



ROOM DOCUMENT NO. 11

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

**PROPOSAL FOR COOPERATION ON
EVALUATION OF
POVERTY REDUCTION**

**Submitted by the
Special Evaluator for International Cooperation,
Belgium**

Agenda item 5 ii)

**34th meeting
22-23 May 2001**

Object : The Belgian Evaluation Department seeks the participation of DAC-members of the Evaluation Group, in order to contribute to the final phase of its poverty-reduction exercise (Nov. 99 – Dec. 2001).

This final phase will be an international colloquium on the incidences of Belgian development assistance for poverty reduction.

The input to this colloquium will consist of 17 evaluation-reports gathered over the period May 2000 – November 2001.

The contribution of other DAC-members could be, to fill in the comparative perspective through :

- a) **improving of the thematical quality of the final reporting**
- b) **to solidify the empirical findings.**

At the colloquium (to be held 2 ½ days during the first week of December 2001 in Brussels) the following expertise will also be invited.

- **17 evaluation team-leaders**
- **a group of international experts on poverty-reduction-strategies**
- **delegates from the implementing agencies**
- **specialised press and media**
- **members of the Belgian Parliament**
- **« witnesses » from the South (local development workers)**
- **permanent delegations development co-operation at the E.U.**

In total 60 to 80 experts will be invited.

On each of the major components of the poverty-problem, a separate commission will be organised e.g.

- **gender**
- **urban poverty**
- **rural poverty (employment, land-reform, ecology)**
- **health (women and children)**
- **social capital.**

The steps leading-up to this final exercise are explained below, for your easy reference.

A. Background

The study is commissioned by the Special Evaluator for International Co-operation as part of the recommendation by the Belgian Parliament to look into the poverty reduction impact of the Belgian development interventions.

The Special Evaluator is a creation of the Belgian Parliament. Although he works within the administrative system of the Ministry of Foreign Relations, Trade and International Co-operation he reports only to Parliament.

Consequently the Belgian Parliament is not only the prime mover in this exercise, but also its prime user. In a transitory phase the Special Evaluator is in charge of both internal and external evaluations.

The policies of the Special Evaluator are spelled out in report tot the Belgian Parliament 14/12/1999. (Plan 2000, distributed to the DAC Evaluation group in Jan. 2000).

B. Major operational phases

1. Conceptualisation : Nov-Dec. 1999

Major source : OECD-DAC Workshop on Evaluation of Poverty Reduction 12-15 October 1999 (Edinburgh).

Definition of poverty and objectives-analysis were derived from Dr. Neil Thin's paper « Methods and Approaches for Evaluation of Development Assistance for Poverty Reduction » delivered at the above-mentioned workshop.

Conceptualisation was later on completed based on two World Bank publications O. Feinstein et al « Evaluation and Poverty Reduction » (Washington 2000) and J.L. Baker et al « Evaluating the Impact of Development Projects on Poverty » (Washington 2000).

1.1. Policy rationale

The emphases laid upon poverty reduction by the Belgian Parliament coalesces with the central objective of all DAC members and programmes as brought forward in the DAC publication « **Shaping the 21st century** » and the associated focus on international development targets on poverty reduction.

The underlying expectation of this study is mainly on the evaluation of outcomes attributable to development co-operation and the evaluator's efforts to make such attributions.

This expectation is based on an explicit acknowledgement of the very limited scope of aid to influence poverty compared with broader influences as trade, economic management and civil of political stability.

As a consequence of the above there is a subsequent acknowledgement that unequal access to development capacity is a major cause of inequality at all levels.

It was noted that there is a limited but growing interest in sensitivity to poverty contexts rather than absolute concepts of poverty. Consequently the evaluation opts for a more human centred approach.

In this respect the widespread promotion of rights-based approaches to poverty reduction comes to the fore. Most notably this is emphasised through the focus on the political and institutional dimension of poverty reduction, on gender inequality and on the empowerment of poor people.

This evaluation tries to shift its disciplinary points of departure away from the traditional economic perspective to more anthropological, sociological and human ecological perspectives.

1.2.Objectives of the evaluation

The main objective is to continue to improve a collective understanding of the various dimensions of the persistence of poverty : “Improved understanding” is thought to be the following :

In general : we are trying to address the following points :

- **To provide a definition of poverty reduction that could be explained to the larger public.**
- **To devise a simple evaluation approach for poverty reduction and put a human face on it.**
- **To have the operational means to divide poverty into manageable bits with supporting methodologies.**
- **To be able to deliver dynamic process-oriented and real-time information to decision-makers.**
- **To have a coherent understanding of critical variables/entry points from analysis of the poverty components into poverty evaluation.**
- **To come up with concrete suggestions on how to co-ordinate institutional stakeholders.**
- **To assess the place of evaluation in management systems, and building the “learning loop”.**
- **To assess International Development Targets-related needs and capacity on the ground, especially *where* the evaluation takes place, *whose* capacity is built, and distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative capacity.**
- **To provide practical suggestions on how to move forward, for example on assessing poverty on project to sector or programme levels.**
- **To remove the question mark from “attribution”.**
- **To develop a common language and methodological approach on poverty reduction.**
- **To clarify different “measurement” levels at which we evaluate, ensuring transparency and clarity in what we are doing.**
- **To follow a comprehensive approach to integrating poverty into evaluation, especially in how to involve local partners in the process.**

More specifically: *we are trying to operationalise the following :*

- what are the specific problems that define being “poor”? These could be low income levels, low consumption levels, weak educational achievements, low health and nutritional status, but equally less traditional indicators such as vulnerability and powerlessness. In sum it should be tried to come to an understanding of what characterises the awareness of being deprived of basic capabilities.
- what are the causes of poverty, what is the nature of poverty dynamics? The fall under the poverty line can be caused by fast and direct interrelated events (illness, bad harvest, falling prices, etc.) However the instigating environments of socio-economic and socio-cultural crises are always looming around the most vulnerable of the population. These crises in turn are the results of unequal patterns spelled out by the dynamics of economic political demographic, socio-geographical growth and/or decline.

- what are the policies, strategies and instruments a/o channels directed at poverty reduction? Much policy making and its subsequent instrumentarium (strategies, tools and channels) still pay tribute, though in an implicit way, to modernisation theory. Development is seen as breaking crucial bottlenecks (health, sanitation, nutrition, finance, etc.) either in an isolated manner or as in some form of clustering. As a consequence project logic still remains very dominant. The external evaluation should try to seek out the weaknesses and strengths when comparing the project vs. the programmatic approaches adopted in each of the 17 “case” studies. More particularly it should be investigated in which manner and to what degree the following policy elements have come to the fore and which recommendations there have to be made in order to enhance their relevance :
 1. donor co-ordination
 2. ownership practices
 3. fundability
 4. conditionality.
- what kind of analytical framework can be devised which is able to accommodate the vast array of information, data gathering policy and management perspectives and the inequalities of the interplay between social time and space? Abundance of the above has lead too often to stalemate positions in policy circles (cf. the “postulate of ignorance”). The more we know the less we are able to structure knowledge, the less we seem inclined to act and commit ourselves (see analytical frame infra).
- what kind of methods and tools will be used for the evaluation of poverty reduction efforts?

Since these evaluation objectives offer an opportunity to break into new grounds of cultural, psychological and even aspects at the individual levels, new ground has to be broken in terms of methodology.

- Depending on the contextual analysis of each specific evaluation-location, the evaluation teams have to opt for a combination of research techniques.

2. Focusing of the Evaluation Jan-March 2000.

2.1. Selection of projects/programmes to be evaluated.

- concertation with stakeholders in International Co-operation of Belgium. (34 proposals, as at November 1999)
- selection by the Special Evaluator of the main theme : poverty-reduction, focused on 17 separate evaluations)
- components and projects/programme on poverty-reduction.

- a) **on gender and poverty reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa**
(6 evaluation studies)
- In Uganda : « Districts Integrated Community Development in Hoima and Kibaale » .
Executing agency : IFAD.
Key issues : rural development, gender and micro-finance
Final report august 2000.
 - In Zambia : Improving household food and nutrition security in the Luapula Valley »
Executing Agency : FAO
Key issues: nutrition, rural development, micro-finance, gender and ecology.
Final report September 2000
 - In Kenya : « Support Programme for Kenya Women's Finance Trust »
Executing Agency : KWFT (Kenyan NGO) + Belgian Survival Fund
Key issues : micro-finance, small entrepreneurship, gender
Final report : Jan. 2001
 - In Niger "Projet intégré Maradi" :
Executing Agency : UNICEF
Key issues : rural development, community development, gender
Final report dec. 2000
 - In Mali : "Programme d'aménagement et gestion des terroirs villageois du Sené-Gondo"
Executing Agency : UNCDF
Key issues : rural development, human ecology, gender
Final report October 2000
 - In Niger : "Projet intégré Maradi" final project evaluation
Key issues : rural development, community development, health, sanitation, production,
etc...
Final report : November 2000
- b) **on urban poverty** in Vietnam, Morocco and Kenya (1 report, 3 countries)
Localising Agenda 21 : Action Planning for Sustainable Development in Vinh (Vietnam),
Essaouira (Morocco) and Nakuru (Kenya) » (Habitat)
Key issues : macro-spatial frameworks (dualism and polarisation, institutional processes,
poverty-targets, empowerment of urban groups)
Final report(s) august 2001.
- c) **on rural poverty in Asia** (3 reports)
- **On land-reform** : « Belgian Landreform Programme in the Philippines »
Key issues : rural development, community development, political analysis. (DGCI)
Final report : September 2001
 - **On rural employment** : "Off-farm job-creation in N.E. Thailand" (DGCI).
Key issues : institutional capacity, employment generation, gender, socio-economic
analysis, marketing.
Final report : September 2001
 - **On human ecology** : « Rural livelihood analysis of five selected Belgian rural
development projects »
Key issues : contexts, (macro-economic, policies, agro-ecology, demography, resources,
institutions and strategies)
Final report : December 2001 (?)

- d) **On health of women and children in Andean Region** (5 reports)
 « Micro-nutrients deficiency in the Andean Region (UNICEF)
 Reports on Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela and Columbia.
 Key issues : institutional analysis (capacity building) production, delivery systems,
 quality control-techniques, gender.
 Final report : September 2001
- e) **On social capital** (2 reports)
- « Promotion du dialogue social en Afrique francophone » (Prodiab-BIT)
 - « Strategies and Tools Against Social Exclusion and Poverty » (STEP. ILO – global)
- Key issues : social economy, institutional capacity, civil society...
 Final reports : November 2001.

2.2. Pre-evaluation (Jan. – March 2000)

Establishing the major axes of research by the Special Evaluator e.g. listening to beneficiaries, discussing draft TOR with local stakeholders and selecting of local consultants. (empowerment-ownership and acculturation of the exercise).

2.3. Methodology (April 2000)

A methodological seminar has been organised in Dar-es-Salaam in April 2000.

Participants – consultants (50 % international, suggested by various DAC-Evaluation departments, requested by the Special Evaluator and 50 % African consultants, selected by the Special Evaluator during pre-evaluation. In both groups the Special Evaluator took into account :

- multi-disciplinarity
 - independence
 - international mix
 - mix international/local
 - stakeholders : members from the implementing agencies (DGCI, UN-organisations, project-staff)
- outcome : design of analytical framework, finalisation of TOR 's.
 source : « Attacking – Poverty » World Bank (Washington 2000) + CIDA – Evaluation Guide (Jan. 2000) distributed to all consultants for conformity of work method.
- **The workshop organised** in Dar es Salaam designed a modular approach which was agreed upon by all participants at the workshop.
 - **The framework is constructed** on 4 interrelated fields of research :
 - First Field** : identifying the poor in the project area and their poverty-problems
 - Second Field** : identifying the causality between poverty and component analysis (gender, urban poor, etc.)
 - Third Field** : identifying the causality of the above relationship and the strategies aimed at poverty reduction.
 - Fourth Field** : correlating the above fields to the area of project-implementation
 - Each field has been de-constructed into a number of sub-fields of investigation.

Sources for the Dar-es-Salaam-seminar (focus gender and poverty) :

- SIDA/DAC “Evaluating Gender Equality and Women’s empowerment” (1993 – 1994) + Gender Review Questionnaire (1999)
- The Why and How – Gender-sensitive indicators (CIDA Project-level handbook) (both documents distributed to evaluation-teams as methodological tools)

3. Executing the evaluation

Field missions and reporting – May 2000-November 2001, consisting of 11 African consultants and 11 international consultants (Ireland, USA, Germany, Belgium, Finland)

4. Feedback to stakeholders

- to DGIC and UN-agencies
Jan 2000 – November 2001. (for comments)
- to the Secretary of State for Development Co-operation (for comments)
May 2001 (intermediary report)
- to the Belgian Parliament (for discussion)
June 2001 (intermediary reporting)

5. Finalisation

- organisation of the colloquium (ibid. supra)
December 2001
- final thematical report to Parliament
December 2001
- publication
Jan.-Feb. 2002