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Organisation de Coopération et de Développement Economiques  
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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**English - Or. English**

**DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION DIRECTORATE  
DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE**

**DAC Network on Development Evaluation**

**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING**

**9 - 10 November 2004**

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## SUMMARY RECORD OF THE SECOND MEETING OF THE DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

### I. OPENING

a) Chair's introduction

Ms Eva Lithman, the new Chair of the Evaluation Network, started by recalling the mandate of the Network and stressed the need for joint work in evaluation in order to meet the needs of an evolving development co-operation and evaluation agenda. She encouraged members to work together to respond to broader, strategic questions about the effectiveness of the aid system as a whole and the need for assessments at various levels.

She indicated her strong support for the partnership dimension of work and wished to see the Network further develop as a node for co-operation and exchange among the various development evaluation communities. She noted that the evaluation co-operation groups of both the UN system and the development banks were going to present their work during the meeting, and that new actors had been invited including from civil society to the second meeting of the Network.

b) The agenda was adopted.

c) The Summary Record of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the DAC Evaluation Network was approved.

### II. ASSESSING DEVELOPMENT EFFECTIVENESS AT COUNTRY LEVEL

1. During the morning session several members presented recent experiences in country level evaluation. The presentations<sup>1</sup> provided Network members with valuable insights which informed the afternoon discussion on assessing development effectiveness at country level.

2. Stefan Molund (Sweden) presented a proposal submitted by Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden for a joint study on assessing the contribution of total ODA effectiveness at country level, offered as an input to the afternoon discussion (Room Documents 2 and 16).

#### *Breakout session reporting*

3. Members discussed the proposal for a joint study in four breakout groups followed by a reporting back session. The main questions related to the feasibility and the approach of the proposal. The rapporteurs of the breakout discussion groups indicated there was general support for the objectives of the study to evaluate the contribution of total official development assistance to development at country level.

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1. Presentations on PRSP Evaluations (IMF/WB); General Budget Support evaluation (UK); Country Assistance Evaluation Retrospective (World Bank); Results of the UNDP workshop; and IDB experiences with country level evaluations. Some of these presentations are available at [www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/members](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/members)

4. Some members, however, considered the proposal overly ambitious and urged a degree of caution. The main issues raised concerned:

- The lack of visible demand from partner countries, and a potential disconnect from their needs.
- The political risks involved in this initiative, including the possibility that its results might ‘backfire’ affecting the image of ODA negatively.
- The challenge of getting partners to accept the role of possibly being put ‘under the spotlight’.
- The evaluability problem inherent in the study and more particularly the difficulty of counterfactuals.
- The study’s cost implications.
- The dangers of a comparative analysis of different aid modalities and donor programmes.

5. Members recognised the scale of challenges posed by the proposed initiative, but also agreed that the study could present a number of opportunities, such as:

- Solving part of the attribution problem affecting individual donors’ attempts to assess the effectiveness of their operations at country level.
- Contributing to better future management of aid flows among donors and between donors and partners.
- Contributing to empowering partner countries, by highlighting the positive and negative aspects of aid.
- Developing a framework for individual donors to use when assessing their own country programmes.
- Signaling a role for the evaluation community to contribute to the broader debate on aid effectiveness.

6. Members presented various suggestions as to how to develop this initiative, such as:

- Broaden the initiative and consult with partner governments by highlighting its potential benefits and the incentives that donors and partners share in conducting this evaluation.
- Avoid a focus on partners’ developmental performance (policies, governance, etc) and concentrate on assessing donors’ aid efforts.
- Explore possible linkages between aid effectiveness and the impact of non-aid policies on developing countries (FDI, trade migration).
- Be realistic about the prospects of partner-led evaluations, not the least because of capacity constraints.
- State clearly that the outcome pursued consists in seeking positive change in donor-partner relationships.

- Build on already existing material during the first, desk study phase.
- Utilize an incremental and flexible approach, starting with a pilot country (or a few).
- The selection of the pilot studies should include a representative sample of partner countries, including i) highly aid dependent; ii) low aid dependent and iii) LICUS/poor performers.
- Explore also the downsides of ODA, including transaction costs, aid dependence, conditionality etc.
- Deconstruct ODA, not only according to aid modalities, but also in terms of type of assistance (grants vs loans, technical assistance, etc).
- When using national development strategies, policies and priorities as a backdrop, distinguish between long, medium and short term, taking into account the impact of 'exogenous shocks impacting on partners' priorities.

7. Sweden indicated its willingness to lead this work initially and a number of members (Denmark, France, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Spain, ECG and the Secretariat) indicated interest in assisting actively to take the proposal forward. Others indicated a willingness to take a more limited role, but wished to be kept informed and be given the possibility to comment as the project evolves. Members agreed on the need to inform the policy community but also make sure to have partners on board from the beginning of the exercise.

**Action:**

- Elaborate on the study proposal taking into account the suggestions made.
- Develop a brief paper describing the proposed study and its broad objectives for use in dialogue with partners and the "non-evaluation" community.
- Identify interested partner countries for pilot studies.
- Explore opportunities to engage the policy community at high level to gain support for the initiative.
- Locate existing relevant material that could be used for a desk study.

### **III. EVALUATING CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACE BUILDING**

***Brainstorming session with members of the DAC Network on Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation***

8. The aim of this session was to initiate collaboration between the Network on Development Evaluation and the DAC Network on Conflict Prevention and Development Cooperation (CPDC) (Room Document 4), and more specifically to select the possible areas of work, identify members willing to take the work forward and establish a task force to manage the process. Tom Owen-Edmunds (UK) highlighted CPDC's interest in working with the Evaluation Network. Bjorg Leite (Norway) presented a concept paper (Room Document 3) on assessing impact of peace building efforts, which builds on the work previously done by the Utstein group. Norway offered to hold a meeting in Oslo to carry the work one step further.

9. Members noted CPDC's interest in: i) the methodological aspects of assessing impact of conflict prevention operations, with a view to developing an evaluation framework; ii) ways to conflict-sensitise evaluation work; iii) carry out an evaluation of conflict prevention programmes benefiting from field-level evidence based on case studies. The IDEAS representative stressed the need to take into account the perspectives of partners on the ground, and highlighted the analytical gap on the factors accounting for the start of conflict. Paul Isenman (Secretariat) also expressed the need for further work on lessons learned in fragile states within the Learning and Advisory Group on Difficult Partnerships (LAP).

10. Members (Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK, US, African Development Bank, World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, the Secretariat) expressed strong support for joint work between the Evaluation Network and CPDC, and offered different types and level of support.

***Action:***

11. Norway and the Secretariat are to coordinate next steps and organise a workshop/ meeting in Oslo which will decide on the objectives and content of a work plan. Possible streams of work to be considered include: i) scope existing evaluative information; ii) analyse existing methodological work and explore the need and scope for further methodological development; iii) consider ways of mainstreaming conflict sensitivity in evaluations; iv) develop an evaluation framework (for joint/ parallel evaluations focusing on countries where multi-donor conflict prevention activities have been carried out; v) attempt to establish links with NGOs and the research community

#### **IV. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY, QUALITY AND SYSTEMS**

***Review of ongoing work***

a) Update on Joint Evaluations study

Members welcomed progress made as reported by Horst Breier (consultant) and contained in Room Document 5. The diversity of joint evaluations was noted and the need for developing a typology, as well as the need for inputs from partner countries in the next phase of the study.

***Action:***

Consultations with members and other actors are to be continued. Workshop with partners who have extensive practical experience in joint evaluations should be organised before next meeting in June 2005 at which time a draft report should be presented. The Secretariat will co-ordinate.

b) Update on multilateral evaluations

Niels Dabelstein (Denmark) reported on the progress of this initiative (Room Document 6). He highlighted that the workshop to be held in Copenhagen on 23<sup>rd</sup> November will give members the opportunity to discuss the key issues that need to be addressed prior to finalising the approach and the pilot test.

**Action:**

Next steps to be agreed during Copenhagen workshop

c) Presentation of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation Network Website

Members expressed their strong appreciation for the development of a useful website and supported the idea of making relevant parts of it accessible to the public. Several members noted the need for a search facility and that the current lack of a standardised website management among members did not facilitate the task of searching. Members also supported the idea of establishing a list of contact persons to facilitate the management of the site.

Mike Hammond (UK) informed Network members that the GBS Steering Committee would wish to see the DAC website host material and studies related to the GBS evaluation, and it was noted that Norway had expressed a willingness to support this financially.

**Action:**

**Members** are to supply the Secretariat with names of contact persons who are responsible for evaluation website management.

**The Secretariat** is to develop parts of the site to be made public, in particular focussing on developing the content of the site and investigating options for a search facility. The Secretariat will also need to obtain funding for further work including GBS website integration.

d) Update on the Review of the Quality of DAC Evaluation Reports

Irene Davis (Australia) introduced this session by providing the background of this initiative, its origins and details of the various stages of work so far, and thanking members who had contributed to the exercise. The main issues outstanding are a) finding a consensus on the adequacy of the set of minimum standards defined, or on a revised version; and b) defining the number of evaluation reports which will constitute the sample to be examined, keeping in mind the cost implications. Jean Quesnel (UNICEF) informed members of the work on norms and standards in UN agencies' evaluation functions, whose outcome will possibly be available at the next the UNEG meeting.

**Action:**

Australia will lead the following phase with support from other interested members. Several members (Denmark, EC, France, Netherlands, Sweden, UK, Evaluation Co-operation Group (ECG), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)) expressed a willingness to participate in further work on quality.

**Discussion on new work**

a) Evaluation systems and structures

The Secretariat presented a study on the evolution of evaluation systems in DAC member agencies (Room Document 10) and a discussion paper proposing two options aimed at strengthening evaluation systems [DCD/DAC/EV(2004)1]. Members agreed on the need to share experiences and good practices to improve evaluation systems and adapt to new demands through

cross-fertilisation. They also highlighted the linkages with the work on quality of evaluation reports and indicated willingness to collaborate in developing the project.

Both options for further work in the paper received support, with most in favour of starting with option one (reinforcing the assessment of evaluation systems in Peer Reviews) and potentially move on to option two (develop a reference guide complementary to the DAC Principles) at a later stage.

***Action:***

Members are to inform the Secretariat of relevant material and initiatives concerning changes within their evaluations systems (institutional modifications, new evaluation policies, recent reviews of evaluation functions, etc). The Secretariat will continue to lead work with interested Network members and the DAC Peer Review division. Future actions are to be carried out in synergy with the work on quality of evaluation reports and potentially on the multilateral evaluation study.

b) Impact evaluations

Greg Ingram (World Bank) provided highlights of some of the recent impact evaluations carried out by the World Bank, including in Kenya, Ghana and Bangladesh. He noted the high cost of these evaluations (250 000 – 450 000USD per project) which involve heavy data collection costs. This work generated public goods and he suggested that there should be more joint financing, including a multi-donor trust fund to finance these types of evaluations.

***Action:***

The World Bank is to prepare a document for discussion under the item of impact evaluation which, as the Chair indicated, is going to be on the agenda at the next Network meeting.

c) Workshop on Evaluation Methodology, Quality and Standards

In connection with discussions under this item, the proposal for a workshop on methods, quality and systems was also raised (Room Document 8). The offer by Australia to host the workshop was welcomed (although it was remarked that considerable travel would be involved for some member countries, whilst others noted that non-European OECD members frequently travelled to Europe for meetings). Several members expressed support for a workshop and indicated a wish for more focus, perhaps by giving quality and system issues some priority. The work by UNICEF on standards was noted in this context and linkages should be explored. It was also stressed that the workshop should produce tangible outputs.

***Action:***

Australia, Denmark and the Secretariat should elaborate a draft outline for a workshop programme and try to identify suitable dates. Members are to send the Secretariat planned evaluation events scheduled to take place in the first half of 2005, in order to plan for the most suitable date for a workshop.

## V. EVALUATION PARTNERSHIPS

### a) Partners in Development Evaluation

Daniel Kamelgarn (France) briefly introduced the item. He underlined the importance of reaching out to various evaluation communities and that the 2003 workshop on “Partners in Development” had been a major milestone. To follow up and further expand relations he expressed the willingness of the French authorities to host a workshop in 2006, possibly in connection with the spring meeting of the Evaluation Network. He noted the need to specifically engage in a dialogue with all the partner countries' stakeholders (government, parliament, civil society organisations) and with the private sector.

Members generally welcomed the idea and noted that careful preparations would be needed. It was suggested that media also could be an important group to involve.

#### *Action:*

France and the Secretariat are to prepare a document calling for a Steering Group meeting of interested Network members and other partners to begin planning for the event.

### b) IDEAS

Sulley Gariba (President, IDEAS) presented the plans for the first biannual IDEAS Conference to be held in New Delhi in April, 2005. He outlined the various conference themes envisaged and invited members of the DAC Evaluation Network to be part of the task groups to prepare for the conference.

Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted the interesting topics on the agenda and the need for support for the conference by the development evaluation community and the DAC Network.

#### *Action:*

The Network Bureau and individual members should consider if they wish to participate in substantive preparations, and review possible funding support. IDEAS to continue to seek active involvement and update the Network on preparations as the conference moves closer.

### c) UNEG and ECG

Saraswathi Menon (UNDP – Chair of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG)) presented the work of the UNEG focusing on the three major work streams and the linkages with the programme of the DAC Evaluation Network: a) norms and standards in the UN system, linking to Network's quality and systems work; b) better ways of working together and common challenges, including results based management and evaluation; c) evaluation capacity development, both internally to UNEG agencies and partners.

Frederik Korfker (EBRD - ECG Chair) presented the programme of work and governing arrangements of the Evaluation Cooperation Group. He pointed out that harmonisation of methodologies is one of the main areas of ECG attention and welcomed collaboration with UNEG and the DAC Evaluation Network particularly around the issues common to the groups work programme such as work on systems and inputs to the harmonisation and results agenda.



## d) Trade Capacity Building evaluation

Caroline Lesser (DAC Secretariat – Network on Poverty Reduction) provided members with an update on the recent initiative to set up a framework for assessing trade capacity building activities. She informed members that the first phase (desk study) will end in the first half of 2005, and asked interested members for support on phase two (indicators development) and three (joint reviews).

**Action:**

Members to send relevant material to the Secretariat and to explore the potential interest in participating in phases two and three of the project.

## e) Presentation of the CGD project on impact evaluation

Bill Savedoff (Center for Global Development) presented a recently launched project on impact evaluations. He noted the need for impact evaluations in order to be able to make precise judgements on what works and that there were few multivariate statistical control studies available according to the literature (ILO, Ekman). He wished to collaborate with bilateral and multilateral agencies in developing the project further.

Members generally agreed on the need for more impact evaluations. Several members expressed doubts however about the range of applicability of randomised evaluation methodology in view of current development assistance modalities. It was also noted that this work aimed at adding more knowledge in the evaluation toolbox on the project level which was where the evaluation community was already best equipped while there were now more and more demands for evaluations on more aggregate levels, including the country and global level. Members found the presentation useful and the Chair encouraged Mr Savedoff to keep the Network informed of progress and results emerging from the research.

## f) High Level Forum II on Aid Effectiveness

Stephanie Baile (DAC Secretariat – Working Party on Aid Effectiveness) informed members of the preparations for the second High Level Forum (February 28 - 2 March 2005, Paris) and sought support towards one of the Forum's main outcomes - "establish means of independent evaluation of progress on the commitments made in Rome". Members expressed general interest but also urged the Secretariat to provide more precise indications of the scope of the request, particularly given the short time available.

**Action:**

Secretariat to send members the document 'Framework for a declaration and agenda for action – Second High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness' [DCD/DAC/EFF(2004)18]. Interested members, particularly the bureau and Secretariat are to provide advice on the evaluation dimension.

## g) Sulley Gariba (IDEAS) provided a brief update on the conference by the African Evaluation Association to be held in South Africa, 1- 4 December, 2004.

## **VI. OTHER BUISINESS**

12. Mr Kitazawa (Japan) informed members of a forthcoming seminar/workshop on ODA evaluation to be held in Thailand in January 2005. He indicated that members would shortly receive an invitation to attend the workshop part of the programme on 21 January.

13. The World Bank informed members that the next IPDET course will be held in July 2005. This evaluation training programme is now attended by over 100 participants yearly.

14. In closing the meeting, the Chair noted the useful contributions by Members in moving forward the evaluation agenda and engage in joint work. She also thanked the invited organisations for their useful contributions to the meeting.

15. Next meeting of the Network will be held in Paris from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005.

### ***Action:***

The Bureau is to reflect on ways to develop the partnership dimension and consider attendance at forthcoming meetings of partners that can contribute to current work streams.

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9 November 2004 - 10 November 2004

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