

**DAC Evaluation Series**

# **Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations**

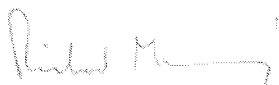


## Foreword

The practical guidance in this booklet is designed to help evaluation managers deliver effective joint evaluations. This is vital at a time in which the international community is prioritising more effective ways of managing aid and emphasising the importance of mutual accountability in demonstrating results.

Joint evaluations enable development agencies and partners to assess collectively the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impacts of our combined efforts, beyond the results of one individual agency. This is increasingly useful in a context in which significant quantities of aid are now provided through joined-up modalities such as basket funds, sector-wide approaches and budget support and within the frameworks of co-ordinated and joint assistance strategies.

Another core objective of joint working is to minimise transaction costs for developing country partners by reducing the overall number of evaluations. This process requires as many donors as possible to collaborate on joint efforts and to reduce the number of separate single evaluations they undertake. We also need to move beyond donor partnerships and to find ways of working in effective collaboration with developing country partners. This is the only way to ensure that evaluation is aligned with national needs and that findings and recommendations are owned by the key partner country stakeholders. The practical tips for effective joint working that are contained in this booklet will help make joint processes more efficient and we hope this will encourage more partners to join future collaborative efforts.



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The Network on Development Evaluation is a subsidiary body of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of international development programmes by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation. The Network is a unique body, bringing together 30 bilateral donors and multilateral development agencies: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UNDP, and the IMF. For further information on the work of the DAC Evaluation Network, please visit the website [www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork](http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork) or email [dacevaluation.contact@oecd.org](mailto:dacevaluation.contact@oecd.org). Special thanks should be given to Austria, Denmark and Germany whose financial contributions have supported this work and enabled this to be a free-distribution booklet.

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## Introduction and Summary Overview

This booklet is a practical guide for managers of joint evaluations of development assistance programmes. It is a revision and update, in view of new experiences, of the DAC publication *Effective Practices in Conducting a Joint Multi-Donor Evaluation* (2000).<sup>1</sup> The omission of the words “Multi-Donor” from the new title reflects the momentum in development co-operation towards broader partnerships and, specifically, joint evaluations undertaken with the participation of non-donor agencies. The update is based on the findings and recommendations in a DAC Evaluation Network Working Paper prepared by consultant Horst Breier in 2005.<sup>2</sup> It also draws on the outcomes of a workshop: “Joint Evaluations: Challenging the Conventional Wisdom - the View from Developing Country Partners” (Nairobi, 2005) and on inputs and feedback from members and partners of the Evaluation Network.

Joint evaluations are development evaluations conducted collaboratively by more than one agency. The focus here is not on participatory evaluation with its techniques for bringing stakeholder communities into the process, but on evaluations undertaken jointly by more than one development co-operation agency.<sup>3</sup> Joint evaluations vary considerably in the number of participating agencies and in their focus, purpose and approach. Methodologies used can also differ widely, ranging from desk reviews of existing information to fieldwork in developing countries.

Joint evaluations have the potential to bring benefits to all partners. Collaborative working offers opportunities for mutual capacity development and learning between the partners, for building participation and ownership, for sharing the burden of work, for increasing the legitimacy of findings and for reducing the overall number of evaluations and the total transaction costs for partner countries. Joint working can also generate particular costs and challenges and these can put significant burdens on the partner agencies. Building consensus between the partners and maintaining effective co-ordination processes can be costly and time-consuming. Delays in the completion of complex joint evaluations can adversely affect timeliness and relevance.

Faced with these challenges of joint working, some agencies are focused on delivering single (as opposed to joint) evaluations. Others demonstrate high levels of commitment to delivering joint evaluations while many more are showing growing levels of interest and the frequency of joint work is increasing. The international community is scaling-up the overall level of ODA and also promoting more effective ways of providing that aid. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness sets out the commitment of development agencies and partner countries to finding more effective ways of working together. This booklet helps evaluation managers meet some of these challenges and deliver more efficient evaluations which maximise the benefits and minimise the costs of joint working. Chapter 1 explores the benefits and challenges of collaborative working while Chapter 2 provides practical guidance.

### Box 1. Joint evaluations by degree and mode of jointness

The DAC Evaluation Glossary defines joint evaluation as: “An evaluation to which different donors and/or partners participate,” and goes on to state that “There are various degrees of ‘jointness’ depending on the extent to which individual partners co-operate in the evaluation process”.<sup>1</sup> Differentiation in the use of the term joint evaluation within three broad categories distinguishes between different types of joint working and helps reduce misunderstandings and clarify expectations when partners work together.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1. Classic joint evaluation

##### Mode of work/ Examples

Participation is open to all stakeholder agencies. All partners participate and contribute actively and on equal terms. Examples of classic joint evaluations include: the Rwanda Evaluation, the tripartite evaluation of the WFP and the GBS Evaluation.

#### 2. Qualified joint evaluation

Participation is open only to those who qualify - through membership of a certain grouping (e.g. DAC, EU, Nordics, UNEG, ECG, Utstein) or through active participation in the activity (e.g. SWAp, basket funding mechanism, jointly-implemented programme) that is being evaluated. Examples include EU aid evaluations, the evaluation of the Road Sub-sector in Ghana, the Basic Education Evaluation, the ITC Evaluation, and the DAC study on Lessons Learned on Donor Support to Decentralisation and Local Governance.

#### 3. Hybrid joint evaluation

Includes a wide range of alternative ways of joint working: (a) responsibilities are delegated to one or more agencies while others take a ‘silent partnership’ role; (b) some components of the evaluation are undertaken jointly while others are delivered separately; (c) various levels of linkage are established between separate but parallel and interrelated evaluations; (d) the joint activity is agreeing a common evaluation framework and responsibility for implementation of individual evaluations is devolved to different partners; (e) research, interviews and team visits are undertaken jointly but each partner prepares a separate report.

1. OECD (2002), *DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management*, p. 26, OECD, Paris.
2. In the report, *Joint Evaluations: Recent Experiences, Lessons Learnt and Options for the Future* (H. Breier), 50 joint evaluations are catalogued according to focus and scope.

## Box 2. A brief overview of joint evaluations, 1990-2006

The *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, agreed in 1991, state that “Joint donor evaluations should be promoted in order to improve understanding of each others’ procedures and approaches and to reduce the administrative burden on the recipient”.<sup>1</sup> The principles also underline the importance of involving the aid recipients in the evaluation.

The 1990s saw a number of flagship joint evaluations, including: the evaluation of the WFP by Canada, the Netherlands and Norway (1994), *The International Response to Conflict and Genocide: Lessons from the Rwanda Experience* (1996) and the evaluation of EU Food Aid approved by the Council of Development Ministers (1997). In 1996, the DAC strategy *Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation* challenged donors to make joint evaluations a routine approach to conducting evaluations and called for collaboration not only among donors but also with recipients. The DAC Senior Level Meeting in January 1998 also identified joint monitoring and evaluation as one of the “11 points” for strengthening partnerships for development.

In 1998, the *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* concluded that the 16 members who had participated in joint evaluations “...found them highly - or, more often occasionally - satisfactory,” and that joint evaluations “...have proven to be satisfactory as they allow first-hand learning from each other, give greater results, facilitate feedback, mobilise knowledge, improve follow-up and save resources”.<sup>2</sup> However, respondents also voiced reasons for concern, namely “...higher costs, since [joint evaluations] require more time and resources to assure co-ordination and foster mutual understanding. Hidden agendas, different approaches, too general and diplomatic conclusions as they have to combine different interests, increased complexity and delays and different political objectives, also work against effective joint evaluations”.

Since 1998, a growing number of joint evaluations have been undertaken, including: *Joint Evaluation of the Road Sub-Sector Programme in Ghana* (2000) initiated by Denmark; *Toward Country-led Development* (2003) led by the World Bank; *Local Solutions to Global Challenges: Towards Effective Partnership in Basic Education* (2003) initiated by the Netherlands; and *Addressing the Reproductive Health Needs and Rights of Young People since ICPD - The Contribution of UNFPA and IPPF* (2004) led by Germany. Other joint evaluations include those of IFAD, the Enabling Development Policy of WFP, the International Trade Centre, the Triple C Concept in EU Development Co-operation Policy, and of General Budget Support led by the UK. Joint evaluations of humanitarian assistance have also been undertaken, such as the *Evaluation of Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons* and the work of the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition co-ordinated by the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP).

The DAC Evaluation Network has continuously sought to promote joint working and has facilitated the launch of numerous joint evaluations and acts as a forum for sharing lessons and experiences in managing joint evaluations.

1. OECD (1991), *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, p. 8, OECD, Paris.
2. OECD (1998), *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, p. 55, OECD, Paris.



## Notes

1. OECD/DAC (2000), *Effective Practices in Conducting a Joint Multi-Donor Evaluation*, OECD/DAC Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness Series, No. 4, OECD, Paris.
2. H. Breier (2005), *Joint Evaluations: Recent Experiences, Lessons Learnt and Options for the Future*, Working Paper, presented at the third meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2-3 June 2005, Paris.
3. The word “agency” is used in this booklet to include bilateral donor and developing country government ministries and other multilateral and civil society development organisations.

## Chapter 1: Why Conduct a Joint Evaluation?

### Potential benefits of joint evaluation

*Mutual capacity development.* Joint evaluations enable agencies to learn from each other and to share evaluation techniques, including through partner country and local consultant participation.

*Harmonisation and reduced transaction costs.* When one joint effort is undertaken in place of multiple single evaluations the partner country transaction costs should clearly be reduced. This will also limit the number of different evaluation messages and foster consensus on upcoming priorities. However, where the process is not rationalised and a joint evaluation is undertaken in addition to single evaluations the net effect will be increased transaction costs for all partners.

*Participation and alignment.* Joint evaluations should enable participation of developing country institutions. This facilitates alignment of evaluations with national needs and ownership of the findings.

*Objectivity and legitimacy.* Effective joint working increases the objectivity, transparency and independence of the evaluation and strengthens its legitimacy and impact. Broad participation increases ownership of findings and makes follow-up on recommendations more likely.

*Broader scope.* Joint evaluations can address broader evaluation questions and can facilitate a perspective on multi-agency impacts beyond the results of one individual agency.

### Potential challenges of joint evaluation

Despite these benefits, the 1998 *Review of the DAC Principles* found joint evaluation work to be “weak” and that generally there was “little enthusiasm” for joint evaluations.<sup>1</sup> The number of joint evaluations is increasing but a gap remains between the levels of policy and practice of joint evaluations. One reason is that all agencies have limited resources and

evaluating one's own performance to meet domestic accountability needs often takes priority over joint efforts focusing on the inter-related impacts of multiple agencies. This bias might be addressed if partner countries are enabled to take ownership of evaluation planning and delivery. However, two challenges for effective joint evaluations would remain:

- **Subjects** that are especially suited to joint evaluation – such as co-financed programme support at the budget or sector level, multilateral agency effectiveness and evaluating the impacts of several actors – are more difficult to evaluate than traditional single agency projects.
- **Processes** for co-ordinating joint work can be complex and can increase the cost and duration of the evaluation. Although some indications suggest that joint evaluations “...neither increase nor reduce financial costs for donors”<sup>2</sup> joint evaluations also generate extra indirect costs in staff time and travel and complex processes can lead to delays which adversely affect timeliness and influence. These process challenges are the focus of Chapter 2.

### Making the decision to undertake a joint evaluation

The decision on whether to conduct an evaluation singly or jointly is taken on a case-by-case basis and with careful consideration of the possible benefits and challenges. Some of the specific factors in deciding whether to undertake an evaluation singly or jointly include:

- **Focus.** Evaluations focusing on co-financed programmes, on national aid effectiveness or sectoral goals, on the evaluation of a multilateral or regional development agency, on issues that are too sensitive or controversial for one agency alone to tackle, and broad thematic or meta evaluations can often most appropriately be undertaken jointly.
- **Purpose.** If they are to reduce transaction costs joint evaluations must be undertaken *in place of* and not *in addition to* individual donor evaluations. For evaluation processes to be effectively rationalised, it is therefore important to undertake joint evaluations that meet each partners' accountability needs as well as lesson learning objectives.
- **Scope.** A joint evaluation's scope is often comprehensive as each participating agency may have issues and questions it wants addressed. A joint evaluation may be inappropriate if an agency wishes an evaluation to remain very focused and wants to remain

exclusively in control of the scope. Conversely, if the evaluation questions are very broad a joint evaluation can be an advantage as the workload and costs can be shared.

- **Timeframe.** If an organisation is in a great hurry to get an evaluation completed, joint approaches may be disadvantageous. The collaborative nature of joint evaluations tends to increase their complexity which often increases the length of time needed for the evaluation. However, some very complex joint evaluations have been completed quickly. For example, the comprehensive joint evaluation of international emergency assistance to Rwanda was completed - in part because of the high-level political interest in the subject matter - in only a little over a year. Silent partnerships, delegation of responsibilities to individual agencies, or the joint development of a common evaluation framework to be applied by different stakeholders in different contexts all offer ways to undertake joint work while minimising the time delays that can be generated by intensive co-ordination. More will be said on these in Chapter 2.

## Notes

1. OECD/DAC (1998), *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance*, p. 11, OECD, Paris.
2. O. Feinstein & G. Ingram (2003), *Lessons Learned from World Bank Experiences in Joint Evaluation*, p. 5, OED, Washington. The note states that tracer studies may be needed to establish solid data on transaction costs.



## **Chapter 2: Key steps in Planning and Delivering Joint Evaluations**

This chapter provides practical lessons learned for joint evaluation managers in identifying the evaluation partners, agreeing the management structure, implementation, and follow-up.

### **Identifying the evaluation partners**

As we have seen in Chapter 2, involving the main stakeholders as partners can help build the legitimacy and credibility of an evaluation. But how are the right partner agencies identified? The best starting point is to find out whether other agencies are already planning or considering an evaluation of the same project, programme or theme. Partnering with these agencies is the easiest way of rationalising the overall number of evaluations, minimising duplication and reducing partner country transaction costs. Problems occur when agencies share their evaluation forward planning too late to agree to undertake the evaluations jointly. A range of country-level and international consultation groups exist where the idea for a joint evaluation can be raised and expressions of interest solicited. The DAC Network on Development Evaluation has a long tradition of co-operation and has facilitated and fostered numerous joint efforts.

In addition to contacting agencies already planning evaluation work in the same area, managers should map the wider institutional framework and identify which other agencies have major activities contributing to the project, programme or theme being evaluated and are likely to be interested in the evaluation findings. Involving these agencies as partners will ensure that the process meets the needs of a broad range of stakeholders, builds ownership of the findings and recommendations, and reduces the likelihood of duplicative evaluations being undertaken in the future.

All too often, joint evaluations are undertaken without the participation of key developing country partners. The DAC Principles state that, “Aid supports activities for which developing countries have final responsibility

and ownership. Project performance depends on both donor and recipient action. Both have an interest in, and responsibility for, the best use of scarce public funds. Both must therefore be interested in evaluation not only for improving resource use for development through learning from experience but also for accountability to political authorities and general publics”.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the agreed need for donor-partner collaboration, a DAC review in 1998 found that compliance with this principle was “seriously deficient”.<sup>2</sup> One reason is that evaluation is too often seen as related only to donors’ own accountability requirements. While this is an important aspect, evaluations can also help meet partner country accountability needs, ensure mutual accountability and can develop practical recommendations and lessons learnt for all partners.

Donors are increasingly relying on developing countries’ own information management systems to provide the data for harmonised monitoring systems and performance assessment frameworks. In Tanzania, for example, a broad range of partners are using information from the Independent Monitoring Group. But there are few examples of donors working in effective evaluation partnerships with government or non-government country institutions or relying on partner countries’ own evaluation systems. One example of good practice is highlighted in Box 3 which shows how South Africa is leading joint evaluations in partnership with a range of donors. Some suggestions for building partner country ownership of evaluations are listed below:

- Effective communication on planned evaluations is needed between partner countries, donor country offices, and donor headquarters evaluation units. Partner country authorities should be enabled to take ownership of co-ordinating the forward planning for joint evaluations.
- The possibility of undertaking a joint evaluation should be considered in the design stage of new projects and programmes. This also facilitates timely start-up of the evaluation.
- Managers should consider on a systematic basis whether each evaluation can be undertaken with partner country participation. Partners should be brought on board before decisions are made on the ground rules, the ToR and the selection of the evaluation team.<sup>3</sup>
- Joint evaluations with several developing country partners should facilitate for these to meet together to co-ordinate their inputs. Steering Committees should also meet in partner countries.

- Genuine ownership of joint evaluations often remains with the donors rather than with the country partners because of the financing. Donor managers sometimes feel that because their agency is financing the evaluation they will be accountable for its quality and should therefore retain tight control over the process. To redress this imbalance, donors and partner countries should develop and fund partner government budget-lines for evaluations. Partner countries should be facilitated to contract at least some of the consultant evaluation team.
- Another factor that limits partner country participation and ownership of joint evaluations is the capacity demands. Donors and partners must prioritise support for evaluation capacity development. This can consist of small-scale stipends for study visits and evaluation training courses for programme managers but should also include long-term activities targeted at institutional capacities. These could include an evaluation capacity development module in technical assistance programmes, assistance in establishing evaluation units or focal points in government departments, and help with the drafting of evaluation policies and guidelines.

It can be practical to work with agencies that have similar development philosophies, organisational cultures and evaluation procedures.<sup>4</sup> Such similarities have made the Nordic countries frequent collaborators on joint evaluations. Another issue in selecting the partners may be limiting the collaboration to a manageable number of partners. Lead-agencies need to take early decisions on balancing demand for wide participation with the need to keep the evaluation process streamlined and efficient.

### **Box 3. Joint evaluation in South Africa**

The International Development Co-operation (IDC) directorate in the National Treasury has established a system of joint evaluations for assessments of the relevance, impact and success of different programmes of support. The aims are to ensure transparency, embed accountability, and deepen the knowledge development process which could contribute towards reorienting and restructuring new programmes of support. The findings of the evaluations are used to inform Country Strategic Frameworks agreed between the IDC and the donors. A *Development Co-operation Report* ([www.finance.gov.za/documents.htm](http://www.finance.gov.za/documents.htm)) was published in 2000. This reviewed the effectiveness and impacts of development co-operation from 1994-99 and gave recommendations for the future. Subsequently, new joint evaluation modalities with bilateral donors were developed.

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Joint evaluations have since been undertaken with Belgium, Ireland, the EU, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the US. One key aspect is that the evaluations evolve within the context of the wider framework of relations with the donor, including: economic relations, trade, investment, and cultural co-operation. This enables the review to address opportunities for improved integration and coherence between the various co-operative relationships. The next step will be to undertake joint evaluations of thematic areas that cut across various donors and also to explore joint evaluations with groups of donors with similar interests, for example the Nordics or the EU and its Member States.

The agreed process for each joint evaluation includes:

- IDC of the National Treasury proposes the joint evaluation. This is normally planned during the design of the donor's co-operation programme and a budget is allocated in advance.
- The ToR, management structure and procurement modalities are agreed by IDC and the donor. There has been strong emphasis on ensuring a South African component in the team.
- The evaluation team develops the methodology during the inception phase and then submits a draft report to all the partners in the joint evaluation.
- IDC facilitates consultations and workshops - both internally for government staff and together with donor representatives - for discussion of the draft findings.
- The evaluation report is finalised and becomes an important resource in developing a new framework of co-operation between South Africa and the respective donor.

There have been challenges and sources of tension in the collaborative processes, including: disagreement on the ToR, the procurement modalities and the evaluation team; attempted donor dominance over the process; critical findings that both partners are hesitant to share upwards; preconceived ideas on why projects have had difficulties; lack of institutional memories; cumbersome management; poor performance indicators; and underestimated time and capacity. However, the overall assessment of the joint evaluation model is very positive. Important assets include:

- Encouraging donor harmonisation and alignment.
- Enhancing national ownership of ODA.
- Reducing the management burden for government institutions.
- Increasing donor understanding of government strategies, priorities and procedures.
- Mutual lesson learning, shared good practice, innovations and improved programming.

## Agreeing the management structure

An effective management structure is critical to the success of all joint evaluations.

When only a few agencies are involved the management structure is usually quite simple. The partners may decide to meet regularly and share in all management decisions, perhaps with one agency acting as the co-ordinator. Alternatively, partners can delegate management responsibility to one agency while the others limit their role to sponsorship and reviewing key outputs.

While every joint evaluation is different, one common structure for larger joint evaluations is a two-tier management system consisting of a broad-membership steering committee and a smaller management group (as outlined in Box 5). Large joint evaluations can also consider using other flexible or decentralised approaches. Possibilities include that different agencies manage concurrent but discrete sub-components of the overall evaluation or that partners work together on the development of a common evaluation framework but then delegate responsibility for implementing the framework to one agency, a smaller group or to different partners in different contexts. It is also possible to use mixed approaches, where some components are undertaken jointly while others are delivered separately. For example the research, interviews and team visits can be undertaken jointly while individual agencies still prepare separate reports. This reduces partner country transaction costs while allowing the donors to tailor the reports to address their different domestic accountability needs.

The more flexible and decentralised approaches have significant advantages in breaking studies with diverse issues into manageable components. Effective delegation or division of responsibilities can also streamline processes and minimise the management challenges of collaborative working. These approaches also create leadership roles for more partners. On the other hand, decentralised approaches limit the capacity of all the partners to input to and influence all components of the evaluation process in a fully participatory manner. The flexible approaches can also suffer from duplications of effort while other issues may “fall between the cracks”. Communications among teams working on different components can also be a challenge that requires specific attention early on in the process as outlined in Box 4.

#### Box 4. Communication tools

Effective communications between the partners is one of the most important aspects of a joint evaluation.

Email is a fast communication tool but it can also generate heavy information traffic. Joint evaluations are especially prone to this risk and partners must exercise discrimination in using the copy function. An alternative way of communicating is to set up a website where key information and reports are posted. If necessary, part of the website can be turned into a password-access area. A good example is the website for the General Budget Support Evaluation housed within the DAC Evaluation Network website. Video- and tele-conferencing are also efficient tools and can reduce the number of face-to-face meetings and associated travel costs. At the same time, experience suggests that some regular face-to-face meetings are necessary to build effective working relationships and minimise communications problems. Full transparency is highly important and the records of all meetings should be circulated.

#### Box 5. The standard management structure

The most commonly utilised management structure for large joint evaluations is a two-tier management system consisting of: (a) a broad membership steering committee; and (b) a smaller management group that runs the day-to-day business of the evaluation. Within this structure there is significant leeway for deciding whether some agencies will participate as silent partners, at what level of detail the steering committee should be involved in decision-making, and how many partners should be on the management group and how much responsibility it should be delegated.

**The steering committee** normally apportions the evaluation's costs; provides broad guidance and direction; takes responsibility for key decisions such as the approval of the ToR and the release of the evaluation products and contributes relevant evaluation reports and policy papers. It has overall responsibility for oversight of the evaluation and is accountable for its robustness. However, the steering committee should avoid micro-managing the process and should delegate sufficient decision-making authority to the management group to keep the process running smoothly. The evaluation team also needs to be ensured a sufficient degree of independence in developing its findings and recommendations. Steering committees should reflect carefully on the optimal balance between oversight and control.

Steering committees for thematic and sector evaluations can usefully include policy and operational staff. These will bring practical experience to the table and help ensure that findings are relevant and useful. The evaluation specialists in the group will be responsible for ensuring the rigour of the methodology and that any critical findings are presented. It can be more challenging to include policy and operational staff in steering committees for evaluations of individual programmes as these staff can be perceived as having too strong a vested interest in the evaluation outcomes.

**The management group** is responsible for the day-to-day running of the evaluation and is best limited to a maximum of five or six members. It is essential that the group is delegated sufficient and clear decision-making authority to keep the evaluation process running

smoothly. As a corollary to this delegated authority, all partners must ensure that the management group has the requisite capacity and skills to take on the responsibilities. The management group is normally made up of evaluation managers with the technical capacity to assess the performance of the consultants. But the members must also have administrative and communication skills and it is important that they are able to work together in an effective and trust-based team. Agencies volunteering for the group also need to be sure they can maintain the required outlay in staff time and travel for the full evaluation period. It is essential to have a strong and effective Chair for the management group. The Chair must have management, administration, leadership, problem-solving and communication skills as well as evaluation and subject-matter expertise.

One of the most important roles of the management group is close, efficient and regular liaison with the evaluation team. A good and open relationship between the two is vital and meetings should take place at key points in the evaluation process.

At the beginning of a large-scale evaluation, steering committees and management groups should consider commissioning external expertise to support their work. This can include help with facilitating and keeping records of meetings; a catalytic role in bringing new and emerging issues to the attention of the group; and providing advice on substantive issues and controversial debates. The expert can also review early drafts of evaluation products and provide feedback direct to the evaluation team. This helps streamline the review process and provides a channel for discreet criticism to the evaluation team. The consultant can also follow the full process and serve as a knowledge bank, perhaps registering lessons learned in a diary that can be the basis for an ex-post assessment of the evaluation.

## **Implementation and reporting**

A number of DAC members have published comprehensive manuals for undertaking evaluations. Rather than duplicating information available elsewhere, this section provides practical guidance that is specific to the context of joint evaluations.<sup>5</sup> The key areas on which joint evaluation partners must reach agreement include:

- Establishing common ground rules for the evaluation.
- The Terms of Reference for the consultants ('evaluation team').
- Selecting the evaluation team: bidding and contracting.
- Budgeting, costing and financing.
- Collecting and analysing data and reporting on the findings.

### ***Establishing common ground rules for the evaluation***

It should not be assumed that each of the partners has the same objectives for the joint evaluation. Experience shows that conflicting - and sometimes hidden - agendas often emerge as the evaluation process

develops. It is vital to hold early discussions which openly acknowledge the motives and incentives of the different partners and anticipate possible problems.

A useful way of building the needed consensus amongst the partners on the purpose, objectives, focus and approach to a joint evaluation is to commission an initial scoping, options or approach paper. This should explore the main issues, challenges and opportunities and provide the basis for an informed discussion between all the partners on the overall approach to the evaluation.

The preliminary discussions and consultations should result in an agreed set of ground rules. These need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each partner and establish clear mechanisms for decision making and cost/burden-sharing. The ground rules should determine the standards governing the evaluation, for example whether the process will adhere to the DAC Principles for Evaluation and the DAC Evaluation Standards. The ground rules should agree if and how one partner can opt out during the evaluation process, should ensure that the views of less powerful partners will be respected and should define the commitment that all partners will have to the findings and recommendations.

### ***The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the consultants***

Another challenge for joint evaluations is to agree manageable ToR that accommodate the particular issues and interests of all the participating agencies. Good ToR are especially important for joint evaluations as they provide a written document which all the participants have agreed. There is no universal model for good ToR but some guiding suggestions are outlined in Box 6.

#### **Box 6. Issues to cover in joint evaluation Terms of Reference**

##### **Evaluation purpose, object and audience**

The intended uses of the evaluation should be made clear. These might include helping to make a funding decision, to guide improvements in operations of implementing agencies or to influence policies and strategies. Clarify whether this is an evaluation of a particular sector, institution, programme or project. The intended audiences are likely to be varied for a joint evaluation and should also be articulated.

##### **Evaluation questions and methodology**

Agree evaluation questions that balance the special interests of the individual partners with the need to ensure overall manageability and a clear focus. The evaluation methodology should either be outlined in the ToR or the consultants should be instructed to develop this during the

inception phase (one or other approach should be chosen rather than a compromise). There is no universal answer on whether to prioritise quantitative or qualitative methods and mixed-methods approaches are often applicable. Selection criteria for choosing countries for studies should be outlined in the ToR.

### **Report requirements**

Provide adequate details on reporting format, content, length and language. Discuss report review procedures and specify arrangements for negotiating conflicts between the various partners over findings and for protecting the evaluation team's independence. The ToR should specify whether or not the consultants are expected to develop recommendations. Country studies may only find in-country support if the ToR clarifies the usefulness of the study at the country level.

### **Evaluation team**

Outline roles and responsibilities and the lines of communication with the agencies managing the evaluation. State any criteria and procedures to be used for selecting team members and identify the optimal team size and needed skills. It is good practice to state that national consultants must be included, to ensure local knowledge and language skills, to integrate a partner country perspective and to promote evaluation capacity development.

### **Administrative support**

Outline the administrative support available to the team. Logistics can be especially complicated in joint evaluations with different agencies having different procedures for travel and contracting services. Some joint evaluations have simplified this by assigning all administrative aspects to one agency or by outsourcing. If the joint evaluation has been divided into separate sub-components, a common approach is to let each agency handle the administration for the component it is overseeing.

### **Budget and schedule**

As far as is possible, estimate the budget and outline the cost-sharing arrangements. Prepare a timetable and establish due dates for reports and other deliverables. Schedules should be realistic, with consideration given to the comprehensiveness of the evaluation topics and related to the size of the team and the resource constraints. Joint evaluations will require more time than single evaluations when the data collection involves interviews with informants from all of the participating agencies.

### **Dissemination**

A dissemination and feedback plan should be developed well in advance of the final report writing.

## ***Selecting the evaluation team***

### ***Bidding processes***

Selecting an evaluation team that is acceptable to all partners is a challenge in joint evaluations. Particular difficulties occur when each partner

wishes the selection process to adhere to its bidding rules. Sufficient time must be allocated for the bidding, selection and negotiation process. As an approximate guide, a minimum of three to four months will be needed from the publication of an invitation to bid to the completion of the negotiations.

Joint evaluations normally avoid direct contracting in favour of competitive bidding. The direct costs for a joint evaluation with country studies can reach over one million euros and procurement rules will often require competitive bidding for an initiative on this scale. For smaller exercises, direct contracting can have advantages such as limiting delays in commissioning; requiring fewer resources to sift the bidding documents; and enabling targeted recruitment of expertise and so reducing the risk of under-performance. Nevertheless, competitive bidding prevails because it is the *modus operandi* best suited for transparency, for value for money and for competition on substance. Competitive bidding processes differ and many joint evaluations have followed the EU, UN or World Bank rules. There are also examples of using a pre-qualification exercise to identify qualified consultants who are then invited to submit a full bid.

Consultants often join together within a consortium when bidding for a large joint evaluation. This can be useful in bringing together team members with varied knowledge and expertise but the selection of members is sometimes based on less legitimate considerations. For example it is often felt, though not substantiated, that the likelihood of winning a contract is greater if the consortium includes consultants from the countries represented on the steering committee. It is worth remembering that the larger the consortium, the more resources it will need to dedicate to organising itself and to maintaining its own internal relationships.

The evaluation team must be competent and objective. Selection criteria should be based on specific technical skills, language competencies and country experience. Choosing a team leader requires special attention as this individual will need strong management, negotiation and communication skills as well as subject matter expertise. Team members should be screened for conflicts-of-interest.

The evaluation team sometimes includes staff from the partner agencies, including from the agency being evaluated, and this can facilitate communications and strengthen ownership of the findings. It can however lead to conflicts-of-interest that undermine the neutrality and credibility of the evaluation. Possible ways of increasing participation while minimising conflicts-of-interest are to accord observer status or to include nationals who are not employees of the agency being evaluated.

Some consultants try to maximise the competitiveness of their bids by minimising planned expenditures and then renegotiating the budget once the

contract is secured. This tactic is as flawed as the opposite approach which inflates cost estimates so that they can be reduced during initial negotiations. Realistic budgeting is a prerequisite for a smooth process and partners should allow time for a rigorous analysis of the bids (as highlighted in Box 8). Consultants should also be encouraged to share any non-financial motivations for bidding such as the potential reputation to be gained or a particular interest and experience in the subject matter. Other important elements of establishing clear understanding with the evaluation team include the clarification of expectations, the agreement of quality control mechanisms and the definition of terms used in the ToR and bidding documents. The continuity of key personnel in the evaluation team is a prerequisite for a smooth process and can be part of the contractual agreements.

### **Box 7. Key questions when reviewing bids from consultant consortia**

- Is the consortium a reasonable size (not more than three organisations as a general rule)?
- Is the composition of the consortium based on complementary experience, expertise and knowledge?
- Is there a tactical notion involved that members are selected because of their country of origin?
- Does the consortium include developing country representation?
- Have members of the consortium already worked together in a comparable setting?
- Have consortium members agreed on the approach to the methodology and the division of labour?
- Are tasks, duties, responsibilities and income divided in a transparent and fair manner?
- Has a system of quality assurance been agreed to guarantee adherence to the stipulated standards?
- Are the administration and the financial management of the evaluation scattered across the consortium or are they concentrated in the hands of one partner, as should be the case?

### *Contracting and legal issues*

As with the bidding stage, particular difficulties for joint evaluations occur when each partner wishes the process to adhere to its contracting and legal rules. One issue that may be debated, for example, is whether to use lump sum agreements or negotiated contracts (with or without a strong element of reimbursable expenses). Another question is whether to include a



cancellation clause to allow for termination in the case of poor performance or an option clause which requires the customer to explicitly request the continuation of the work at certain stages of the process. The simplest way of avoiding disagreements among the joint evaluation partners is to follow the legal systems and established practices of the lead agency.

Difficult legal questions can emerge around pooled financing for joint evaluations. Some countries have legal restrictions on providing financial support to another government, even if the support is earmarked for joint activities. Difficulties can also occur if the co-funding agreement stipulates that the pool country should submit progress reports demonstrating that the funds are being properly used, as it is being obliged to report on the use of funds over which it does not have full control (because decisions are taken by the steering committee). Problems can also occur when one of the co-funding countries wishes to reserve the right to audit the accounts kept by the pool country. The audit of government accounts is normally the exclusive domain of the national board of auditors.

Different kinds of contracts and agreements are required to establish binding relationships between different partners and to overcome legal difficulties as they arise. A strong spirit of co-operation prevails within most joint evaluations and this has helped partners overcome these challenges.

### **Box 8. Tips for financial issues in joint evaluations**

- The costing of a joint evaluation must be realistic and should cover the full evaluation cycle. The budget should include quality assurance, editing, translation, printing, and follow-up workshops, events and seminars. A budget-line for contingencies will help avoid difficult procedures and possible disagreements if the original estimates need to be augmented.
- The budget process should start with a discussion among the partners on how much the evaluation is likely to cost, not with a discussion on how much financing is available. There will be opportunities later to match expenditure and income.
- The preliminary costing should be based on experiences with comparable exercises, plus an additional safety margin. No final commitments should be made on the basis of these preliminary figures. An early fixed commitment by only some of the partners risks that the others will become burdened with all additional unforeseen costs.
- Significant time and effort should be spent on scrutiny and critical assessment of financial bids submitted by consultants.
- The size of the final budget will only be known after the contract is awarded and negotiations with the evaluation team have been concluded. If feasible, this is when all the partners should firmly pledge their contributions. This approach is not always possible because some donors require that full funding for the evaluation is secured before the bidding process can be initiated.

### *Briefing the evaluation team*

Joint evaluation teams often benefit from considerable diversity with different national backgrounds, language proficiencies, disciplines and skills. Diversity can enrich the evaluation's findings but language barriers may be problematic for communications and differences in perspectives can result in conflicts rather than compromises. Holding a planning workshop will help the evaluation team get off to a good start. Evaluation team members as well as representatives of the partner agencies should participate. The purpose should be to build an effective team that shares a common understanding of the evaluation purpose and planning. The workshop can help clarify roles and responsibilities and agree how the team will function and co-ordinate.

### *Collecting and analysing data and reporting on the findings*

The implementation stage is often a period of unforeseen challenges that requires all partners to demonstrate flexibility, mutual understanding and patience. Some lessons learned are discussed below.

### *Document reviews and supplementary interviews*

Document reviews involve a systematic review of available and relevant literature in order to answer specific evaluation questions. An evaluation synthesis study may be produced from a document review and these are useful for summarising the experiences, findings and lessons in a particular area. The limitations of document reviews are that the methodology does not easily lend itself to participatory approaches and that existing documents may not address or answer the evaluation questions in a comprehensive manner. Document review processes suffer when documents are received late and when the literature has not been screened for quality and relevance. Any needed translations should be planned well in advance. Document reviews can be usefully supplemented by other information-gathering techniques such as interviews with agency officials.

### *Fieldwork in developing countries*

Country studies enhance the quality and depth of the evaluation and enable the team to ground-truth the desk findings. Country selection criteria should be agreed to ensure that all relevant aspects are covered. Fieldwork involves gathering information from government officials, agency staff, local experts and other stakeholders. Techniques include direct site observations, focus groups, interviews, workshops and mini-surveys. All too

often, teams do not gather information from the programme beneficiaries and rely on secondary sources. Rapid appraisal methods are relatively low-cost and provide a structured approach to gathering useful information. Teams should systematically document the information gathered.

It is useful to organise a workshop at which all the team members discuss and agree the country study findings, conclusions and recommendations. Any tensions between team members can be managed more effectively if the whole team is brought together and it is useful to agree a clear process for resolving disagreements. Partner country institutions often welcome a participatory workshop at the beginning and end of the fieldwork. These institutions should also be given the opportunity to review a draft of the country report, both to confirm the accuracy of the findings and to input additional views and perspectives.

### *Preparing the synthesis report*

An overall synthesis report is normally prepared for complex joint evaluations that have multiple sub-components or country studies. In some cases, the synthesis report is a collation of the executive summaries of the sub-studies. Another approach is for the synthesis report to go ‘beyond’ the contents of the sub-studies to arrive at overall findings, conclusions and recommendations. This builds synergies and becomes more than the sum of its parts. The likelihood of new findings that emerge in the synthesis work being contested by those who worked on the sub-studies is minimised if the synthesis is prepared by a team of people who participated in the sub-studies. Ownership can be built through a workshop for agreeing the synthesis findings and recommendations.

The sub-component and synthesis reports typically undergo reviews by all of the joint evaluation partners. This helps build ownership as well as improving the quality of the report. It is essential that the independence of the evaluation team is maintained and revisions may be subject to previously agreed restrictions on changing the findings, conclusions or recommendations. The likelihood of disagreement, conflict or controversy is minimised when the conclusions and recommendations are closely tied to the empirical evidence, when procedures for resolving disagreements have been agreed in advance, and when communication between the team and the partner agencies has been good throughout the earlier stages.

## Dissemination and follow-up

Dissemination and follow-up should be given attention from the beginning of the evaluation process. Evaluation managers need to ensure that the production of the evaluation report does not become an end in itself but that the changes in policy or implementation recommended in the report are delivered. These changes may occur during the evaluation process as initial discussions with programme managers and draft findings may lead to changes in advance of the final evaluation report.

### ***Dissemination: translating, publishing, and communicating the results to intended audiences***

The costs of printing and publishing should be considered in the initial budgeting process. Reports on country studies or other sub-components are usually published by the responsible lead agency while one of the lead partners will often offer to publish the final synthesis report.

Distribution traditionally involves mailing copies of the report and a short summary note to the identified audiences. Wider stakeholders groups can also be accessed via publication on the Internet. It is important to ensure that reports are published in translations tailored to the key audiences who will make use of the findings and recommendations.

In addition to published reports, a joint evaluation's results can be effectively communicated at conferences or workshops. It is important to invite operational managers and decision makers from the donor, partner country and NGO institutions towards whom the recommendations are directed. An advantage of such forums is that participants can discuss the evaluation's findings and agree to take appropriate actions. This facilitates collaborative and co-ordinated follow-up.

### ***Follow-up: monitoring whether the recommended actions are being taken***

Every agency has its own approach to following-up the recommendations of a joint evaluation. Some give them the same treatment as their own evaluations and request a management response, submit to their audit and evaluation boards for review or send to parliament for information. Some agencies establish action plans for implementing the recommendations. However, others proceed more cautiously and on a case-by-case basis - preparing the follow-up process *ex-post* and depending on their interest in the conclusions. This approach can lead to the decision to file the report rather than to deliver on the recommendations. To reduce the

likelihood of this occurring, it is good practice for each agency to develop, early in the evaluation process, a communications plan for building internal interest and ownership. In this way, senior management and programme staff can be involved in advance of the publication of results and should be more ready to accept the findings and recommendations.

Compliance with recommendations cannot always be compelled as joint evaluations often raise system-wide issues and recommendations that relate to a diverse range of organisations. Monitoring the implementation of recommendations can be useful and provides a degree of accountability. A well-structured monitoring effort influences agencies to account for their response to the evaluation. An example of good practice is the Joint Evaluation Follow-up Monitoring and Facilitation Network (JEFF) that was established to institutionalise post-evaluation monitoring of the Rwanda evaluation.

## Notes

1. *DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, op. cit.*, p. 4.
2. *Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, op.cit.*, p. 11.
3. Joint evaluations with a global scope face a dilemma in determining which partner countries should join the steering committee in advance of the agreement of a sampling strategy. The sampling strategy will need approval of the steering committee but the steering committee should make its decisions with the developing country participants. This is a “chicken and egg” problem for which there is no patent solution.
4. Each agency should publish information on its website outlining its general policy to joint evaluations and how the agency might be approached to take forward a joint evaluation.
5. See Bibliography for other evaluation guidance and manuals.

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