



MANAGING JOINT EVALUATIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Development co-operation agencies have recognised that they need to work together in a better way, co-ordinating their work to prevent duplication and maximise synergies. Evaluation of development activities is following this general trend and as the form of co-operation is shifting towards budget support, sector-wide approaches, and multi-donor programming, evaluations of development co-operation are also moving towards more joint approaches. The DAC Network on Development Evaluation plays an active role in supporting this shift towards more collaborative work – by offering guidance, providing a platform to coordinate evaluation plans and facilitating joint work on development topics of wide interest.

WHAT IS A JOINT EVALUATION?

An evaluation to which different donor agencies and/or partners participate.

There are various degrees of “jointness” depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting.¹

WHEN SHOULD YOU CONDUCT A JOINT EVALUATION AND WHEN SHOULD YOU NOT?

The decision on whether to conduct an evaluation singly or jointly should be taken on a case-by-case basis and with careful consideration of the value added and benefits and costs involved.

Joint evaluations are particularly appropriate when evaluating co-financed programme support at the budget or sector level, national aid effectiveness goals, the effectiveness of a multilateral or regional development agency or issues that are too sensitive or controversial for one agency alone to tackle. The areas mentioned are experiencing an increasing pressure for evaluation since more funds are being directed to these. Broad thematic evaluations and meta evaluations are also often suited to joint work.

A joint evaluation may be inappropriate if an agency wishes an evaluation to remain narrowly focused or mainly concerned with accountability needs. Likewise, if an organisation is in a great hurry to get an evaluation completed, joint approaches may be less suitable. However, 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.

1. Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, 2000, DAC, OECD p 26.

Note that if joint evaluations are to reduce transaction costs they 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 balance each partners' accountability needs as well as lesson learning objectives. Partners also need to be willing to compromise in order to ensure the success of the collaborative effort.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF JOINT EVALUATIONS?

Joint evaluations can:

- address broader evaluation questions and facilitate a perspective on multi-agency impacts beyond the results of one individual agency.
- enable those involved in the evaluation, agencies, partner countries, consultants, etc., to learn from each other and share evaluation and development knowledge;
- increase ownership of the evaluation process and the findings making follow-up on recommendations more likely;
- limit the number of different evaluation messages and foster consensus on recommendations for future actions.
- reduce the partner country's transaction costs and ideally also the donors' costs.
- facilitate alignment of evaluations with national needs when joint evaluations involve partner country institutions.
- increase the objectivity, transparency and independence of the evaluation and strengthen its legitimacy and impact through effective joint working.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED WHEN DOING JOINT EVALUATIONS?

Processes for co-ordinating joint work can be complex and can increase the cost and duration of a joint evaluation compared to a single donor evaluation. Joint evaluations also often generate extra indirect costs in staff and travel time.

Delays often occur due to the complex processes and this adversely affect timeliness and the possible influence of the evaluation.

It is important to note that areas that are especially suited to joint evaluation, for example budget support and multilateral effectiveness, as mentioned above, are often more difficult to evaluate than traditional single agency projects.

HOW IS A JOINT EVALUATION CONDUCTED?

A joint evaluation is often managed and conducted by one or two lead partners (donors and/or partner countries), who have identified a topic of mutual interest. The most commonly utilised management structure for large joint evaluations is a two-tier management system consisting of a broad steering committee and 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 team conducting the evaluation in the field often consists of a group of consultants that have been selected through a transparent, competitive bidding process.

A joint evaluation can be funded in a variety of ways. However, the simplest way of avoiding disagreements among the joint evaluation partners is often to pool resources and follow the established legal rules and practices of the lead partner.

WHAT DOES THE DAC EVALUATION PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS SAY?

Already in 1991, *The Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance* (OECD/DAC, 1991) stressed that both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process. The Principles also highlight that issues of concern for each partner should be addressed in a joint evaluation.

The Standards for Development Evaluation (OECD/DAC, 2010) states that donor agencies and partner countries should systematically consider the option of a joint evaluation in order to contribute to harmonisation, alignment and an efficient division of labour. The Standards also asserts that a partnership approach increases ownership of development and builds mutual accountability for results.

WHAT DOES THE DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION DO?

Over the past years, the DAC Network on Development Evaluation has had a lead role in promoting collaboration and joint evaluations among DAC members and partners. This work is supporting behavioural change towards more joined up, harmonised and better aligned evaluation efforts. The Network has for example produced a *Guidance on Managing Joint Evaluations* and other normative work that inform harmonised and joint evaluation processes.

The Secretariat of the Network has a facilitating role, identifying opportunities for collaboration and running a platform for sharing evaluation plans. The Secretariat also provides various levels of support to major joint evaluations, by, for instance, serving as reference group members, commenting on draft reports and terms of references, linking with relevant DAC policy communities, and encouraging the application of DAC norms and standards in the evaluation processes.

EXAMPLES OF JOINT EVALUATIONS

- *Joint evaluation of conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in South Sudan* (ongoing 2010). The purpose of the evaluation is to provide insights into the effects of donor supported conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities in Southern Sudan, as well as to provide wider lessons for policies and programming in conflict and post-conflict situations. The evaluation involves several commissioning and funding agencies as well as the Sudanese government.
- *Joint evaluation of anti-corruption efforts* (ongoing 2010). The main purpose of the study is to look at what works under what conditions. The evaluation focuses on lessons learned and looks at anti-corruption efforts in partner countries that are supported by one or several of the involved donor agencies.
- *Joint evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration Phase I (2008) & Phase II (ongoing 2010-2011)*. This evaluation looks at how the Paris Declaration has been implemented at partner country level and at donor headquarter level. The second phase will provide more information about the results, end impacts and effects of increased efforts to improve aid effectiveness. Both donors and partner countries are conducting studies as part of the evaluation.
- *Joint evaluation of the international response to the Indian Ocean*, Published by the Tsunami Evaluation Coalition (2006). The evaluation examines the successes and failures as well as the constraints within which the response occurred.

SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

DAC Quality Standards on Development Evaluation, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, OECD (2010)

Experiences with Conducting Evaluations Jointly with Partner Countries, Danida, Evaluation Study 2009/3

Challenges, opportunities and approaches for increasing joint donor programming of evaluations, SADEV (2008)

Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations, DAC Evaluation Series, OECD (2006)

Joint Evaluations: Recent experiences, lessons learned and options for the future, OECD/DAC, 2005

Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance, OECD/ DAC (1991)

www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork

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