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TRANSPARENCY, INFORMATION FLOW AND FOLLOW-UP OF EVALUATION PROCESSES IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Guidelines for Donor Institutions and Evaluators

Task Force on Evaluating Development Policy of the German Society for Evaluation (DeGEval)

DeGEval

Transparency, Information Flow and

Follow-Up of Evaluation Processes

in Development Cooperation

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Evaluators

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Prepared by

*Working Party on Transparency, Information Flow and Follow-Up
of Impact Analyses*

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Foreword

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This paper looks at a neglected aspect of evaluation in development cooperation (DC): transparency, information flow and learning. If evaluation findings are to bring about improvements in the evaluated projects or in the planning of future projects, they must be made as widely accessible as possible. This applies inside the organisations concerned: findings should not remain within evaluation units but should be made available to the operational and planning units as well. But it also applies beyond the boundaries of those organisations: findings must be published so that everyone can learn from them. The importance of an evaluation lies in the learning processes it triggers. But transparency is also very important during the course of the evaluation process itself and to ensure its success. If important information is not passed on at this stage, the evaluation results will be unsatisfactory. Existing evaluation standards are often not specific on transparency (Joint Committee, Development Assistance Committee – DAC, etc.). The present paper has been drawn up with the intention of complementing existing standards in this respect, not replacing them.

The paper's recommendations are addressed to institutions and individuals concerned with evaluation processes on the donor side, especially in Germany's official DC. Many of the recommendations are transferable to non-governmental organisations, though they need to be adapted to the specific conditions of this type of DC.

When writing this paper, the authors were aware that in all evaluations the partner side has – or should have – a role to play on equal terms. However, the recommendations are deliberately not addressed to them. The paper is intended for German institutions and groups of individuals. It explicitly addresses them as actors and clearly underlines their duty of transparency towards their partners.

The authors were also aware that their recommendations are formulated as ideal requirements. These should not be understood as instructions, but as guidance. In particular, the recommendations concerning cooperation with other actors should be implemented in accordance with the specific situation. Some of the recommendations are of course already part of a well-established routine in some DC organisations.

The paper was prepared by members of the *Working Party on Transparency, Information Flow and Follow-Up of Impact Analyses* within the task force on *Evaluation of Development Policy* of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval). It is the result of a process of intensive discussions extending over seven working sessions from July 1999 to April 2001. The participants were members of staff of governmental and non-governmental DC organisations, development-policy consultants and people from the world of politics and science (see list in Annex). The participants are all indebted to Mr. Sigfrid Schröder-Breitschuh (GTZ) for his painstaking work in compiling the written and oral contributions.

The paper is divided into two parts. The first part summarises the main recommendations. The table that follows sets out the steps necessary to operationalise these recommendations and suggests courses of action for various groups of actors.

Summary of the main recommendations

1.   Evaluation planning

Preparation based on partnership is the basis of an implementation-oriented evaluation process that is transparent for all the parties involved. It not only heightens the interest shown in the findings by all stakeholders, but makes it more likely that the conclusions will be accepted and the recommendations put into practice. To agree objectives and select the objects of the evaluation, structures in the partner country (operational decision-makers, implementing organisations) corresponding to the operational and technical organisational units of DC organisations on the German side should, wherever practical, be involved and criteria defined that are easy to follow. The programmes of the various evaluation units should be made available to the public.

2.   Requirement profile for Evaluators

A code of conduct and a methodological requirement profile for Evaluators should be defined and made available to the public (internet). Consultants taking part in evaluations should be independent and neutral, good team players, and have inter-cultural competency and a high level of professionalism. The decision on which consultants to appoint to the team should be able to be made in a spirit of partnership. Partner structures should be involved in particular in the selection of the local consultants who will play a systematic part in evaluations; a high degree of independence and neutrality is desirable here too. Such participation raises the transparency and acceptance of the evaluation process in the partner country and, where applicable, serves to enhance the skills of local consultants. Compromises between the capacity development objectives and the normative demands made in terms of the competence of local consultants are justified in such cases.

3.   Terms of reference

Terms of reference should be agreed with the partner structures concerned as far as possible. In addition to the purpose and goals of each evaluation, they set out the methodological and technical requirements (quality criteria) and the requirements in terms of lessons learnt.

4.   Methods

Programme-specific and project-specific evaluation methods should be developed and specified as minimum quality standards. They should be adapted as appropriate to each evaluation project and disclosed before the evaluation begins. An evaluation methodology compass should be prepared and made available to the public (internet). Information and further training events should be held, particularly in partner countries, on the general and methodological requirement profiles of the evaluation units of German DC organisations. A regular exchange of experience among con-

sultants in Germany and its partner countries should be organised to provide information about relevant changes in evaluation systems and requirements.

5.   Implementation

The methodological concept and implementation planning should be agreed within the evaluation team and made available to participants. The role and functions of the consultants should also be made known in the partner country at the beginning of the mission. The evaluation recommendations are more likely to be implemented if the operational decision-makers, particularly on the partner side, are involved in implementation and in the development and discussion of recommendations. All the main individuals concerned with and/or affected by the subject of the evaluation should be involved in the presentation of the results and conclusions (e.g. at a workshop) at the end of the evaluation. A summary report should be drafted in the partner country, a copy made available to the partners in advance and, if possible, discussed with them. Conditional wording should be used, and it should be pointed out that subsequent amendments may be made as a result of further analysis. The relevance of recommendations must be made clear to the management of the operational areas.

6.   Formulation and dissemination of results

The impact of an evaluation's findings can be enhanced by adapting the report format to the different target groups. At the very least, major parts of the report should be translated in full or in part into the lingua franca of the country concerned and made available to the partner structures at an early date.

The evaluation methods applied and sources used should be presented in reports, taking due account of personality and privacy rights. Corrections made to draft reports by consultants should be clearly visible to those involved. In the event of disagreement, the impartiality of the consultants must be upheld. The partners must have the opportunity to put forward divergent positions in the report or annex.

A system for recording and supplying evaluation abstracts (abridged versions of summarised descriptions of methodologies, main findings, expected and unexpected impacts, lessons learnt and recommendations) should be set up and made available to interested parties.

7.   Internal learning processes

Measures should be taken to build up and strengthen the institutional memory and to encourage lessons learnt from evaluations to be put into practice. Procedures for institutionalising learning processes within the evaluating institutions should be integrated into the quality and knowledge management systems of the various organisational units. Efficient information and knowledge management systems should be set up in the DC organisations on a user-friendly basis.

Analysis and evaluation discussions involving the operational and steering units and the individuals involved in the evaluated project should be conducted. Debriefing of

consultants should take place after individual evaluations and at the end of an evaluation programme.

Monitoring of the implementation of recommendations should be systematised, particularly in the projects, and incorporated into existing report formats. In the case of new applications or extensions of ongoing projects, operational units should provide evidence that relevant evaluation results have been taken into account.

Cross-project findings should be picked out from individual evaluations and made available in condensed form to operational management. They can be used for accountability purposes and should be taken into consideration in the planning and implementation of projects and in designing DC concepts, strategies and methods. Rules of procedure should be drawn up accordingly.

8.   External learning processes

The transfer of information and know-how in the evaluation field should be intensified. Horizontal learning processes between DC organisations should be promoted and institutionalised. Policy-makers, specialists, scientists and academics as well as the public at large should be integrated into information flows and learning processes. Cross-project findings should be fed into the general dialogue with partners on development and sector policy.

9.   Evaluator feedback and assessment

Opportunities should be used in evaluations for mutual feedback from seconded and local experts. Contracting DC give seconded Evaluators feedback following evaluations. These results should be documented, included in the consultants' assessments and used to plan future evaluations and for training purposes. This process should be made as transparent as possible.

OPERATIONAL LEVELS	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
	INSTITUTIONS	EVALUATORS	ACADEMICS	DEGEVAL
1. **EVALUATION PLANNING**				
1.1 Include all principal parties involved, especially partner structures, in evaluation planning	Evaluation units of DC organisations: sensitise political decision-makers and examine possibilities of involving partner structures (operational decision-makers, implementing organi-sations) in selection process			
1.2 Clarify and set out transparency principles for evaluations, in dialogue with partners	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
1.3 Systematically notify and register eva-luation requirements with institutions con-cerned. Include concerned institutions and organisations in partner countries as well as operational areas and sectoral-techni-cal services of German DC organisations	Evaluation units of DC organisations: design, plan and steer overall process		Devise and document approaches and good practices for transparent evaluation planning	Identify and disseminate good practices for involving partner structures in evaluation planning
1.4 On the basis of registered requirements, set priorities for the evaluation programme and define clear-cut criteria for the selection of sectors, countries, projects and programmes to be studied	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
1.5 Agree in dialogue with partners on selection of	Make use of partner dia-			

OPERATIONAL LEVELS		RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
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themes, evaluation subjects and objectives	logue, government consultations and similar events			
1.6 Make evaluation programmes available to different interest groups. Set up and systematically maintain web site to announce evaluation reports and post profiles of consultants sought	Evaluation units of DC organisations			Inform members about evaluation programmes. Facilitate assess to information for other national and international evaluation societies
2. REQUIREMENT PROFILES FOR EVALUATORS				
2.1 Define codes of conduct and methodological requirement profile for Evaluators and make them available to the public (internet). Take account of socio-cultural acceptance in partner countries and make country-specific adjustments jointly with partners	Evaluation units of DC organisations			Develop general evaluation standards. Investigate whether certification of Evaluators is appropriate
2.2 Ensure high degree of impartiality, neutrality, team work, intercultural skills and professionalism in Evaluators. Develop standards in keeping with specific conditions in partner countries and co-ordinate with partner structures	Evaluation units of DC organisations using findings from decentralised structures			
2.3 Determine specific requirement profile (technical, managerial, socio-cultural skills) of Evaluators needed for each evaluation and publicise with terms of reference	Evaluation units of DC organisations: disseminate information through decentralised structures			
2.4 Involve local Evaluators systematically in eva-	Evaluation units of DC or-		Support the growth of	Establish contacts with na-

OPERATIONAL LEVELS		RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
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evaluations. To promote transfer of knowledge and growth in regional evaluation capacity, compromise is justified between the goals of capacity development and the normative skills requirements of local Evaluators	ganisations with participation of decentralised structures: support enhancement of knowledge and skills		know-how	tional evaluation societies or similar organisations
2.5 Set up and maintain Evaluator files (databases) and regularly share information with partner institutions within applicable data protection regulations	Evaluation units of DC organisations: set up, maintain and use databases	Disclosure of skills and experience (clients, specific details of contracts, methodo-logies applied, leader-ship skills, submission of references and contacts)		Facilitate flow of information between various databases
2.6 Use existing options for partnership-based decision-making to determine Evaluators to be appointed to teams; in particular encourage selection of local Evaluators by partner structures	Evaluation units of DC organisations using knowledge from decentralised structures			
3. TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR)				
3.1 Disclose existing terms of reference (TOR) standards	Evaluation units of DC organisations			Develop standard TOR
3.2 Define purpose of evaluation in co-ope-ration with partner structures concerned and specify in TOR	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
3.3 Determine specific methodological and technical requirements in TOR	Evaluation units of DC organisations			Develop minimum requirements and guidelines for

OPERATIONAL LEVELS		RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
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					TOR
3.4	Include generation of lessons learnt in evaluation objectives and take into account in terms of reference. Clarify significance and understanding of lessons learnt and define reporting standards	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
4.	**METHODS**				
4.1	Refine programme- and project-specific evaluation methodologies and disclose minimum methodology requirements (quality standards) for evaluations (see also 3: Terms of reference)	Evaluation units of DC organisations: set and/or refine standards for evaluation in DC	Document experience with evaluation methodologies and contribute to discussion	Refine evaluation methodologies	Develop general quality standards and methodologies for evaluations
4.2	Develop methodology compass for evaluations and make available (internet) with annotated reading list to interested parties, especially in partner countries	Evaluation units of DC organisations: disseminate methodology compass	Document experience of evaluation methodologies and feed into discussion	Document experience of evaluation methodologies and feed into discussion	Develop and disseminate methodology compass
4.3	Offer Evaluators, particularly in partner countries, information events and further training about the general and methodological requirement profiles of the evaluation units of German DC organisations. Review and make use of opportunities to co-operate with other donors	DC organisations, in particular using decentralised structures		Create and offer opportunities for further training	Identify requirements profiles and further training opportunities
4.4	Organise exchange of experience between Evaluators within Germany and within partner	Evaluation units: establish a regular 'evaluation confer-	Willingness to share experience		Promote Evaluator networking and learning

OPERATIONAL LEVELS		RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
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countries and inform them of relevant changes affecting evaluation systems and require-ments. Encourage exchange among Evalua-tors		ence' attended by DC or-ganisations and Evaluators			groups
4.5	Explain approach and choice of methodology using appropriate forms of presentation during evaluation		Seconded and local Eva-luators in close co-operation		
5.	**IMPLEMENTATION**				
5.1	Ensure Evaluators have access to all docu-ments relevant to project in Germany and partner country	Regional and sectoral struc-tures of DC organisations			
5.2	Clarify responsibility for provision of data and information in the partner country, specifying sources	DC organisations and project and programme staff			
5.3	Ensure communication between seconded and local Evaluators on methodological ap-proach. Secure agreement among evaluation team members on methodo-logical concept and implementation planning and make them available to participants and other parties con-cerned. Spell out reservations and notify changes	DC organisations promote communication process	Head of mission respon-sible for facilitating proc-ess		
5.4	Communicate role and functions of Evaluators well in advance; clarify and discuss at start of mission in partner country	DC organisations	Presentation of objectives of evaluation, terms of reference and planned		

OPERATIONAL LEVELS	RESPONSIBLE PARTIES			
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		methodological approach. Where necessary: facilitation of process of clarification with individuals and structures affected by the evaluation		
5.5 Ensure inclusion of partner in evaluation process		Each member of mission responsible for integrating partners. Head of mission has overall responsibility for adequate integration		
5.6 At end of mission, reflect back findings and conclusions from evaluation (e.g. in a workshop) to all those principally concerned		Organised by head of mission in collaboration and consultation with partner side and project; local Evaluators participate		
5.7 Draft summary report in partner country and hand to partners. Choose conditional wording and draw attention to possible subsequent changes. With regard to recommendations in particular, draw attention to the restricted role and function of Evaluators and to the need for partners' agreement		Mission head in collaboration with team members. In particular, request and integrate contribution of local Evaluators		

6.	**FORMULATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS**			
6.1 Adapt contents, form (including non-written) and style of reporting to the purpose in hand and to the different interests and competencies of the addressees. Develop corresponding standards	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Adapt contents and style to user groups	Play a supporting role in the identification of the needs and development of standards. Investigate the effectiveness of different forms of reporting	Identify needs, develop standards, support dissemination. Present non-written forms of reporting
6.2 Include in the report the evaluation methodologies applied and sources used. Point out methodological limitations of findings		Ensure transparency of methodology		
6.3 In reports observe personality and privacy rights (to protect those concerned) and take into account possible threats to participants and other individuals concerned		Head of mission		
6.4 Draw conclusions and recommendations consistently and present clearly on the basis of well-documented surveys and analyses	Quality control by evaluation units of DC organisations	Ensure transparency of analytical steps and sources used and consistency in deducing recommendations	Determine effectiveness of different ways of obtaining findings	Disseminate findings on effectiveness of different ways of obtaining findings
6.5 Establish and communicate practical relevance of recommendations	Evaluation units of DC organisations: quality control and communication	Tailor recommendations closely to actors' scope for action		
6.6 Explain and document why corrections have to be made to draft report by Evaluators. In the event of differences of opinion, the impartiality	Evaluation units of DC organisations	In the event of disagreement in drafting the final report, mark passages		

of the Evaluators must be upheld		concerned		
6.7 Allow partners to introduce dissenting opinions/positions in the report or annex	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Add partner's objections and dissenting views to the final report		
6.8 Ensure timely completion of report, approval and easy access for interested parties to important sections of it	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Keep to deadlines		
6.9 Translate the entire final report, or at least important parts of it, into the lingua franca and hand to partner structures in good time	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
6.10 Set up a system for registering and supplying evaluation abstracts (summary of methodologies, main findings, expected and unexpected impacts, lessons learnt and recommendations)	Evaluation units of DC organisations		Support development and set-up; draw up standards for evaluation abstracts	Collaborate on development and set-up, offer platform for abstracts; draw up mailing list
6.11 Draw up a pre-structured abstract for all evaluations. Include drafting of abstract in terms of reference	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Complete evaluation abstracts		
6.12 Draw up and circulate brief information on new evaluation reports and findings for sensitisation purposes (general, sectoral, regional or country-specific newsletter / evaluation newsletter). Use readily understandable style for summary versions of evaluation reports. Make complete reports available upon request	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Evaluators should ideally be available to answer queries		Support dissemination

7.	INTERNAL LEARNING PROCESSES				
7.1	Institutionalise learning processes and procedures and integrate into management system (evaluation, controlling, management, information, quality and knowledge management systems)	Evaluation units in collaboration with operational units of DC organisations		Analyse organisational aspects of learning processes and dissemination of lessons learnt; present good practices with reference to international experience	
•	Promote measures to strengthen institutional memory	Evaluation units in collaboration with relevant departments of DC organisations		Analyse and assess organisational aspects of learning processes and international experience and present good practices	Document and disseminate good practices
•	Build efficient, user-friendly information management systems using modern information technologies	Evaluation units of DC organisations, inWent (former DSE)			
7.2	Create incentive structures for co-operation, team-building and communication	Managerial staff improve spirit of co-operation			
7.3	Make clear the relevance of evaluation results to management of operational areas	Evaluation units of DC organisations: organise regular internal information events on results of evaluations and deduce action required			

7.4	Initiate dialogue between Evaluators and individuals and institutions involved in order to promote learning processes and systematically analyse evaluations with the participation of the operational units and individuals responsible for steering the evaluated projects	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
7.5	Set up systematic monitoring of implementation of recommendations, especially in the projects, and integrate into reporting formats	Evaluation and controlling units for checking implementation of cross-project agreements; operational units for adaptation of existing reporting formats and control of implementation; integration of implementation monitoring relating to individual projects within normal project M&E and reporting thereon in existing reporting formats			
7.6	Set up systematic sector-specific debriefing of Evaluators after each evaluation and at the end of an evaluation programme	Evaluation units and sectoral divisions of DC organisations	Design of debriefing		
7.7	Regularly analyse and assess evaluation results thematically and, if appropriate, instrumentally and take into account in the planning of new and ongoing projects, for country and sector strategy papers and in the design of DC	Evaluation units of DC organisations: develop procedural rules, provide analysis and assessment, document and circulate results; sectoral	Keep abreast of developments (ensure state of the art)	Create and maintain capacity for scientific analysis and assessment. Conduct meta-analyses	Carry out lobbying for scientific analysis and assessment

instruments and procedures	and regional structures of DC organisations: integrate results in strategy papers and planning and in the development of procedures and instruments			

8. EXTERNAL LEARNING PROCESSES

8.1 Initiate and maintain cross-institutional and cross-donor learning process	Evaluation units of DC organisations		Promote and support learning processes	Encourage and organise exchange of experience and discussion process
• Make available information on own evaluation system and evaluation activities (organisation, methodologies, evaluation plans, individual reports, abstracts, cross-sectional evaluations, annual reports etc.)				
• Undertake joint efforts (at special events or through regular meetings) to refine existing methodologies and organisational forms or to devise and test new ones				
• Encourage exchange of experience and transfer of know-how, especially from larger to smaller DC organisations, by means of co-ordinated, jointly conducted evaluations				
8.2 Include policy-makers, specialists, academics and the general public in the learning process in order to strengthen the accountability and information function of evaluation work	Evaluation units of DC organisations		Carry out active information and lobbying work for evaluations	Carry out active information and lobbying work for evaluations
8.3 Raise pressure to act through publication and dissemination of evaluation results. Set up publicly accessible databases that collect and	Evaluation units of DC organisations			Provide information on available reports. Conduct conferences and work-

	publish reports and evaluation abstracts				shops
8.4	Conduct meetings/seminars/workshops periodically or at a particular event attended by individuals and institutions not directly involved in the evaluated projects to discuss evaluation findings at a cross-project level	Evaluation units of DC organisations: make relevant information available to Evaluators	Actively help to design exchange of experience and information	Analyse and assess international experience and make results available	Offer technical inputs and promote international exchange of experience
8.5	Feed cross-project findings into general policy or sectoral dialogue between donors and partners	Regional units of DC organisations			Make use of publications and other forms of dialogue among evaluation experts
9.	**EVALUATOR FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT**				
9.1	Systematically provide seconded Evaluators with feedback at the end of evaluations	Evaluation units of DC organisations			
9.2	Systematically provide local Evaluators with feedback and, where appropriate, with information on upgrading opportunities	Evaluation units and decentralised structures of DC organisations support the process	Head of mission at the end of an evaluation	Create training potential in partner countries and provide support if requested	Support networking among local Evaluators
9.3	Create and implement possibilities for mutual feedback among seconded and local Evaluators	Evaluation units and decentralised structures of DC organisations support the process	Head of mission responsible for process design and documentation. Team members take an active part		
9.4	Assess seconded Evaluators in the light of the terms of reference. Document results and use to plan future evaluations and for further training. Design process as transparently and meaningfully as possible	Evaluation units of DC organisations	Invest in own upgrading as necessary	Offer training and upgrading on evaluation	Identify deficiencies in the evaluation system and develop an upgrading programme

9.5	Arrange for and document assessment of local Evaluators by seconded team. Decentralised structures of DC organisations analyse assessments and use them to plan new evaluations and/or to analyse further training needs	Evaluation units of DC organisations establish basic principles of assessment and formalise assessment process (process, forms, etc.)	Head of evaluation mission responsible for process design and documentation. Team members play an active part	Carry out cross-sectional analysis of assessments, identify upgrading requirements, create upgrading capacities and offer upgrading programmes	

ANNEX

List of participants

The present document by the *Working Party on Transparency, Information Flow and Follow-Up of Impact Analyses* of DeGEval's task force on *Evaluating development policy* was produced with the collaboration of the following individuals:

Axel Borrmann, Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWA)

Dr. Horst Breier, German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Division 120

Dr. Petra Feil, Association for Development Aid (AGEH) / Misereor

Ulrich Jahn, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW)

Uwe Kohlmann, Lufthansa (formerly University of the Saarland)

Dr. Simon Koppers, BMZ, Division 120

Klaus Krämer, BMZ, Division 120

Regina Müller, consultant

Klaus Müller-Reimann, terre des hommes

Theo Mutter, German Association of Development Consultants (AGEG) / Evaluator (head of working party)

Dr. Susanne Neubert, German Development Institute (DIE)

Otto Schreiner, consultant

Dr. Karin Stahl, consultant

Reinold E. Thiel, editor of *E+Z*

Brunhilde Vest, BMZ, Division 120

Editor:

Sigfrid Schröder-Breitschuh, GTZ