

LEARNING FROM EVALUATIONS

Guidelines for Donor Agencies and Evaluators

*Task Force on
Evaluating*

**Evaluating Development
Policy of the German
Evaluation Society
(DeGEval)**

Working Party on Learning from
Evaluations

Learning from Evaluations

Guidelines for Donor Agencies and Evaluators

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PREFACE

The Working Party „Learning from Evaluations“ worked from February 2002 to October 2004 at this subject and drew up these guidelines. The group was composed of members of the government, scientific and non-governmental spectrum of German development cooperation as well as of expert consultants in this field. The initiative to set up this Working Party came in 2001 from the precursor Working Party on “Transparency, Information Flow and Follow-Up of Evaluation Processes in Development Cooperation” which proposed looking at how to organize evaluation processes for maximum learning outcomes amongst all stakeholders.¹ Starting point were questions about the compatibility of the learning goal with the legitimating goal of evaluations as well as the general conclusion that evaluation findings are still too little used for real learning inside and outside the stakeholder circle. Once it will be achieved to learn from evaluations for the specific project and sector as well as for development policy in general by implementing the findings, the improvement of impacts and the link between legitimacy and learning from evaluations will become apparent. Of particular importance is practical learning for implementing or disseminating evaluation findings from the project up to the policy level. This is why it is needed to examine how evaluation findings are handled and which obstacles arise in the process.

The aim of the working party was to define conditions for improving the learning outcome of evaluations for all stakeholders.⁴ Stakeholders are defined as German government and non-governmental donor organizations, their partners, other intermediaries, the target groups as well as the development-policy expert consultants. These guidelines and their recommendations are, however, aimed primarily at donor organizations and expert colleagues engaged in evaluation work in Germany. Nonetheless, the best practices cited in the tables are of relevance for all stakeholders. The working party members are aware that the conditions for individual stakeholders, government and non-governmental organizations, for example, or organizations in countries under dictatorships can differ greatly, and the practical application of recommendations can vary in each case.

The method used drew distinctions amongst the standpoints of major stakeholders in the evaluation process: the donor side, the partner side (and the associated target groups) and the evaluators/expert consultants. For the analysis, important criteria of the evaluation process were filtered out (external conditions, internal institutional conditions and conditions in the evaluation process) and examined from different perspectives to ascertain the relevance of hindering and conducive factors and identify examples of good practices for the future. As a stakeholder group, the evaluators have been subsumed in the respective analytical tables of donors and partners, which are appended in the Annex. Preceding the tables, a text outlines the most important conditions that can facilitate or hinder learning from evaluations.

¹ See Task Force on Evaluating Development Policy in DeGEval, Transparency, Information Flow and Follow-Up of Evaluation Processes in Development Cooperation, Guidelines for Donor Institutions and Evaluators, 2001

⁴ On the term evaluation and evaluation standards, see, German Evaluation Society, Standards for Evaluation, Cologne 2002

Although it was not possible to include partner organizations directly in elaborating the guidelines, the working group considered it important to identify factors that hindered and facilitated learning from evaluations in partner organizations as well. This was based on the experience gained by evaluators with partner organizations in the field and by donor organizations in evaluation preparation and follow-up. The members of the working group recommend that donor organizations step up dialogue on this with their partners to be able to give due consideration to their viewpoint.

For development-policy practice, however, the lessons learnt must be available to the organizations involved and that is why their dissemination, general application and use must be placed on a more systematic footing. Learning takes place first of all at the personal level. Converting individual knowledge into institutional knowledge is the challenge for a systemic learning concept. Learning more from evaluations, though, is only one element of institutional learning; it must be supplemented by elements of observation based, emotional and theoretical learning as well as by “learning by doing”. The working party is aware of this deficiency, even though some of these missing aspects have been included in the tabulated analysis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Great strides have been made by Aid Agencies in evaluating projects and programmes but there is **still broad scope for learning**.
- To put evaluation knowledge to far greater use it is essential to develop an **evaluation culture**. For systematic quality improvement in development cooperation, the aim should be to consider not only the success stories, but to adduce also adverse experience. This should also be the aim of the donor, not just the partner. Interventions can be made here at the social and institutional level as well as in the design of evaluation processes.
- At the **social level**, learning more from evaluations requires that identifying **adverse developments and mistakes** generally is understood as an opportunity. Transparency and freedom of opinion without fear of sanctions are elementary prerequisites. In partner countries, development cooperation has only limited possibilities to improve these general parameters for learning from evaluations. Projects and programmes for promoting democracy and improving governance can only support these learning processes through long-term impact chains.
- Donor organizations have more direct means at **institutional level**. **Evaluation systems should be actively and directly promoted in partner countries** by setting up independent evaluation institutions, training local evaluation personnel, disseminating evaluation standards and supporting evaluator networks and associations.
- However, the social and institutional climate for evaluations can also be improved in the **donor countries**. Institutional learning processes call for **clear objectives and visions** in Aid Agencies and a transparent and participatory **style of management** that raises the performance of personnel and makes them more amenable to change through appropriate incentives and working conditions.
- Evaluation must be included as an **integral component of management and the knowledge and information system**. Evaluations must not only figure as an inherent element of the project cycle but they should also be systematically incorporated in the development of general and sectoral strategies and concepts, the planning of new individual projects and the development of institutional learning and change processes.
- The **evaluation system** itself provides many different ways of catering more for learning. **Independent and impartial** evaluation units and evaluators raise the credibility and acceptance of evaluation findings. Increasing **participation** can give a major impetus to learning from evaluations. Involving partners in planning, conducting and assessing evaluations can allay misgivings and fears and facilitate the acceptance and practical implementation of the knowledge gained. This can also help reduce tensions on the donor side between the operating units and those responsible for independent evaluation in the Aid Agencies. **It shifts the emphasis away from evaluation as an indispensable instrument of reporting and more towards its beneficial learning function**.
- In **evaluation programmes** knowledge and learning goals can be planned systematically and corresponding inter-project cross-section studies initiated. Setting clear **objectives** for the respective evaluation project makes for more successful learning and application of the lessons learnt.

- Selecting external and local **evaluators** for their sectoral and intercultural ability to communicate is very important for the learning outcome as these can already transfer know-how, activate learning and initiate processes of change in the course of the evaluation itself. Evaluation knowledge can be imparted better by editing **reports** to suit different readerships.
- **A specific management of implementing the evaluation findings** guards against evaluation recommendations being forgotten, suppressed or obstructed.
- Stepping up **dialogue in and amongst institutions** fosters the dissemination and internalization of evaluation knowledge.

LEARNING FROM EVALUATIONS

1 External conditions

1.1 Social context for evaluations and learning

Evaluations are situated between the poles of reporting and learning. While keen to report successes in detail, the stakeholders involved have more difficulties to disclose mistakes. In their view successes suit better to accounting than failure.

The efforts in the field of development cooperation are aimed by its own mission to show successes. After all, they are supposed to promote development and reduce poverty in the countries of the South. So learning is primarily associated with success stories in development cooperation that set an example for future practice. Learning from mistakes as an effective way to improve their own work is, however, still given too little credence in German Aid Agencies. To thrive, an evaluation culture that facilitates learning from experience, from success and failure and mistakes alike, also needs a conducive social environment.

Evaluations and their findings are frequently still seen by individuals and organizations as a threat. Finding out about mistakes is seen less as an opportunity and more as gathering evidence of misconduct by individuals. Individuals who are courageous enough to disclose their mistakes are given no credit and are not motivated to do so, either. This nourishes personnel fear that disclosures may be detrimental to their careers. In authoritarian countries, individuals and organizations that disclose controversial evaluation findings are also in danger of forfeiting their social and economic position. These tendencies inhibit the transparency to openly disclose also adverse evaluation findings and hamper individual and institutional learning.

Social conditions that facilitate learning from evaluations are those that guarantee freedom of speech and individual rights. A social milieu that disallows freedom of opinion obstructs professional evaluation work. In partner countries, the scope for development cooperation to improve these framework conditions for learning from evaluations is limited. Socio-political projects and programmes to promote democracy and improve good governance only support these learning processes indirectly in the long run. A more direct impact can be achieved by promoting evaluation institutions, training evaluation personnel, disseminating evaluation standards and supporting evaluator networks and associations.

Favourable overall political and social conditions and an interested, critical public are conducive factors but they are not enough to enable learning. It is just as important to establish a learning and evaluation culture in the relevant institutions in all policy fields to enable them to make a critical assessment of findings and experience in their own work.

1.2 Institutional structure and relations

The different approaches of the various donor organizations in development cooperation enlarge the gamut of experience, which makes for a wide-ranging learning process. To make full use of these resources, coordination amongst donor organizations needs to be extended further and intercommunication improved. In Germany, though, divergent intervention priorities and interests still hamper horizontal learning amongst Aid Agencies.

Competition amongst German donor organizations for diminishing public and donated funds is becoming keener. On the one hand, this enhances the efficiency of development work by raising cost-awareness and encouraging efforts to avoid adverse developments. On the other hand, competition also hinders a frank exchange about failures amongst individual donors. Funds will not be appropriated to organizations that engage in an open discussion of failures; instead, they go where each invested euro seems to assure a successful development.

Improved cooperation is essential for efficient inter-institutional learning. Joint evaluations, regular exchange of lessons learnt and joint training are effective ways of doing this and they are already applied by evaluation units in government donor organizations in Germany. Other formal communication channels such as discussion platforms on topics of common interest should be underpinned by informal avenues of cooperation. Personal contacts facilitate frank exchange and arrangements beyond institutional boundaries.

Donor standards are increasingly shaping the implementation of development projects in partner countries. Particularly in official development cooperation, evaluations are initiated but also dominated by donor organizations as regards content and personnel. The multitude and diversity of the evaluation and monitoring methods demanded by the different donors, however, overstretch the capabilities of the partner organizations but they also detract from a sense of ownership in and for these processes.

Of special importance in this context are the efforts of OECD to harmonize donor procedures and to assign more responsibility to partner capacities in the different procedural steps.

The joint development of evaluation principles and the conduct of evaluations in partnership are additional major steps towards more ownership on the part of partner organizations. Full use should be made of all the options for effectively including partner organizations in the preparation, conduct and assessment of evaluations (cf. Chap. 3).

The readiness of partner organizations to engage in learning processes through evaluations depends essentially on whether they have confidence in the Donor Agencies and whether relations are actually based on partnership. In partner-like relations based on joint learning,

evaluations must be placed on the agenda in negotiations for beginning or continuing projects.

When appraising partner organizations, donors should pay attention to the existence of evaluation units and their programmes. They should also stress the consequences of any reticence to draw the necessary conclusions from evaluations and to put these into practice. These must include the option of project termination.

1.3 Developmental objectives

The different development approaches, priorities and objectives of donor organizations open up a broad learning field for development measures, but the multiple and complex developmental goals can also blur the contours of operational guidelines and the relevant learning processes. Objectives do not just vary over time, they also differ by country and donor organization. Differing interests and priority activities pose an additional impediment to concentrating on key priorities and learning objectives.

The German Government has begun to concentrate development-policy measures. Having fewer regional and sectoral priorities helps focus learning efforts on central policy fields.

2 Internal institutional conditions

Aid Agencies in particular have gained many years of practical experience in evaluation. They could take on a pioneering role as learning organizations. The increasing use of approaches based on partnership and participatory evaluation methods could also provide a methodological framework for this. Nevertheless, too little use is made of evaluations and their affirmative and critical conclusions for advancing institutional learning. This holds for learning from successes and mistakes alike. Aid Agencies are still not *systematic* learners.

2.1 Objectives and visions

The clarification of the vision and mission of each donor and partner organization, the definition of realistic objectives and a corresponding strategic planning are the basic preconditions to enable objective oriented evaluations and institutional learning processes. Many organizations in partner countries still lack these prerequisites of purposive institutional learning (from evaluations).

Strategic and operative objectives in German donor organizations and in partner organizations are not or inadequately geared to learning. If learning goals are not defined clearly, evaluations cannot be designed adequately to cater for them. The contents of evaluation programmes and their objectives must be in line with the strategic and operative objectives of the respective organization. With this in view, evaluations in general need to be geared

less to control and more to institutional learning and in-process support.

Good examples of this are the studies on “poverty orientation of the development cooperation” that have been realized as part of the BMZ's central evaluation programme in 2002 and 2003. The individual findings were compiled in a cross-section evaluation on completion of the programme.

2.2 Organizational structure and management

In donor organizations the operating units are “ruling”. Their prime concern is the regular implementation of projects and the due disbursement of funds. Evaluations often appear to them as a time-consuming nuisance. Possible learning gains from evaluations are relegated behind other priorities. On account of the subordinate role attached to evaluations in operational activities inadequate financial and personnel resources are often provided for the related work. The findings and experience gained in evaluations are not adequately prepared as inputs for decision-making.

Many donor organizations in Germany already maintain separate evaluation units, far more than partner organizations. Evaluation units, however, exert too little influence on the implementation of recommendations. Insufficient cooperation between evaluation and operating units prevents evaluations from making the contribution they could to improving quality in development cooperation.

Evaluations are a management tool. Their findings should therefore also be taken into account in management decisions. To date, however, management decisions have not been sufficiently based on the analysis of monitoring or evaluation findings. Administrative and financial pressure as well as excess of work leave too little time for this kind of purposive learning. There is still too little appreciation of the resources for learning that could be harnessed by including personnel and target-group representatives in decision-making and planning, despite the increasing introduction of participatory methods.

Institutional learning processes require transparency, commitment and participation in decision-making. Donor and partner organizations that operate predominantly along authoritarian and bureaucratic lines with personalized styles of management and intransparent decision-making hamper such processes. In such an organizational culture the willingness to change generally is weak. Personnel who are willing to learn are demotivated and this is aggravated by a lack of individual accountability. In partner organizations, the frequent need to respond to crises also affects styles of management and ways of working and impairs purposive learning.

2.3 Learning, knowledge and quality management

Even where donor organizations play a pioneering role for evaluations in the political field, they have still not adopted evaluation as an integral part of their organizational culture. Knowledge is the most important prerequisite for professional and institutional success. Organizations whose prime factor of production is knowledge are more prone to monopolize it.

2.3.1 Knowledge management and evaluation

Generally, evaluations address questions regarding the individual measures and projects. This means that evaluation findings are seldom requested or noted let alone systematically incorporated in in-house operations by organizational units and interest groups other than those directly concerned (boards, management, personnel, target groups). This is why evaluations are geared too little to the knowledge needs of an entire institution.

For the successful application of evaluation findings it is essential to include evaluations not only as a permanent component in the project cycle but also as a systemic element in the processes of general and sectoral strategy and conceptual development. This has been done rather sporadically till now. These processes must be institutionalized for effective knowledge management, which generally fails because of a lack of their institutionalization.

The best way to transfer evaluation findings and recommendations is to institutionalize evaluations as support processes. In KfW, for example, where all projects are evaluated, the application of evaluation findings is facilitated by giving evaluation units a say in preparing new projects.

Evaluation programmes and individual evaluations should be designed and geared to incorporate the knowledge goals of operating and other units, but these must of course be defined in the first place.

To enhance the learning relevance of evaluations, methods have to be developed to facilitate the progress and steering of learning processes. Evaluation processes and the methods and procedures adopted should also be assessed accordingly. The findings gained could then be used to improve the quality of evaluations. Peer review procedures amongst evaluation units and a methodical exchange beyond organizational and national boundaries are a good way of doing this.

To enable cross-section evaluations and analyses for preparing evaluation findings, the necessary resources should be provided for their dissemination. A strategic budget appropriation could be set for evaluations and knowledge management activities.

In the Technical Cooperation the exchange of experience amongst projects as part of sector networks has proved to be a successful way of disseminating knowledge efficiently and putting it to use for future conceptual and implementation work. Regional sectoral groups afford an effective platform for discussing sectoral and regional evaluation findings and conclusions. Cross-section evaluations are particularly suitable for discussions in this context.

Other good practices for disseminating evaluation findings are in-house knowledge repositories or also booklets like the World Bank's OED Precipis.

2.3.2 Quality management and controlling

Quality management plays a central role for learning in organizations. Substantive and structural relations of evaluation units to quality management units are therefore essential for strengthening the learning outcome of evaluations. By including evaluation units in designing and organizing organization-wide learning and change processes, in reappraising and redefining concepts and sectoral strategies and in designing and planning new projects, experience from ongoing and completed projects and programmes can be systematically used and applied. The precondition for this is an open discussion on evaluation findings between evaluation departments and the respective project and programme departments in charge but also on the direction of evaluation work in the organizations concerned.

A special controlling system has proved useful in implementing evaluation recommendations. In BMZ, the management of the project concerned must submit an implementation plan for the recommendations and its execution is generally assessed a year after completion of the evaluations.

2.4 Information and communication system

As yet, evaluations have not been allotted a firm place in existing information systems. Often, there are, for example, no operational channels of communication between evaluation and operating units and not enough use is made of innovative dissemination channels. The primacy of operational concerns, where implementation comes before critical reflection, contributes to marginalizing evaluation findings.

The flood of information inputs forces personnel to select. Evaluation knowledge is not easily accessible, either. Evaluation reports frequently form part of project file and are no longer accessible after completion of the project. Inadequate management of documents hampers research and the search for them is time- and cost-consuming. Reports are often unavailable to partners in their national language.

In partner organizations there is a need to promote open information structures and styles of communication (not just vertical but also horizontal). Decision-making scope must be commensurate with the tasks and training of personnel. Supportive training programmes to meet specific needs are useful and these should already be incorporated in the project budget.

In-project joint workshops with those responsible for the project, expert consultants and donor representatives have proved to be useful platforms for socialization of knowledge and recommendations. Evaluation findings can be transferred particularly effectively to operative activities when those involved are given sufficient time to reflect together on the necessary conclusions.

Particularly effective ways of disseminating evaluation findings at institutional level have proved to be regular reporting and assessment of evaluation experience by evaluation units and summary reports on the impacts of evaluations to management and possibly to the operating units.

Posting abstracts of evaluations on intranet and internet provides broader public access to essential information and increases the transparency of evaluation work. Relational databases and knowledge repositories facilitate access to evaluation findings. The systematic use of key terms for evaluation reports should make these systems easier to use.

2.5 Working conditions and systems of incentives

Learning experience is related to persons. High personnel turnover hinders learning processes and the experience gained in particular by outgoing personnel is lost. Cross-section analyses of evaluation findings are not carried out systematically for lack of human resources. Personnel turnover is particularly high in non-governmental partner organizations. Dependent on project-tied finance from external donors, they employ a large number of personnel on a temporary basis, which is detrimental to institutional learning but also to a sense of institutional identity.

Tangible and intangible performance and learning incentives have not yet been developed enough either in donor or partner organizations. This also applies for sanction mechanisms. Attitudes to learning processes will, however, only change if personnel see them as clearly benefiting their own work.

Activities in and by evaluation units should be promoted and given credit. Appropriate incentives should be provided in human resource development schemes. Evaluation activities should be accounted for in the objectives agreed on with personnel and operating units as well as in assessment procedures. Helpful here can be definite agreements to carry out projects and programmes within the own working unit with a clear set of objectives and to present the findings.

Evaluations and knowledge management should also play a role in human resource development and personnel support. Training, systematic briefing and debriefing on recruitment

or change of staff help to improve the flow of information. Personnel must be allotted sufficient time for these activities. Pro-learning systems of incentives encourage personnel to consider evaluation findings and recommendations.

3 Conditions in the evaluation process

The direct conditions under which an evaluation is carried out are of key importance for its learning potential. What matters is that all steps in the evaluation process - from planning to follow-up - are designed for learning. The greater the participation in an evaluation process the greater the prospective learning outcome for all stakeholders in a project/programme.⁵

Evaluations play a special role in relations between donors and project partners. They are often a neuralgic point where conflicts arise or threaten to arise between donors and partner organizations. The cause is the asymmetrical relationship between donor organizations and partners, where the partner organization is generally in the more dependent position. In all efforts towards a relationship based on partnership this structural imbalance of power should be kept in mind when organizing learning processes based on evaluations.

This is why evaluations are frequently only seen by the partner organizations as a control instrument. They fear for continued assistance to the project if too many weak points are detected. Counterposed to this attitude is some donors' continued understanding of evaluations as an instrument of reporting. Frequently the partner dialogue doesn't emphasize enough that evaluations also act as a key instrument for – joint - learning to improve quality. Nevertheless, every evaluation also performs a control and reporting function. This should not be ignored due to a mistaken overemphasis on participation and partnership.

Reservations facing evaluations are closely bound up with the organizational culture prevailing in the donor and partner organizations that determines the response to the mistakes and weaknesses detected. Though more or less pronounced, the general fear and shame of mistakes being discovered and the attendant sanctions is a serious impediment to the candid, secure climate essential for learning. It is therefore essential to make plain that a frank discussion of flaws and weaknesses must be seen as an opportunity for constructive project development and not as the apportionment of individual blame.

3.1 Evaluation climate

Creating an affirmative evaluation climate is therefore essential for fostering a willingness to learn. Indispensable for this is a clear evaluation approach that stresses the importance of learning for those involved within the organizations at different levels.⁶ In a relationship of

⁵ This does not, however, rule out certain partial evaluations, project management evaluations that are only relevant for certain stakeholders for example, being conducted with less participation to include fewer stakeholders. On this, see also the DeGEval utility standards U1 und U8. German Evaluation Society, Standards for Evaluation, Cologne 2002.

⁶ Cf. the DeGEval utility standard U2. German Evaluation Society, Standards for Evaluation, Cologne 2002

partnership based on mutual respect the issue of evaluation should be included early on in project dialogue. Beyond bilateral dialogue, training partners on evaluation issues can have a beneficial effect in many respects, for example by raising competency to carry out self-evaluations or take part in external evaluations.

3.2 Preparation

Good planning and preparation of an evaluation is crucial for a smooth subsequent execution. Even though evaluations are usually initiated by donors, it is necessary to include the partner organizations in preparations for the evaluation from the outset. This entails clarifying joint and possible divergent knowledge and use interests, agreeing on the Terms of Reference (ToR), selecting the evaluators and eliciting their acceptance by the stakeholders, e.g. exchanging curricula, early scheduling agreements, organizational preparations and division of labour.

The so-called inception report towards the end of the preparatory phase has proved to be particularly useful for improving transparency. This documents the preparations by the stakeholders and organizational and methodological aspects of implementation.

When recruiting external evaluators, bilateral teams accepted by both sides have proved effective. Both sides propose one or several suitable persons with complementary sectoral and methodological competencies.

Care should, however, be taken not to overload the ToR with too many questions. The aim should be a realistic frame of reference that is feasible given the time, finances and personnel available.

To further inter-project learning by means of cross-section evaluations, for example, it makes sense to include certain standard guiding questions in all evaluations of an organization or if necessary amongst organizations. Examples of this are impact-relevant strategies for empowerment, poverty reduction and the preparation of project impacts for the specific target group, but also the evaluation methodology for gaining knowledge and learning itself and the lessons learnt.

3.3 Conduct of evaluation

Participatory evaluation always presupposes the acceptance of the partner and target groups as rightful stakeholders in the evaluation process and its findings, instead of confining their role to providing information to the external evaluators. Preparations by local stakeholders can enhance the ownership, quality and utility of an evaluation. These can range from compiling documents to collecting simple information to systematic data acquisition and even a partial or complete self-evaluation. Methods and procedures must be tailored in a flexible way to the local conditions and the capabilities of partners and external evaluators.

This kind of approach underpins the sense of ownership in evaluation and is the best way to ensure the practical kind of learning that results in the implementation of evaluation recommendations and the sustainable improvement of project quality.

At the beginning of the evaluation process in the field at the latest, the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders need to be defined in binding terms. This includes possible responsibilities of members of the target groups and/or personnel of the partner organization as members of the evaluation team.

It is imperative to have a broad participation of different stakeholders, particularly the partner organization and the target groups, so as to make the most of their willingness to learn. Participation may not, however, be misconstrued to mean that the evaluation findings only reflect the opinion of the partners and/or target groups. Different stakeholders naturally hold different views of a programme and their interests differ. The external evaluators in participatory evaluations take a predominantly moderating role but the trained eye of an outsider is an explicit requirement. The different perspectives and yardsticks must therefore be expressly accounted for in the evaluation findings. It is worthwhile imparting the outside view to the partner organization and target groups during the evaluation process itself and work towards an understanding. This is not always possible under certain circumstances, an extremely short evaluation period, important information is provided only after the field phase, for example, and with weak partner organizations. The job of intensive feedback in this case must then be undertaken after the evaluation by the donor organization.

A participatory and pro-learning climate cannot prevail in extremely authoritarian partner organizations or where a partner or donor has something to hide. In such cases it is usually impossible for evaluators to work unhindered. To anticipate such situations, clear ToRs need to be drafted and an obligation made to provide free access to project documents of donor and partner organizations, to target groups and to other stakeholders. In such critical cases, the independence of evaluation departments is particularly important for the objective assessment of evaluations and the protection of the evaluators.

A proven method is to have partner organizations, target groups and if necessary other relevant actors work out all or part of the findings and recommendations together with the external evaluators in the field. In the majority of cases this process is conducted and moderated by the external experts but this need not necessarily be the case: Role changes are quite possible and desirable.

3.4 Evaluators

Evaluators play an important role in triggering learning processes amongst all parties involved in an evaluation. Their qualification is therefore decisive for the success of an evaluation geared to learning. Various aspects play a role. Beyond the obvious need for sectoral

competency, the methodological procedure is key to animating the learning process. This is why methodological competency and the ability to communicate in intercultural settings are further important criteria when selecting evaluators. The ability to moderate and mediate is taking on an increasing role. A team made up of international and local experts with complementary competencies can facilitate all the stakeholders' willingness to learn. Methodological competency in gender issues is also a must to ensure that women and men are given the same chance to participate.

Moreover, the external evaluators must be independent and impartial, central criteria in the DAC guidelines for evaluations. This applies for evaluators from North and South alike, despite the different context. The independence requirement is, however, often only about relative independence, as external evaluators depend on this business segment for their livelihood. The more diverse the commissioning organizations, the more independent the work of evaluators can be. The following exclusion criteria are essential to ensure the greatest possible independence of external evaluators:

- ✓ Prior employment of external evaluators in the project under evaluation, that is, they should not evaluate their own inputs and performance or those of close colleagues.
- ✓ Involvement of personnel from consulting firms in evaluations that have rendered previously services to the project.
- ✓ Material interests in the project under evaluation or in the project environment.
- ✓ Family or close friendly relations with project management or personnel.
- ✓ If possible, external evaluators should not be recruited from consulting firms that are heavily financially dependent on the commissioning party.

On top of this, independence implies personal qualities, such as the ability to form an opinion of one's own and to stand by it, to communicate it in a suitable way and a personal commitment to professionalism. The independence of expert consultants can be underpinned by drafting and gaining general acceptance of an ethical code of conduct.⁷

3.5 Reporting

Even though a large part of the learning process, particularly for partner organizations, target groups and external evaluators, takes place in the field during evaluation, for the stakeholders not directly involved the evaluation report is also the main medium of information and the most important reference for all the communication processes in the follow-up phase. The quality of reporting is particularly important for the donor organizations to be able to draw project specific and general conclusions. As a matter of course, the wording should be understandable and respectful, the evaluation findings comprehensible and the recommendations realistic. Relevant evaluation standards must be observed, such as those of DeGEval. The reports should be edited to suit the different readerships. Debriefings in the

⁷ Cf. German Evaluation Society, Standards for Evaluation, Cologne 2002

Aid Agencies, which should involve as many organizational units as possible, have proved to be of practical value.

3.6 Implementation of evaluation findings

In itself, conducting evaluations in a participatory and learning oriented way in a cooperative climate between donors and partner organizations has a beneficial effect on the implementation of evaluation recommendations.⁸ Beyond the actual evaluation, however, there are a number of obstacles to implementation. These include a lack of flexibility in the modification and practical implementation of project agreements and objectives, a lack of reflection on the part of donors and partner organizations, unsustained dialogue and the absence of agreements on the implementation of recommendations.

The implementation of evaluation recommendations can, however, also fail for lack of adequate resources in partner organizations. A pro-active attitude on the part of partner organizations should therefore be given due credit by the donors to support the sustainable impacts of evaluation on improving project implementation. This also entails specific support in implementing evaluation recommendations, even when an aid component (e.g. necessary training) has not yet been budgeted for in current project or programme finance.

Evaluation findings and recommendations that do not suit donors and/or partners are also frequently swept under the carpet instead of being studied in a constructive way. The most frequent reasons for this are unwillingness to shoulder responsibility for mistakes (which are then continued and/or ignored), keeping face, insufficient capacities and capabilities for development or simply the desire for safeguarding one's own position of power. These constraints point beyond the evaluation process itself to the organizational culture and can therefore only be remedied in a broader context.

So managing the implementation of evaluation recommendations is crucial to whether learning during the actual evaluation is also transformed into action to improve the project. Elements of purposive follow-up processes are starting up a dialogue between the donor and partner organization to clarify the acceptance of the evaluation findings and reaching binding agreements for implementing recommendations with clear timelines and reporting. Annual control of the implementation of evaluation recommendations guards against their being forgotten, suppressed or obstructed. This does not just hold for individual project evaluations but also for meta and cross-section evaluations, which still afford broad unexplored scope for institutional learning.

⁸ See again the DeGEval utility standards U1 and U8. German Evaluation Society, Standards for Evaluation, Cologne 2002

It has proved useful to conduct an external monitoring mission 1-2 years after the end of an evaluation for the purpose of analyzing which evaluation recommendations have been implemented by the partner and donor organization. This analysis can also ascertain the organizational learning steps taken in implementing the recommendations or pinpoint the deficits and obstacles in organizational learning where recommendations have not been implemented (Protestant Development Services)

A general deficit in evaluations is that target groups are usually incorporated in the evaluation process only during the field study. Participation in evaluations, however, also means that target groups take active part in and bear responsibility for implementing the recommendations. It therefore makes sense to prepare evaluation findings and recommendations specifically for the target group and incorporate these in planning and monitoring at the lowest level so as to set up a clear feedback loop.

4 Outlook

As evaluations are a particularly suitable instrument for compiling and assessing project experience and results over a longer period, they should be used far more than at present for inter-project and interorganizational learning. The resources of the new media should be harnessed more systematically to make full use of the evaluation potential. Evaluations should also be taken seriously as a management tool and included more in relevant decision-making.

The more complex the developments to be evaluated, the larger the number of stakeholders and the more numerous the different determinants of project and programme results and impacts, the more difficult it is to attribute clear responsibility for success and weaknesses and to identify the addressees for necessary learning steps.

Donor organizations and evaluators must confront these emerging globalized processes and programmes in development cooperation (multilateral donor coordination, transnational modes of finance, PRSP programmes, SWAP, etc.) and the resulting (methodological) challenges. To be able to meet these complex processes and the variety of the actors and determinants, particularly in multi-donor programmes, it will be increasingly important in future to evaluate not only individual projects and programmes, but also the methods and instruments applied in development cooperation in coordination with Aid Agencies and evaluation research from other countries and to adapt and upgrade the sets of methods.

CONSTRAINTS ON AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING FROM EVALUATIONS *IN DONOR ORGANIZATIONS*

Learning conditions	I Constraints	II Enabling factors	III Recommendations and <i>good practices</i>
1 External conditions			
1.1 Societal setting for evaluations and learning (political, economic, social, cultural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance between increasing pressure to legitimize development cooperation to the public or parliament and the acceptance of errors as a valuable source of learning • Predominant perception of evaluation as a function of accountability to public and parliamentary bodies • No credit given for the proactive disclosure of mistakes; mistakes seen as a sign of failure and sanctioned accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legitimacy provided by demonstrating impact • Interested and critical public • Distinct culture of evaluation in all political fields (e.g. public budgets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The provision and publication of findings of evaluations, including a presentation of the evaluation process and the lessons learnt • <i>Cross-section evaluations by generally recognized institutions (e.g. Federal Court of Audit, HWWA)</i> • <i>Regular reporting on evaluation activity in the Parliamentary Committee for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)</i>
1.2 Institutional structure and relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divergent interests and intervention priorities of Aid Agencies, hampering horizontal learning • Insufficient communication amongst Aid Agencies • Increased competition amongst implementing institutions due to declining funds (greater aversion to contact for horizontal learning) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing approaches of stakeholders in development cooperation generate diverse experience, which can be exchanged to make learning more fruitful • Frank and adequate discussion by all stakeholders (clear arrangements, personal contacts) • Institutional competition raises interest in learning from evaluations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific measures to promote horizontal learning from evaluations, e.g. institutional-ization of exchange platforms and other communication channels amongst evaluation services; conducting joint evaluations with German and international Aid Agencies • Development and strengthening of effective mechanisms of institutional cooperation, e.g. workshops for Aid Agencies with learning goals

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Annual meeting of the evaluation units of different Aid Agencies (initiator BMZ)</i> • <i>Joint training of aid agencies (BMZ/GTZ/KfW)</i> • <i>Regular exchange in the development policy task force at the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval)</i>
1.3 Developmental objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too many different, complex, ill-defined, cursory objectives: lack of priorities lead to lack of clear guidance for action and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional interest in concentrating on certain sectors, priorities and countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Setting regional, sectoral and thematic priorities (BMZ)</i>
2 Internal institutional conditions			
2.1 Objectives and vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives of management and operating areas insufficiently geared towards learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specification of clear visions by management for evaluation programmes; prime contents (besides control tasks) institutional learning and process monitoring • Alignment of learning goals of the evaluation departments with the operating areas or relevant staff units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying links between objectives and the related evaluation work • Using objectives agreements on evaluations as personnel management and management instrument (→ 2.5) • <i>Thematic concentration (e.g. poverty reduction) with corresponding cross-section evaluations (BMZ, World Bank)</i>
2.2 Organizational structure: Management style Distribution of power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little interest of the management in learning • Sanctioning mistakes instead of learning from them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readiness of management to create the necessary conditions for the desired quality standard of monitoring and evaluation work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting systematically prepared evaluation programmes with the support of management • Offensive discussion by management and personnel on design

<p>Working climate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient cooperation amongst evaluation units, operating areas and other stakeholders (priority of operational activities) • Insufficient influence of evaluation units on the implementation of evaluation findings • Fear of job loss when failure rate too high 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disclosure and dealing with problems receive credit in the institution (learning culture) • Institutional appreciation and promotion of work in and cooperation with evaluation units 	<p>and findings of evaluations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including evaluation units in designing company-wide learning and change processes, defining concepts and sectoral strategies and in designing and planning new projects (→ 2.3) • Systematic monitoring of the implementation of evaluation recommendations (→ 3.6)
<p>2.3 Learning, knowledge and quality management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of an institutionalized knowledge management • Deficient identification and development of knowledge aims (know-how) as well as related documentation • Subject of evaluations inadequately aligned with knowledge needs: What is to be learnt from what kinds and types of evaluation? • Too often, evaluations stockpile knowledge • No systematic account taken of evaluation findings in ongoing internal operations and procedures • Insufficient funds for analyzing, preparing and disseminating evaluation find- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of platforms or networks of similar projects for joint preparation of approaches • Ensuring that design, assessment and presentation of evaluation findings are relevant to the learning outcome (→ 2.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic identification and feed-in of knowledge needs (information deficits) and knowledge aims in the different organizational units and relevant platforms • Explicit account taken of knowledge aims and needs of operating and other units in designing evaluation programmes and task profiles • Reflection on aspects of evaluation methodology conducive to learning (→ 3.2) • Development of new evaluation methods geared to steering learning processes • Assessment of evaluation processes (instruments, procedures used) and use made of experience, improvement of evaluation quality on the basis of self-critical

	<p>ings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient personnel for the systematic evaluation and cross-section analysis of evaluation findings • Learning experience too closely tied to individuals • Staff turnover hinders institutional accumulation of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of personnel and time for knowledge management activities • Good teamwork in operating and evaluation units (promoted by management) • Incentives structures conducive to learning (→ 2.5) 	<p>analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting a strategic budget appropriation for knowledge management and evaluation activities • Inclusion of learning goals in human resource development schemes and personnel upgrading in line with these • Systematic debriefing when personnel leave or are replaced • Peer review processes in the evaluation units • Involving evaluation units in methodological, sectoral and thematic working groups • <i>Evaluation units systematically incorporated in the planning of new projects and related decision-making (KfW)</i> • <i>Cross-section analysis of evaluations to synthesise evaluation findings and to feed them into decision making (e.g. DWHH, Misereor, BfdW, BMZ, GTZ, KfW)</i> • <i>International dissemination of evaluation findings (OED Précis of the World Bank)</i>
<p>2.4 Information and communication system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient development of information and communication culture • Poor documentation management or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open information facilities and frank forms of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and extension of pro-learning information and communications structures with

	<p>presentation of evaluation findings hampering their use</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate organization of access to (evaluation) knowledge and resulting high (research) costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of regional or sectoral expert networks; discussion of cross-section analyses in connection with these (→ 2.3) 	<p>far-reaching integration of the evaluation systems for use of available evaluation knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More international exchange on pro-learning evaluation methods (→ 3.2) • Use of different forums and media to disseminate evaluation findings: short presentations, discussions, etc. • Use of databases with easy-to-learn queries on evaluation reports and questions (internal, external) • <i>Abstracts of evaluations on intranet and internet (BMZ, KfW)</i> • <i>Regular assessment of evaluation experience and impacts; related reporting to management and personnel (BMZ)</i> • <i>Exchange amongst evaluation units of aid agencies to foster a corporate spirit (BMZ, GTZ, KfW)</i>
<p>2.5 Working conditions and systems of incentives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative pressure leaving conceptual planners and project managers with too little time for learning (from evaluations); costs of learning felt to be excessive • Flood of information with inappropriate processing (→ 2.4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enough time and funding for learning and knowledge management (→ 2.3) • Learning process felt to be useful for own work • Work and human resource development planning take 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of commendations and incentives; account taken of criteria relevant to learning in agreed objectives and assessment • Evaluation activities as part of agreed objectives (→ 2.1)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient tangible and intangible incentives for learning 	account of learning and upgrading needs	
3 Conditions in the evaluation process			
3.1 Evaluation climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient sensibility among executives and project managers of the need for and benefit of evaluations to improve quality and knowledge management • Insufficient sense of ownership for the evaluation process amongst all stakeholders (e.g. operating areas): too much responsibility for overall management assigned to the divisions or persons directly in charge of carrying it out • Mistakes often seen as an indication of failure instead of a source of learning (→ 2.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence of a learning culture (→ 2.2) • Trust (including in the competency, loyalty and cooperativeness of personnel and other stakeholders) • Mutual respect and avoidance of prejudice • Regular systematic conduct of evaluations • Open-mindedness of management towards failure (→ 2.2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campaigning for evaluation; creation of an affirmative evaluation climate (→ 3.3) • Systematic preparation and use of lessons learnt by evaluation unit • Pinpointing learning gains from evaluations
3.2 Preparation and terms of reference as well as planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation badly positioned in the project cycle ; evaluation schedules subject to administrative exigencies and not to learning needs • Insufficient consultation and agreement on the evaluation purpose amongst stakeholders and those affected (short runup, little interest on partner side...), possible poor acceptance or unwillingness to learn as a result • Self-evaluation and external evaluation not complementary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation needs clearly defined on both sides • Relevance of topic (the greater the need to solve the problem, the better the chances for learning) • Thorough and early information on objectives and schedule for the evaluations of those involved in the field • Adequate and binding definition of roles, tasks and re- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing for evaluations in project agreements between partners from outset • Detailed discussion of knowledge and use interests with partner organizations and operating departments • Agreement of joint ToR • Active solicitation of partner proposals for evaluations • Enhancing learning motivation through participatory evaluation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in findings geared more towards accountability rather than towards knowledge goals • Thematic overloading of the evaluation (too many aspects without specifying priorities) 	responsibilities of stakeholders in the evaluation process	<p>planning (early information and co-determination of partner organization, partner's own evaluators)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formative evaluations for promoting learning processes (e.g. mid-term review) • Inception report with a systematic presentation of the method applied incl. Indications for learning objectives from the evaluation • <i>2-year evaluation programme with an annual update (BMZ)</i>
3.3 Conduct of evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders not or insufficiently involved in conducting evaluations to the detriment of acceptance and willingness to learn • Overconcern with control and accountability inimical to creating a fruitful evaluation and learning climate (→ 1.1) • Evaluation process geared to mission of evaluators in the field; little use made of the scope for preparatory and follow-up activities in the field • Evaluation methods applied generally unsuitable for initiating learning processes • Time allowed for field mission frequently too short 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity in the evaluation process as regards major elements such as objectives, stakeholders, allocation of tasks and avoidance of intransparent changes; also sufficient flexibility in evaluation process for adjustments • Detailed discussion of recommendations in the field to strengthen acceptance and relevance • Use of pro-learning methods to trigger learning processes and convey a sense of evaluation as a learning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value judgement survey methods for questions relevant to learning • More active preparatory and follow-up measures (including self-evaluation), also developing questions relevant to learning in the field, stepping up interim dissemination and discussion of findings

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient time for evaluators to apply better methods and participatory procedures 	
3.4 Evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning prerequisites not sufficiently accounted for in the composition of the expert team (sociocultural, gender, communicative and methodological competency), impairing acceptance of findings or recommendations • Evaluation methods of evaluators not sufficiently conducive to learning • Critical evaluators blocked by the commissioning party, where its own interests are involved • Inadequate impartiality and independence of evaluators detrimental to their credibility and hence acceptance of their recommendations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic attitude and approach of evaluation team to value judgements • Participatory procedure of evaluation team • Timely specification of socio-cultural, communicative requirements for learning before appointing the evaluation team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the learning relevance of evaluation findings and reports as an appraisal factor for evaluators • Inviting the partner organization to contribute personnel to the evaluations (→ 3.3) • Assigning teams able to deal with sociocultural questions; taking account of the specific communication and learning competencies of team members • Predefining the role of the local evaluators and their contribution to a learning process • Drawing up criteria for the selection and assessment of independent evaluators in Aid Agencies • Strengthening exchange of experience amongst evaluators • Use of training possibilities in learning and evaluation by evaluators and evaluation units • <i>Assigning local evaluators as team members with equal rights (e.g. EED, BfdW, hbs, GTZ, Misereor)</i>

3.5 Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficiently comprehensible and insufficiently sound inference of findings • Insufficient operational relevance of evaluation recommendations impair their usefulness (e.g. for adjusting sectoral policies and country strategies) • Insufficient feedback of evaluation findings to major stakeholders: lack of preparation for specific target groups • Unprofessional use of new media and existing information channels to disseminate findings • Lack of publicity hampers learning from evaluations in partner countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent inference of recommendations • Beginning feedback in the course of the evaluation process in the field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation, presentation and discussion of evaluation findings and recommendations in the field for the target group with corresponding feedback by the partner organization and other stakeholders (final workshop) • Conveying the relevance of recommendations and scheduling their implementation in the field (→ 3.6) • Debriefing of evaluators • Reporting to management (back to office report) • Assessment meetings • Translating main findings of reports in the lingua franca of the country • <i>Summary evaluations on internet in German and English (BMZ, KfW (→ 2.4)</i>
3.6 Implementation of evaluation findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unclear responsibility for implementing findings (commissioning party, partner organization, development institution) • Lack of processes for reflection, recognition and transferral of evaluation findings also beyond the individual project • Main focus on individual project evaluations; scope available for cross-section evaluations to generate knowledge un- 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documenting binding acceptance of evaluation findings • Implementation of accepted recommendations and related monitoring by operating divisions • Sectoral and cross-section evaluations (→ 2.3) • <i>Regular monitoring of the imple-</i>

	sufficiently used		<i>mentation of recommendations (BMZ, GTZ, KfW)</i>
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CONSTRAINTS ON AND APPROACHES TO LEARNING FROM EVALUATIONS IN PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

LEARNING CONDITIONS	I. Constraints	II. Enabling factors	III. Recommendations & good practices
1 External conditions			
1.1 Societal setting for evaluations and learning (political, economic, social, cultural)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparency impeded by social and cultural values • Little pressure to provide legitimation • Authoritarian/Dictatorial regimes can endanger partner organizations in opposition, evaluation findings can be used against them (e.g. human rights organizations, use as an information source) • No culture of criticism and analysis of mistakes, no independent evaluation capacity in development cooperation • No link between performance and remuneration • Developmental quality subordinate to economic pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure to legitimize in own societal setting and in relation to donor • Democratic socio-political setting as a framework condition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting associations of partner organizations and preparing a code of conduct and/or standards for evaluations • <i>Assistance to local evaluation networks and assignment of local evaluators (DWHH)</i>
1.2 Institutional setup and relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient ownership by partner organization and target groups (planning, implementation and evaluation) • Politically motivated continuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship of trust through close and genuine partnership and through adequate time for cooperation and communication (culture of cooperation) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Donor makes consistent use of opportunities for participation • Evaluations as a component of negotiations on new and continued projects

	<p>of cooperation, accommodating expert report, sanction-free evaluations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner organizations instrumentalized politically and lacking sufficient autonomy for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making use of scope for learning by crediting learning loops • Detailed familiarity with and account taken of internal, official and unofficial partner capacities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pointing out longer-term consequences of unwillingness to learn from evaluations • Joint evaluations • Pointing out possible gains of good cooperation (→ 3.2)
2 Internal institutional conditions			
2.1 Objectives and visions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear visions for purposeful learning and action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic planning with clear and realistic objectives, vision, mission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Participatory planning (NGOs, government Aid Agencies)</i>
2.2 Organizational structure: Management style Allocation of power Working climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authoritarian and bureaucratic setup & demotivation through lack of internal transparency and personalized style of management • Insufficient participation/inclusion of personnel and target groups in project planning & implementation • Insufficient account taken of M&E findings in planning and decision-making • Permanent crises & ad hoc responses • Poor individual and institutional reporting • Insufficient readiness to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal transparency and participatory mechanisms • Responsibility of personnel and work units for results 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiating and supporting reorganization processes (if necessary with external support) (→ 3.3) • <i>Requiring close collaboration of partner organization in conducting evaluations (most NGOs)</i> • Promoting separate evaluation capacities in partner organizations
2.3 Learning, knowledge and quality management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of institutionalized knowledge management and schemes for self evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With larger organizations: organized knowledge and quality management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific promotion of upgrading in evaluation methods, M&E and organizational development

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of demand for evaluation findings on the part of major addressees: personnel of partner organization, steering bodies, target groups, etc. • Insufficient internal PME system and no interlinkage of individual elements (→ 2.4) • Preparation of evaluation findings unsuitable for target groups • Insufficient systematization of previous findings and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented and systematized PME system, easy accessibility • Systematic evaluation and implementation of lessons learnt • Documentation of findings and learning experience from self-evaluations • Interdepartmental work 	<p>(OD)processes as well as exchange of M&E approaches amongst executing institutions or donors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration (?) of personnel in evaluations; e.g. adding short method workshops • <i>Annual interinstitutional learning week for exchanging lessons learnt (→ 3.2; initiated by BMZ)</i>
<p>2.4 Information and communication system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to (PME) knowledge insufficiently organized: therefore difficult research for monitoring and evaluation findings; no interlinkage with operating areas (→ 2.3) • Use hampered by flood of information and inappropriate processing (→ 2.2) • Communication blocks due to monopolization of knowledge and intransparency • No interface management and insufficient communication and arrangements between donors and partner organizations • Possible filtering of evaluation reports by persons responsible or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access and active dissemination of knowledge/evaluation findings (see also → 2.3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific promotion and integration of existing, also unofficial or traditional, communication systems • <i>Socialization of evaluation findings and recommendations in the field by evaluation team as well as discussion with management, implementing team of partner organization and target-group representatives as an evaluation standard (→ 3.3) (NGOs & government Aid Agencies)</i> • Preparation of evaluation findings. For target group; appropriate graduation of short and long versions • <i>Translation of evaluation report into lingua franca and enough time for feedback from partner organization (see also → 3.2 & 3.5) (NGOs)</i>

	management		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Publications (e.g. on internet) (BMZ, KfW)</i>
2.5 Working conditions & system of incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too little time for learning processes due to administrative and financial pressure • Reactive instead of pro-active work due to permanent excessive workload (→ 2.2) • Project-tied, temporary employment relationships due to financial dependence on projects and external donors • Personnel turnover and lack of institutional identity • Scheduling of evaluation and external monitoring frequently incompatible with the schedule of evaluated partner organization • Poor tangible and intangible performance and learning incentives • Weak sanction systems and mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Account taken of learning and upgrading needs in work and human resource development planning • Frank information exchange and style of communication (vertical & horizontal) (→ 2.4) • Adequate scope for decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting upgrading programme in partner organizations to meet needs and providing for this in the project budget • Introduction of incentive systems
3 Conditions in the evaluation process			
3.1 Evaluation climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient acceptance of evaluations as a source of learning • Evaluation seen only as a control instrument for reporting (partly used in this way by donors) • Mistakes often viewed only as an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding evaluation as a source of learning • Requesting evaluation proposals from the partner organization to increase a sense of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creation of an affirmative evaluation climate in institutions and projects from the outset; explicit integration of partner questions in evaluation (NGO & government Aid Agencies)</i> • <i>Initial workshop to create a trustful</i>

	<p>indication of failure instead of as a source of learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient awareness among management and personnel of the need for and usefulness of evaluations for improving quality and knowledge management (→ 2.3) 		<p><i>evaluation climate (most Aid Agencies)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding evaluation as an consultancy (?) service and a dialogue instrument of joint learning • Citing cases of successful learning outcomes from evaluations • Promoting and guiding self-evaluations; in-process support (→ 3.3) • Promoting transparent evaluation follow-up (see → Working Paper No. 1 of this section) • Promoting the establishment and development of evaluation institutions & formation of networks
<p>3.2 Preparation and clarification of contract as well as planning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often no own evaluation plans or programmes • No account taken of learning needs of both sides, socio-political, cultural, religious and other factors; evaluation geared to meet administrative needs of donors • Insufficient consultation and agreement on the evaluation purpose between stakeholders and those affected • Standard ToRs overload evaluations (too many questions), result- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint drafting of ToR with clear questions and plan of execution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal for evaluations by partner organizations (→ 3.1) • Planning for sufficient time (runup of at least 6 months) to enable a communicative evaluation situation conducive to learning • Promoting method development. Introducing practical experience in DeGEval activities • <i>Training of partner organization in evaluation methods, participatory work and organizational development (→ 2.3) (some Aid Agencies)</i> • Practising joint evaluations, also to-

	<p>ing in a lack of focus on specific knowledge interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different yardsticks, frame of reference and methods of various donors • Knowledge interests of donors defined and geared more to reporting than knowledge goals (→ 3.1) • Intransparent interests of actors involved (suspicion of hidden agenda) • Choice of method insufficiently geared to generating knowledge 		<p>gether with other donors (→ 1.2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter far-sighted learning recommendations into matrix/ToR (clear articulation of knowledge interests) • <i>Bilateral evaluation teams: one person proposed by partner organization and one by donor and mutually accepted (→ 3.4) (NGOs & some government Aid Agencies)</i>
3.3 Conduct of evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholders not or insufficiently involved in conducting evaluations to the detriment of acceptance and willingness to learn (→ 3.2) • Overemphasis of problems and inadequate assessment of scope for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance of partner organization as stakeholder and not just as a source of information • Systematic feedback to partner organization and evaluators on their contribution to the evaluation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization of evaluation as process support in stages, thus affording time for reflection and processes of change • Inclusion of prepared data of the partner organization and the findings of self-evaluations (→ 3.1) • Exchange of information and cross-checking from organizations and target group • <i>Feedback event with involved persons at the end of the evaluation to set learning processes in motion (→ 2.4) (some Aid Agencies)</i>
3.4 Evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice of evaluators takes no account of learning aspects: sociocultural, communicative and 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competencies of the evaluation teams matched to learning needs (sectoral, methodological and so-

	<p>didactic competency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem of independence of local evaluators from partner organizations and national institutions due to socio-political setting (→ 1.1) • Professional arrogance of evaluators 		<p>ciocultural)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mixed evaluation teams made up of external and internal evaluators (conducive to acceptance of findings) • Support of local evaluation and evaluator networks (→ 3.2) • <i>Experience with participatory procedures in evaluations as a criterion for expert selection (Aid Agencies)</i> • <i>Joint, coordinated choice of evaluators (right of proposal and power of veto for partner organization) -- (→ 3.2) (almost all NGOs)</i>
3.5 Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation findings and recommendations too general, too impractical and not operational • Inappropriate form and presentation, specialist jargon often difficult to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic assessment and account taken of what the partner organizations can and cannot do; their resources should not be overstretched 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing and imparting practical relevance of recommendations • Discussion and access to evaluation findings and recommendations in the field (→ 2.4, 3.3)
3.6 Implementation of evaluation findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of time and funds for process of change (→ 2.5) • Insufficient discussion and preparation of findings/ recommendations; frequent lack of follow-up • Obstruction of follow-up of disagreeable findings or where conflicts arise in the course of evaluation (policy of wait-and-see) • Internal institutional conflicts due 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings are the result of a process actively supported by all those affected • Provision of additional funds for (upgrading) measures in the follow-up process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring transparency of interests and frank dialogue between donor and partner organization on what findings and recommendations are relevant, which can be accepted and which not • Introduction of implementation controls • Guidance in implementation and drafting an implementation plan for

	<p>to undiplomatic wording of recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Learning handicapped by inadequate implementation management• Lack of provision for reflection and acceptance		<p>recommendations as a component of the evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Negotiation of the implementation plan between donor and partner organization
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