

Donor/Agency HQ Evaluations: Possible Update of Phase 1 Studies

The generic TOR explains the purpose of the donor/agency HQ evaluations as:

“The purpose of the Donor/Agency HQ Evaluations, most of which have been conducted during Phase 1, has been to assess what constitute better practices for Donor/Agency headquarters in implementing their Paris Declaration commitments in order to contribute to increased aid effectiveness. The emphasis is on learning, by asking the twin questions: are we doing the right things and are we doing things right?”

The answers to these questions will be explored through “a series of evaluations, 11 studies in Phase 1 and an anticipated 7 new studies in Phase 2, with the possible addition of some updating of earlier Phase 1 studies” (new underlining)

This document has been developed to assist the IRG to consider and decide the scope, possible questions, [governance and management] and timing for such possible updates. Following discussion by the IRG, the results can be crystallized for formal consideration by the Phase 1 donors involved in a very short time.

The purpose of these updates would be to further strengthen the robustness of the evaluation as such through an effort to:

- i) address certain weaknesses on the knowledge and evidence base at HQ level, identified in phase 1 that would strengthen the scope of coverage;
- ii) increase potential for cross validation between the country studies and the HQ studies by examining a series of “mirror questions” that would add depth to the evaluation; and
- iii) if possible, throw light on what changes the Accra commitments have lead to at the HQ level.

In terms of addressing weaknesses identified in Phase 1, one weakness identified in the reports was the lack of clear and comparable analysis of the contextual factors. This element is therefore receiving particular emphasis in the generic TOR for the Phase 2 and in view of this it would be useful to have an update from the Phase 1 studies with comparable factual information and contextual analysis.

Such updates could draw, inter alia, on annual reports, the latest DAC Peer Review, and the Monitoring Survey to provide basic factual information on the following:

- Staff
- Budget
- Geographic spread of programme
- Multi/bilateral share, share provided to vertical funds, and aid modalities (project, programme, budget support, TA etc.)

Furthermore, it is proposed that the organizational structure be described, including the degree of de/centralization and the performance management system, along with existing

Action Plans or policies and guidelines that are Paris Declaration related and any new additions to these following Accra.

In terms of depth of the evaluation, it is also proposed to include issues around policy coherence in the Phase 2 evaluations, something that was not required of the Phase 1 studies. However, given the evaluation questions agreed for the country level studies, in particular those related to the “sphere of the PD”, one “mirror” question would be whether and how much the PD has influenced those policies of a given donor that have an impact on developing countries.

The proposed questions are:

- What is the influence of the Paris Declaration on government policies (aid and other policies such as those affecting trade, international financial cooperation, investment, climate change, security, immigration, etc.) with implications for developing countries?
- Who are the key actors in the donor country (or constituency for multilateral agencies) involved in the aid arena, taking major decisions on aid flows, priorities, activities, programs and projects?
- How are their perceptions and decisions influenced by the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action?

Lessons from Phase 1, the commitments emphasized at Accra, and the country level evaluations and overarching evaluation framework for Phase 2, open the possibility for useful updates to be made to the Phase 1 studies by also exploring some additional key evaluation questions. In particular two key questions were suggested in the Approach Paper, and included in the generic ToR for the Phase 2 HQ level evaluations, although the Country Evaluation ToRs are moving away from them in this form. These are:

- Have “transaction costs” of delivering aid actually been reduced and/or shifted because of implementation of the Paris Declaration? If so, how, and what are the effects of such changes?
- What would be the likely implications for development results if donors were to shift a majority of aid to either general or sector-specific budget support?

The regional workshops in October/November 2009 are pointing to some changes on these issues and therefore consultation will be required, once the Country Evaluation ToR are confirmed, about how these “mirror” questions might best be pursued.

Lastly, in terms of updating information from Phase 1 reports, there is a general recognition (expressed in the Monitoring Survey and in the London meeting with the Evaluation Coordinators) that there is insufficient knowledge about the two commitments Managing for Development Results and Mutual Accountability. Therefore the following two questions have been made explicit in the Phase 2 Donor/Agency HQ Evaluations, and could be usefully covered by an update to the Phase 1 studies:

- What is the main problem facing donors/agencies in fulfilling the Paris Declaration commitment to Manage for Development Results?

- What arrangements or mechanisms for Mutual Accountability have been in place and how well are they working? (See Phase 1 Synthesis Report for orientation)

These two questions should in particular examine the perceived need for “flag planting” that continues to be seen as a problem both for some donor and agency staff and for the countries.

Lastly, it is proposed, in view of critical findings from the 2008 Monitoring survey on use of country systems, that even where such systems are rated as strong, they are still not used by donors. The usefulness of the Monitoring survey in uncovering and documenting such issues are fully recognized, but such findings are only fully useful, if evaluations can subsequently contribute to improve the understanding of the “why” behind. This question is therefore considered a fundamental question to cover.

Governance

While it would probably not be appropriate to expect elaborate new governance or management arrangements to produce possible evaluation updates, this issue does need to be discussed. The most practical course might be to extend/revive the structures used in Phase 1, with a modest consultancy contract to carry out the work.

Timing

In order to mesh with the overall Evaluation and be integrated into the Synthesis, the draft updates would have to be completed by September/October 2010, and final reports by 31 December, 2010..

Support Arrangements for Donor/Agency HQ Evaluation Updates

A range of services are provided by the Core Evaluation Team to all evaluation teams, country as well as HQ. These include:

- The development of the “Generic Terms of Reference” for Donor/Agency HQ Evaluations
- Professional advice to the Evaluation Coordinator and members of the Reference Group on the basis for and processes of selection, contracting and briefing of HQ Evaluation Teams.
- Ongoing advice and support to HQ Evaluation Teams to ensure the coherence of the evaluation and the comparability of its different elements.

A series of engagement points - pro-active and reactive - has been identified between the Team and the processes of the Evaluations. These are designed to help lay solid foundations and clear tracks for Phase 2 HQ Evaluations to follow, support adherence to evaluation standards, provide guidance if/ where Evaluation Teams run into problems, and facilitate peer-to-peer sharing and learning between HQ Evaluation Teams. Support will be mainly web-based, remote support, but can also be face-to-face on a selective basis. It is proposed that the consultant/teams that will be engaged to carry out updates will have access to those services as well.

