

► Denmark

Danish International Development Assistance (Danida), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida Evaluation Department

Mandate

The Evaluation Department is an independent, specialised unit in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The unit is responsible for commissioning evaluations of Danish development co-operation efforts, with a focus on thematic, cross-cutting issues and programme level evaluations. The unit is guided by a comprehensive evaluation policy, updated in 2006.

The purpose of the evaluations is to contribute to maintaining and improving the quality of Danish aid by providing a systematic means of learning from experience and lessons to guide future decisions. Evaluation also serves to provide the Danish Parliament with documentation about the aid processes and outcomes of development efforts and forms a basis for informing the public about the results of Danish development assistance. Core responsibilities and duties of the Evaluation Department include: managing evaluations of development activities, contributing to increased accountability, developing evaluation methodology, and participating in international co-operation on evaluation. Support to evaluation capacity development in partner countries is also mentioned in the guidelines, though few resources are available for this work.

Programme and project completion reports are prepared by programme divisions. The Evaluation Department is responsible for analysing these reports, maintaining the filing system and facilitating efficient use of lessons.

Independence

The Evaluation Department's location and reporting procedures are independent of embassies and entities responsible for programming and implementation of development co-operation programming. While it is part of the performance management framework, the Evaluation Department holds no responsibility for administration, implementation or monitoring of development co-operation. Evaluation is a separate, specialised unit. The head reports to the Minister for Development Co-operation through the State Secretary for Development Policy. The Head is employed on a fixed term contract (five years) and is a permanent employee of the Ministry. External consultants are commissioned to carry out all evaluations. Codes of conduct and quality standards ensure non-interference with evaluators. The evaluation team has the final responsibility for the contents of the report.

Summary of the evaluation set-up



Reporting and use

At the conclusion of an evaluation, a follow-up memo is prepared, taking note of Danida's management position on the conclusions and recommendations. The follow-up memo is discussed in the Programme Committee. Based on the discussion a short management response in Danish is prepared and approved by the Minister for Development Co-operation. The Evaluation Department undertakes to monitor the implementation of the follow-up activities at regular intervals.

The Evaluation Department contributes actively to the dissemination of Danida's own as well as other organisations' evaluation experience via workshops and seminars for staff in co-operation with the Ministry's education section. Further, the Department assists Danida's Centre for Competence Development in the dissemination of evaluation experience and contributes to the incorporation of evaluation experience in policies, strategies and guidelines, etc.

Quality and stakeholder involvement

As quality assurance, the DAC evaluation principles, a set of evaluation ethics and a Code of Conduct for consultants are mandated by Danida evaluation guidelines. Danida expects the evaluation team to have a systematic process for controlling and assuring the quality of its evaluation process and output. The DAC Evaluation Quality Standards constitute a frame of reference for all Danida evaluations; the evaluation team must ensure that its evaluation process and product are consistent with these standards.

The unit operates off a two year evaluation programme developed through a complex consultation process involving a public meeting, presentation of a draft to the embassies and departments for comments and then presentation of the programme to the Danida board, which can make comments. Finally the Minister sends the plan to the Finance and Foreign Affairs Committees of the Parliament for additional comments.

Danida frequently uses a participatory approach for evaluations of development co-operation. Approximately 50% of evaluations are conducted jointly with evaluation offices of other development agencies and the partner country is involved in about 80% of evaluations.

