### Workshop Report

Workshop on Lessons Learned
From International Joint Evaluations
French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry
DAC Network on Development Evaluation
Paris Declaration Evaluation Secretariat
Paris, 6-7 February 2012

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#### Workshop Report

#### 1. Introduction

The evaluation of the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness which came to an end in connection with the High Level Meeting on Development Effectiveness in Busan in January 2012, was unique both because of its size and because it was a truly joint evaluation with both partner countries ('recipients') and development partners ('donors') on equal terms. More than 200 people in 40 countries and agencies were actively engaged in the planning and execution of the separate evaluations that were the basis of the synthesis, final report of the Paris Declaration Evaluation (PDE).

In order to summarise the experiences from primarily the PDE, but also from other large, recently undertaken, joint evaluations a workshop was held in Paris 6-7 February. The workshop was cohosted by the Paris Declaration Evaluation Secretariat and the French Ministry of Finance and the venue was in fact physically very close to the room where the Paris Declaration was agreed upon in 2005. The Workshop was financed by Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland.

The workshop had two objectives

- Identify the main lessons for future joint evaluations—drawing from the experience with the Paris Declaration Evaluation and other recent large scale joint evaluations.
- How to build on the capacity and network relations developed in these evaluations for future collaboration, e.g. partner-led, collaborative or joint evaluations as a way towards mutual accountability?

The over fifty participants in the workshop belonged to three categories: national coordinators for the PDE studies in individual countries, members of the PDE Management Group and the PDE International Steering Committee, the PDE Core Evaluation Team and a number of independent consultants with experience from large joint evaluations other than the Evaluation of the Paris Declaration.

Two main conclusions stood out from the lively and engaged discussions. One was that joint evaluations are useful and worthwhile especially for assessing complicated policy related changes that span several countries, in spite of the often considerable investment required in time and money. The other was that the network of evaluators and evaluation managers established during the implementation of the PDE and the accumulated experience of the network members should be preserved in one way or another after the finalization of the PDE and the closing down of its Secretariat. Such continuation might preferably or at least initially be effected by the DAC Evaluation Network, but linkages to the various mechanisms established to follow up the Busan High Level Meeting were also suggested.

#### 2. The program

The program was built around five aspects of joint evaluations, which previous experiences had proved to be strategic:

- programming, preparing and engaging stakeholders
- building consensus on the approach
- governance and management structures
- co-ordination of multi-site evaluations design, support, execution
- utilization of joint evaluations

The workshop had three parts. The first part was a number of presentations linked to these five aspects, either based on the PDE or other joint evaluations including the Evaluation of Budget Support, led by the EC and Evaluation of Support to Conflict Prevention and Peace Building in Southern Sudan, led by the Netherlands. Presentations dealt with the above-mentioned aspects from a management and lead agency respectively partner country perspective. Presentations included country cases of Nepal, Bolivia, Uganda and Malawi, which illustrated many commonalities, but also pointed out that the political and social context differed in important ways.

The second part of the program comprised two rounds of group discussions. The first round was directly linked to the aspects above. The second looked forward, particularly at the issue of building on previous experiences gained with large-scale joint evaluations and those gathered by the PDE network in particular. The third part of the program was a concluding plenary discussion.

In her opening speech Ms. Delphine D'Amarzit, Assistant Secretary, Multilateral Affairs, Trade and Development policies Department, Treasury General Directorate, paid tribute to the remarkable work accomplished by conducting the Paris Declaration Evaluation and stressed how important it was to have completed this evaluation in time to inform the preparations for the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in November 2011. She also praised the extensive outreach and dissemination efforts made by those engaged in the Paris Declaration Evaluation as being critical to facilitate the use of the evaluation results.

She urged participants to use the workshop as an opportunity to provide inputs to making the Busan commitments a reality. In that context, she specifically pointed to the Post-Busan 'Results and Accountability Building Block' as a vehicle for additional initiatives aimed at improving the delivery and measurement of development results on the ground ((learning from successes and failures to reinforce accountability). In particular, steps need to be taken to support the strengthening and use of developing country systems, including systems for statistical data gathering and processing, and monitoring and evaluation required for evidence-based decision making. She pointed out that Promoting joint and partner country-led monitoring and evaluation is essential.

#### 3. Common themes in the presentations

The presentations touched upon three major common themes: preparation of the evaluation and allowing buy-in; building trust and confidence; and organizing the evaluation process in order to foster evaluation use.

#### Preparation and buy-in

It goes without saying that thorough *preparations* are important in all evaluations. Proper preparation is even more essential for joint evaluations where several, sometimes diverging interests must be met and where the background, knowledge and capacity of the various partners

engaged in the evaluation may differ considerably. Several of the presentations centred on a number of issues linked to the preparation of complex joint evaluations underlining how such evaluations normally are more complex than bilateral evaluations, where the donors used to be dominating the scene. A couple of presenters talked about managing *tensions* as part of joint evaluation work.

Typical issues reflected in the presentations were:

- Consult all stakeholders to ensure buy-in on scope, agree on management structure, and establish common ground rules.
- Seek consensus but do not compromise the integrity of the evaluation process and product.
- Have a strong and effective lead but also show openness and readiness to listen.
- Ensure evaluator independence to guarantee the integrity and credibility of the evaluation findings even while engaging diverse stakeholders to ensure relevance and use of the evaluation.
- Take the time necessary but equally important: respect timelines in order to make a joint evaluation work.

#### **Building trust and confidence**

Another theme was the need to build confidence among the stakeholders commissioning large-scale joint evaluations. It must be acknowledged that experiences and points of view may differ, and agreement must be reached on all principal issues while it may not be necessary or possible agree on every little detail. Thus authority to work out the details may be delegated to a smaller group of stakeholders tasked with managing the evaluation (e.g.an evaluation management group).

Ways to gain trust is of course to engage with all important stakeholders, be they influential policy makers or interest groups, and to relate to established evaluation or feedback mechanisms in the country.

It is also necessary to agree on what standards to apply. The DAC evaluation quality standards proved to provide a useful framework for guiding the quality of the evaluation as well as a basis for evaluating the evaluation (meta-evaluation).

#### Evaluation process and use

A third theme was the need to be *process oriented*. It is important to allow ample time for preparation in order to allow sufficient buy-in and understanding what the evaluation is about as well as time for continuous consultations throughout the evaluation. The attention to use, underlined by Michael Patton, should be present during the whole process in order to focus the work and justify the investment in time and money. One aspect of the process is that every joint evaluation has an element of *capacity building* and this must be recognised and effectively handled.

Also, joint evaluations have an impact beyond just gathering data and reporting findings. During the processes of early stakeholder engagement, evaluation design, data collection, and interpretation of findings, the inquiry and engagement processes deepen the understanding among all stakeholders about the object of inquiry. For example, the country teams that interviewed policy makers about the Paris Declaration often had to explain what the Declaration was about and, in so doing, became part of the process of disseminating the Paris Declaration principles and alerting key people to the forthcoming 4th High Level Forum. The message is that learning already occurs during the

evaluation process, but only if such a process is well-organized and is focusing on stakeholders that should use the evaluation results.

In short, joint evaluation processes inform and engage even as they gather data and interpret findings.

A related observation concerned when and how use occurs. While the PDE was clearly to produce an evaluation report that could be used in the deliberations at the 4th HLF, it was envisaged that the outcomes of the evaluation needed to be disseminated in time to feed into the preparations for the HLF. Thus the most important use came in the preparations for and build up to the Forum in Busan rather than at the Forum itself. Thus, for a joint evaluation to be used and have impact substantial planning and resources need to be directed to dissemination timed to crucial milestones for shaping positions and decisions.

#### **Management**

It was also evident that a typical joint evaluation s generally managed at three levels. A *Steering Group/Committee*<sup>1</sup>, which comprises all or most stakeholders, takes the strategic decisions such as adopting the Terms of Reference, selection of the evaluation team and approval of the final report in terms of its quality and credibility. A smaller *Management Group* elected by the Steering Group is involved with day-to-day issues and provides guidance and advice to the third level, the *Evaluation Manager/Coordinator*, who is responsible for the daily, practical work and execution of decisions taken by the steering bodies as well as direct contact with the evaluation team as need be. This was considered a viable mechanism of governing complex joint evaluations.

#### 4. Common themes from group discussions from Round One

Following the presentations, the participants were divided into a number of break-out groups each discussing a different aspect:

- 1. Programming, preparing and engaging stakeholders in joint evaluations
- 2. Building consensus on the approach and methodology
- 3. Governance and management structures and cost sharing
- 4. Co-ordination of multi-site evaluations: design, support, execution, QA and synthesis
- 5. Utilization: making a difference with the evaluation input to policy and decision making

It was generally acknowledged that each joint evaluation is unique although there are a limited number of 'models' that are being used.

Among the break-out groups three opinions seemed to dominate. The first was that joint evaluations, at least large-scale evaluations with several actors involved, are not a way to cut costs unless one can be sure that they replace a number of bilateral evaluations on the same subject. It was recognised that a big joint evaluation takes considerable time and effort because of the need to coordinate. On the other hand, the efforts may often be worthwhile because such an evaluation can generate knowledge that single evaluations are not able to produce and because the learning element may be stronger as the conclusions are normally based on a wider body of information.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In large scale multicounty evaluations such steering groups may be established in each country as was the case with the PD Evaluation

A second opinion was that joint evaluations can be very valuable but are best used when joint programmes are scrutinised. It then becomes logical to evaluate together and an evaluation can easily be built into the programme and its budget from the beginning.

A third generally held view was that procedures have to be clarified early on and that roles regarding the governance of the evaluation must be well defined. Partner countries have to be brought into the process at an early stage even if donors often take the initiative to launch evaluations.

An important aspect from one group was that although the limited institutionalisation of evaluation in many countries is a constraint for joint evaluations it may for this very reason be an advantage to engage in such efforts since it will help to develop an evaluation culture in the country. The level of involvement may be kept at a limited level yet the benefits may be considerable as there is often a capacity development element in such large evaluations.

It was pointed out by another group that the DAC guidelines on joint evaluations have a gap regarding how to engage with fragile states where partnership with and among national institutions tends to be difficult.

Several groups and also speakers in the introductory sessions were worried that there may be a tendency among donors to concentrate on domestic accountability and lose interest in joint efforts including joint evaluations, where individual donor country or agency contributions and their links to results cannot be traced. This change of attitude among donors may even reduce the interest in planning and conducting evaluations together with the partner country.

#### 5. Common themes from group discussions Round Two

Participants agreed that the professional contacts established during the course of the PDE were valuable and should not be lost. However, there seemed to be no obvious way to carry the experience and the network further since the PDE and its Secretariat will soon close. Although there are a number of organisations, institutions and initiatives aimed at capacity development for evaluation there is no one that would be a natural 'successor' or 'caretaker' of the PDE network. Linkages with the various evaluation professional societies were advocated. It was also suggested that international evaluators should promote the 'networking of networks' where the various initiatives and existing organisation are more actively brought together. Although the DAC Evaluation Network seems to be an obvious institution for pursuing a continuation of the PDE network, an obvious obstacle is that the OECD and thus the DAC is a donor organisation.

It was pointed out that joint evaluations require special requirements for their execution and therefore may need additional resources because partner countries do not have the right capacity and experience. It noted that joint evaluations very often have a value added by indirectly having a capacity building element. Donors generally lack sufficient knowledge about the existing evaluation capacity in partner countries and the evaluation structures and follow-up mechanisms that are already established. There has to be a change of mind-sets among donors when it comes to trusting partner country capacities, institutions and procedures.

Several groups argued that as soon as possible the network as well as the individual members of the PDE International Reference Group should link up with the various post-Busan initiatives to ensure that evaluation is properly integrated. A suitable venue for this would be the post-Busan "Building Block" on results and accountability.

The groups identified several subjects which seemed to be particularly suitable for future joint evaluations. One would be disaster or conflict situations and such evaluations could well be combined with other joint undertakings like a joint conflict analysis. Another obvious subject would be sector programmes. Also common activities or developments spanning several or many countries are natural subjects for joint work. Organisations like NEPAD in Africa could be a suitable forum for organising cross national joint evaluations.

The groups identified a number if issues and suggestions that could facilitate joint evaluations:

#### Country level:

- Institutionalisation of evaluation and development of a strong evaluation culture (demand for and use of evaluations at different levels) is vital.
- Countries should be encouraged to establish national Monitoring and Evaluation
   Committees with broad membership (government, CSOs, national evaluation association
   and donors). In some countries Evaluation Committees or secretariats already exist.
- The Evaluation Boards should be registered in the OECD/DAC evaluation database.
- National Boards should develop (annual) evaluation plans building on proposals for topics from e.g. sector round-tables.
- Donors should actively support the promotion of joint evaluations at sector level.
- National evaluation funds could be established (with support from donors).

#### Regional and international level:

- Make use of existing regional and international evaluation networks; these are not being used enough for joint evaluation work.
- Communities of practice at regional level may be helpful in promoting evaluation of issues that can be sensitive at national level.
- Evaluation networks should help setting standards and fostering joint work.
- There is a need to differentiate between the 'big joint evaluations' like the PDE and other
  joint evaluations of a smaller magnitude involving e.g. 2-3 donors/agencies and one or two
  partner countries
- Need to work hard to involve emerging donors (China, Arab countries, Brazil, etc.) in joint evaluation exercises.
- Need to engage the private sector in evaluation work (let them do the actual evaluations)
- Donors need to make more use of evaluations conducted by others (this requires thrust and credible evaluations).
- All donors/agencies and partner countries should include the possibility of conducting joint evaluation work in their evaluation policies.
- All donors, agencies and partner countries should (further) develop their capacity for management, conduct and use of joint evaluations.

#### 6. Plenary discussion

The plenary discussion focussed on the second objective of the workshop: How to build on the capacity and network relations developed in large-scale joint evaluations for future collaboration, e.g. partner-led, collaborative or joint evaluations as a way towards mutual accountability?

Niels Dabelstein (PDE Secretariat) concluded the discussion by observing that there is a strong interest in joint evaluations while all recognise their limitations and constraints. Large scale international evaluations like the PDE are the exception rather than the rule and the focus should be on country-led joint evaluations. Several partner countries have an institutional framework for evaluation in place, but many still need support to build capacity and to improve institutional arrangements, including quality awareness. It was observed that evaluation capacity building is much about empowerment; and donors should use country systems and procedures to the greatest extent possible.

He also noted the interest in creating a network that can promote joint evaluations and retain the experience gained in the PDE evaluation and other large-scale joint evaluations. The DAC Evaluation Network would be a suitable institution to act as a bridge between the several existing evaluation networks, organisations and initiatives and it was suggested that the DAC Evaluation Network explore the possibilities for establishing an all-inclusive network.

#### 7. Concluding remarks

Henri Jorritsma noted that the PDE had created a great commitment among the evaluation community and we should capitalise on this costly investment.. On reflection, he suggested, we have probably focussed too much on the costs incurred by joint evaluations and looked not enough at their benefits.

His second point was that donors should challenge the partner countries to build further on the foundations that were created or strengthened during the country evaluations which were conducted under the auspices of the PDE such as new relationships among institutions and ways to collect data to enhance both accountability and learning.

Thirdly, he noted that despite the trend that donors currently seem to concentrate on their own contributions to development processes in a particular partner country. This drive for national accountability in the donor country should not detract from the fact that joint evaluations have an important role in documenting collective contribution to development at the country level. Moreover, joint evaluations can build on existing capacity in partner countries.

Finally, he noticed that many ideas have been brought forward on how to build on existing networks and indicated that the DAC Evaluation Network should play a role as a bridge here<sup>2</sup>. It should establish an inventory of evaluation capacities / institutions in partner countries. Real capacity building is done by working together.

Mr. Rémy Rioux Deputy Director, Multilateral Affairs and Development, Treasury General Directorate, closed the workshop emphasizing the value of joint evaluation for both mutual accountability and joint learning, and hoped that the enthusiasm displayed at the workshop would be sustained and lead to more joint undertakings.

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Annex 1 Workshop programme

Annex 2 Workshop participants

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> At the DAC Evaluation Network meeting on 8 February 2012 it was agreed to follow up on this and to establish a task force on joint evaluation with France in the lead.

#### Annex 1

## Workshop on Lessons Learned From International Joint Evaluations French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry DAC Network on Development Evaluation Paris Declaration Evaluation Secretariat

#### Paris, 6-7 February 2012

#### **Background:**

The changing context of development assistance approaches has increased the importance and utility of joint evaluations for donors and partners. Poverty Reduction Strategies, national development programs, sector-wide assistance and general budget support vary considerably from traditional project assistance activities. The 'way of doing business' is also changing considerably due to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) and the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011). These new approaches to development cooperation emphasize collaborative, aligned and harmonized multi-donor assistance efforts with shared common objectives, and increasingly employ co-financing schemes. They also stress greater participation and leadership (ownership) by the developing countries. Effective evaluation of development cooperation calls for – in fact requires – greater leadership on the part of the partner countries and intense collaboration by all partners.

Joint evaluation has several virtues: rationalization of the evaluation process, reduced transaction costs for partner countries, improved evaluation quality, increased weight and legitimacy of the evaluation when undertaken with partners, answer questions which cannot be addressed by one actor<sup>3</sup>. In addition joint evaluation is one element of mutual accountability. They are also challenging: compared to single project/program evaluation, the subjects are more difficult to evaluate and the management of the evaluation is often complex and cumbersome.

#### Purpose:

- Identify the main lessons for future joint evaluations— drawing from the experience with the Paris Declaration Evaluation and other recent large scale joint evaluations.
- How do we build on the capacity and network relations developed in these evaluations for future collaboration, e.g. partner-led, collaborative or joint efforts as a way towards mutual accountability?

#### **Workshop format:**

The Workshop will be 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  days of presentations and discussions in break-out groups with defined themes for discussion and pre-assigned facilitators.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> DAC Evaluation Series: Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations. OECD 2006

#### **Programme:**

#### Monday 6 February 2012

#### 1300 - 1330 Opening:

Ms. Delphine D'Amarzit, Assistant Secretary, Multilateral affairs, Trade and Development Policies Department, Treasury General Directorate.

Mr. Henri Jorritsma, DAC EvalNet Vice-Chair.

Mr. Niels Dabelstein, PDE Secretariat

#### 1330 – 1530 Setting the agenda: Presentations by Evaluation Managers and Evaluators

- 1. Programming, preparing and engaging stakeholders in joint evaluations experiences from the PD Evaluation (Niels Dabelstein & Lal Shanker Ghimire, Joint Secretary, Foreign Aid Coordination Division, Ministry of Finance, Nepal)
- 2. Building consensus on the approach experiences from Budget Support Evaluation Martyn Pennington, EC) and PDE (Jaime Garron Bozo, Unit Chief, Financing Negotiations, VIPFE, Ministry of Development Planning, Bolivia)
- 3. Governance and management structures experiences from the South Sudan Evaluation (Ted Kliest, NL) and PDE (Timothy Lubanga, Assistant Commissioner Monitoring & Evaluation, Office of the Prime Minister Uganda)
- 4. Co-ordination of multi-site evaluations: design, support, execution, QA and synthesis (Bernard Wood, Team Leader, PDE and Julia Betts, Team Member PDE)
- 5. Utilization: making a difference with the evaluation input to policy and decision making (Michael Patton, Utilization Focused Evaluation and Twaib Ali, Assistant Director, Debt and Aid Division, Ministry of Finance, Malawi)

#### 1530 - 1600 Coffee

#### 1600 – 1615 Instructions to break out groups

#### 1615 – 1730 Break out groups

- 6. Programming, preparing and engaging stakeholders in joint evaluations (Facilitator Margrethe Holm Andersen)
- 7. Building consensus on the approach and methodology (facilitator Anne Bichsel)
- 8. Governance and management structures and cost sharing (Facilitator Stefan Dahlgren)
- 9. Co-ordination of multi-site evaluations: design, support, execution, QA and synthesis (Facilitator Henry Jorritsma)
- 10. Utilization: making a difference with the evaluation input to policy and decision making (Facilitator Michael Patton)

#### **Tuesday 7 February 2012**

#### 0900 - 1000 Reporting back from Yesterday's group discussions

Facilitator: Stefan Dahlgren Rapporteur: Michael Patton

#### 1000 - 1200 Break out groups

How do we build on the capacity and network relations developed in these evaluations for future collaboration, e.g. partner-led, collaborative or joint efforts as a way towards mutual accountability?

#### 1200 - 1300 Lunch

#### 1300 - 1400 Reporting Back

Facilitator: Stefan Dahlgren Rapporteur: Michael Patton

#### 1400 - 1530 Plenary Discussion

How do we build on the capacity and network relations developed in these evaluations for future collaboration, e.g. partner-led, collaborative or joint efforts as a way towards mutual accountability? Partner and donor perspectives.

Facilitator: Niels Dabelstein

Rapporteurs: Stefan Dahlgren and Michael Patton

#### 1530 - 1600 Coffee

#### 1600 - 1630 Conclusions & next steps

Henri Jorritsma, DAC EvalNet Vice Chair

#### 1630 - 1700 Closing

Mr. Rémy Rioux, Deputy Director, Multilateral Affairs and Development, Treasury General Directorate.

Niels Dabelstein, PDE Secretariat

#### Evaluation of the Paris Declaration Lessons Learned Workshop Paris 6-7 February 2012

#### **List of Participants**

#### Afghanistan

Mr Mohammad Reza Fayeq Aid Effectiveness Officer Ministry of Finance Post Box No 552 Central Post Office 25000 Kabul - Afghanistan

+93 (0) 787 771 948

reza.fayeq@budgetmof.gov.af

rfayeq@gmail.com

**African Development Bank** 

Mr Foday Turay

Chief Evaluation Officer

Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV)

African Development Bank (AfDB)

Angles des 3 Rues:

Avenue du Ghana Rue Hedi Nouira

Rue Pierre du Coubertin

**BP 323** 

1002 Tunis-Belvédère

Tunisia

f.turay@afdb.org

Bur: +216 71103257 Fax: +216 71194460

Australia

Mr Dereck Rooken-Smith

Office of Development Effectiveness Australian Agency for International

Development (AusAID)

GPO Box 887

ACT 2601 Canberra,

Australia

Dereck.Rooken-Smith@ausaid.gov.au

PH: +61 2 6178 5793

MOB: +61 434 668 343

Austria

Ms Karin Kohlweg

Head of the Evaluation Unit

Austrian Development Agency

**Evaluation Unit** 

Zelinkagasse 2

1010 Vienna - Austria

karin.kohlweg@ada.gv.at

Tel: + 43 (0) 1 90399 - 2520

Fax: + 43 (0) 1 90399 -1520

www.entwicklung.at

Ms Laurence Hengl Austrian Development Agency Evaluation Unit Zelinkagasse 2 1010 Vienna - Austria

Bangladesh

Laurence.hengl@ada.gv.at

phone: +43 (0)1 90399 - 2536 fax: +43 (0)1 90399 - 1536

#### **Bangladesh**

Mr Bijon Kumar Baishya, Joint Secretary Economic Relations Division Ministry of Finance Block-8, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Dhaka - 1207 bijon kumar@hotmail.com

Ph. +88-02-9674122 Cell. +88-017 11173017

Belgium

Mr Dominique de Crombrugghe Special Evaluator of Development Cooperation Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation Rue des Petits Carmes, 15 B - 1000 Brussels, Belgium

dominique.decrombrugghe@diplobel.fed.be

+32 (2) 501.36.06

#### **Benin**

Ms Justine A. Odjoubé, Coordinatrice Observatoire du Changement Social Bénin, Ministère d'Etat Chargé de la Prospective, du Développement et de l'Evaluation de l'Action Publique 01BP 6850 - Cotonou BÉNIN

ocsbenin@ymail.com

Tel. (Bureau): +229 21 32 78 06 /

+229 21 32 79 42

Tel. (mobil): +229 90 92 62 31

PrénomObservatoire du Changement Social [ocsbenin@ymail.com]

#### **Bolivia**

Jaime Andrés Garrón Bozo
<u>Unit Chief</u>, Financing Negotiations Unit
VIPFE - Ministry of Development Planning
Centro de Comunicaciones La Paz
(Ex Edificio Correos), Piso 15
La Paz, BOLIVIA

jaimegarron@gmail.com jaime.garron@vipfe.gob.bo

Tel +591 (2) 2317424 – 2360084 ext. 1510 Fax +591 (2) 2391062 www.vipfe.gob.bo

#### Cambodia

Mr Chhieng Yanara

Council for the Development of Cambodia

(CDC)

Palais du Gouvernement,

Sisowath Quay

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

chhieng.yanara@crdb.gov.kh

+ 855 12812301

#### Cameroon

Mr Dieudonne Takouo

Director of the North-South Cooperation and

the Multilateral Organizations

Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional

**Development of Cameroon** 

P.O. Box 2163 Yaoundé

Cameroon

Head of the Paris Declaration Implementation

Follow-up Unit in Cameroon

dieudonnetakouo@yahoo.fr

+ 237 99 94 42 79

#### Canada

Ms Rafika Amira, Director, Evaluation Directorate, Strategic Policy and Performance Branch Canadian International Development Agency

200 Promenade du Portage

Gatineau (Quebec)

K1A 0G4

Rafika.amira@acdi-cida.qc.ca

+819 934 3900

#### **Cook Islands**

Mr Jim (Alan) Armistead

Senior Research and Policy Officer

Aid Management Division

Ministry of Finance and Economic

Management,

PO Box 120, Avarua

Cook Islands

jim@mfem.gov.ck

+682 29521

#### **Denmark**

Ms Margrethe Holm Andersen

Deputy Head of Evaluation Department

Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2, Asiatisk Plads

DK 1448 Copenhagen

Denmark

marand@um.dk

Tel.: +45 33 92 10 41

WWW.EVALUATION.DK

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EC	
Mr Martyn Pennington Head, Evaluation Unit Directorate General Development and Cooperation Europe Aid European Commission 41 Rue de La Loi B-1049 Brussels Belgium	Martyn.pennington@ec.europa.eu  Tel. + 32 2 296 29 39  Fax + 32 2 299 29 12
Ms Carolina Guimarães Evaluation and Communications Consultant, Evaluation Unit Directorate General Development and Cooperation Europe Aid European Commission	

Finland	
Ms Riitta Oksanen	Riitta.Oksanen@formin.fi
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland	
Office of the Under-Secretary of State Development Evaluation (EVA-11)	tel + 358 9 1605 5889
Katajanokanlaituri 3	mob + 358 40 728 4023
P.O. Box 512	
FI-00023 Government	
Finland	

France	
Ms. Claude Leroy-Themeze Head of the Development Activities Evaluation Unit- UEAD Multilateral Affairs, Trade and Develop-ment Policies Directorate General of the Treasury Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry 139, rue de Bercy – Teledoc 552 75 572 Paris cedex 12 France	Claude.leroy-themeze@dgtresor.gouv.fr  Tel.: + (33) 1 44 87 73 06 Fax: + (33) 1 44 87 71 70
Mr Frédéric Bobay Ministère de l'Economie, des Finances et de l'Industrie Direction générale du Trésor Unité d'évaluation des activités de développement Télédoc 552 139, rue de Bercy	frederic.bobay@dgtresor.gouv.fr  Tel: +33 1 44 87 70 98 Fax: +33 1 44 87 71 70
F-75012 Paris, France	

Mr Laurent Fontaine Responsabel de la division evaluation Agence française de Développement 5 Rue Roland Barthes 75598 Paris Cedex 12 France	fontainel@afd.fr  Tel: +33 1 53 44 47 21  Fax: +33 1 53 44
Ms Stéphanie Pamies Division de l'evaluation Agence française de Développement 5 Rue Roland Barthes 75598 Paris Cedex 12 France	pamiess@afd.fr Tel: +33 (0) 53 44 41 98
Ms Christiane Zepter Chef du Pôle de l'évaluation Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes DGM/SPR/PRG 27 rue de la Convention CS91533 F-75015 Paris cedex 15 France	Christiane.zepter@diplomatie.gouv.fr  Tel: +01 43 17 80 04
Ms Maxime Poissonnier Ministère des Affaires Étrangères et Européennes DGM/SPR/PRG 27 rue de la Convention CS91533 F-75015 Paris cedex 15 France	Maxime.poissonnier@diplomatie.gouv.fr

GAVI	
Dr Abdallah Bchir	abchir@gavialliance.org
Senior Programme Officer / Evaluation	
GAVI Alliance	Tel: +41 22 909 6542
2 chemin des Mines/ 1202, Geneva,	Fax: +41 22 909 6555
Switzerland	+41 79 776 0748 <b>mobile</b>

Germany	
Dr. Frank Schwarzbeck Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development Dahlmannstr. 4 53113 Bonn Germany	Frank.Schwarzbeck@bmz.bund.de Tel. +49 228 53 53 643

#### **Ghana**

Capt Patrick Donkor, Dept. Director National Development Planing Commission Flagstaff House, P.O Box C 633, Cantonments,

Accra Ghana patrickdonkor@hotmail.com

Tel: +233-21-764905 Fax: +233-21-773055 Mob: +233-24-4138971

#### Malawi

Mr Twaib Ali

Debt and Aid management Division Ministry of

Finance

P.O. Box 30049 LL3 Lilongwe Malawi tali@finance.gov.mw

+265 1 789 355 +265 1 789 337

+265 88 4 161218 mobile

Fax +265 1 789 173/ 265 1 788 592

Alit\_mw@yahoo.co.uk

#### Mali

Mr Modibo M. Makalou

Coordinateur/Mission de Développement et

Coopération

**Development and Cooperation Initiative** 

(DACI)

Présidence de la République

BP10

Koulouba, Mali

mmakalou@mdc.pr.ml mmakalou@cefib.com mmakalou@afribonemali.net

+22376374700

#### Nepal

Mr Lal Shanker Ghimire

Joint Secretary/ Chief Foreign Aid Coordination

Division

Ministry of Finance

Singhdurbar, Kathmandu

Nepal

Ighimire@mof.gov.np ghimirel@hotmail.com

Tel. +9771 4211837

Fax. +9771 4211164 4211165 (pref.)

www.mof.gov.np

#### **The Netherlands**

Mr Ted Kliest

Policy and Operations Evaluation Department

(IOB)

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs P.O.

Box 20061 2500 EB

The Hague

The Netherlands

tj.kliest@minbuza.nl

Tel: + 31 70 3486201 Fax: + 31 70 3486336 Mr Henri Jorritsma

Dep. Director Policy and Operations Evaluation

Department (IOB),

Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs P.O.

Box 20061 2500 EB

The Hague

The Netherlands

Hej.jorritsma@minbuza.nl

**Spain** 

Ms Bibian Zamora Giménez

Evaluation Division, Head

Secretariat of State for international

Cooperation and Latin America

Secretariat General for International

Cooperation

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation

Beatriz de Bobadilla nº 18, 3ª planta

28040 Madrid

bibian.zamora@maec.es

Tel. +34 91 379 17 32

Fax: +34 91 394 89 48

**Sweden** 

Mr Lennart Peck, Director

Department for Evaluation

SIDA

SE-105 25 Stockholm

Sweden

Lennart.Peck@sida.se

Tel: +46-8-698 5440 ?

Fax: +46-8-698 5643

**Switzerland** 

Ms Anne Bichsel

Programme Officer

Corporate Controlling Section

Swiss Agency for Development and

Cooperation (SDC)

Freiburgstrasse 130

3003 Bern – Switzerland

Anne.bischsel@deza.admin.ch

Tel. +41 31 325 92 57

Fax +41 31 324 90 47

Uganda

Mr Timothy Lubanga

Ag. Assistant Commissioner

Monitoring and Evaluation

National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategy (NIMES)

Office of the Prime Minister

P. O. Box 341.

256UGA Kampala

Uganda

tlubanga@opm.go.ug

tklubanga@yahoo.co.uk

Tel: +256(0)312264517, (0)414233968

Mob. +256(0)772451852

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#### UNEG

Ms Belen Sanz, Chief Evaluation Office UN WOMEN + UNEG Chair

220 East 42nd St

Suite 19-25 New York, NY 10017, USA Belen.sanz@unwomen.org

Tel: +1-646-781-4723 Fax: + 1-646-781-4422 www.unwomen.org

#### **USA**

Mr Peter B. Davis Chief Evaluation & Foreign Assistance effectiveness, Planning, Performance Management, Monitoring and Evaluation Office of Director of US Foreign Assistance Resources Department of State/USAID

DavisPB@state.gov

+1 202 647 3834 (phone) +1 202 647 2813 (fax)

Cclapp-wincek@usaid.gov

2201 C Street NW, Washington DC 20520, USA

Ms Cynthia Clapp-Wincek, Director
Office of Learning, Evaluation and Research
Bureau for Policy, Planning and Learning
U.S. Agency for International Development
Room 7.09-118

+202-712-5719

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20523, USA

# Mr Cao Manh Cuong Deputy Director General Ministry of Planning and Investment 6B Hoang Van Dieu St. Ba Dinh District Hanoi, Viet Nam Cmanhcuong@yahoo.com tel. +84 4 37 333 000

Zambia	
Mr Paul Lupunga Ministry of Finance and National Planning P.O. Box 50062 10101 Lusaka Zambia	Paulmlupunga@gmail.com Tel.: +26097758141

OECD/DAC	
Mr Hans Lundgren Head of Evaluation Team REED, Development Co-operation Directorate, OECD, 2 rue Andre-Pascal 75775 Paris Cedex 16 France	Hans.lundgren@oecd.org Tel: +33 1 45 24 90 59
Ms Megan Kennedy-Chouane Evaluation Policy Analyst Develop Co-operation Directorate, 2, rue André Pascal 75775 Paris Cedex 16 France	megan.kennedy@oecd.org  Tel: +33 1 45 24 84 09  www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation

PDE Secretariat		
Mr Niels Dabelstein	NDA@DIIS.DK	
Evaluation of the Paris Declaration	NDA@DIIS.DK	
Danish Institute for International Studies	Tel. +45 32 69 86 00	
Strandgade 56	Fax.: +45 32 69 86 00	
DK 1401 Copenhagen		
Denmark		

Consultants	
Mr Bernard Wood, Director Bernard Wood & Associates Limited 84 Delong Drive	bwoodcan@gmail.com Tel: 1 (613) 749-4738 or 1 (613) 741-3791
Ottawa K1J 7E1, Canada  Mr Michael Quinn Patton Utilization-Focused Evaluation	Fax: 1 (613) 749-6945  mqpatton@prodigy.net
740 Mississippi River Blvd So., Suite 21-E Saint Paul, MN 55116-1037 USA	+651 690-3254
Mr Stefan Dahlgren Stefan Dahlgren Consulting Bergviksvägen 50 SE-167 63 BROMMA Sweden	stefan.dahlgren@mail.com +46 (0)73 916 9610
Dr Julia Betts IOD Parc 16-26 Forth St., Edinburgh EH1 3LH UK	Julia@iodparc.com +44 1830 540235 +44 7824 365232

Mr Luc Lefebvre 241, route de Longwy L-1941, Luxembourg	luc.lefebvre@see-policies.eu Office: +352 26 20 01 27 Mobile: +352 6 91 94 62 54 www.see-policies.eu
Mr Jon Bennett Independent Consulant	Jon.bennett@dsl.pipex.com
84 Sandfield Road Oxford OX3 7RL UK	+44 1865 769206