



## DANIDA EVALUATION GUIDELINES



# **Danida Evaluation Guidelines**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

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Contact: [eval@um.dk](mailto:eval@um.dk)

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## Preface

This updated version of the Danida Evaluation Guidelines constitutes the basic framework for evaluations of Danish development cooperation. The guidelines replace the version published in 2006.

A number of important developments have influenced the present version. The Evaluation Network in OECD/DAC<sup>1</sup>, of which Denmark is a member, has agreed on the *Quality Standards for Development Evaluation (2010)*. Key statements from the common standards have been inserted in relevant sections of these guidelines in order to underscore the harmonisation with these OECD/DAC standards. The guidelines have also been updated to reflect developments in the aid architecture and in Danish development cooperation; to include methodological developments; to update and specify procedures, thresholds, and transparency aspects of contractual processes; to emphasise the quality control and assurance processes; and finally to sharpen and further clarify the role of different stakeholders as well as the independence and impartiality aspects of conducting evaluations.

The audience for the guidelines are those who have a professional engagement in evaluation of development cooperation, as well as others interested in evaluation. These include those who are parties to an evaluation process and the users of evaluations. Moreover, the guidelines may be of interest to a broader audience, such as students, researchers and policy makers, and the interested public.

Chapter 1 explains the role of evaluation in Danish development cooperation and provides definitions and key principles of evaluations in Danida. Chapter 2 outlines the processes and requirements related to the formulation of Danida's evaluation programme. Chapter 3 explains the scoping of an evaluation. The concrete design steps of an evaluation are elaborated in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents Danida's approach to evaluation of multilateral cooperation. Chapter 6 lays out the organisational set-up of an evaluation and the contractual procedures around assigning an evaluation team. Chapter 7 describes the different implementation phases of an evaluation from the inception phase to the final reporting. The final chapter (Chapter 8) explains the mechanisms in place to ensure learning from and dissemination of evaluations. The guidelines include five annexes: codes of conduct (Annex 1); quality control and quality assurance (Annex 2); key issues to be covered by an inception report (Annex 3); key issues to be covered by an evaluation report (Annex 4); and an overview of analytical quality issues, pointing to validity and reliability requirements (Annex 5). The guidelines do not constitute a manual in evaluation methods and techniques, but reference is made to useful links and resources throughout the text.

The guidelines will be updated as need arises, and comments and suggestions for improvements or clarifications are welcome and may be forwarded to [eval@um.dk](mailto:eval@um.dk).

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1) The OECD/DAC network on evaluation brings together 32 bilateral donors and multilateral development agencies with the purpose of supporting robust, informed and independent evaluations of development cooperation. It is a subsidiary body to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). See <http://www.oecd.org>

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## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<i>3iE</i>	International Initiative on Impact Evaluation
<i>ALNAP</i>	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
<i>AMG</i>	Aid Management Guidelines
<i>DAC</i>	Development Assistance Committee
<i>Danida</i>	Danida is the term used for Denmark's development cooperation. Development cooperation falls under the mandate of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
<i>DEReC</i>	The DAC Evaluation Resource Centre
<i>DIME</i>	Development Impact Evaluation
<i>EM</i>	Evaluation Management
<i>ERG</i>	Evaluation Reference Group
<i>ERH</i>	Business and Contract Department, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<i>EVAl</i>	The Evaluation Department, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<i>KVA</i>	Quality Assurance Department, Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<i>MFA</i>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark
<i>NGO</i>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<i>NONIE</i>	Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation
<i>OECD</i>	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
<i>RBM</i>	Results Based Management
<i>ToR</i>	Terms of Reference
<i>QA</i>	Quality Assurance



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# Chapter 1. Development evaluation: definition and overarching issues

This chapter defines and explains the role of development evaluation<sup>2</sup> as an instrument in Danish development cooperation.

## 1.1 What is development evaluation?

All major development agencies involved in international development cooperation undertake formal evaluations of their activities. Danida has integrated evaluation processes into development cooperation since the early 1980s. Both the evaluation function and international cooperation on evaluations have since been strengthened significantly.

The joint efforts of OECD/DAC donors to develop and recently update the “*Quality Standards for Development Evaluation*” (OECD/DAC 2010)<sup>3</sup> underscore the importance paid to evaluation by development cooperation actors. Danida adheres to the OECD/DAC definition of evaluations:

*Development evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed development intervention, its design, implementation and results. In the development context, evaluation refers to the process of determining the worth or significance of a development intervention. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 1.1)*

## 1.2 The role of evaluation in Danish development cooperation

Development cooperation includes bilateral programmes, support through NGOs, the private sector and research as well as an extensive engagement through multilateral organisations. Development cooperation also includes engagement areas such as adaptation to climate change and fragile situations and states.

Evaluation serves two interrelated main purposes. First, evaluation is one of several instruments holding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Danida<sup>4</sup> accountable for the choices and actions taken to meet the overall and specific objectives of Danish development cooperation. Second, and of equal importance, evaluation is a means to facilitate learning about the positive and negative experiences of development cooperation in specific contexts. In this respect, evaluation is a way to generate and distil context-specific lessons and assess their broader applicability and usefulness.

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- 2) The terms “development evaluation” and “evaluation” are used interchangeably in these guidelines.
  - 3) Hereafter referred to as the OECD/DAC Quality Standards.
  - 4) The terminology used in these guidelines is as follows: *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* is used when reference is made to processes involving the ministry as an institution. *Danida* refers to Danish development cooperation and the way in which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organises the management of the development cooperation.

Evaluation is also a key instrument in the efforts to enhance aid effectiveness. Coordinated and joint efforts among the various partners in development cooperation (partner countries and development agencies)<sup>5</sup> to evaluate joint undertakings is an example of optimising resources in the use of both development cooperation funds as well as domestic funds.

The evaluation function supplements and works in conjunction with other programme cycle processes and aid management tools: Danida applies a Results Based Management (RBM) approach and makes use of a range of different aid management tools in order to plan, monitor and assess progress. These tools, which include appraisals, reviews, performance monitoring and assessments, feed into different phases of the programme cycle and provide valuable information for evaluations. Explanations of the RBM approach and various tools used by Danida to monitor development cooperation can be found at [www.um.dk](http://www.um.dk) and [www.amg.um.dk](http://www.amg.um.dk).

The evaluation function in Danish development cooperation, being part of Danida, resides in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The evaluation department (EVAL) is responsible for the planning, management and quality control of evaluations of Danish development cooperation; it reports directly to the Minister for Development Cooperation through the State Secretary for Development Policy and is independent of the operational functions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (HQ departments and representations abroad involved in development cooperation).

### 1.3 Key principles

The following section presents the key principles guiding evaluations in Danida, and the corresponding OECD/DAC Quality Standard. Later sections of these guidelines unfold these key principles.

#### 1.3.1 Free and open evaluation process

Development evaluation is independent from programme management and implementation. All steps of an evaluation are embedded in transparent processes. In order to enhance credibility and accountability, evaluations are conducted by independent evaluation teams, which are recruited through a transparent tender process.

#### 1.3.2 Evaluation ethics

Development evaluation abides by relevant professional and ethical guidelines and norms and it must be undertaken with impartiality, integrity and honesty. All parties that oversee, manage and implement an evaluation must respect human rights and cultural diversity, customs, religious beliefs and practices. When designing and carrying out an evaluation, they should be knowledgeable and mindful of gender roles, ethnicity, ability, age, sexual orientation, language and other differences.

#### 1.3.3 Codes of conduct

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs/Danida engages in evaluations in accordance with agreed codes of conduct to ensure independence, impartiality and credibility of evaluations (See Annex 1). The codes of conduct clarify responsibilities, proper conduct and mutual relations between consultants, EVAL, other Danida staff, and other parties responsible for the activities under evaluation.

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5) Following the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005), and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008).

### **1.3.4 Coverage and accountability**

The entire portfolio of Danish development cooperation is under the mandate of EVAL and may be subject to evaluation. The portfolio includes bilateral and multilateral development cooperation, and instruments such as NGO cooperation and humanitarian assistance (further elaborated in Section 2.2).

### **1.3.5 Partnerships and mutual accountability**

In order to increase ownership and credibility, enhance utilisation, and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach is routinely considered early in the evaluation process. Evaluations conducted in partnership with various groups of stakeholders enhance shared understanding, learning and application of recommendations.

### **1.3.6 Coordination and alignment**

Coordination of evaluations aims to reduce transaction costs, promotes partnerships, and enhances mutual accountability and alignment (see Section 3.2). In line with coordination and alignment principles, development agencies should wherever possible take into account national and local evaluation plans, activities and policies; where feasible, they should build on these and also regard them as capacity-building opportunities. Alignment also refers to the principle of building on country systems and the use of national data, to the extent that these are available and of adequate standard.

### **1.3.7 Capacity development**

Capacity development is part of development cooperation when concrete evaluation processes are undertaken collaboratively with national evaluation agencies. Danida may integrate capacity development of partner country organisations that are mandated to undertake evaluations into its country programme support.

### **1.3.8 Ensuring quality**

Quality *assurance* is the responsibility of the evaluation team selected to conduct a particular evaluation (see Section 6.4); the standards to be followed are laid down in the technical bid and subsequently in the contract with the selected evaluation team.

EVAL conducts quality *control* of all evaluations. The OECD/DAC Quality Standards on quality control are adhered to. However, the exact nature of the quality control arrangements for evaluations depends on the scope and complexity and is decided upon when the organisation and management for a particular evaluation is established (see Chapter 5). Quality control may also be expanded during the evaluation process, if need be.

Both quality assurance and quality control are exercised throughout the evaluation process (see also Annex 2).

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## Chapter 2. The evaluation programme

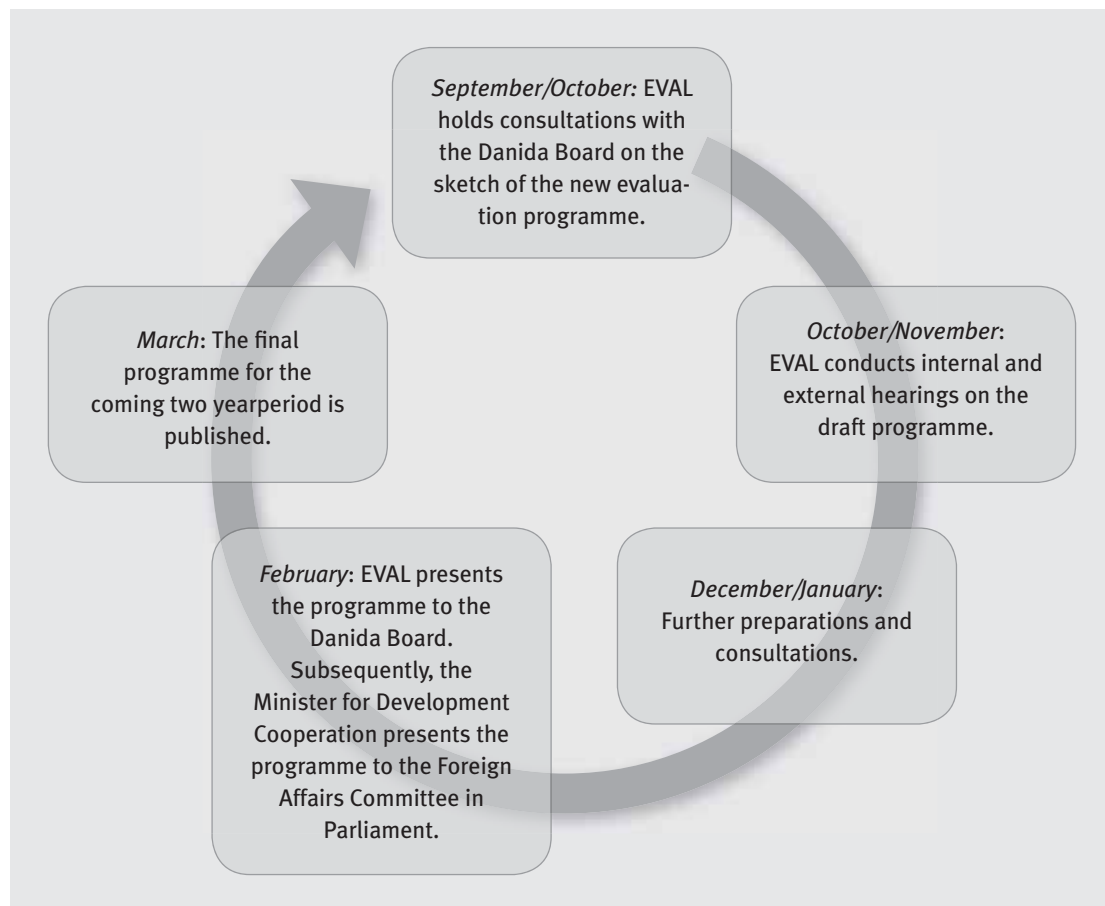
This chapter explains the process related to the preparation of Danida's evaluation programme, including the involvement of different stakeholders.

### 2.1 Preparation of the evaluation programme

Preparation of the evaluation programme falls under the mandate of EVAL. The portfolio of evaluations is planned on a two-year rolling basis. The programme is developed through consultations and discussions with stakeholders and is updated annually. The selection of evaluations for the programme is partly based on suggestions from various stakeholders and the public; and partly decided upon by EVAL in order to meet the obligation of EVAL to cover the entire development cooperation portfolio. See Box 1 below. Note that the timing is tentative and illustrative.

The consultation process includes the Danida Board, internal ministerial hearings and dialogue at both headquarters and embassy level. Embassies and representations are encouraged by EVAL to consult national stakeholders about possible topics for evaluation. A public hearing is usually organised to present the tentative ideas of the programme; the hearing is either in the form of a meeting presentation or through the internet.

#### Box 1: Annual process of programme preparation: the timing is tentative and illustrative



The dialogue with stakeholders concerning topics for the evaluation programme is important in order to secure utilisation of results and promote learning from evaluations. Key stakeholders include senior management in Danida, staff members at embassies and headquarters, partners in international organisations, decision makers in partner countries, consultants involved in programme design, researchers and others with an interest in development cooperation. Following the hearing process, EVAL presents the proposed evaluation programme and a report on evaluation activities conducted in the previous year to the Danida Board (See Box 2.) The final evaluation programme is approved by the Minister for Development Cooperation and submitted to the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs for comments, before being posted on the website <http://www.evaluation.dk>.

### **Box 2: The role of the Danida Board**

*Programme preparation:* The Danida Board provides initial suggestions to the evaluation programme.

*Annual reporting:* The Board discusses the previous year's report on evaluation activities together with the draft programme for the next two years.

*Management response:* The Board receives the evaluation summary and the ministry's draft management response to each evaluation before it is submitted to the minister. The Board may comment on the summary and, in particular, on the management response.

*Information and presentation:* All completed evaluations and evaluation summaries are sent to the Board for information. The Board may request in depth presentations and discussions of specific evaluations.

## **2.2 Programme coverage and strategic considerations**

The evaluation programme must, over a number of years, demonstrate a proper coverage of the total development cooperation portfolio (Section 1.3.4). The programme coverage includes different modalities and instruments, a balance of geographical areas, large and small partner countries, and thematic areas. The following are examples of evaluation topics:

- General cooperation with a partner country or cooperation within specific sectors or themes in a partner country. Such topics are often covered through joint evaluation with other donors and/or partner country/countries.
- Specific Danish policies or strategies such as the Strategy for Humanitarian Action or the Strategy for Support to Civil Society in Developing Countries.
- Different instruments in bilateral assistance such as sector/thematic programmes and project assistance to partner countries, assistance through NGOs, support to civil society, mixed credits, budget support, humanitarian assistance, climate change funds, globalisation and stabilisation support, and support to research.
- Thematic evaluations, covering themes such as anti-corruption, decentralisation, gender equality, exit strategies, etc.

- On-going or completed projects and programmes, which may have a broader significance for development cooperation.
- Funding channelled through multilateral organisations (see Chapter 5).

### **Box 3: Main parties to an evaluation**

Collaboration between key parties, with due adherence to the principles of independence and impartiality of the different parties, is key to successful evaluations. Parties include:

*The commissioner.* This is either EVAL alone or EVAL jointly with other development agencies, and/or EVAL with partner country institutions.

*The evaluators.* These are the independent and impartial organisations or individuals that carry out the evaluation, i.e. collect and analyse data, judge the value of the cooperation intervention, and produce the evaluation report. Evaluators are often organised as an *evaluation team*.

*The stakeholders.* These are the agencies, organisations, groups or individuals that have an interest in the development intervention or its evaluation, but not necessarily a formal role in the subject of the evaluation.

*The users.* The users of evaluations are stakeholders with a specific relationship to the intervention and its evaluation. They include policy makers, Danida management, staff, advisers, partner country decision makers and implementers, and other parties with a formal or direct role in relation to the development activities under evaluation.

Stakeholder and user participation in the evaluation process is encouraged to promote learning, ownership, and application of results and “lessons learned” to future activities. In practice, the groups may overlap.

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## Chapter 3. Scoping an evaluation

This chapter describes the process of scoping or conceptualising an evaluation. Each evaluation preparation process is unique. Also, conceptualising an evaluation is exploratory and, therefore, not a linear process. In most cases, the scoping is followed by a design phase (see Chapter 4).

### 3.1 Preliminary considerations

The preliminary scoping starts during the consultations that feed into the evaluation programme (see Section 2.1). This scoping includes assessments of different topical angles and entry points, preliminary assessment of existing studies of the subject area, timing and logistics, and availability of funding and other resources. Different stakeholder views and possible cooperation modalities are also solicited.

*The feasibility of an evaluation is assessed. Specifically, it should be determined whether or not the development intervention is adequately defined and its results verifiable, and if evaluations is the best way to answer questions posed by policy makers or stakeholders. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 2.4)*

The availability of data and the evaluability of the topic are then gauged. Gauging evaluability involves recognising the barriers and complications that may challenge the evaluation process and assessing whether a topic can be evaluated fulfilling the requirements of the OECD/DAC Quality Standards. At this stage, evaluability considerations may lead to the conclusion that a topic is not feasible for evaluation, but more suited for a review, audit or research project.

The options for organisation, management and resourcing of the evaluation are also considered. This includes consideration of the potential for conducting the evaluation as a joint undertaking with other agencies (see Section 3.2) and possible involvement of the partner country or countries.

### 3.2 Considering a joint evaluation

Danida and other development agencies aim to promote mutual accountability in the management and administration of development cooperation. This has resulted in an increased focus on joint evaluations, which in turn reflects an increase in coordinated and aligned programmes and provision of budget support. In line with the Paris Declaration's principles for good development cooperation, there is also emphasis on partnerships with partner country institutions.



*In order to increase ownership of development and build mutual accountability for results, a partnership approach to development evaluation is systematically considered early in the process. The concept of partnership connotes an inclusive process, involving different stakeholders such as government, parliament, civil society, intended beneficiaries and international partners. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 1.4)*

Joint evaluations have been conducted by various groups of donors including Danida since the late 1980s and a significant number of joint evaluations have been undertaken since 2000.

*A joint evaluation is an evaluation in which different donor agencies and/or partners participate. There are various degrees of “jointness” depending on the extent to which individual partners cooperate in the evaluation process, merge their evaluation resources and combine their evaluation reporting. The decision to conduct an evaluation singly or jointly should be taken on a case-by-case basis and with careful consideration of the value added and benefits and costs involved. Joint evaluations are particularly appropriate when evaluating co-financed programme support at the budget or sector level, national aid effectiveness goals, the effectiveness of a multilateral or regional development agency or issues that are too sensitive or controversial for one agency alone to tackle. (OECD/DAC: Managing Joint Evaluations, 2010, p.1)*

<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork>

With regard to conducting joint evaluations, OECD/DAC has summarised experiences and found that, if an evaluation has to be conducted in haste, is narrowly focused, or mainly concerned with domestic accountability needs, a joint evaluation approach may not be appropriate. It is also noted that joint evaluations are often more costly and take longer than a single donor evaluation<sup>6</sup>. Possible strengths of a joint approach include enhanced credibility because of broader ownership, cross-learning among institutions, and decreased transaction costs for partner countries. A possible disadvantage is that, in joint evaluations, the evaluation questions can become overly general, largely because of the incorporation of all partners' requirements.

In the case of joint programmes or common subject matters, Danida favours joint evaluations. Before engaging in a joint evaluation, EVAL considers the opportunities and challenges. It also assesses the potential benefits such as the expected learning outcome and value in relation to transaction costs. EVAL engages actively in joint evaluations, where other donors are contract holders. Experience has shown that a sleeping partner role is not satisfactory.

With regard to joint evaluations conducted with partner countries, the *Evaluation study on experiences with conducting evaluations jointly with partner countries*<sup>7</sup> lists good practices for such evaluation processes with respect to both partner country institutions and international evaluation departments.

6) OECD/DAC: *Managing Joint Evaluations*, 2010.

7) Danida: *Evaluation study on experiences with conducting evaluations jointly with partner countries*, Serial number 2009/3.



The joint evaluations in which Danida has participated are published at EVAL's website and can also be found at Danida publications [www.um.dk](http://www.um.dk) The OECD/DAC database of evaluations (DeREC) includes additional examples of joint evaluations, <http://www.oecd.org>.

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## Chapter 4. Designing an evaluation

The design phase develops the considerations made in the scoping phase. The rationale and purpose of the evaluation is sharpened, and the objectives of the evaluation are formulated. A preparatory study is often the basis from which the approach and methodology of the evaluation are generated. The study will propose the evaluation criteria, the preliminary list of overall evaluation questions, and the methodology to be applied to answer the evaluation questions. The design of an evaluation is an evolving process and continues into the tendering phase (see Section 6.5) and subsequently the inception phase of the evaluation (see Section 7.1).

### 4.1 Rationale, purpose and objectives

When the broader topic and focus of an evaluation has been established, the rationale, purpose and intended use of the evaluation is clarified. This requires a deeper assessment of the topic, focusing on why the evaluation is being undertaken, for whom, and if the evaluation meets accountability or learning purposes – or both.

#### ***Rationale and Purpose of the Evaluation***

*The rationale, purpose and intended use of the evaluation are stated clearly, addressing: why the evaluation is being undertaken at this particular point in time, why and for whom it is undertaken, and how the evaluation is to be used for learning and/or accountability functions.*

*For example the evaluation's overall purpose may be to:*

- *contribute to improving a development policy, procedure or technique,*
- *consider the continuation or discontinuation of a programme,*
- *account for public expenditures and development results to stakeholders and tax-payers.* (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 2.1)

The formulation of the objectives is a crucial step in the design process, because the objectives set the level of ambition and clarify what the evaluation tries to find out. In addition, the objectives spell out whether the evaluation has a process or a results focus. Evaluation should be objective driven rather than driven by methods or methodological considerations. Only when the objectives are clearly formulated does it become possible to determine the most suitable approach and methodology (see Section 4.4).

### 4.2 Preparatory studies

In the process of determining the rationale, purpose and objectives, EVAL uses different types of preparatory studies: a pre-study, an approach paper, or a combination of the two (see Box 4). For smaller evaluations, the Terms of Reference constitute the main or only preparatory document (see Section 4.5).

**Box 4: Preparatory studies**

Preparatory studies assist the parties to specify why an evaluation is undertaken (accountability and/or learning purposes) as well as the anticipated focus, objectives and use of the evaluation.

Preparatory studies (pre-studies or approach papers) assemble the first broad overview documentation of a particular evaluation topic. They are typically used to summarise existing knowledge and factual information. They also suggest the focus and purpose of the up-coming evaluation and assess evaluability and discuss potential approaches, methods and sampling strategies.

Technically, the main purpose of both types of study is to help clarify, simplify and focus an often complex and broad topic. Strategically, the preparatory studies also constitute a way of engaging stakeholders to build commitment to the evaluation, including the use of the evaluation. Therefore, preparatory studies are shared with relevant parties, both in and outside Danida, to solicit their engagement and comments in time before an evaluation is carried out. This process helps to strengthen the foundation for the evaluation and may also be used to explore possibilities for a broader cooperation with other donors or providers of development assistance.<sup>8</sup>

**4.3 Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions**

The basis for any evaluation, irrespective of type and focus, is the five OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation (see Box 5).

**Box 5: OECD/DAC criteria for evaluating development assistance<sup>9</sup>**

Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results.
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved taking into account their relative importance.
Impact	The positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed. The probability of long-term benefits. The resilience to risk of the net benefit flows over time.

- 8) Danida and some other organisations consider preparatory analyses to be similar or equivalent to an evaluability assessment. More information can be found at the European Commission's website, under Evaluability Assessment at <http://ec.europa.eu>
- 9) See OECD/DAC's online resource: [http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_34435\\_2086550\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html)

The five criteria are interdependent and not mutually exclusive. In each case, the relative meaningfulness of the criteria for a specific evaluation is assessed and trade-offs discussed to ensure that the most relevant questions are addressed. This also helps to ensure that unnecessary efforts and expenses are avoided. Often the emphasis in an evaluation is on some and not all of the criteria.

Use of these standard OECD/DAC criteria does not exclude that other evaluation criteria be applied. The reason for supplementing the five standard evaluation criteria is to enhance and/or expand the focus of an evaluation.

The criteria for the evaluation of *humanitarian assistance* are a case in point. Because of the unique features of humanitarian action, the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action, ALNAP, has introduced additional evaluation criteria: connectedness, coherence and coverage.<sup>10</sup> (See Box 6.) Where deemed relevant and feasible, Danida applies these criteria in evaluations. They may be applied either as separate evaluation criteria or – more often – as an integral part of the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. For example, does ALNAP suggest adding *appropriateness* to the OECD/DAC relevance criterion (See Box 6).

#### Box 6: Additional criteria for evaluation of humanitarian action

Relevance/ appropriateness	Appropriateness is often added to the criteria of OECD/DAC criteria of relevance. It is understood as the tailoring of humanitarian activities to local needs, increasing ownership, accountability and cost-effectiveness accordingly.
Connectedness	The need to ensure that activities of a short-term emergency nature are carried out in a context that takes longer term and interconnected problems into account ( <i>this often replaces the DAC criteria of sustainability</i> ).
Coherence	The need to assess security, developmental, trade and military policies as well as humanitarian policies, to ensure that there is consistency and, in particular, that all policies take into account humanitarian and human rights considerations.
Coverage	The need to reach major population groups facing life-threatening suffering wherever they are.

At times, the evaluation of specific topics, such as climate change, or evaluations in specific contexts, such as conflict and high-risk, post-conflict or multiple natural disaster situations, call for the use of specific methodologies, such as remote evaluation techniques.

Considerable effort is expended in various fora to discuss how to adapt the OECD/DAC criteria to specific settings as well as how to develop context-specific evaluation guidelines. For example, in relation to the evaluation of conflict prevention and peace building interventions, there are continuous efforts to refine and field-test guidelines for the application of both the OECD/DAC and the additional ALNAP criteria.

10) ALNAP, *Evaluating Humanitarian Action using the OECD-DAC Criteria*, 2008

Another example is the European Commission's series of evaluation studies that are carried out to explore and assess the role of the Maastricht Treaty precepts – coordination, complementarity and coherence (3Cs) – in the European Union's development cooperation policies and operations. The 3Cs relate to critical factors in the effectiveness of development cooperation of the EU Member States and the European Commission; they are similar to the principles of harmonisation and alignment which feature centrally in undertakings and initiatives such as the Paris Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. The 3Cs principles adhere to the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria.<sup>11</sup>

In evaluations commissioned by Danida, issues related to the complementary evaluation criteria suggested by ALNAP and the 3Cs as defined by the EU are normally incorporated under the five OECD/DAC evaluation criteria as and where applicable.

*The evaluation objectives are translated into relevant and specific evaluation questions. Evaluation questions are decided early on in the process and inform the development of the methodology. The evaluation questions also address cross-cutting issues, such as gender, environment and human rights. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 2.7)*

Evaluation questions are formulated on the basis of the purpose and specific criteria chosen for a particular evaluation. These questions are intended to operationalise the criteria and guide the focus of the evaluation. Evaluation questions can be normative (did the intervention meet its objectives to a satisfactory degree?), descriptive (what happened during the development intervention?), or focus on the cause-and-effect of change that has been observed.

#### 4.4 Approach and methodology

Over the years, evaluation approaches have evolved away from classical categorisations, such as summative and formative approaches<sup>12</sup>. Today donors often use the term “approach” to cover both the evaluation type and organisational aspects of an evaluation. In each evaluation, the approach is developed on the basis of the purpose and objectives and an agreement between partners regarding the overall organisation. The approach then summarises the key elements of an evaluation: rationale, purpose, objectives, methodology, setting and organisation.

Therefore, rather than labelling an evaluation approach according to a specific evaluation typology, it is of essence that each specific evaluation should have clear objectives, and that the purpose and emphasis of the evaluation should be tailored to meet the objectives most appropriately. It should be clear if the emphasis is on policy, process and manage-

11) The initiative came to an end in 2008, but information and reports produced are available at the website: <http://www.three-cs.net>

12) *Formative evaluations* (often called process evaluations) are generally conducted during implementation to provide information on what is working and how efficiently, in order to determine how improvements can be made. ‘*When a cook tastes the soup, that’s formative evaluation*’ (well known quote by Professor Robert E. Stake). *Summative evaluations* are undertaken (i) at or close to the end of an intervention or at a particular stage to assess effectiveness and results and also (ii) sometime after the conclusion of an intervention to assess impact. ‘*When a guest tastes the soup, that’s summative evaluation*’ (well known quote by Professor Robert E. Stake).

ment issues; or on results, including outcomes and impact of the interventions under study; or on a mix of both process issues and results at various levels.

*The purpose, scope and evaluation questions determine the most appropriate approach and methodology for each evaluation. An inception report can be used to inform the selection of an evaluation approach.*

*The methodology is developed in line with the evaluation approach chosen. The methodology includes specification and justification of the design of the evaluation and the techniques for data collection and analysis. The selected methodology answers the evaluation questions using credible evidence. A clear distinction is made between the different result levels (intervention logic containing an objective-means hierarchy stating input, output, outcome, impact). (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 2.9)*

The evaluation methodology is the term covering the different methods to be applied to meet the overall purpose and objectives of the evaluation. The particular methodology to be used for data collection and analysis is determined by the subject and purpose of the evaluation; it is developed to ensure that professionally adequate methods are used to meet the objectives and answer the questions posed by the evaluation.

The methodology encompasses the main scope (duration of evaluation period and activities to be covered); sampling considerations at various levels (countries, sectors, themes, cases); and the mix of quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to answer the evaluation questions (See Box 7). Other methodological elements may be included in a specific evaluation. The available budget and the time frame also influence the boundaries for what is methodologically possible, and vice-versa; the chosen methodology has implications for the budget. Practical opportunities, constraints and new technologies may lead to the application of interesting and innovative combinations of methods; these contribute to making evaluation a dynamic field of methodological evolution.

### **Box 7: Case studies**

The use of case studies is to generate robust evidence through the extrapolation of the case study findings to a more general level. It is a methodology that is increasingly applied in complex thematic evaluations. The case study is characterised by research that intensely studies a single object to illuminate its complexity; this then gives rise to conclusions that to some degree lend themselves to wider application.<sup>13</sup>

What is true for all case studies is that the sampling of cases is paramount to the conclusions and to their potential for providing conclusions that can be generalised.

Some evaluations are designed as multiple case studies of the same theme or type of development cooperation. In that case, the aim is to draw synthesising conclusions with the purpose of establishing parallels and rendering probable certain causalities. This requires: 1) comprehen-

13) Gerring, John (2004): *What is a case study and what is it good for?*, American Political Science Review 98:2, American Political Science Association, and Gerring, John (2007): *Case study research: principles and practices*. Cambridge University Press.

sive insight in to the specificities of each case and its context, and 2) a systematic and streamlined approach to all cases. The conclusions should then be based on careful consideration of the comparability and incomparability of the different contexts and specific dynamics.

The selected evaluation methodology aims to ensure that the most appropriate methods of data collection and analysis are applied in relation to particular evaluation objectives and questions. Evaluation methodologies are derived from research standards and methods. The close link between research and evaluation methods is beneficial to evaluation and vice versa. Research methods that are both tested and innovative inspire and strengthen the methodological rigour of evaluations.

There are many combinations of approaches and methodologies for evaluations and new combinations are constantly being generated, making each evaluation unique. EVAL encourages triangulation of methods, data collection and data analysis based on a thorough understanding of the evaluation topic. All evaluations conducted for Danida must be based on evidence and must explicitly consider limitations related to the analysis conducted (e.g. due to security constraints or lack of data).

Internationally, some evaluation types, most notably different forms of impact evaluations, are receiving considerable interest and resources from some donors. At the centre of the discussion on the methodology of impact evaluations are the issues of attribution, contribution and establishment of a counterfactual (see Box 8). Danida has participated in impact evaluations and follows the discourse around new methodologies closely<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Box 8: Attribution, contribution and the counterfactual<sup>15</sup>**

Different definitions exist for the concepts below. Therefore, the definitions in this box may not be shared by everyone; the intent here, however, is to explain broad thrust and meaning of the concepts of attribution, contribution and counterfactual.

*Attribution* refers to the extent to which observed development effects can be attributed to the evaluated intervention itself or, instead, should be attributed to other factors. In practice, the question of attribution is complicated and involves a process of identifying multiple determining factors. Testing of attribution requires availability of good quality data and information, not only from the intervention itself, but also from other relevant interventions.

*Contribution* analysis aims to demonstrate whether or not the evaluated intervention is one of the causes of an observed change. It may also rank the evaluated intervention among the various causes explaining the observed change.

- 14) Further information and guidelines on impact evaluations: The International Initiative for Impact Evaluations (3iE) [www.3ieimpact.org](http://www.3ieimpact.org) and the Network of Networks on Impact Evaluation (NON-IE) [www.worldbank.org/ieg/nonie](http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/nonie). The OECD/DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DEReC) stores over 300 impact evaluation studies in its searchable database [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org). The Spanish Impact Evaluation Fund (SIEF) under the World Bank <http://www.worldbank.org/sief> and the World Bank Development Impact Evaluation initiative (DIME) [www.worldbank.org/dime](http://www.worldbank.org/dime)
- 15) The box is based on the description and terminology at <http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation/>

Construction of a *counterfactual* is the analytical core of any attribution and contribution analysis. It is a comparison between what has actually happened because of an intervention and what would have happened in the absence of an intervention. The counterfactual is important to establish because it is not possible to observe outcome variables (income, living standard proxies, health proxies, women's empowerment, etc.) for those participating had they not participated.

In order to establish the counterfactual, data must be collected from two different groups: the treatment group and a comparison group. It is important that the comparison group possess similar observable characteristics to the treatment group. Ideally, the counterfactual will be based on a well-designed baseline study, carried out on both a treatment and a comparison group, before the interventions are initiated. Similarly, an ex-post study will need to be carried out for the same two groups after completion of the intervention. However, where baseline studies are either non-existent or insufficient to establish a reliable counterfactual, it may instead be possible for the evaluation to rely on data collected by other development partners and/or good quality national data sets (such as national household surveys, population censuses and demographic health surveys).

## 4.5 Terms of Reference

The design phase concludes by the finalisation of the Terms of Reference (ToR) by summarizing the decisions of the scoping and design phases. The ToR also describe the competences of the evaluation team and the processes of implementation and management. The ToR usually specify the requirements for the various phases of the evaluation, i.e. inception phase, literature or desk study, fieldwork, analysis and synthesis/reporting.

The ToR for an evaluation are structured along the sequential logic of design discussed in the sections above. Below, the common structure for ToR of Danida evaluations is shown. The structure may be different in joint evaluations, but the point is that the ToR should follow a logical sequence.

- Background,
- Objectives and scope,
- Evaluation criteria and evaluation questions,
- Approach and proposed methodology,
- Competencies required of the evaluation team,
- Tentative timing of the evaluation process.

The ToRs for ongoing evaluations are posted on EVAL's website ([www.evaluation.dk](http://www.evaluation.dk)) under "ongoing evaluations".



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## Chapter 5. Evaluation of multilateral development cooperation

This chapter lays out key aspects of evaluations of multilateral organisations and cooperation with multilateral organisations on particular evaluations; it elaborates on the specifics of designing, managing and implementing such evaluations. It should also be noted that the planning of the evaluation programme (discussed in Chapter 2) includes planning of evaluations of and with multilateral organisations. Similarly, the Danida evaluation policy principles (Chapter 1), the analytical standards of evaluation (Chapter 4), the scoping phase (Chapter 3), and the discussion on dissemination on evaluation findings (Chapter 8) also all apply to work with multilateral development cooperation.

### 5.1 Multilateral cooperation

According to OECD/DAC<sup>16</sup>, around 40% of the total official development assistance in the world in 2008 was channelled through some 200 multilateral organisations.

Evaluating multilateral aid poses particular accountability and evaluation challenges. The effectiveness of multilateral aid and the possible benefits to individual donors and recipients of funding channelled through multilateral organisations have been recurrent issues in many countries, including Denmark, not least because donor visibility is generally less in multilateral aid than in bilateral cooperation.

The changed architecture of aid and the increasing interest from the general public and policy makers have contributed to a renewed interest among donor agencies in better evidence of multilateral impacts and the effectiveness of multilateral contributions. Despite various initiatives to contribute information on the organisational – and to some extent also the development – effectiveness of multilaterals, there is still a perceived information gap.

Funds to multilateral organisations are channelled as core funding (not earmarked) and non-core funds (earmarked). In the first case, funds are pooled and the results and impact of individual contributions cannot be assessed in isolation. Assessments must focus on the effectiveness of the receiving institution as such.

### 5.2 Approach to evaluating multilateral cooperation

Most evaluations of the interventions conducted by multilateral organisations are designed and conducted by the evaluation units established in and by the multilateral organisations themselves.<sup>17</sup> The evaluation units differ in size, structural set-up and approach to designing and managing evaluations. The quality of the evaluation functions and evaluations produced likewise vary from one agency to another, but considerable efforts are being made to improve the standards of the evaluation function and the quality of evaluations. Peer reviews of UN agencies are instrumental in this regard (See Box 9).

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16) OECD/DAC: 2010 DAC Report on Multilateral Aid (September 2010).

17) World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group [www.worldbank.org/ieg](http://www.worldbank.org/ieg); The African Development Bank's Operations Evaluations Department [www.afdb.org/opev](http://www.afdb.org/opev); United Nations Evaluations Group [www.un-eval.org](http://www.un-eval.org); The Asian Development Bank's Independent Evaluation Department [www.adb.org/evaluation](http://www.adb.org/evaluation)

**Box 9: Peer reviews**

As a way of supporting improvements in the quality of evaluation functions of multilaterals, the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) have joined forces to conduct peer reviews of the evaluation functions of UN agencies. The peer reviews use UNEG norms and standards and provide pointers, which gauge the extent to which donors (including Danida) can rely on the organisations' evaluations to feed into their accountability systems. Recognizing the importance and usefulness of peer reviews<sup>18</sup>, EVAL has been actively involved in their initial conceptualisation and participates regularly in them. Peer reviews have been carried out of the evaluation functions in UNDP, UNICEF, WFP, OIOS, GEF and UNIDO (see [www.uneval.org](http://www.uneval.org) or [www.oecd.org/dac](http://www.oecd.org/dac) for further information).

The development banks (WB, IMF and the regional banks) have developed their own network of evaluation functions; and some peer reviewing of evaluation functions within this group of institutions is also taking place.

EVAL also actively engages in and supports Danish representations who follow the evaluation practices and programmes of the multilateral organizations. This may include advising representations with responsibilities for particular multilateral organisations on their dialogue with these organisations concerning development of evaluation programmes and specific evaluations (TOR, draft reports, use of evaluation findings and follow-up).

In some cases, joint evaluations of a particular theme or intervention with the evaluation office/department in a multilateral organisation are also conducted. In such cases, the evaluation departments involved need to develop and agree on a joint understanding of the principles, approach and methodology to be used for the evaluation based on their respective policies and guidelines.

### 5.3 Collaborating for mutual accountability

Some multilateral agencies (e.g. the World Bank) act as “pace-setters” in development of evaluation approaches and methodologies. Being large organisations with strong pressures for accountability from their donors and boards and the beneficiaries of their programmes, they have an obligation to continuously develop and refine their approaches and methodologies and to publish and share their evaluation results. Therefore, they are often at the forefront of the learning curve on evaluation, and collaboration with these institutions on evaluation may at times have a capacity-building effect on bilateral donors and in partner countries.

There are several on-going initiatives from donors and the multilateral agencies to strengthen their reporting of results; these may have a positive impact on evaluation practice and capacity. Initiatives include the bilaterally-driven Multilateral Organisations' Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) and the multilateral development banks' Common Performance Assessment System (COMPAS). The latest report (2008) from COMPAS records progress towards harmonisation in the area of evaluation.

18) Participation in peer reviews of other evaluation functions also serves as a “mirror function” in so far as good practices in the multilateral organisations can act as inspiration for the bilateral evaluation units.

Efforts are also being made through the OECD/DAC evaluation network to explore the possible usefulness of meta evaluations, i.e. reports that synthesise results from evaluations by the multilaterals' own evaluation functions. The aim is to contribute to the determination of the development effectiveness of particular multilaterals.<sup>19</sup>

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19) See documents concerning the pilot project at the website of the DAC evaluation network (<http://www.oecd.org/dac>).

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## Chapter 6. Managing and assigning an evaluation

This chapter explains the roles of the different bodies managing, advising and implementing an evaluation commissioned by or in cooperation with Danida. The chapter also describes the contractual procedures and the role of the evaluation team.

### 6.1 Functions in implementation of an evaluation

The overriding principle is that an evaluation process must be free of any bias and open and transparent in order to be credible. The institutional framework, both of the planning and management of an evaluation, must adhere to that principle throughout the process and in the functions established. Those managing and advising the evaluation must be free of decision making and implementation interests in Danida and other agencies. Those implementing the evaluation (the evaluation team) must be free of external pressure, and there should be no conflict of interest or any previous involvement in the intervention being evaluated.

A management structure is set up for each evaluation. Generally, the main management and oversight bodies are the Evaluation Management (EM), which is in charge of day-to-day management and quality control, and the Evaluation Reference Group, which is more of a technical and advisory body. In joint evaluations with a large number of partners, the governance structure may differ from the normal practice. To strengthen the quality control aspects, the Evaluation Management often engages external peer reviewers, who are called upon to comment on draft reports because of their particular subject matter expertise or their in depth knowledge of evaluation methodology/report writing (See also Annex 2 on quality assurance and quality control principles).

The tasks assigned to various bodies may vary depending on the types of evaluation conducted and the agencies and other partnerships involved.

The point to be underlined is that, in each and every evaluation, the organisational set-up must be unambiguous and the roles of each party must be clear. A Memorandum of Understanding is at times used to formalise the agreements, e.g. in the case of joint evaluations with partner countries.

The role of the evaluation team is usually described in the TOR for the evaluation and further elaborated on in the contract between the commissioning party (EVAL or lead partner on the evaluation, if different from EVAL) and the company or organisation that has been selected for the assignment.

*The governance and management structures are designed to fit the evaluation's context, purpose, scope and objectives.*

*The evaluation governance structure safeguards credibility, inclusiveness, and transparency. Management organises the evaluation process and is responsible for day-to-day administration. Depending on the size and complexity of the evaluation, these functions may be combined or separate. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 2.11)*

## 6.2 Evaluation management

When Danida is the contract holder for an evaluation, it is EVAL who, in collaboration with Danida Business Contracts, in the Business and Contract Department (ERH), is responsible for managing the contractual relationship with the selected evaluators. EVAL must ensure that the evaluation is carried out in accordance with the Terms of Reference, Danida's evaluation policy and guidelines, and good evaluation practice. EVAL also holds the responsibility to ensure that evaluations are carried out in a cost-effective and timely fashion.

For larger evaluations and for joint evaluations, the Evaluation Management (EM) comprises of one or more representatives from participating evaluation departments, including EVAL and when relevant, institutions from partner countries or other donor agencies with a mandate to conduct evaluations.

During the preparation, the main tasks of the EM include drafting of the TOR and participation in tender processes, often with assistance from Danida Business Contracts, ERH, and most often supported by an independent tender consultant. The EM also provides relevant background documentation to the evaluation team and organises meetings with key informants at headquarters and in embassies (usually through video conferences).

An important function of the EM is to carry out quality control throughout the implementation of the evaluation process. In so doing, management seeks to ensure that the evaluation addresses all the evaluation questions listed in the ToR and that the evaluation report assembles findings based on solid evidence and high quality and consistent analysis; the report must also set out a clear link between findings, conclusions and recommendations. Moreover, the role of the EM includes sharing of draft reports among relevant stakeholders and calling for comments; engaging possible peer reviewer(s); and signing off on/approving final versions of the inception report, work plan, progress reports, and the evaluation report (Annex 2 describes the quality assurance and quality control processes).

The EM may also organise, facilitate and participate in workshops to discuss and disseminate (preliminary) findings and recommendations.

Once the evaluation is completed, EVAL presents the evaluation results and the follow-up as suggested by the responsible embassy or department to relevant Danish authorities, i.e. the Danida Programme Committee, the Danida Board, senior management and the Minister for Development Cooperation (Section 8.1 has further details on follow-up and dissemination activities).

## 6.3 Evaluation reference group

The Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) is usually advisory and comprises technical expertise of relevance for the evaluation in question. It may also include representatives from relevant embassies and departments in Copenhagen as well as resource persons from the Danish and/or the international resource base. In addition, the ERG may include partner country representatives; alternatively, a special reference group may be established in the partner country/countries involved.

The tasks of an ERG include advising on factual information and methodological issues, including commenting on the draft TOR and the draft evaluation report. The ERG engages at different stages of the evaluation process; participates in evaluation workshops (as relevant); and supports the dissemination and follow-up of the evaluation recommendations.

The group is in most cases “virtual”, communicating through email and video conferences. The virtual communication enables the participation of members based in different countries, thereby making possible a broader feedback on draft reports and other aspects of the evaluation. Virtual communication is usually complemented by at least one stakeholder workshop in the country/countries covered by the evaluation. Such workshops help validate evaluation findings and may also be seen to contribute to the control of the quality of the evaluation.

### 6.4 Evaluation team

The independence and impartiality of the evaluation team is a core requirement in establishing the credibility of an evaluation. Screening takes place as part of the tendering process to ensure that this requirement is met. Members of the evaluation team represent relevant professional areas; a mix of international and country specific expertise is often requested. National/regional team members are included in most evaluation teams. The team leader is responsible for the team’s performance, according to professional evaluation principles and standards.

The evaluation team prepares and carries out the evaluation according to the ToR and the contract. The team is accountable to the Evaluation Management; it is expected to conduct the evaluation process with a high degree of integrity and to apply the approved methodology to produce evidence-based and reliable findings, conclusions, lessons learnt and recommendations.

The evaluation team reports to the Evaluation Management regularly; organises stakeholder workshops in case study countries (when this is part of the ToR); participates in or organises validation stakeholder workshops towards the end of the evaluation process; and ensures systematic and documented processes for quality assurance.

### 6.5 Procuring the evaluation team

Danida, with the participation of the partner country and/or representatives of other agencies involved in the evaluation, procures the evaluation team through a tendering process. The contracting is typically with a consulting company or a research organisation. In cases of joint evaluations, the lead partner’s procurement policies and processes usually apply. Key selection criteria are the quality of the technical proposal of the tenderer, experience in evaluation, field-level competences, and experience relevant to the task.

The current system for procurement of services in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs implies that all assignments above 250,000 DKK are tendered. Between 250,000 DKK and 500,000 DKK, three organisations are invited by letter from EVAL to submit a tender. Above 500,000 DKK, the contract opportunity is announced and tendered, either through an open or through a restricted procedure (following a two-step process

described below). Contract opportunities above the EU threshold follow the EU procurement directive. The Contract Notice for such assignments is advertised on EU's Tender Electronic Daily (TED) for all interested parties to respond to.

Tenders are appraised on the basis of topical content, professional composition, competence of the evaluation team, and price. Tender procedures, according to the EU procurement directive, require a preparation period of about four months. A two-step process is often used. First, there is a short-listing of organisations among those who have forwarded an expression of interest; the short listing is based on an assessment of the references submitted of similar assignments previously carried out. On the basis of this assessment, a certain predetermined number (usually five) of prospective tenderers are invited to submit a proposal. The second step is the tender evaluation. The Contract Department's website has further details and guidelines.<sup>20</sup>

*A transparent and open procurement procedure is used for selecting the evaluation team.*

*The members of the evaluation team possess a mix of evaluative skills and thematic knowledge. Gender balance is considered and the team includes professionals from partner countries or regions concerned. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 3.1)*

In situations where conflict of interest could occur, potential evaluators are excluded from participation, if their participation puts into doubt the independence and impartiality of the evaluation. In addition, any firm or expert participating in the preparation or implementation of a project or programme may be excluded from participation in the tender, unless the involvement does not constitute unfair competition.

*Evaluators are independent from the development intervention, including its policy, operations and management functions, as well as intended beneficiaries. Possible conflicts of interest are addressed openly and honestly. The evaluation team is able to work freely and without interference. It is assured of co-operation and access to all relevant information. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 3.2)*

Decisions on whether a conflict of interest exists rest with the Tender Evaluation Committee and are made on a case-by-case basis. Companies and individuals submitting proposals/bids shall provide all necessary information of relevance to the decision-making process as part of their tender. They shall self-assess the likelihood of a conflict of interest occurring.

20) See 'Danida Business Contracts' at [www.um.dk](http://www.um.dk).



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## Chapter 7. Implementation and reporting

This chapter presents issues related to the steps of implementation and reporting in evaluations. Different phases of implementation are discussed, namely inception, field work, data collection and analysis. (See Box 10 for the sequence of the evaluation process.)

### 7.1 Inception phase

The inception phase provides an opportunity for the evaluation team, in agreement with the Evaluation Management, to further operationalise the ToR and finalise the evaluation approach and methodology. Key stakeholders may also be consulted. In most cases, the inception phase includes a documentation review, which helps strengthen the final development of the methodology. This includes clarification of potential sampling strategies and sampling criteria; the methods to maximize solidity and relevance of case studies; and the inclusion of relevant assumptions or requirements.

The inception phase may also be used to discuss issues related to the intervention logic including, e.g. the non-linear nature of intervention logics in complex interventions and how to conduct fieldwork in fragile situations. In such cases, methodological complexities, often combined with logistical challenges, must be taken into account. In fragile situations, poor or limited security may reduce the possibility of ensuring robust sampling. Alternative methods of data collection must be proposed at this stage.

At the end of the inception phase, the evaluation team produces an inception report, including a detailed operational plan for the conduct of the evaluation fieldwork. The report is usually shared with the ERG for comments. The Evaluation Management approves the final version of the report (see Annex 3 for a list of key issues to be covered by the inception report).

The evaluation team must apply and document its quality assurance process starting from this phase. Quality assurance must address key questions of methodology, e.g. reliability and validity of findings as well as security and confidentiality of data and information.

### 7.2 Fieldwork and data collection

The purpose of fieldwork (if part of the evaluation) is to systematically collect data and information from different relevant sources, using a solid sampling frame and methods for data collection. The data collection builds on the documentation analysis; it validates existing information, fills knowledge gaps, and ensures triangulation of information (see Section 7.3). A mix of methods is applied to compensate for the respective weaknesses and biases in each of the data collection methods.

Data collection methods may include interviews, focus group discussions, surveys, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, participatory appraisal methods, structured observation, review of log books, analysis of data generated through monitoring systems, and new data sets generated from existing surveys.



Based on initial data analysis, preliminary findings of facts are formulated and validated with concerned parties.

Data collection and choice of methods should take into account the specific challenges such as language and adaptation to different contexts. Similarly, cultural sensitivities should be considered and respected both in the choice of data collection methods and in the manner in which the evaluation team gathers information.

Because evaluations often produce findings that are subject to disagreements, the choice of methods of data collection and analysis is critical; it needs to be of high standard and well substantiated.

EVAL, as part of its quality control function, monitors that robust methodologies are applied, i.e. that evaluations use the methods that best answer the evaluation questions in order to ensure validity and reliability of findings and conclusions (see Annex 5 for further information on validity, reliability, sufficiency and evidence in data collection and analysis).

### 7.3 Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to transform data into credible evidence. The collected data, using a robust sampling strategy as well as thorough contextual knowledge, is the basis for the analytical process.

The first step in the analytical process involves the cleaning, verification and organisation of data, so that they meet standards of quality, i.e. validity and reliability. Data also need to be organised according to the evaluation criteria and questions.

The second step is to aggregate the data to constitute findings that are relevant to the evaluation questions at hand. Although judgment is involved in the formulation and selection, findings describe facts and do not constitute or contain evaluative judgments in themselves. At this step, the evaluation team needs to ensure that the collected data have been triangulated, i.e. cross verified with data emanating from different sources and/or different methods of data collection, and that such data are sufficiently robust for analysis. Testing the findings through different analytical tools may also strengthen the validity of the analysis.

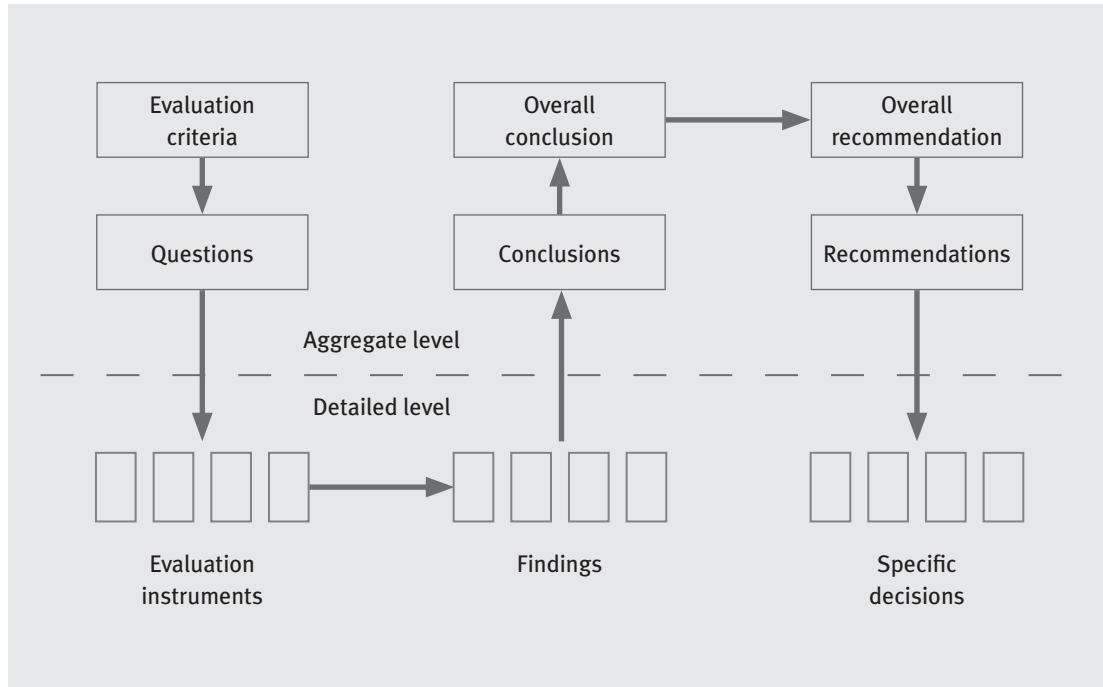
The third step in the analytical process is to categorise, contrast, compare, and interpret the findings, i.e. formulate conclusions. This entails judging findings in relation to a reasonable expectation, e.g. a standard, criterion, benchmark, target, indicator, or good practice.

The “lessons learned” from an evaluation present selected key findings and conclusions and assesses these in the broader perspective of generality and wider applicability.

The evaluation team translates the conclusions and lessons learned into main recommendations, which can be considered by management and subsequently translated into more specific and detailed decisions and follow-up. Recommendations must be well founded and clearly supported by the data analysis and the conclusions drawn in the evaluation. A dialogue with key stakeholders (e.g. during validation workshops) aims to enhance the

understanding of lessons learned and recommendations and thereby the usefulness of the evaluation. The final formulation of lessons learned and recommendations, however, rests with the evaluation team to ensure independent views.

### Box 10: Building sequential consistency of the evaluation process



## 7.4 Reporting

The reporting on an evaluation starts as early as the inception phase when a report outline is presented based on the ToR and the introductory discussions with EVAL. The reporting ends with the submission of the final evaluation report. The evaluation team is bound by contract to ensure that the contents of the ToR are adequately addressed in the evaluation report. Moreover, as stated in the OECD/DAC Quality Standards, reporting must also take into consideration the interests and background of the intended audience for the evaluation.

*The evaluation report can readily be understood by the intended audience(s) and the form of the report is appropriate given the purpose(s) of the evaluation.*  
(OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 3.5)

Throughout the process, it is important to keep in mind that the report should be based on findings from *all* stages of the evaluation process. It is a common pitfall that findings from fieldwork dominate at the expense of findings from document reviews and/or initial interviews with key resource persons for instance.

EVAL, other Danida staff, and the commissioning partners have no say on the evaluative judgements of the report. They assess the quality of the report and submit comments regarding factual information, methodological issues, conclusions, and clarity of recommendations, after which the team prepares the final draft version.

In accordance with the OECD/DAC Quality Standard, Danida emphasises and seeks short and precise reports, written in understandable and reader-friendly language.

The team leader is responsible for submitting the final report and summary in a structure and a layout that comply with Danida's formal requirements. In evaluations that are not managed by Danida other formal requirements may apply. Lay-out and writing guidelines for Danida are available and can be accessed online at <http://www.evaluation.dk>.

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## Chapter 8. Follow-up, learning and dissemination

This chapter provides an overview of MFA's internal follow-up procedures and the external dissemination of evaluations, as well as the learning aspects related to both.

### 8.1 Management response to evaluations and internal follow-up

When an evaluation has been finalized, a Follow-up Note is prepared and discussed in Danida's internal Programme Committee. This serves a dual purpose: First, the note provides the Programme Committee with information on the key findings and recommendations of the evaluation. Second, the note proposes a management response to the recommendations of the evaluation.

EVAL coordinates the preparation of Follow-up Notes, while the responsibility for the draft management response rests with the representation/department responsible for the programme (or multilateral support) being evaluated. The management response is finalised by the responsible representation/department, based on the discussions in the Programme Committee, and submitted to EVAL, which presents it to the chair of the Programme Committee for final approval.

A four-page summary of the evaluation, including a short version of the management response, is prepared in Danish. EVAL is responsible for the preparation of the Danish summary of the evaluation; the relevant embassy or department is responsible for the preparation of the Danish version of the management response.

Since evaluation plays a critical role in the learning cycle, the management of Danida continuously monitors how findings and recommendations of completed evaluations are followed-up. The Quality Assurance Department is responsible for reporting on a semi-annual basis to the Programme Committee on follow-up to evaluations completed within the previous two years.

All evaluations and Danish summaries of evaluation reports are distributed to relevant embassies and departments in Danida. It is the responsibility of Danida's operational departments and embassies to ensure that relevant past experience is built into the design and preparation of future activities.

*Recommendations are systematically responded to and action taken by the person(s)/body targeted in each recommendation. This includes a formal management response and follow-up. All agreed follow-up actions are tracked to ensure accountability for their implementation. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 4.2)*

EVAL also attends the presentation and discussions of Concept Notes on new programmes or new phases of existing programmes in the Programme Committee. EVAL participation aims to ensure inclusion of evaluation-based knowledge in the preparation of new programmes or phases of programmes. More details on the functioning of the Programme Committee can be found at [www.amg.um.dk](http://www.amg.um.dk).

In addition, “brown-bag lunches” are organised in the MFA to disseminate lessons learned and follow-up actions related to key evaluations. Presentation of evaluations also takes place at seminars for advisers within specific technical areas. Uptake of new knowledge based on evaluations may thus take place at individual level, but may also take place through a community of practice, such as a group of technical advisers with expertise in the topic. Similarly, internal meetings may be organised to discuss evaluation studies or other reports commissioned by EVAL.

## 8.2 External dissemination

External dissemination of evaluations takes place through publishing of evaluations and evaluation studies at the department’s website ([www.evaluation.dk](http://www.evaluation.dk)) and through distribution of hard copies of evaluation reports to relevant stakeholders, such as the Danida Board, members of the Council for Development Cooperation, MFA management, embassies and relevant departments plus relevant partners internationally and in specific partner countries. Information on upcoming and recently completed evaluations also takes place through distribution of the newsletter published by EVAL at regular intervals (normally twice a year).

Evaluation reports are distributed, together with a press release and a Danish summary, including the official Danish management response to the evaluation. Evaluation reports are also submitted to the database of the OECD/DAC Evaluation Resource Centre (DeREC).

EVAL contributes to international efforts towards developing methods for evaluation of development cooperation through, e.g. the organisation of international seminars or workshops and publishing of articles in international publications.

Other means of communicating evaluation-based knowledge include the organisation of public meetings in Denmark to present evaluations; lectures at universities in Denmark; and explaining the role of evaluation through video and film. In line with the communication strategy of the MFA, EVAL is exploring possibilities for increasing the use of social media in the communication of evaluation results in the future.

*The evaluation is designed, conducted and reported to meet the needs of the intended users. Conclusions, recommendations and lessons are clear, relevant, targeted and actionable so that the evaluation can be used to achieve its intended learning and accountability objectives. The evaluation is delivered in time to ensure optimal use of the results.*

*Systematic dissemination, storage and management of the evaluation report are ensured to provide easy access to all development partners, to reach target audiences, and to maximize the learning benefits of the evaluation. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 4.1)*

The external users of evaluations are a diverse group of persons and organisations located in Denmark, partner countries and the international community. They comprise authorities, the media, politicians, civil society, private sector associations, researchers, consultants and professional agencies, among others.

*The evaluation results are presented in an accessible format and are systematically distributed internally and externally for learning and follow-up actions and to ensure transparency. In light of lessons emerging from the evaluation, additional interested parties in the wider development community are identified and targeted to maximise the use of relevant findings. (OECD/DAC Quality Standards section 4.3)*

EVAL continuously assesses how evaluations are used. The main feedback on existing outreach includes use of evaluation in planning of new development interventions, in management of existing activities, in development of policies and strategies, and in training of staff members and external resource people.

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## Annex 1: Codes of conduct

### The evaluation management

- At the inception stage the Evaluation Management (EM) is responsible for briefing the evaluation team on the operations, the expected role of all parties involved in the process, relevant documents and data sources. After the draft report has been presented, all communication between the evaluation team and Danida staff and other stakeholders should go through the EM.
- The EM is required to react to all requests for assistance relating to situations in which the evaluation team feels their independence questioned or threatened. If the evaluation team encounters insufficient assistance or outright resistance during the evaluation process, including when carrying out the fieldwork, it is the responsibility of the EM to contact the persons involved and ensure that proper cooperation be established. In the extreme situation where comments can be interpreted as subtle or overt pressure against the evaluation team to achieve specific conclusions, the EM has a particular responsibility to take immediate action.
- If the evaluation team suspects mismanagement, corruption or other illicit practices, the evaluation team must inform the EM, which must ensure that the information is passed on to relevant departments or embassies for appropriate action.

### Danida Staff and other stakeholders responsible for the activities under evaluation

With the increasing alignment of Danish development cooperation with partner management structures and with the emphasis put on partner ownership, actors in partner countries such as line ministries, private sector actors, and civil society organisations are also, along with Danida staff, key parties to the evaluation process.

Other parties responsible for the activities under evaluation may include organisations in Denmark (e.g. Danish civil society organisations), multilateral organisations and other international institutions supported by Danida. These stakeholders have the complex role of being both the object of an evaluation, key resource persons during the evaluation, and/or users of the results. They have a key role in assuring the usefulness of evaluation findings for their own learning processes. They facilitate evaluations, and they comment on the reports by pointing out factual errors and inaccuracies.

- When facilitating evaluations by providing contacts, references, information about activities and logistical support to the evaluation team, Danida staff and other stakeholders are expected to respect the integrity of the evaluation team in making its own decisions about where to go and whom to see. They may certainly provide comments or background information on suggested sites for field visits and persons to be interviewed, but the final decision rests with the evaluation team in consultation with the EM.

- Danida staff and other stakeholders should assist with the identification of relevant documents, even if the material has not been specifically requested.
- If contributing to quality control of the report, Danida staff and other stakeholders should observe the right of the evaluation team to make conclusions and recommendations, which may not be shared by Danida.
- Reservations regarding the competence of evaluation team members, the quality of the fieldwork, the quality of analyses, etc. should be reported immediately to the EM.
- After the draft report has been produced, all contact between the evaluation team and stakeholders should go through the EM. If the evaluation team meets with stakeholders, the EM should be present, and all correspondence between the evaluation team and stakeholders should be copied to the EM.

### Evaluation teams

Independent evaluation teams carry out all evaluations and it is their responsibility to collect the information necessary to fulfil the tasks set out in the Terms of Reference for the assignment and to present findings, conclusions and recommendations in a well-structured and well-written report. The evaluation team prepares and undertakes the fieldwork and in this process consults with relevant Danida and partner staff as necessary.

Conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report are discussed with the EM, Danida staff and, in case of joint evaluations, also with staff from other agencies, partners and possibly a reference group, but it is the evaluation team who has the ultimate responsibility for conclusions and recommendations.

- The evaluation team should be prepared to engage in discussions with Danida staff and other stakeholders without perceiving any difference of opinions as a form of pressure. There is an inherent tension in any evaluation assignment, and the evaluation team should expect their interpretations to be challenged.
- Evaluation teams who believe that they have been subject to undue pressure or inappropriate behaviour from Danida staff or other stakeholders (including those responsible for the activities under evaluation) during fieldwork or while preparing the report, should report this immediately to the EM.
- It is the responsibility of the team leader to decide, whether it is appropriate for the EM and possible stakeholders to participate in meetings, interviews and field visits. Stakeholders may include Embassy staff, Danida advisers and company advisers, representatives of other donors, partner representatives, other parties responsible for the activities under evaluation, and others. Issues relevant to the team leader's decision include ensuring the impartiality of the evaluation, ensuring openness of discussions, and avoiding imbalance in numbers (too many 'evaluators' present can make stakeholders uncomfortable).
- If the evaluation team encounters or suspects corruption or other illicit practice, while carrying out their evaluation, it is their responsibility to report this to the



EM, which will ensure that Danida can take appropriate action. Only cases sustained by legally valid evidence can be reported in an evaluation report.

- During the preparation and the undertaking of the fieldwork, the evaluation team is responsible for informing the EM about the time schedule of the evaluation and the persons to be contacted and interviewed. This information ensures coverage of important sources of information and helps to avoid duplication and the evaluation becoming a burden upon a small group of key resource persons.
- After the draft report has been produced, the evaluation team should avoid any direct contact to Danida staff and other stakeholders without prior agreement with the EM. If the evaluation team meets with Danida staff, the EM should be present, and all correspondence between the evaluation team and Danida staff should be copied to the EM.
- The evaluation team should correct all factual errors and inaccuracies and make changes related to report structure, consistency, the analytical rigour, the validity of evidence, and requirements in Terms of Reference, as pointed out by the EM. However, the evaluation team should only agree to make changes to conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation that they regard as qualitative improvements. Where consultants disagree with changes proposed by the EM, other Danida staff, and other stakeholders, they must present counter arguments. In cases of serious disagreement, the alternative assessments and counterarguments by the evaluation team should be presented in the report, if appropriate as footnotes. In cases of minor issues, the consultant must explain in writing to the EM why suggested changes are not considered relevant or appropriate.
- Statements should not be made on behalf of the evaluation team if all team members have not had the opportunity to express their agreement. Unless disagreement has been clearly expressed in the report, all team members involved in an assignment are expected to be loyal to the conclusions of the report. If internal team disagreement has not been reported, it is not appropriate that team members subsequently criticise the quality or the conclusions of the evaluation after it has been published.
- A particular case of internal team disagreement regards the situation in certain partner countries, where criticism can have serious consequences for national members of the evaluation team. Therefore, the team leader should ensure that national consultants either endorse a report in its entirety or that their limited roles are clearly described in the report.
- Participation by the evaluation team in the dissemination of evaluation findings after the publication of the evaluation report is appreciated. If the evaluation team contributes to a public debate about the interpretation of the evaluation, however, this has to be agreed with the EM. Particular attention should be paid to the issue of confidentiality of information obtained during the evaluation process, and the evaluation team should not orally or in writing present information, which is not included in the report.

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## Annex 2: Quality Assurance and Quality control

Danida makes a distinction between quality assurance and quality control, and this separation is also used in the text below:

### Quality assurance -principle

Quality *assurance* is the responsibility of the evaluation team and the standards to be followed are laid down in the technical bid and subsequently in the contract with the selected evaluation team. Quality assurance by the evaluation team must ensure that the evaluation follows the OECD/DAC quality standards for evaluations and the Danida Guidelines for Evaluation (2012) including the lay-out guidelines.

### Minimum requirements in implementation

The evaluation team must:

Understand and conduct all processes of the evaluation according to OECD/DAC Quality Standards. This includes upholding the independence, impartiality of the team and i.e. addressing key questions of methodology, e.g. reliability and validity issues, as well as security and confidentiality of data and information systematically throughout the contract period.

Document its quality assurance processes in a transparent manner and be ready to share documentation of the quality assurance with EVAL.

Report to the Evaluation Management on a regular basis throughout the evaluation process e.g. by forwarding brief progress reports (or summary of progress in e-mails).

Quality assurance must be exercised throughout the evaluation process. It is the responsibility of the team to ensure that the procedures for quality assurance set out in the technical proposal and the contract with MFA, are adhered to before reports are submitted to EVAL.

### Quality control principle

EVAL conducts quality *control* of all evaluations. Quality control is exercised throughout the evaluation process.

The OECD/DAC standards of quality control are adhered to, but the exact nature of the quality control arrangements for evaluations depends on the scope and complexity, and is decided upon when organisation and management for a particular evaluation is established.

## Quality control implementers

The Evaluation Management is in charge of day-to-day management and quality control.

The Evaluation Reference Group (if established) is in most cases a technical and advisory body, which contributes to quality control through its oversight at particular stages of the evaluation.

External peer reviewers (engaged on most evaluations) are used to strengthen the quality control function in particular subject matters, but may also contribute to control of evaluation methodology, consistency of the analytical work conducted etc.

Participants in validation workshops may also contribute to the quality control of the evaluation.

## Quality control processes

Quality control is carried out throughout the evaluation process and should help ensure that:

The preparatory studies and Terms of Reference are coherent to ensure a clear logic between rationale, purpose and objectives and resources available for a planned evaluation. Tender procedures stipulate standards for quality assurance and clearly stipulate that these are part of the requirements of the tenderer. The tenderer's quality assurance set-up and approach is also rated as part of the technical proposal.

The principles of independence and impartiality of the evaluation team is adhered to right from selection to completion.

The inception report is coherent and the approach and methodology meets the OECD/DAC Quality Standards.

The fieldwork applies robust methodologies i.e. use methods that best answer the evaluation questions in order to ensure validity and reliability of findings and conclusions.

The evaluation report addresses all evaluation questions listed in the Terms of Reference and the evaluation report is drawn up on the basis of evaluation findings based on solid evidence, high quality and consistent analysis and with a clear link between findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Quality control also encompasses calling for comments to draft reports among relevant stakeholders and signing off/approval of final versions of the inception report, work plan, progress reports and the evaluation report.

The list above is illustrative rather than exhaustive.

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## Annex 3: Key issues to be covered by the inception report

The following outlines the requirements of the inception report. The report should include:

- An overall logic model of the intervention, depicting the linkages between resources (inputs), intervention activities (processes), intervention results (outputs or deliverables), intended outcomes (intervention objectives), overall impacts, and their relationships in terms of the criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact; an explanation of how the sustainability criterion is defined and operationalised.
- Relevant aspects of design and approach, the final evaluation methodology including discussion of sufficiency and appropriateness of methods and alternatives if need be, sampling and data collection strategy, analytical framework and reporting outline
- The hierarchy of evaluation questions starting from the general ones that are presented in the ToRs through to the specific ones that will produce data and information.
- A matrix indicating the nature and sources of evidence for each specific question.
- A schedule of activities.
- A communication and consultation plan (with stakeholders).
- In the case of evaluations with complex evaluation team organisation and logistics, e.g. joint evaluations, a systematic management plan that addresses key issues of management, coordination, authorities, responsibilities, etc.
- Draft outline of evaluation report.

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## Annex 4: Key issues to be covered by the evaluation report

Because the focus and types of evaluations vary there is no common format for reporting. However, EVAL expects the report to be consistent with the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards and the following principles:

- The main report is relatively short. It contains the aggregated information and highlights. All detailed information is referred to annexes.
- Information is organised in a simple format, which is easily accessible to the reader. This means that discussion of the evaluation criteria is a focus in the report.

The evaluation report consists of three levels of information. First, the executive summary is written as a self-contained paper that provides the bare essentials for decision-makers on background, major conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned. The second level is the main report including conclusions and recommendations (40-50 pages). The third level in the report is the annexes. These provide all information necessary to substantiate major conclusions and recommendations in the main report. The Terms of Reference, the team's itinerary, list of persons met, and list of documents used should also be annexed.

Danida's evaluation reports are published in print. Annexes are available on the Danida website.

An evaluation report *could* be structured as follows:

- Executive Summary (which covers most aspects of the main report but in abbreviated form).
- Introduction, with the background for and implementation of the evaluation as well as a presentation and discussion of the methodology used.
- Setting in which assistance interventions are implemented, in terms of geography, policy, sectors and organisations, as appropriate.
- Description of the planning, and implementation of development activities. This includes the presentation of objectives, target groups, components, financing, management, etc.
- Findings.
- Conclusions based on findings and analysis, including efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, and sustainability.
- Lessons learned.
- Recommendations.

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## Annex 5: Evaluation validity, reliability, sufficiency and evidence<sup>21</sup>

This annex explains the concept validity, reliability and evidence, which may be used as a checklist in evaluation processes and support the quality control and quality assurance processes.

### Validity

Validity is a measure of the extent to which, taken together, the evaluation's design, data collection methods and analyses provide a reasonable basis for conclusions about the evaluation's questions.

Some of the most common pitfalls of validity may be addressed and mitigated in the design phase. In a qualitative evaluation design this includes assessing the comprehensiveness of data sources, consider the cultural competence of data collectors and consider the adequacy of data analysis techniques and team capacity. In a quantitative design this includes considering whether random sampling is appropriate, the sampling size is sufficient and if there is a potential sampling bias. Consider whether key indicators have been properly identified and whether measures of them are likely to be accurate. Consider whether statistical procedures have been appropriately selected and whether there is sufficient expertise for their use<sup>22</sup>.

### Reliability

Reliability is a measure of the quality of measurement; information is reliable if the measurement procedure yields the same results if applied repeatedly. Reliability is a key factor for the quality of the evaluation and, as such, the evaluation team is expected to incorporate into its methodology ways of estimating the reliability of the data it gathers.

One of the most commonly used techniques for approximating the reliability of data is triangulation, applying the same measurement procedure to different sources to obtain data that can be compared for similarity or using different data collection methods with the same type of respondents.

There are different forms of reliability, i.e. where triangulation is applied to three different categories of data: verbal, documentary and observation; or the consistency of a measure is tested from one time to another, e.g. where the same household survey is administered at periodic intervals; or when it is tested to which extent different raters/observers give consistent estimates of the same phenomenon, e.g. an assessment of the fairness and freedom of elections by different observers.

The evaluation team is expected to consider the relationship, i.e. the trade-offs, between issues of validity and reliability, as part of the development of the methodology.

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21) This annex is in parts an updated version of a section in Danida: Evaluation Guidelines (2006).

22) Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., and Mabry, L., 2006: Strengthening the Evaluation Design and the Validity of the Conclusions. Chapter 7 in *Realworld Evaluation: Working under Budget, Time, Data and Political Constraints*, Sage Publications, California.

## Sufficient and appropriate evidence

When making choices about the amount and nature of data to gather, it is expected that the evaluation team will collect only the information required to answer the evaluation questions. Sufficiency has to do with the amount of information required to provide persuasive support for the contents of the evaluation report, i.e. will the collective weight of the evidence be sufficient to persuade a reasonable person that the observations and conclusions are valid, and the recommendations appropriate.

Some of the factors to consider when judging sufficiency are:

- The quality of the data, i.e. its relevance, reliability and validity;
- The significance of the finding and conclusion the data are intended to support, e.g. how important is it?
- How much assurance is intended, e.g. is the evaluation important for accountability purposes?
- What is the risk of making an incorrect observation or reaching an invalid conclusion?
- What is the cost of obtaining additional information in relation to its additional benefits, i.e. in terms of support for observations and conclusions?

Appropriateness of data includes questions of reliability and validity, but as well of relevance, i.e. the extent to which information bears a clear and logical relationship to the evaluation criteria and questions.

Data are commonly categorised as: verbal, documentary and observational; as a rule of thumb, observations are considered the most robust type of data followed by documentary and verbal.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK  
**DANIDA** | INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

2 Asiatisk Plads  
DK-1448 Copenhagen K  
Denmark

Tel +45 33 92 00 00  
Fax +45 32 54 05 33  
um@um.dk  
www.um.dk

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