



DAC Tokyo workshop on
Evaluation Feedback for
Effective Learning and Accountability

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

Reporting Performance for External
Accountability: DFID's Public
Service Agreement

Submitted by

'Department for International Development'
United Kingdom

Hosted by the Government of Japan
26-28 September 2000

Reporting Performance for External Accountability:

DFID's Public Service Agreement



Department for International Development (DFID)

Tokyo, September 2000

DFID's Public Service Agreement

What is it?

The Public Service Agreements... are the detailed statement of the Government's commitments for the next three years. They are agreements with the taxpayer, something for something, for the resources that are put in. We will continue to report our performance annually against these clear, measurable targets. Their achievement is critical to this Government's agenda.

Gordon Brown
Chancellor of the Exchequer

DFID's Public Service Agreement

Aim

- Elimination of Poverty

Objectives

- International Development Targets

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Performance Targets

- Poverty reduction: selectivity, PRSPs, coordination
- Global sustainable development: debt, conflict, environmental protection
- Health and education: top 10 recipients
- Value for money

DFID's Public Service Agreement

What is it for?

- UK's 'Modernising Government' agenda:
accountability for results
- 2000 Spending Review
- Departmental Report

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Strengths

- Improved external feedback and accountability through:-
- clear statement of 'SMART' objectives
- formalised external reporting and publication
- 'joined-up government': enhanced policy coherence through shared targets

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Limitations

Effective external feedback constrained by:

- 'simplistic' framework
- problems of measurement
- problems of attribution

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Opportunities

PSA helps to put performance assessment 'centre stage':

- better use of evidence for decisions on policy and resources
- links resources and performance
- enhanced public awareness

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Risks

- weaker horizontal and downward accountability?
- micromanagement by Treasury?
- targeting may oversimplify policy objectives?
- statistical focus may undervalue qualitative analysis and understanding of modalities and processes?

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Conclusions

Public Service Agreement will strengthen:

- feedback and external accountability for results
- integration of performance analysis into decisionmaking for policy and resources
- motivation and public support but
- needs careful management to avoid inflexible or mechanical application
- UK/'DFID-centric' approach
- creation of perverse incentives

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DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Aim - The elimination of poverty in poorer countries

Objectives and Performance Targets

Objective I: to reduce poverty through the provision of more focused and co-ordinated development assistance by the international community to low and middle income countries.

1. *An increased focus by DFID on poor countries, particularly those with effective governments pursuing high growth and pro-poor economic and social policies, as demonstrated by:*
 - (a) an increase in the percentage of DFID's bilateral programme going to poor countries, particularly those with favourable policy environments;
 - (b) an increase in the percentage of EC development assistance going to poor countries and;
 - (c) adoption and implementation of effective Poverty Reduction Strategies by 2004 in all countries accessing IDA high impact or adjustment lending.

Objective II: to promote sustainable development through co-ordinated UK and International Action.

2. *To promote the integration of developing countries into the global economy through co-ordinated UK and international action, including by:*
 - (a) relief of unsustainable debt by 2004 for all heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC) committed to poverty reduction, building on the internationally agreed target that three-quarters of eligible HIPCs reach decision point by end 2000 (joint target with Treasury) and;
 - (b) gaining international agreement on the integration of social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development into poverty reduction programmes.
3. *Improved effectiveness of the UK contribution to conflict prevention and management, as demonstrated by a reduction in the number of people whose lives are affected by violent conflict and by a reduction in potential sources of future conflict, where the UK can make a significant contribution (joint target with FCO and MoD).*

Objective III: improved education outcomes in key countries receiving DFID education support

4. *Improved education systems in our top ten recipients of DFID education support demonstrated by:*
 - (a) an average increase in primary school enrolment from a baseline established in 2000 of 75% to 81% on the basis of data available in 2004 and;

(b) improvements in gender equality in education, particularly primary education.

Objective IV: improvements in health outcomes in key countries receiving DFID health care assistance

5. Improvements in child, maternal and reproductive health in our top ten recipients of DFID health care assistance demonstrated by:

(a) a decrease in the average under-5 mortality rate from 132 in 1997 to 103 on the basis of data available in 2004;

(b) an increase in the proportion of births assisted by skilled attendants from a baseline established in 2000 of 43% to 50% on the basis of data available in 2004; and

(c) improved access to reproductive health care.

Value for Money

6. Improved value for money and effectiveness of projects in DFID's bilateral programme, as demonstrated by a year on year improvement in the index of their evaluated success.

The Government has adopted the International Development Targets as its long term strategic objectives. These provide milestones against which progress towards the elimination of poverty can be measured. DFID's PSA objectives and targets measure its own contribution towards these international goals.

The International Development Targets are:

- reducing by one-half in the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015
- universal primary education in all countries by 2015
- demonstrated progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women by eliminating gender disparity in primary and secondary education
- reducing by two-thirds the mortality rate for infants and children under age 5 and a reduction by three-fourths in maternal mortality, all by 2015
- access through the primary healthcare system to reproductive health services for all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than 2015
- implementation of national strategies for sustainable development in all countries by 2005, so as to ensure that current trends in the loss of environmental resources are effectively reversed at both global and national levels by 2015.

Progress against these objectives will also depend, among other things, on improvements in democratic accountability, protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Who is responsible for Delivery?

The Secretary of State for International Development is responsible for delivery of this PSA. The Department's target on conflict prevention arises out of the Conflict Prevention Cross-Cutting Reviews. The Secretary of State for International Development is jointly responsible for the delivery of this target and for the target on debt relief.



DAC Tokyo workshop on Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

External Feedback- Danida's Dissemination Vehicles

Submitted by

**'Danida'
Denmark**

**Hosted by the Government of Japan
26-28 September 2000**

**Workshop on Evaluation Feedback for
Effective Learning and Accountability**

**External Feedback -
Danida's Dissemination Vehicles**

Niels Dabelstein

**DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation
Tokyo, September 2000**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida



External Feedback - Why?

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida

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- Dual Purposes of Evaluation
- Learning
- Accountability/Documentation:

Evaluations shall provide political decision makers and the general public with professional documentation for the use and results of aid resources and also contribute to a better understanding of development aid, its potential and limitations as an instrument for economic and social change.

External Feedback - Multiple Target Groups

- Parliament
- Opinion makers/leaders
- General public
- Academics/researchers/students
- External Resource base
- NGOs
- Partners

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida

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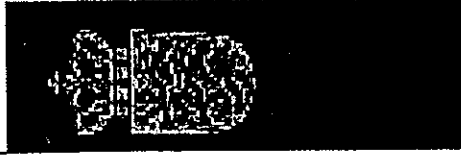


External Feedback - Vehicles

- Evaluation Report
- 4 page summary
- 25 page "popular version"
- Press conference/seminar
- Video/film
- EvS' annual report to Board
- Danida's annual report
- Danid@visen
- Public meetings/Professional Associations
- Lectures Universities/high Schools
- WWW

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External Feedback - Accountability

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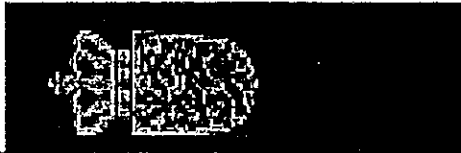
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- **Target Groups**

- Parliament
- Opinion makers/leaders
- General public

- **Vehicles**

- 4 page summary
- 25 page "popular version"
- Press conference/seminar
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- WWW



External Feedback - Learning

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- **Target Groups**

- Academics/researchers/students
- External Resource base
- NGOs

- **Vehicles**

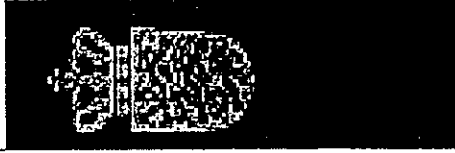
- Evaluation Report
- WWW
- 4 page summary
- Public meetings/Professional Associations
- Lectures Universities/high Schools



External Feedback - Partners

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- **Target Groups**
 - Developing Countries
 - Development Agencies

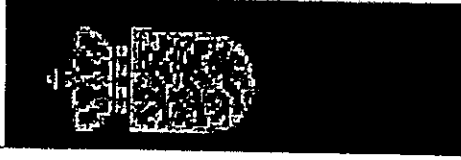
- **Vehicles**
 - Evaluation Report
 - 4 page summary
 - Participation
 - Video/film
 - Seminars/workshops
 - WWW

External Feedback

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Danida

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Does it make a difference?



Danida
The Evaluation Secretariat
List of Evaluation Reports

* is in course of preparation

Year	Evaluation	Title
2000	2000/4*	Rakai
	2000/3*	ENRECA
	2000/2*	Danish Support to Health
	2000/1*	Danish Import Promotion Office (DIPO)
1999	1999/11	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation
	1999/11 - 1	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 1, Synthesis Report
	1999/11 - 2	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 2, Justice, Constitution and Legislation
	1999/11 - 3	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 3, Elections
	1999/11 - 4	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 4, Media
	1999/11 - 5	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 5, Participation and Empowerment
	1999/11 - 6	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 6, Ghana
	1999/11 - 7	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 7, Guatemala
	1999/11 - 8	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 8, Mozambique
	1999/11 - 9	Danish Support to Promotion of Human Rights and Democratisation Vol. 9, Nepal

1999/10	Danish Support to the Health Sector in Bhutan
1999/9	Danish Humanitarian Assistance
1999/9 - 1	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.1, Synthesis Report
1999/9 - 2	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.2, Afghanistan
1999/9 - 3	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.3, Angola
1999/9 - 4	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.4, Caucasus
1999/9 - 5	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.5, Former Yugoslavia
1999/9 - 6	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.6, The Great Lakes
1999/9 - 7	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.7, Sudan
1999/9 - 8	Danish Humanitarian Assistance Vol.8, UN and International Organisations
1999/7	Danish Development Assistance to Egypt
1999/6*	Bistanden gennem EU - Et sammendrag
1999/5	United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF)
1999/4	WWF: The Convention on Biological Diversity
1999/3	Danish Development Assistance to Bangladesh, volume I & II
1999/2	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme Bangladesh
1999/1	The UNDP Programme for Accountability and Transparency (PACT)

All the Report can be commissioned at *Bech Distribution*

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Statement Prepared
by
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for the

Tokyo Workshop of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation
Workshop on "Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability"
Tokyo, 26 - 28 September 2000

Session
on

"Making feedback more effective - Involving partners more effectively"

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the outset, may I express my heartfelt thanks to the Government of Japan for the honour bestowed on me through the kind invitation to participate in this distinguished forum, and my sincere gratitude for the peerless hospitality and excellent arrangements made for the meeting.

The Government of the Lao PDR is pleased with the opportunity it was offered to express, within the context of this very useful conference, its deep conviction on the necessity of involving partners more effectively in the process of planning and evaluation of international aid.

We believe that there is an intimate relationship between planning and evaluation feedback, and we do not want to dissociate these activities, because they are at the heart of our approach to sustainable and people-centred development.

It was thus most important for my Government to launch a dialogue process of a new type with our partners in development. Indeed, in 1999, my Government decided to convert the traditional Roundtable Meetings, which are held every 2 and a half to 3 years, into a process - the RT Process 2000-2002 whose purpose is to achieve, on the basis of a mutual understanding and in-depth policy debates, 3 main objectives:

- i) a greater correlation between our national development priorities and the resource mobilisation needed to implement them,
- ii) improved national development planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, by continuously integrating the lessons learned through an effective evaluation feedback mechanism, and
- iii) a greater harmonisation between the donors' own funding cycles, our constantly evolving national priorities, and the new insights gained from evaluation and its feedback.

Involving our partners more effectively in the planning and evaluation aspects of the development activities that they are funding is thus an integral part of this process. It is, indeed, essential for us to improve the return on public investments, in view of our own need to be accountable

for them, and to strengthen core capital investments in order to prevent the deterioration of our assets due to insufficient maintenance, and to ensure that insufficient operational resources do not compromise their usefulness. This is one of our greatest concerns.

For this reason, we are increasingly insisting on greater accountability as far as foreign-funded public investments are concerned. We also perceive as necessary a greater participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of international co-operation, in order to gear future involvement to the new insights gained and the lessons drawn out through appropriate and timely feedback of evaluation results. At the same time, we have to consider how aid could be better delivered, in accordance with our evolving needs and on-going decentralisation, and with the need for more synergy and multiplier effects in our undertakings. In our view, this can only be achieved through a continuous dialogue based on the integration, in a most timely way, of the evaluation feedback received into the improvement of project implementation and programme elaboration.

From this point of view, our expectations coincide with the concerns expressed in the remarkably well-documented Synthesis Report that we have received from the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation, sponsored by the Government of Japan, and for which we are most grateful.

Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Roundtable Process I have just referred to, and which extends over 2 years, is in our view a most appropriate way to ensure that significant results from evaluations are fed back into decision-making.

Because we felt the need for a much closer dialogue with our partners on the strategic visions and longer-term coherence of our strategies, but also because we felt a need to have a better perception of our partners' own evaluation and feedback mechanisms, in view to use feedback results towards the improvement of our development strategies and programmes, in accordance with our own priorities that we have launched this process – which can be seen as an institutionalised dialogue and exchange forum.

So far, in-depth policy dialogues on our government-owned long-term strategic visions and coherence, have already been held for some of the major sectors contributing towards an in-depth improvement of the living standards of our multi-ethnic population, i.e. contributing towards poverty alleviation, namely public health, education, rural development, road infrastructure, agriculture, forestry and macro-economic management.

At this point in time, we are particularly interested in feedback at *strategy, policy and programme levels*. Indeed, since 80 per cent of our public investment programme is funded by the international donor community, it is crucial that the recommendations stemming from evaluations, and the insights gained through strategy and policy experiences are taken into consideration. Timely feedback at this level is critical since the strategic visions that we have prepared in the fundamental sectors that I have mentioned before will serve as references to reach our 2020 goal, namely quitting the Group of the Least Developed Countries (LDC). For this reason, we cannot over-emphasise the need to integrate all feedback from evaluations into our strategies and policies.

In this context, let me stress that we consider evaluation feedback as an indispensable component of the learning process that will guide us in our development endeavours. However, especially at the policy and strategy levels, we do not have yet all the necessary indicators, for instance, to assess our progress towards poverty eradication. We are in the process of elaborating some qualitative and quantitative indicators, which will help us monitor and evaluate our progress on the policy and strategy levels. We are also defining institutional arrangements, which will help us integrate in the

best possible way feedback into our policy making. As most of our development partners are working with us towards poverty elimination it will be even more important in the future to ensure a joint understanding with our partners in terms of evaluation and the possible feedback from which we could benefit.

This is one of the issues that we will discuss with our partners in October of this year, when, within the context of the Roundtable Process, my Government will hold a policy debate on precisely some of these issues.

As I said, the *policy and strategy levels* are our current priorities, in terms of integrating evaluation feedback into our decision making process. But this is not to say that we are not interested in benefiting from the feedback at the *project level*. Quite the contrary. Presently, we are exploring with different donors the appropriate level for the best integration of possible feedback stemming from evaluations.

In this context, we are giving utmost importance to our decentralisation policy whereby provinces are now becoming strategic units with responsibilities including international co-operation; districts are the new planning and budgeting units, and villages as implementing units are now required to set up evaluation systems to monitor the implementation of their development plans.

New challenges are arising with the decentralisation process presently underway, especially with regard to the needed capacity-building. But we believe that it will be much easier, once decentralisation is a fact, to integrate evaluation feedback into new undertakings, to check the replicability of successful experiences, or, in the case of mid-term evaluations, to adjust the next steps of the project according to the insights gained. It will be much easier and much more efficient, indeed, simply because the management and feedback levels will be closer to the decision-making process in terms of planning and implementing, the more so that, in the future, beneficiaries themselves should be increasingly associated with the feedback of evaluation results.

Other challenges with respect to evaluation feedback and involving partners more efficiently relate to the fact that different donors intervene in the same sectors. This asks, in principle, for a much greater symbiosis among them in order to increase synergy and cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences in a given sector in the best interest of the beneficiaries in our country, but also in the best interest of the taxpayers of the donor community.

Still another challenge, as we see it, consists in feeding evaluation results back into the linkages that could be established between various interventions in different sectors by the same donor. We have already tried to respond to this challenge in the case of our co-operation with some of our partners, where the overall coherence within the co-operation programme benefited from a substantive evaluation feedback.

What, in our view, will be all-important is to devise an appropriate evaluation format allowing for meaningful feedback, and to formulate the relevant questions which would favour an efficient feedback mechanism and optimise its integration in the national decision-making process.

This, however, requires close co-operation, right from the conception and inception stages, between all the stakeholders involved, especially at the provincial and district levels - something we would like to achieve.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Because I see that my time is running out, let me stop here by saying how useful the reading of the Synthesis papers has been and how much we appreciate the initiative taken by the organisers to

discuss these most important topics in such a distinguished forum and a most constructive environment.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express our deep gratitude to all of our development partners to whom we owe so much of our progress already, and in particular, with regard to the great generosity and genuine empathy that we enjoy from the Government and people of Japan. Our special thanks go to JICA and other agencies with whom we are linked with a most fruitful co-operation.

Thank you very much for your attention.



**DAC Tokyo workshop on
Evaluation Feedback for
Effective Learning and Accountability**

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

Evaluations- for whom and for what purpose?

Submitted by

**'Swedish International Development
Cooperation Agency'
Sweden**

**Hosted by the Government of Japan
26-28 September 2000**



Sida Evaluations Newsletter

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Evaluations – for whom and for what purpose?

Background

Most public and private organizations nowadays subscribe to the importance of regularly evaluating their activities. Evaluations are seen as a tool for assessing the merits or value of an activity. The knowledge gained from evaluations is then supposed to be fed back into the organization and its learning loops. The outcome of the process is an improved production of goods and services. International development cooperation is no exception from this pattern. For many years, donor agencies have had an active approach to evaluation. Sida has an elaborate evaluation policy to guide the agency and its various departments in their evaluation related work. Sida also has a central evaluation office (UTV), independent of operational Sida, which not only conducts its own evaluations, but is also expected to advise and assist the departments on matters of evaluation theory and methodology.

Evaluations are done for several reasons, and to serve different interests. For the purpose of *learning*, evaluations are supposed to produce knowledge primarily for the use of those directly concerned with the activities reviewed, to make the development efforts more relevant, effective and efficient. With a view to *accountability or control*, evaluation is an instrument for documenting the use and result of Swedish development assistance. These considerations are central elements of Sida's evaluation policy. Determining the primary objectives of a planned evaluation has important implications for its design, execution and use.

The study

One of the thematic areas recurrently dealt with by Sida-UTV is organizational change and learning in Sida. The study presented here forms part of that theme. It maps the nature of the evaluation process and explores in depth the prevailing usefulness of evaluations

This issue of *Sida Evaluations Newsletter* focuses on the actual process and use of evaluations in Swedish development cooperation, as they are planned and commissioned by Sida's operative departments. Featured is a presentation of a two-phased study, "Using the Evaluation Tool", initiated in late 1996 by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal

for Sida and its collaborating partners. The full study consists of two separate reports, the first entitled *Using the Evaluation Tool. A survey of conventional wisdom and common practice at Sida* (Sida Studies in Evaluation 97/1), the second *Are Evaluations Useful? Cases from Swedish development cooperation* (Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1). The study was carried out by a team of consultants, led by Jerker Carlsson of Andante Consultants AB, Sweden, with participatory inputs in both reports from Sida-UTV staff (see title boxes).

The first report, published in mid-1997, analyses the evaluation process within Sida focusing on how an evaluation is initiated, planned and carried out. It also gives an idea of how the Sida programme officer assesses the quality and usefulness of evaluations managed by him/her, but only briefly touches on the involvement of other stakeholders. The study is based on a sample of 30 evaluations. The data was collected through in-depth interviews with Sida programme officers and a survey that was sent out to Sida staff members.

In the second report, completed in spring of 1999, the focus of the study was shifted to the field and various stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluation process, as well as their assessment of the usefulness of evaluations. This part is based on a sample of 9 cases out of the previous 30 evaluations, selected with the criterion that there had been some form of attempt to involve stakeholders. The purpose of this was to enable an assessment of the quality of stakeholder representation in evaluations that by design tried to involve stakeholders, thus facilitating a discussion about the possibilities of incorporating the concepts of "partnership" and "ownership" in practical evaluation design. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with local stakeholders, selected from the "Persons met" lists in the respective evaluations, in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia.

Audit (UTV), the purpose of which has been to map and critically analyse the evaluation process in Sida and to explore Sida's and its collaborating partners' use of evaluations.

At the end of this issue is a presentation of another recent study, also commissioned by UTV, which attempts to assess ex-post the impact of a major evaluation.

Although the two separately conducted parts of the study differ somewhat in approach, focus and method, the study findings can be presented under four major questions which permeate both studies: (1) How and why are evaluations initiated? (2) How is the evaluation process managed, from the setting of a purpose, the decision to evaluate and the commissioning of a study? (3) How are the results from this process used? (4) Do evaluations meet acceptable standards of quality? Question (1), (2) and (4) are primarily discussed in the first report, while question (3) is largely the subject matter of the second report.

Findings

1 How and why are evaluations initiated?

Why does Sida carry out evaluations? Sida's evaluation policy clearly answers this question - in theory. Investigating the real reasons, the study presents a somewhat different picture. Sida is a decentralized organization with extensive room for programme officers to influence decision making, including that of initiating evaluations. Study responses from programme officers suggest that the initiative to evaluate a project often rests on rather shallow grounds, the most common reason given being that this has been stipulated in the project agreement. This being as it should be, what is often lacking is a carefully prepared and explicit evaluation purpose, understood and agreed by all major stakeholders. The study indicates that an unclear purpose reduces the usefulness of an evaluation.

In cases where learning was a stated purpose, it was invariably unclear as to who should learn, why they should learn and how they should learn. The study stresses that in order for evaluations to be useful there must be clear ideas not only on "why" and "for whom", but also on priority issues that should be treated and how evaluation results are expected to be used. This is a central prerequisite for good use. Inclusion of an evaluation in a project agreement is no guarantee of it being used.

2 How is the evaluation process managed?

The evaluation process is largely managed by Sida and the programme desk officer. Recruitment of an evaluation team takes place in Stockholm, sometimes in consultation with the partner organization and/or the Swedish embassy in the partner country. All evaluations are assigned to external consultants. By choosing a particular evaluator, the study points out, you also choose a particular perspective, based on that person's values and assumptions, which affects the evaluation, and sometimes even the drift of the conclusions.

The study finds that evaluators are largely identified with the assistance of colleagues, rather than selected on the basis of competitive bidding, and most are well known to Sida from earlier assignments and evalua-

tions. This practice often leads to an informal interaction between the evaluator and the client that can, the study claims, easily have the effect of disturbing an already unbalanced relationship between the donor and various local stakeholders.

In discussing Sida's management of the evaluation process, the study is particularly critical when it comes to the distribution of the evaluation report. The final report is distributed to a limited, largely Sida-based group of stakeholders. It is a sad fact, the report holds, that in the collaborating country, few stakeholders have access to the results they played a part in producing.

3 How are evaluation results used?

Findings in the first study report indicate that recommendations are most often accepted by programme officers. In 75 per cent of the cases analysed, the recommendations had also, according to the programme officers, led to concrete results. When asking the same question to other stakeholders a different and a more complex picture on utilization emerged.

Many stakeholders, implementors included, are not even in a position to use the evaluation findings and recommendations, for the simple reason that they never see them. According to the study, the draft report is normally circulated only to the same, fairly small group of Sida-based people that were consulted in connection with the initiative to start the evaluation. In about 50 per cent of the cases (15 out of 30 evaluations) the draft was sent to the main cooperation partner in the partner country, such as a subject ministry or a parastatal, for comment. People working directly with implementation very seldom have access to evaluation recommendations and findings. The further away you are from the centre (in terms of decision making), the less information you get on evaluation findings and recommendations.

The evaluations analysed were used in the various ways and for the various purposes detailed and discussed in the second report. In general, the analysis confirms current knowledge on various types of evaluation use. Thus, evaluations are often expected to lead to direct operational or *instrumental use*, in the sense that recommendations are expected to be directly transferred into improved activities and operations. However, instrumental use turns out to be much less common than other types of use, such as *ritual use*, *no use* and *conceptual use*. The latter implies that stakeholders get new ideas and insights from an evaluation that may lead them to think (strategically) about alternative ways of doing things. Evaluations are often used, the evaluators find, as a means for stakeholders to conduct their dialogue. Stakeholders rarely see an evaluation as contributing to any new knowledge.

"An evaluation is useful when stakeholders find something in the evaluation which they can put to use according to their own interest and needs." The study claims that, even with this modest definition of usefulness, evaluations are useful only to a limited group of stakeholders at the centre. For a majority of stakeholders the evaluation process could just as well have been left undone. The main factor behind this strong statement, the report holds, is Sida's dominance over the whole evaluation process. This limits the possibilities of estab-

Are Evaluations Useful?

Cases from Swedish Development Co-operation

**Jerker Carlsson
Maria Eriksson - Baaz
Ann Marie Fallenius
Eva Lövgren**

Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1

**Department for Evaluation
and Internal Audit**

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Sida Studies in Evaluation is a series concerned with conceptual and methodological issues in the evaluation of development cooperation. It is published by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. Reports may be ordered from:

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The views and interpretations expressed in this report are the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida.

Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1
Commissioned by Sida, Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit.
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Registration No.: UTV-1997-0025
Date of Final Report: May 1999
Printed in Stockholm, Sweden 1999
ISSN 1402 - 215X

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Are Evaluations Useful?

~ Cases from Swedish development cooperation
Jerker Carlsson, Maria Eriksson-Baaz, Ann Marie Fallenius,
Eva Lövgren
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1

lishing any felt ownership of the evaluation on the side of the cooperating partners, and thus of securing any constructive use.

4. Are evaluation reports of acceptable quality?

Interviewing programme officers in the first study, the evaluators found that most of them were quite positive to the outcome of the evaluation process, in the reviewed cases, believing that the evaluators had arrived at reliable conclusions and that the project had been given fair and adequate treatment. At the same time, they found the reports relatively weak on new ideas and practical usefulness. This programme officer opinion of quality highly contrasts with the study team's own assessment of the same evaluations. Based on a standardized set of quality criteria, quality was found to be significantly less than desired. In particular, the evaluations were found to be methodologically weak. Basic quality criteria such as reliability and validity could rarely be met.

Evaluation quality, however, is often much more than the report itself, the study notes. The report is only a manifestation of a multifaceted process, which may contain a number of experiences for active participants in the process. Looking into the process affords new insights as to what quality is all about. One of the most significant findings in the second sub-study was that so many stakeholders, most frequently project staff and beneficiaries, were excluded from the evalua-

tion process. They had no say in it, and they were never in a position to make use of the evaluation findings. Apart from the ethical aspects on not informing or hearing people affected, the study discusses a number of reasons why improved stakeholder involvement may be expected to lead to enhanced evaluation quality, not least in terms of better accuracy and facilitating a learning process.

Main conclusion and recommendations

The overall conclusion of the study is that the typical Sida evaluation is mainly a concern of Sida itself. The other stakeholders, particularly those in the collaborating country, rarely have any use of the evaluation. They have very little say concerning what is going to be evaluated, the questions to be asked and the selection of evaluators. This adversely affects the quality of the evaluation process as a whole, and particularly on the use of the evaluation findings and recommendations. Sida's evaluation practices do not reflect a true application of its overall policy, the cornerstones of which are partnership and local ownership of the projects and programmes supported.

Sida should actively attend to this lack of coherence in ways that will enhance the quality, use and learning impact of evaluations. The report discusses a set of measures that can facilitate a change in this direction. Recommendations to Sida include *inter alia* the development of a consistent strategy on participatory evaluation methods, and utilization being made the point of departure for Sida's guidelines (manual) on evaluation work. Sida should be pro-active in involving representatives of the partner country in the process of initiating and managing evaluations. ■

Learning from an evaluation: an ex-post study of stakeholder responses

Background

In 1994 Sida commissioned a major, first-ever evaluation of Swedish government support to development cooperation through Swedish non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The dual purpose was to get feedback on the effects of this type of aid and to support the ongoing capacity development amongst the NGOs towards enhanced effectiveness. The evaluation (entitled *Development by Proxy - An evaluation of the development impact of government support through Swedish NGOs*) was carried out by an international team of consultants led by Roger Riddell, Overseas Development Institute (ODI), London, using a relatively high degree of consultation with a selection of the NGOs at all stages of the process, from evaluation design to the dissemination of results. A main finding of the team was that most NGOs were good at achieving project level targets, but when judged against a set of criteria for long-term development (pov-

erty alleviation, innovation and replicability, learning and capacity building, sustainability etc) results were less encouraging.

The study - findings and conclusions

What has been the impact of this, the so called Proxy Evaluation on different stakeholders in the Swedish 'NGO system' (i.e. the Ministry for Foreign Affairs,

Managing the NGO Partnership - An assessment of stakeholder responses to an evaluation of development assistance through Swedish NGOs
Claes Lindahl, Elin Björkman, Petra Stark, Sundeep Waslekar and Kjell Öström
Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit
Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/4

Posttidning B

Avsändare: Infocenter
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Sida, a few hundred NGOs at different levels and their local counterparts), and what are the reasons or determinants for any such impact? These are the main questions addressed in a study commissioned by Sida-UTV in mid-1998, almost four years after the dissemination of the Proxy Evaluation report.

The overall purpose of the study, entitled *Managing the NGO Partnership - An assessment of stakeholder responses to an evaluation of development assistance through Swedish NGOs* (Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/4) was to promote and guide the learning process towards improved accountability, effectiveness and impact of Swedish NGO development assistance funded by Sida, an additional purpose being to identify any lessons learned for Sida in conducting evaluations. The study was carried out in the second half of 1998 by a team of consultants led by Claes Lindahl, Management Perspectives International (MPI), Stockholm. It builds on a mail survey of a sample of fifty Swedish NGOs, documentary research, and interviews with a range of actors (including some at field level).

The study finds that within the group of thirteen major NGOs with which Sida has long-term agreements and funding arrangements, there is clear awareness of the Proxy Evaluation. Several of these so called framework NGOs, many of them umbrella organizations, report that they have also used the evaluation findings actively as inputs in internal discussions and ongoing broader debates on development issues, such as sustainability and the application of management tools. Such *conceptual use* has contributed to overall strategic thinking and possibly also to a change in policies.

However, among the non-framework NGOs, constituting the vast majority of NGOs and receiving Sida funds via the framework organizations, the degree of awareness of the Proxy Evaluation is far less. The survey indicates that a majority of them have never even heard of the evaluation, and those that do know something about it have no perception of any impact from it on their work. The study finds this raises doubts as to how well Sida's "decentralized system" for managing the NGO support functions.

The impact on the Swedish government's management of NGO support is, the report says, considerable. The Ministry, seeing the Proxy Evaluation as providing facts and knowledge in an area earlier largely based on beliefs, changed its instructions to Sida concerning sup-

port to NGOs towards stronger goal-orientation. Sida claims that the Proxy was instrumental in constructively opening up the relationship and cooperation between the NGOs and Sida. It also affected the joint work on formulating new Sida guidelines for NGO support.

The study discusses some of the key determinants of evaluation impact. The consultation and dissemination process, together with the professionally high credentials of the evaluation team, clearly contributed to the awareness and impact found among central actors. However, a perceived lack of validity and relevance to NGO concerns may have reduced impact; in the study it is argued that the Proxy Evaluation contains unverified generalizations. Further, according to the study, the malfunctioning of the 'NGO system', with framework and non-framework organizations, seems to have seriously hampered any impact beyond the central actors.

A major lesson from the Proxy Evaluation, the study says, is that the evaluation process is at least as important as the evaluation itself. A consultative and participatory process - consultations with stakeholders and actors during the planning of the evaluation study, interaction with them during the actual study and especially the dissemination of results - stimulates discussions and allows the evaluation to function as a forum for interaction, even when specific findings and recommendations are not fully shared. This is essential in order to create a condition for change and impact. The Proxy Evaluation, the study claims, was an important step in a long-term process of increasing interaction, cross-organizational learning and cooperation between the Swedish NGOs and Sida.

One of the main recommendations by the evaluators is that Sida review its "decentralized management system" for support to NGOs, in terms of how and to what extent lessons learned, methodological development, etc. trickle down to the majority of Swedish NGOs. This study should include, it is suggested, an assessment of the (cost-)effectiveness of the official development assistance through Swedish NGOs, based on the specific and varying features and merits of the different types of NGOs. This is to a large extent still unknown, the report holds - in spite of the Proxy Evaluation. Another recommendation is that Sida put more effort into assessing the validity and reliability of evaluations. ■



Sida

October 1999

Sida Evaluations Newsletter is published by the Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. Publisher: Ann Marie Fallenius. The views and interpretations expressed in presented reports are those of the authors and should not be attributed to Sida. Comments and subscription enquiries may be addressed to the editor: Mr Claes Bennedich, Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, telephone: (+46) 8 698 5447, fax (+46) 8 698 5610, e-mail: claes.bennedich@sida.se. The Newsletter is also available on Internet; www.sida.se

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Executive Summary

This report forms part of the study "Using the Evaluation Tool", initiated by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. The purpose of the study is to analyse the evaluation process as it currently works in Swedish development co-operation. It attempts to broaden our knowledge of the way in which evaluations are initiated, produced and, finally, distributed and put to use.

This study is concerned with three questions:

- * *How are evaluations used by various stakeholders in development co-operation and how do different stakeholders perceive their usefulness?*
- * *How do different stakeholders participate in the evaluation processes and how can stakeholder participation affect utilisation?*
- * *How can the usefulness of evaluations be improved and what are the factors determining utilisation?*

A sample of 9 evaluations/projects was selected for this study.¹

It is no exaggeration to say that there is still some way to go before the typical evaluation process provides a good starting point for a broad utilisation of evaluations results. There is, across the board, a significant disregard of the critical factors which determine whether an evaluation will be relevant to all stakeholders. An evaluation continues to be a concern for a very limited proportion of all those who have an interest in a project and are affected by its outcome.

The evaluations analysed in this study have been used in various ways and for various purposes. It is discouraging to find that the general pattern has been that *the further away you are from the centre of the project in terms of power and involvement, the less information you receive on evaluation recommendations and findings*. This means that officers at Sida and, in most cases, officers occupying central positions within the major co-operation partner (i.e. the ministries) do get access to the evaluation report and can act. Stakeholders further away from the project centre very seldom have a chance of acting on the evaluation. There were two reasons for this: 1) they never received any feedback on the findings and recommendations from the evaluation; 2) they never had the power to act on the evaluation findings, even if they wanted to because they did not have access to the findings.

We found that those stakeholders who do use the evaluation rarely do so instrumentally. Other types of use are much more common - conceptual use, for example. The results of evaluations are supposed to trickle down into various decision-making processes and result in changes which are concerned more with strategies of doing things than with more immediate operational matters.

-
- 1 *Evaluation of the Small Business Development Programme in Northern Namibia*, by Sahlin, A.
 - 2 *Rural Village Water Supply Programme - Botswana*, by Valdelin, J. et. al Sida Evaluation 96/10
 - 3 *Botswana Road Safety Improvement Programme* by Davey, R. Sida Evaluation 96/43
 - 4 *Water Supply System in Dodota*, Sida Evaluation 96/23 by Olsson, B., Judith Narro, Negatu Asfaw, Eneye Tefera, Amsalu Negussie
 - 5 *Building Research Capacity in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/9 by Thulstrup, E.W., M. Fekadu, A. Negewo
 - 6 *Support to the Education Sector in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/27, by Valdelin, J. Michael Wort, Ingrid Christensson, Gudrun Cederblad
 - 7 *Curriculum Development in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/40 by Palme, M., Viggo Kilborn, Christopher Stroud and Oleg Povov
 - 8 *HESAWA. Health through Sanitation and Water - Sida supported programme in Tanzania*, Sida Evaluation 97/12 by Smet, J., Kathleen Shordt, Pauline Ikumi, Patrick Nginya
 - 9 *National Soil and Water Conservation Programme - Kenya*, Sida Evaluation 96/25 by Tiffen, M., Raymond Purcell, Francis Gichuki, Charles Gachene, John Gatheru
-

Using evaluations for legitimising decisions already taken is common, as is using evaluations for ritual flag waving.

The fact that other types of use than the conventional instrumental use are so dominant suggests that evaluations are not "pieces of objective evidence". Rather the evaluations seem to form part of an already ongoing process of dialogue between the stakeholders in development co-operation.

There are few examples of evaluations actually contributing something new in terms of knowledge. Neither the issues, the questions or the answers were new to the stakeholders. They had been discussed before by other means and perhaps in other ways. The evaluation repeated/reminded them of critical issues. The evaluation became an instrument, a tool, for stakeholders to use in their regular dialogue.

Evaluations are situated in the context of various stakeholders' interests. They are by nature political. There are always different stakeholders with different interests who try to influence the evaluation in the direction of their interest. From this it follows that evaluations cannot be seen as neutral or objective or as representing some outside neutral perspective. In addition to this, the evaluators themselves have values and assumptions of their own which they bring to the evaluation. By choosing a particular evaluator you also choose a particular perspective, a preference concerning how things should be done and even concerning the general drift of the conclusions.

The fact that evaluations are influenced by various stakeholders could be seen as problematic. Our conclusions, however, is that this can never be avoided. It is in the nature of all evaluations in all kinds of contexts. However, it becomes a problem when the evaluation arena is characterised by dominance arising out of dependency. Sida possesses considerable strength as donor in relation to most recipient governments and it does not hesitate to use the evaluation function to further its interests. It is not surprising that almost all of Sida's co-operation partners saw the evaluations as a way for Sida to convey its interests and concerns. The conclusion drawn from this study is that evaluations are useful to a very limited group of stakeholders. For a majority of stakeholders the evaluation process could just as well have been left undone.

The evaluations analysed in this report are quite far removed from the key Swedish policy concepts of "partnership" and "ownership". There is not much openness and clarity about the way in which interests make themselves felt in an evaluation. Mutual trust is not what immediately comes to mind. In terms of adherence to the present policy framework of Swedish aid, the evaluation process as we know it is in dire need of reform.

1. Purpose of the study

Evaluations have been an institutionalised part of the activities of aid agencies since the 1970's. They are standard procedure in almost all bilateral and multilateral aid agencies. Numerous project, programme, sector and thematic evaluations are conducted each year, and quite a substantial amount of money is channelled into the evaluation function in the various aid organisations. Evaluations are widely assumed to serve an important function for the work of aid agencies. According to Sida, evaluations shall serve several purposes. One is *learning*. According to this objective, evaluations are supposed to serve as an "instrument for improving development assistance through feedback of experience from ongoing or completed activities". The evaluations are supposed to produce knowledge that can be used to make development efforts more relevant, effective and efficient. Another objective of evaluation activities, according to Sida, is *development of knowledge*. This objective is formulated in more general terms, such as contributing to a better understanding of fundamental processes and events. Evaluations shall "increase our knowledge about development assistance and its possibilities and limitations as an instrument of economic and social change" (Sida's Evaluation Policy 1995). Finally, Sida evaluations are also supposed to contribute towards *accountability* of aid by regularly controlling aid projects and programmes.

The question addressed in this study is to what extent evaluations live up to these expectations. Given the large funds allocated for evaluations and the essential purposes that the evaluations are supposed to serve, it is of central importance to study evaluation processes and in particular how evaluations are put to use. One very obvious prerequisite for evaluations to be capable of "making development efforts more relevant, effective and efficient" is that they are put to use in various ways. The present study is concerned with this question – *how are evaluations used by various stakeholders in development co-operation and how do different stakeholders perceive the usefulness of evaluations?*

This report forms part of the study "Using the Evaluation Tool", initiated by Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit. The purpose of the study is to analyse the evaluation process as it currently works in Swedish development co-operation. It attempts to broaden our knowledge of how evaluations are initiated, produced and, finally, distributed and put to use. The work has been divided into two phases. The focus of the first phase, conducted during 1996/97, was on Sida's internal organisation and it only briefly touched upon the involvement of other stakeholders in the evaluation process. Utilisation appeared as a subject, although from the limited perspective of Sida headquarters. In the present study, which can be seen as the second part of the larger study, the focus is shifted towards the field and to the stakeholders who are actively involved in the planning, implementation of a particular project, as well as all those supposed to benefit from the aid intervention.

A study of evaluation processes and utilisation cannot only include Sida, which, by its own testimony, is not the only stakeholder in the evaluations of Sida-funded activities. As regards learning, it is pointed out that the organisations and individuals in the collaborating country who are directly concerned with the activities under review are also target groups for evaluations. Moreover, development co-operation should, according to Sida, be guided by the principle of partnership. This is also stated in Sida's evaluation policy: "Evaluation work should be transparent and be carried out in a spirit of co-operation". This is the background to another question in this study: *how do different stakeholders participate in the evaluation processes and how can stakeholder participation affect utilisation?*

Finally, as indicated above, the purpose of the study is not only to describe the evaluation processes and patterns of utilisation, but also to address the question of *what are the factors affecting utilisation and how can the usefulness of evaluations be improved.*

2. Studying USE - a point of departure

By the late 60's there was a growing realisation that the visions of government based on rational decision-making supported by scientific truth might not be realised. Non-utilisation and under-utilisation of evaluation results emerged as critical problems in evaluation research. Patton (1986). Carol Weiss (1972: 10-11) made the point that:

Evaluation research is meant for immediate and direct use in improving the quality of social programming. Yet a review of evaluation experience suggests that evaluation results have not exerted significant influence on program decisions.

The utilisation debate among evaluation researchers in the 1970's and 80's assumed that it should be possible to see a direct use of evaluation results through changes in programmes and projects. When this direct impact was not very visible, it was assumed that evaluations were not used at all. This concern suggests that there is a wide gap between the instrumental evaluation model's view of the world and the world as it actually functions.

To illustrate the causes of this perceived inefficacy, it is helpful to divide the evaluation system into three different parts, or subsystems: the production system, the distribution system and the receiving system. Weaknesses in the production system often mean that evaluation models and methods can be hard to understand and/or are inappropriate. Evaluations can also simply be examples of bad craftsmanship. Observed weaknesses in the distributive system often concern technical matters such as producing and delivering the evaluation in a timely way, presenting the results in a proper format and ensuring that they are distributed to the interested parties.

The role of the receiving system can be understood from many perspectives. Lack of knowledge and ability may be important for utilisation. The individual may lack the necessary knowledge to understand an evaluation. There may also be weaknesses in the organisational context of the individual that can impede use. The necessary organisational mechanisms for ensuring that evaluation results are acted on, for example somebody responsible for dealing with the evaluation and/or proper organisational channels may not be in place. Other influential factors can be lack of time and continuous changes in the priorities of the organisation.

The point made here is that there is far more to the evaluation process than the final report. In order to understand utilisation, we have to analyse the whole evaluation process, from initiation and distribution to receiving system. A focus on how the evaluation is produced, common in many textbooks and manuals, is too narrow a perspective for understanding the use of evaluations.

2.1 Outline of this report

This report is organised as follows. In the next section we present a summary of the whole study, phases 1 and 2. This is intended for the action-oriented reader, who may find it difficult to read through the whole report. Section 4 presents the method approach we have used for the study. Essentially this is a matter of introducing the stakeholder approach and the selection of case studies. The next section (5) introduces concepts that are central for the study. First, the concept of use, or utilisation and, secondly, the concepts of participation, partnership and ownership, and how they are related. Section 6 contains the empirical material, as well as the actual analysis. It starts with a presentation of what we consider to be basic premises for use. Conditions that have to be present in an evaluation process for stakeholders to regard the evaluation as useful. Then follows a presentation of the patterns of use as found in the case studies. Three questions will guide this

presentation. Who are the evaluations used by? For what purpose? And do stakeholders find the evaluations useful? Towards the end of the section, we return to the issue of whether the basic premises for use are present in the case studies. Section 7 is an attempt to understand the current pattern of use. The analysis is divided in two parts. The first deals with causative factors internal to the evaluation process - factors that largely are under the control of the evaluator and the sponsoring agency. The second part of the analysis looks at factors external to the evaluation process and beyond the control of the evaluator, e.g. constraints in the donor agency and recipient organisations, macro economic and/or political developments in the recipient country etc. Section 8 return to the terms of reference for the study and summarises the main findings. In Section 9, finally, we provide a set of recommendations for improving the use of evaluations.

3. Using the evaluation tool in Swedish aid - a summary of the full study

This section is for the benefit of the action-oriented reader who finds it difficult to sit down and peruse not only this report, but also the report from the first phase. This summary intends to capture the main findings from phase 1 and phase 2 of the study "Using the Evaluation Tool". Hopefully it will capture the reader's interest sufficiently for him/her to find it worthwhile reading the full versions.

One of the thematic working areas of Sida's Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit (UTV) concerns organisational change and learning. The present study forms part of that theme. Its purpose is to map the nature of the evaluation process and explore in-depth the usefulness of evaluation for Sida and its collaborating partners. There are four questions guiding the full study:

1. How and why are evaluations initiated?
2. How is the evaluation process managed, from the setting of a purpose, the decision to evaluate and the commissioning of a study?
3. How are the results from this process used?
4. Do evaluations meet acceptable standards of quality?

The full study consists of two parts. The first part, analysing the evaluation process from the perspective of Sida Headquarters in Stockholm, is based on a study of 30 evaluations. The second part shifts the focus to the field and all the various stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluation process, as well as the usefulness of the evaluation. This part is based on a sample of 9 cases, selected from the previous 30 evaluations identified for the first phase of the study. This part of the study is generally much more concerned, compared to the first one, with analysing how stakeholders use an evaluation. Let us then return to the original question and present our answers to each of them.

3.1 How and why are evaluations initiated?

What this study has clearly shown is that various stakeholders influence evaluations. Naturally, they try to influence the evaluation in the direction of their interest. From this it follows that evaluations cannot be seen as neutral or objective or as representing some outside neutral perspective. In addition to this, the evaluators themselves have values and assumptions of their own which they bring to the evaluation. By choosing a particular evaluator, you also choose a particular perspective, a preference for how things should be done and even the direction of the conclusions.

The fact that various stakeholders influence evaluations could be seen as problematic. Our conclusion is, however, that this can never be avoided. It is in the nature of all evaluations in every kind of context. Stakeholder influence becomes a problem when the evaluation arena is characterised by dominance arising out of dependency. Sida possesses considerable strength, as donor in relation to most recipient governments and it does not hesitate to use the evaluation function to further its interests. The problem is thus not so much the lack of objectivity - evaluations can never be totally neutral - as Sida's domination of the evaluation processes. It is not surprising that nearly all Sida's co-operation partners saw the evaluations as a way for Sida to convey its interests and concerns. The evaluations analysed here are not good examples of partnership. There is not much openness and clarity in the way interests make their way into an evaluation. Mutual trust is not what immediately comes to mind. In terms of adherence to the present policy framework of Swedish aid, the evaluation process as we know it is in dire need of reform.

Sida is a decentralised organisation in the sense that the organisation grants the programme officer extensive possibilities to influence decision-making. It is the programme officers who initiate an evaluation. The initiative to evaluate appears to rest on rather loose grounds. The most common reason for starting an evaluation is that it has been decided in the project document, or it was part of the agreement with other stakeholders that an evaluation should be carried out after a certain period of time. There is nothing wrong in this *per se* as long as there is a carefully crafted purpose, understood and agreed by all major stakeholders. This, however, is rarely the case. Consultations are few and far between. Most programme officers prefer to have informal contacts with their closest colleagues.

The immediate and direct purpose of an evaluation is defined in the terms of reference (TOR). This is a document which appears to be largely copied from the evaluation manual. There is often no practical focus in the TOR. A good example of an unclear and impractical purpose was found in the evaluation of the rural village water programme in Botswana (Valdelin, 1996). The purpose was stated to be learning. However, there was no further elaboration on who was supposed to learn, how they should learn, and most importantly, what they should learn. Experience from this study has clearly indicated that an unclear purpose reduces the usefulness of an evaluation. In order for evaluations to be useful there must be clear ideas of why an evaluation is undertaken, which issues that should be treated and what kind of utilisation is expected. This is one of the central prerequisites for use. The fact of an evaluation of a programme being included in an agreement is no guarantee of it being used.

3.2 How is the evaluation process managed?

All evaluations were commissioned from external consultants. Evaluators were largely found with the assistance of colleagues, and most were well known to Sida from earlier evaluations. Some of them could be described as in-house consultants to Sida. Only rarely - in 17% of all 30 cases - were evaluators selected on the basis of competitive bidding. This practice illustrates a complex interaction between the evaluator and his client that cannot be described in simple client-server terms. Although the TOR of the evaluation, often formulated in neutral terms, stipulates what the client wants to be done, there are sometimes messages, intentions, views etc., which in a more informal way is communicated to the evaluator. The existence of such communication between the sponsor and initiator of the evaluation and the evaluator is particularly difficult in aid evaluation. It can easily disturb an already unbalanced relationship between the donor and various local stakeholders.

The evaluations are usually completed rapidly once they have been commissioned, often within a few months. But the process from the first evaluation initiative to the dissemination of the first report is a lengthier one. Evaluation management breaks down completely when it comes to the distribution of the evaluation report. Few of Sida's collaborating partners, particularly those in the recipient country, ever see the report they have contributed to.

3.3 How are the evaluation results used?

According to the programme officers we interviewed, the draft report is circulated to the same group of people that were consulted in connection with the initiative to start the evaluation, i.e. a fairly small group of people. In about 50% of the cases (15 out of 30 evaluations) the draft was sent to recipient country authorities for comment.

How did the programme officers assess utilisation? From their perspective utilisation was not a problem. According to the findings in the first study, the recommendations were often accepted by the programme officers and rarely led to any controversies. In about 3/4 of the cases the recommendations had also, according to the programme officers, led to concrete results. But sometimes they had led to actions other than those recommended. The second phase of the study gave us a different and a more complex picture of use.

First of all, many stakeholders are not in a position to use the evaluation findings and recommendations. The further away you are from the centre (in terms of decision making), the less information you get on evaluation recommendations and findings. This means that officers at Sida and, in most cases, the main co-operation partner (i.e. the ministries) have received the report while people working directly with implementation very seldom have access to evaluation findings.

The evaluations analysed were used in various ways and for various purposes. What experience from this study tells us is that it is rare for evaluations to be put primarily to instrumental use. Other types of use are much more common. Conceptual use is very frequent. The results from evaluations are supposed to trickle down into various decision-making processes and result in changes, which are more concerned with strategies of doing things, rather than more immediate operational concerns. Using evaluations for legitimising decisions already taken is common practice, and so is the use of evaluations as ritual flag-waving.

The fact that other types of use than the conventional instrumental use are so dominant suggests that evaluations are not "pieces of objective evidence". Rather the evaluations seem to form part of already ongoing processes of organisational encounter. This is evidenced by the fact that we found few examples where the evaluations actually contributed something new in terms of knowledge. Neither the issues nor the questions were new. They had been discussed before by other means and perhaps in other ways. Evaluation is just another possibility for the stakeholders to conduct their dialogue.

Are the case studies examples of "good" use? Usefulness can be defined in the following way: *an evaluation is useful when stakeholders find something in the evaluation which they can put to use according to their own interest and needs.* The conclusion drawn in this study is that evaluations are useful to a very limited group of stakeholders. For a majority of stakeholders the evaluation process could just as well have been left undone.

There are reasons for this strong statement. The dominance of Sida constitutes a major obstacle to use. It limits the possibility of establishing concrete ownership of the evaluation on the side of the co-operating partners. The evaluations are seen as a part of the agreement with Sida. From a legal point of view this is also what they are. In the agreement with its co-operating partners, Sida reserves the right to verify the use of funds as well as the progress of implementation, in order to ensure that the money is being properly used.

Serious application of a policy which emphasises ownership should enable the co-operation partner to "own" the utilisation and implementation of evaluation findings to a much greater extent. But in order to do this they must also have greater ownership of the whole process. Expecting the co-operation partner to implement and "own" the implementation process (following an evaluation) without granting them ownership of the rest of the evaluation process is unrealistic. Thus, there is a discrepancy between, on the one hand, the emphasis on "partnership" and "ownership" in the overall aid policy, and, on the other, the actual terms of the agreements which Sida concludes with its co-operating partners.

A creation of ownership requires a change in decision-making and influence over the evaluation process. "Consulting" the co-operation partner is not enough. Concrete and real use demands: (i) that the co-operating partner has the right to suggest evaluators; (ii) that Sida's partners have a real influence on the selection of issues to be treated; (iii) that the co-operation partner takes evaluation initiatives, (and of course that they have a say in whether an evaluation should be undertaken or not); (iv) that the process becomes more transparent and democratic.

3.4 Is the quality of evaluation reports good?

The quality of evaluations is an elusive subject, and it must be recognised that what one person regards as a good and reliable report can be given a totally different interpretation by another. When assessing the quality of evaluations in the first phase of the study, we have focused on the reports. But the report itself is only a manifestation of the whole process - which may contain quite different qualities.

An interesting picture emerges when we contrast the programme officers' opinion of quality with an independent, subjective assessment based on 50 variables. Most programme officers were pleased with the outcome of the evaluation process. They thought that the evaluators had arrived at reliable conclusions, and that the project was given fair and adequate treatment. The reports were found, however, to be relatively weak on new ideas and practical usefulness.

With a different kind of assessment, based on a standardised set of quality criteria, the picture changes dramatically. In the same sample of 30 evaluations, quality was found to be much less than desired. In particular, the reports were found to be methodologically weak.

Switching the perspective from the report to the process affords new insights as to what quality is all about. One of the most significant findings in the second phase of the study was that so many stakeholders were excluded from the evaluation process. They could not influence it and they were never in a position to use the results from the evaluation. The stakeholders most frequently excluded from the process were those working with day-to-day implementation and the beneficiaries. This pattern is partly an ethical problem, provided that the stance is taken that everybody with an interest in and/or put at risk by an evaluation should also be entitled to put their concerns and issues on the table. It is, however, also a problem of quality. The quality of evaluations will most probably be enhanced if these groups are allowed to participate in the evaluation process.

There are several reasons for this. Firstly, if these groups have a hand in identifying the issues to be addressed and in the collection of data, the evaluation results tend to be more realistic and more closely attuned to the project/programme context. Secondly, if they are involved in this way, the findings tend to be more accurate since participation removes the tendency to hide and exclude problematic issues. Thirdly, if these groups are included in the evaluation process, both in the way outlined above and in final workshops, the process of "trickling down" directives can be shortened, and the evaluation can become a learning process in itself.

4. Method

4.1 A stakeholder approach to analysing use of evaluations

The stakeholder approach has been central to this study. The notion of stakeholder is based on the idea that different people are put at risk by an evaluation. Since an evaluation can affect the future of a programme or project, different people who are involved in, or affected by, a programme have a stake in the evaluation. *Stakeholders are groups of people or individuals who are somehow affected by an evaluation.* They can therefore be expected to have concerns and issues related to it. We have employed a stakeholder approach since we analyse the issue of use by taking different stakeholders' perception of the use and usefulness of the evaluations as our point of departure.

In the evaluation arena there are a number of stakeholders, each with his/her own view of what is going on and how things should be done etc. It is rare to find a situation where groups and individuals do not hold competing and sometimes combative views on the appropriateness of the evaluation and on whose interests will be affected by the outcome. The promotion of these interests also largely determines to what purpose the findings and recommendations of the evaluation are used. The starting point for any analysis of use is therefore a recognition of the full range of stakeholders. Who are they and what interests are they bringing into the aid project? In the box below we have listed typical categories of stakeholders found in development co-operation.

Box. 4.1 Typical categories of stakeholders found in development co-operation.

- * *Policy makers and decision-makers*
Persons responsible for deciding whether a program is to be instituted, continued, discontinued, expanded or curtailed.
- * *Program sponsors*
Organisations that initiate and fund the program to be evaluated.
- * *Evaluation sponsors*
Organisations that initiate and fund the evaluation (sometimes they are identical with the program sponsors)
- * *Target participants*
persons, households, or other social units who participate in the program or receive the services being provided by the intervention being evaluated.
- * *Program management*
The group being responsible for overseeing and co-ordinating the intervention process.
- * *Evaluators*
Groups or individuals responsible for the design and/or conduct of the evaluation.
- * *Program competitors*
Organisations or groups who compete with the project for available resources.
- * *Contextual stakeholders*
Organisations or groups, individuals, or other social units, in the immediate environment of a project.

These are very broad categories and, as is suggested, sometimes it is not possible to separate them. The Sida identification of collaborating partners exemplifies this very well. The *project owner* is the party that requests support for its project and which is responsible for the planning and

implementation of the project. The project owner can be a government agency, a voluntary organisation, a company or a research organisation. The *co-operation partner* is the party which concludes an agreement with Sida on the project. The co-operating partner can also be the same as the project owner. The *implementing partner* is, in principle, the owner of the project.

Within each of these categories there are stakeholders with different interests. The target group, for example, most often consists of groups who can be affected in different ways, depending for example on gender, economic status and age. The project owner or the co-operating partner is also divided into different stakeholders, depending for example on duties and responsibilities in connection with planning and implementation. Interested parties can by definition consist of several different groups. Moreover, there are often differences of interest and perception within one actor. In the aid agency it is common to find such conflicts between headquarters and the officers at the Embassies.

It is important to point out that we cannot claim to have talked to all the possible stakeholders in the nine evaluation cases included in this study. For each evaluation we interviewed, on average, 15 - 25 stakeholder representatives. We tried to identify the major stakeholders who were involved in the evaluations by using the evaluation report and the "lists of persons met". This means that we interviewed stakeholders who participated in the evaluation in question. Thus there could very well be other groups who might be affected by the evaluation in some way (and who should therefore be seen as stakeholders). Only in a few cases have we talked to these "neglected stakeholders". A telling consequence of following the "lists of persons met" is that only in a few cases did we talk to representatives of the target groups. The target group is rarely involved in the evaluations. If they are, their role is restricted to provide information and they are rarely mentioned by name in the lists of persons met, so they are not easily identified.

In most cases we interviewed several people from each stakeholder group. Except for a very few cases, the interviews were made individually. This was considered important, given that the persons interviewed often occupy different positions in the institutional hierarchy, which can make it difficult for people in subordinate positions to express their views in a group. Moreover, since the people in the organisation often have different responsibilities, the assumption was that they could be expected to have different views on the usefulness of the evaluation. All persons interviewed by us were promised anonymity. We have, furthermore, refrained from making the full case studies available, in order to fully protect our respondents.

The interview procedures were semi-structured (a description of the interview procedure will be found in Annex 2). At the beginning of the study we constructed a questionnaire for the interviewees to fill in. We then continued the interview by discussing the answers with the participant and canvassing explanations. However, during the course of the study it became evident that not all people were especially keen on filling out the form. During the last part of the study the questionnaire was instead used as an interview guide and was presented to the respondent in order to give him or her an understanding of what issues we were interested in.

It should be stressed that we are not claiming to provide an "objective" account of the evaluation processes. The study is based upon the different stakeholders' perceptions of their participation and use of the evaluations. It has been quite interesting to see how one evaluation process can be described in so many, and often conflicting, ways. These often divergent and conflicting views, which unfortunately cannot be fully accounted for in the present report, should nevertheless be kept in mind.

4.2 Analysing the evaluation process

Our method for analysing use and usefulness takes its point of departure in a stakeholder approach, but it also builds on a perception of usefulness and what is required for an evaluation to be seen as useful by stakeholders. We shall discuss this in more detail later on (section 5). But as it also forms part of our method, it should be briefly presented already here.

The starting point for determining whether an evaluation is useful or not, has little to do with a particular type of use. Rather, by useful we refer to an evaluation process that has enabled stakeholders to find something useful in the evaluation which they can put to use according to their interest and needs. An evaluation is considered useful by us if as many stakeholders as possible have had an opportunity to access the evaluation and determine whether it contains anything of interest to them. Thus, usefulness is very much determined by the nature of the evaluation process and its openness. To structure our analysis of the evaluation process we have used a set of *basic premises for use* identified by Patton (1986). They serve as the framework for our assessment of the evaluation process and the extent to which it facilitates utilisation. These basic premises are presented in some more detail in section 6.1.

4.3 Case studies

The starting point for the selection of case studies was the 30 evaluations that had formed the basis for the first phase of this study. A sample of 9 evaluations/projects was then selected for the second phase of the study. When we selected these 9 evaluations we followed a set of criteria, which we felt were important to facilitate a good study of utilisation, as well as allowing for a practical organisation of the study. Of course, not all the criteria can be applied equally, but to a large extent we have tried to take each of them into account in an equitable manner.

The following criteria were used:

- * Sweden's most important co-operating countries in southern and eastern Africa should be represented.
- * The spread between sectors should be as wide as possible.
- * The evaluation should have been carried out some 12-18 months ago
- * There should be a possibility of comparing participatory with non-participatory evaluation methods.
- * There should be a possibility of comparing different modes of project implementation, i.e. where implementation was the responsibility of a local organisation, or of a foreign-based consultancy company.

The Swedish co-operating countries were represented by: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia. They all belong, or have belonged, to the group of programme countries and have been variously successful as recipients of aid. Five sectors are represented in our sample. *Education*: primary as well as tertiary education in Ethiopia. *Health*, through water projects in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Botswana; *agriculture*, through the soil conservation project in Kenya; *industry*, through small-scale industry support in Namibia; and, finally, *infrastructure*, through the road safety project in Botswana.¹

¹ We would have liked to include a project working with democracy issues. The portfolio included one such project, in Ethiopia, but closer scrutiny told us that it would not be very useful for our purpose since it mainly involved study trips, procurement of office equipment etc.

It is important that the timing of the evaluation and the project should be right. The evaluation should not be too "old". It should have been carried out fairly recently, so that we can track down all the parties involved while their memories are still fresh. On the other hand, it is also important for a certain time to have elapsed, in order for the stakeholders to react to the recommendations and findings from the evaluation. Ideally, this means that the evaluation should have been carried out some 12-18 months ago. All the evaluations in our sample were produced and published during 1996 and 1997.

Since the evaluation is to address the question of how usefulness of evaluations can be improved and how use is related to participation, we searched for evaluations with different patterns of participation (which could serve as a basis for comparisons). In an evaluation made for UNDP (1989), Forss and Rebien have outlined different ways in which stakeholders can be involved in an evaluation process. They distinguish between six different activities in evaluation processes: 1) planning and formulation of evaluation questions, 2) deciding on which methods to use; 3) providing data; 4) collection of data; 5) interpretation of data; and 6) using the evaluation results (in decision making). Forss and Rebien perceive participation in an evaluation as a continuous line extending from low to high participation. A fully participatory evaluation would involve all stakeholders in all phases of an evaluation process.

Evaluations which have employed a fully participatory approach, in the way described by Forss and Rebien were (not surprisingly) not to be found. These kinds of evaluations are very rare in government based aid-organisations. The first part of the study "Using the Evaluation Tool" (which was based on 30 evaluations) provided some information regarding stakeholder involvement in Sida evaluations. According to this report *only about one third of the evaluations involved recipient government officials during the preparations of the terms of references.*

The cases chosen for this study are, at one level, examples of "best practice" at Sida. In all the evaluations chosen here the collaborating partners have (according to the survey material in the first part of the study) been involved in the evaluation, either in preparation or in commenting on the draft. It seemed quite pointless to choose evaluations of (and spend money on field trips to) projects or programmes where the stakeholders in the collaborating country had not participated at all (and probably, therefore, had no knowledge of the evaluation in question).²

Even though the pattern of participation in our sample of evaluations is fairly stable there are some variations (which became clear to us during the study) which have allowed for a comparative approach. There are, in particular, two cases which differ more considerably from the others in terms of pattern of participation:

- 1) *Building Research Capacity in Ethiopia.* This evaluation differs from the others in terms of the co-operating partner's influence on the evaluation process. In contrast to the other evaluations the co-operating partner had a great deal of influence over the process and expressed a strong ownership of the evaluation.

² However, as became clear during the study, participation (as defined in the first study) can mean a lot of things. Its extent and quality vary a great deal. Participation can be limited to being forced to participate in an evaluation that you do not want. It can also extend towards exerting strong influence on the purpose and design of the evaluation, choosing the evaluation team etc. During the process of evaluation, differences between the cases in terms of participation and influence became clearer.

2) *HESAWA, Health through Sanitation and Water in Tanzania*. This evaluation differs from the others in another respect. It is not an example of the co-operating partner's influence over the evaluation process (in initiation and formulation TOR and choosing evaluators etc.) In contrast to the other evaluations, which were based on more conventional data-collection techniques, this evaluation was based on workshops where the participants could articulate their ideas and concerns in a more free way.

These cases have therefore provided particularly interesting and important information regarding how participation is related to use.

Application of these criteria to the portfolio of 30 cases resulted in the following sample (a presentation of the main features of each evaluation will be found in Annex 3):

- * *Evaluation of the Small Business Development Programme in Northern Namibia*.
by Sahlin, Å.
- * *Rural Village Water Supply Programme - Botswana*.
by Valdelin, J. et al. Sida Evaluation 96/10
- * *Botswana Road Safety Improvement Programme*
by Davey, R. Sida Evaluation 96/43
- * *Water Supply System in Dodota - Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/23
by Olsson, B., Judith Narrowe, Negatu Asfaw, Eneye Tefera, Amsalu Negussie
- * *Building Research Capacity in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/9
by Thulstrup, E.W., M. Fekadu, A Negewo
- * *Support to the Education Sector in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/27
by Valdelin, J., Michael Wort, Ingrid Christensson, Gudrun Cederblad
- * *Curriculum Development in Ethiopia*, Sida Evaluation 96/40
by Palme, M. Viggo Kilborn, Christopher Stroud and Oleg Povov
- * *HESAWA, Health through Sanitation and Water - Sida supported programme in Tanzania*, Sida Evaluation 97/12 by Smet, J., Kathleen Shordt, Pauline Ikumi, Patrick Nginya
- * *National Soil and Water Conservation Programme - Kenya*, Sida Evaluation 96/25
by Tiffen, M., Raymond Purcell, Francis Gichuki, Charles Gachene, John Gatheru

5 Use and participation - an introduction to concepts

No doubt every evaluator has had moments of glorious dreams in which a grateful world receives with adulation the findings of his or her evaluation and puts the results immediately and directly to use.

(Rossi and Freeman, 1993:444)

5.1 Types of use

What then do we understand by utilisation? How are evaluations being used? In the literature one can find different classifications of use. The traditional attempt to classify use is based on three types of use (Leviton & Hughes, 1979, 1981, Rich, 1977)

Direct or instrumental use refers to the documented and specific use of evaluation findings by decision-makers and other stakeholders. Evaluations are used to control, manage and learn from an activity. Unhappiness about the usefulness of evaluations usually refers to the inability to see a direct link between an evaluation and instrumental use. This pessimistic view should, however, be somewhat modified. There are studies which have established a direct impact of evaluations on changes in projects and programmes (Leviton & Brach, 1983; Chelimsky, 1991; Brown, 1982).

Conceptual use refers to the impact of evaluations on policies, programs and procedures, through sensitising persons and groups to current and emerging social problems. This will eventually lead to changes in the way they think of social issues and in a later stage, changes in policy and procedures.

Persuasive use refers to enlisting evaluation results in efforts either to support or to refute a political position already taken - or to defend or attack the status quo (Rossi & Freeman, 1993:443)

A more extensive typology would include also other types of usage, some of them with their roots in organisational politics. Utilisation then becomes linked to stakeholder interests and the need to prove a thesis, consolidate power, acquire ammunition for political battles, give an impression of action etc. Vedung (1995) identified a typology that is based on this kind of legitimisation perspective: instrumental, conceptual, legitimising, interactive, tactical and ritual use. His typology gives us many interesting angles for studying use, although it suffers from certain weaknesses. First and foremost, it mixes different classification criteria, on the one hand the *process* of utilisation, on the other hand the *purpose* of utilisation. The category "interactive use" is the best example. Secondly, it is difficult to distinguish between some types of use. "Legitimising" and "tactical" are in practice difficult to distinguish from each other, and can therefore conveniently be grouped together.

Thus, our typology consists of the following types, where the purpose of use is the classification criteria.

* Instrumental use

The engineering model where the operations are tried and tested and where the results from such a testing are fed back into the planning and implementation of the operations.

* Conceptual use

Results and conclusions from evaluations trickle down into political processes in the form of ideas, new concepts and new ways of structuring operations.

* Legitimising use

The evaluation legitimises decisions and positions that have already been taken on other grounds. Often it is not the results but the evaluation process as such which is important and used for different purposes.

* Ritual use

Initiating and implementing an evaluation symbolises desired qualities of the management or the organisation.

* No use

The evaluation is simply not being used. Stakeholders do not find anything of interest in the evaluation to develop their action or their thinking on the subject that the evaluation analyses. A distinct reason for non-use can also be that the evaluation is not available to stakeholders. The evaluation does not matter to them, because they do not know it.

Can this typology be linked to quality? Are some types of use considered "better" than others?

The point of departure here is that the quality of use can only be determined from the perspective of the individual actor and his/her preferences and interests. It cannot be argued, for example, that the ultimate objective of improving use is the supremacy of the instrumental model of use. When evaluations are not being used in the way prescribed by textbooks and organisation manuals, frustration over the effectiveness of the evaluation system develops easily. It is rarely we see such a direct application of evaluation information as this model assumes. This does not, however, mean that evaluation results are not used. By and large they probably are, but use is a much more complicated psychological and sociological process than standard instrumental models would suggest. Simon (1986:210-211) pointed out that decisions are normally taken on the basis of bounded rationality. It is not possible for an individual to know all possible actions open to him, assess them and act according to his best choice. This is especially unlikely to happen under conditions of uncertainty, (which are quite typical of development aid). Decisions have to be taken on the basis of a rather limited set of alternatives which are, furthermore, highly unstable. Thus, there is a distinction to be made between the real world and the actors' perceptions of it and reasoning about it.

When we talk about an evaluation as being useful we refer to an evaluation process that has enabled stakeholders to find something in the evaluation which they can put to use according to their interest and needs.

5.2 Participation, partnership and ownership

In recent years, Sida has put a lot of emphasis on such concepts as participation, partnership and ownership. The Agency has formulated goals and strategies trying to incorporate these concepts into active use in its operations. Supposedly this means that they should also influence the Agency's evaluation policy.

The question of how the concepts of participation, partnership and ownership should be defined is a highly contested issue both when it comes to development aid in general and evaluation research in particular. The purpose of this section is to try to elaborate how these concepts are conceptualised in this study and how they can be helpful for an analysis of use.

During recent years, participation has arisen as a central concept in evaluation research, both within the general discipline of evaluation and among researchers involved more specifically with the issue of aid evaluation (Rebien, 1994, 1996; Forss & Rebien 1993, 1994; Lawrence, 1989; Swantz,

1992). There is no single definition of what constitutes a participatory evaluation. On this subject there are probably as many viewpoints as there are practitioners.

The controversies surrounding the meaning of the concept can partly be seen as a result of participation in evaluation being viewed both as a means and as an end in itself. The means aspect is reflected in the increasing arguments that participation contributes to greater effectiveness. Thus in the context of evaluation the argument is that participation facilitates use of evaluation results by increased learning and communication by stronger commitment to implementing recommendations, and that it enhances the quality and broadens the perspective of information by raising questions that would not be raised otherwise (Rebien, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Lawrence, 1989; Patton, 1986).

Participation is also perceived as an end in itself and not as a strategy for improving aid effectiveness. Participation is by some presented as an empowerment strategy whereby existing power relations can be questioned. It is also seen as a "stakeholders right" in that stakeholders are put at risk in an evaluation (since their lives can in different ways be affected by it) and therefore that stakeholders are entitled to have their concerns and issues included in the evaluation. Guba and Lincoln add an ethical dimension to the justification of participatory evaluation:

... all stakeholders put at risk in an evaluation have the right to place their claims, concerns and issues on the table for consideration, irrespective of the value system to which they adhere (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, p.11)

According to them, failure to involve different stakeholders is seen as unfair and discriminatory. The idea of development co-operation as a partnership promoted by Sida, can in part be seen to belong to the dimension of participation as an end or right in itself.

On the other hand, Sida also views participation as a means of achieving other goals. Participation is presented as an important integral element in the process of achieving the main policy objectives, especially poverty reduction, gender equality and protection of the environment. (Rudquist & Woodford-Berger 1995)

The Poverty Task Force at Sida has defined participation as the process whereby people - especially poor women and men - can influence political life, policy formulation, determination of development directions and the choice of development investments and interventions which affect them (ibid.).

This definition of participation is quite similar to the conceptualisation we have employed for this study. What is central in this definition is that it builds on a notion of *influence* rather than merely "taking part" in a process. As Rahnama has pointed out, the concept of participation can mean many different things.³ The fact of somebody participating in a process does not necessarily mean that they have influence over the process. Neither does it necessarily mean that the person is participating as a spontaneous free exercise arising from a wish to participate in the process. Instead they can be led to perform actions which are inspired or directed by others and which are of limited interest to them. These aspects have become evident to us during the course of this study. While some stakeholders have been invited to participate they have not had the possibility of

³ Rahnama (1995) distinguishes between transitive and intransitive, moral, amoral, forced and free, manipulative and spontaneous participation. By distinguishing between moral and amoral he wishes to point out that the term participation is often associated with desirable goals and is given a positive connotation, while in fact the act of partaking "may apply to evil or malicious purposes". The distinction between forced and free partaking can be seen as an example of this. He points out that while participation is often seen as a free choice exercise, people are sometimes "dragged" into taking part, in the very name of participation, in operations which are of no interest to them.

influencing the process. Also, some people have been made to participate in evaluations which they have not wanted or been consulted about. In these cases stakeholder participation has not affected their use or perception of usefulness in a positive way. Instead, the important aspect of participation – if it is to influence use in a positive way – is that those who participate feel themselves to be capable of influencing the process. A meaningful conceptualisation of participation in an evaluation context would thus be that it is *a process whereby a stakeholder is taking part in, and has influence over, the evaluation process.*

This conceptualisation of participation - a feeling that one has influence over the evaluation process - is very much related to *ownership*. In a recent document Sida has defined the policy of ownership as follows:

Sida's approach where our co-operation partners are concerned ... is that they themselves must be responsible for their projects: they must "own" their own development. ... In order to be able to say that a partner in co-operation is the owner of a project, the partner must have full rights to use the resources provided within the framework laid down in the project agreement. But this is not enough. The co-operation partner must also be prepared to assume full responsibility, participate actively in the work, and be ready to implement the project on its own initiative. (Sida at Work - Sida's methods for development co-operation, p. 17)

The concept of ownership is important in this study. Furthermore, we have found that a feeling of ownership of evaluations has an important bearing on their use. But in contrast to Sida's concept of ownership, quoted above, which only involves one owner - the co-operating partner - we would prefer a conceptualisation of *shared ownership*. According to a notion of shared ownership there is no one single owner of an evaluation. By ownership we refer to a situation *whereby a stakeholder has the feeling that an evaluation is not only done by and for the interests of another stakeholder, but is initiated, carried out and influenced by and for their own interests and concerns.* Participation and ownership thus become very much related, in that participation - to participate and being able to influence a process - becomes a prerequisite of ownership.⁴

Lastly, we would like to say something about the concept of partnership which, at least in Swedish aid policy, is related, although it is by no means clear in what way, to the concepts of participation and use. But, this being a policy strongly promoted by the Swedish government and Sida, it is of interest to see how it applies to the cases here. It should, however, be kept in mind that the evaluations examined here were conducted before Sida officially announced its partnership policies. Since partnership is not introduced as an analytic concept we will take our point of departure in the definition given by the Swedish Government. The recent Government Communication "Africa on the Move - Revitalising Swedish Policy towards Africa for the 21st Century", gives the following definition of partnership (Government Communication SKR 1997/98:122, pp. 99-100):

Partnership should be seen as an attitude, in a form of co-operation that is based on a shared basis of values and mutual trust. Joint and clearly formulated objectives, conditions, obligations, roles and responsibilities are part of partnership. The aspiration should be to bring about increased equality and mutual respect in the relationship, in awareness of the fundamental inequality represented by the donor's upper hand in terms of resources. Partnership is also aimed at strengthening the weaker party.

⁴ The difference between the two concepts would seem to be that ownership implies, not only a feeling that one has influence, but a feeling of the evaluation being initiated and carried out for one's own concerns and interests.

5.2.1 Partnership, ownership and control - contradictions in Sida policy

None of the concepts participation, ownership and partnership can be easily transferred into the evaluation context. If Sida's own notion of ownership is to be used in relation to evaluation, this would imply that the co-operation partners "own" the evaluation, that they "assume full responsibility", "participate actively" in the evaluation and are ready to implement the evaluation on "[their] own initiative". Transferring this notion of ownership to the context of evaluations, however, is somewhat problematic, given that Sida also has, as the expression goes, a "responsibility to exercise control". (see Sida at Work - Sida's methods for development co-operation, pp. 18-20). Even though there are different ways of exercising this control, evaluations are inevitably a part of the control function. In Sida's evaluation handbook from 1993, under the heading "Evaluations - for whom?", we read that financiers have "a legitimate interest to evaluate activities that they support" and that "it is natural that the financiers, in agreement with the recipient countries, reserve the right to evaluate the programme they support". One of the (three) objectives in Sida's Evaluation Policy (1995, p. 1) is also concerned with the issue of control:

Approached with a view to *control*, or accountability, evaluation is an instrument for examining the use and results of Swedish development assistance. In this perspective, evaluations primarily serve the Swedish public, the Government of Sweden, and Sida's Board of Directors.

As this text shows, the notion of ownership, according to Sida policy, is not easily transferable to the evaluation context. Nor are the concepts of participation or partnership. This points to an inherent *contradiction* in Sida policy. On the one hand Sida has the right to exercise control, on the other hand, development co-operation should be organised in the spirit of partnership. It has become clear in the course of this study that evaluations are to a great extent viewed as instruments of control. From this it follows that participating in an evaluation should *not* be considered as the collaborating partner's *right*. At the same time Sida constantly stresses the spirit of partnership and the importance of ownership on the part of the collaborating partner.

Clearly, then, judging the patterns of participation found in this study on the basis of Sida policy is extremely difficult, and we do not propose making the attempt. What we will do is describe the patterns of participation found in the study and present the results of our analysis of how participation can be seen to affect use and usefulness. Our own position should, however, be stated since it nevertheless has implications for the study - participation in evaluations should be seen as a right of the collaborating partners. Without this being acknowledged, the notions of ownership and partnership become meaningless.

5.3 Participation - a necessary condition for use?

In mainstream thinking on utilisation and participation there seems to be general agreement on the positive link between participation and utilisation. The more involved a stakeholder is in an evaluation, the more prepared he/she is to use the results.

In general, there are few studies of this relationship and we have found none within the field of development aid. Greene's (1988) case studies of implementation of youth employment and day-care information and referral programmes in a community in New York give some interesting insights. Greene found that stakeholder participation at three levels - cognitive, affective and political - led to enhanced utilisation of evaluation results. Cognitive participation refers to an ongoing active discussion and processing of information related to key program issues toward some decision or action. Affective participation refers to the individual's feeling of worth and value. Finally, political participation refers to the situation when an evaluation process gives voice to the

less powerful so that they receive interest and attention from the more powerful actors on the arena. An evaluation process which facilitates a participatory bottom-up perspective contributes to utilisation in four ways: 1) greater understanding of the results; 2) greater acceptance or ownership of the results; 3) heightened perceptions of the results as valid, credible and persuasive; 4) greater sense of responsibility and obligation to follow through on the results. Greene's findings support the hypothesis that there is a positive link between extensive stakeholder participation and the utilisation of the results.

It is also useful to differentiate between participation and the different stages of the evaluation process. Involvement is more important for utilisation at some stages of the process than others. In the literature the question formulation phase is singled out as the most important. If you are in a position to influence the questions to be answered by the evaluation, you obviously come to regard that evaluation as explicitly recognising your information needs (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Patton, 1986; Lawrence, 1989; Rebien, 1996).

Thus, substantial stakeholder participation can be expected to enhance use since evaluation is a process of learning in itself. Utilisation then becomes something that does not necessarily follow, or involve, a reading of the evaluation report - but something that occurs during the evaluation process itself. Further, the inclusion of stakeholders in the evaluation process can enhance stakeholders' perception of the credibility of evaluation results. This is of particular relevance if aid evaluations are primarily seen as instruments of control to be used by the donor (Lawrence, 1989).