



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

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

**Dissemination: Ensuring Integration of
Lessons
Performance Review Branch**

Submitted by

**'Canadian International Development Agency'
Canada**

**Hosted by the Government of Japan
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Dissemination: Ensuring Integration Of Lessons

Performance Review Branch

Canadian International Development Agency

I Introduction

How do individuals and this Agency -as a knowledge-based, learning organization go about considering the lessons from our various studies?

With several studies indicating that lessons of the past have not necessarily been taken into consideration, this short paper attempts to look at the issue from both the supply and demand side of the equation. It concludes by addressing what can be done to better apply what we have learned.

II Background: Why Disseminate?

The dissemination of performance review reports and the consideration and integration of lessons learnt is based on the belief that:

- { the Agency needs to be transparent in reporting to its stakeholders on the results and effectiveness of its aid investments; and,
- { that the increased awareness of the findings and lessons learned will positively impact on the design and implementation of new and/or ongoing phases of programs and projects in similar geographic regions, sectors and/or themes of intervention.

III Building the Lessons Database

CIDA's significant investments in a variety of study-types results in the performance review function producing a full spectrum of reports and products for the benefit of management. We believe that the review products and lessons generated effectively answer a wide-ranging set of needs including quality enhancement, transference of accumulated experience, emphasizing lessons learned and promoting best practices. Commissioned to respond to the needs of management, they include:

- { corporate performance reviews

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- { evaluations
- { audits
- { assessments of RBM practices
- { Program branches' performance measurement activities -monitoring, end-of-project reports, etc
- { special investigations

IV Current Practice: Meeting Expectations?

4.1 Dissemination Methods: The SUPPLY Side

The four (4) main methods available for the dissemination of the lessons are: presentations and workshops; distribution of reports in hard-copy; electronic access and PRB's Liaison/Advisory role.

4.1.1 Presentations & Workshops

{ At the conclusion of major studies, presentations and/or workshops are offered to BMGs, divisional staff meetings and thematic and/or sectoral networks. Bag lunches are also organized to reach broader groups of employees and other invitees.

{ The President's Best Practices Forum, Field Reps meetings and external fora such as CIDA's annual NGO Consultations and the Canadian Exporters Association days are other opportunities for dissemination of lessons.

4.1.2 Reports in Hard-Copy

{ Executive Committee

For major corporate reviews, the Executive Committee members receive a packaged/bound copy of each of the individual report's executive summary (in both official languages).

{ Program Representatives

To ensure that the information is made available where it most likely will have the potential to be integrated into programming, all directors of the programs involved in the re-

view receive a copy of the Executive Summary and/or Synthesis Report, along with their respective country/project reports.

{ Aid Sections & PSUs

Recognizing the importance which the field plays in programming and monitoring, both the Heads of Aid and the PSUs receive a complete set of key reports from major and/or relevant studies.

{ All Agency Staff

In order to heighten awareness of Agency staff, a Performance Newsletter, in both official languages, is produced periodically on specific issues and related lessons learned. The newsletter is made available both in hard-copy and electronically in Entre Nous.

{ Treasury Board, IDRC and the Office of the Auditor General

In a letter of transmittal from the Director General, the above noted organizations would receive a complete set of reports from the subject study

{ CIDA Networks

In addition to transmitting a full-set of reports to the programming branches' Performance Review Officer, PRB ensures that the summary/synthesis report are distributed to members of relevant networks.

{ DAC Members

Under a covering note from the CIDA representative to the DAC's Working Group on Aid Evaluation, members are sent a copy of both the Evaluation Abstract and the synthesis report

{ Participating Stakeholders

Recipient country counterparts, Canadian Executing Agencies, consultants, etc who participated in the Review receive the relevant reports.

{ Universities & NGO Umbrella Groups

Universities with an international development program and NGO umbrella organizations such as the ACCC receive a complete set of the reports.

{ Library & Corporate Memory

Finally, a full-set of the reports, including the Evaluation Abstract, is transmitted to the Agency's Library and Corporate Memory Units, both of which are part of CIDA's International Development Information Centre.

4.1.3 Electronic Dissemination

All reports, including the Performance Newsletter are made available electronically on PRB's *Entre Nous* site. Specifically:

- { the Performance Newsletter are circulated under 'CIDA News' mechanism, along with a prompt to direct them to the full-set of detailed reports;
- { the full-set of the executive summary reports are made available under the Performance Review section of the 'Corporate Documents' heading; and,

Other

- { Evaluation Abstracts are also transmitted for inclusion in OECD's DAC Evaluation Database, which contains the evaluation abstracts and lessons learned from donor countries.
- { Evaluation policies and guidelines are also posted on the INTERNET site of the Agency.

4.1.4 PRB's Liaison/Advisory Role

PRB's Officers have become a useful resource to program officers wishing to have independent advice on performance measurement as well as on the design, implementation and evaluation of their projects.

4.2 Supply-Side Enhancements

{ Timeliness It can be argued that the greatest learning occurs during the course of the study/review itself, when presentations and workshops are held to debrief and validate findings. As a result, greater emphasis will be placed on early feedback to help ensure timely and effective input to all parties concerned.

{ Quality of Lessons Database Our systems are so clogged with 'lessons learned' that most officers are overwhelmed with information. The nature of this information overload is both quantity (no. of lessons) and the quality of the lessons themselves. What is required is a more relevant, user-friendly and managed lessons learned database.

First, PRB will work with Phoenix and the Corporate Memory Unit to organize the 'lessons' information into a coherent, subject-matter based and easily retrievable lessons database for learning and decision making.

Second, fewer but, better and more relevant lessons through easily accessible reference guide(s) & methodological tools and increased quality assurance.

{ Best Practices Working with the Continuous Learning Division to develop 'Best Practices' modules.

{ Internet It is PRB's intention to make available the Performance Newsletter and other relevant documentation on its web-site on the Agency's Internet site.

{ Relevancy Are we auditing and evaluating what's important and what is deemed useful and helpful to CIDA staff? These and other related questions will have to guide PRB in its future work-planning exercises.

VBuilding on Experience: How are we learning?

What we have described above refers mainly to the supply-driven activities. But, with several studies indicating that lessons of the past have not always been taken into consideration, how are we learning?

{ Individually --on a responsive and sometimes proactive basis, but this does not provide adequate coverage nor assurance of learning from the past.

{ Institutionally -thru our Policy and Management Cttees and thru the various formal and informal 'Networks' at work in the Agency.

{ Systematically -thru our consultants -in conjunction with Corporate Memory System and thru ad hoc informal peer reviews.

5.1Key Demand Factor: The Programming Pipeline

{ Project (original design and re-calibration)

{ Program (country, institutional & thematic)

{ Policy (targeting, norms, guidance)

{ Strategic (Agency accountability to Parliament)

5.2 The Missing Links: Demand-Side Enhancements

It can be argued that the true value-added of our 'Lessons' is their consideration and integration into programming. Specifically, be it at the project, program, thematic, policy or corporate-wide issue level, this Branch's true and long-term impact is decided by how we can bring about change at these various levels.

{ Stimulate Search for Lessons Work with Phoenix to ensure that 'prompting points' for access to lessons learned menus are built into key milestones/decision points in the program/project development & approval process.

{ Quality at Entry Although project officers are expected to consult the various policies and guidelines and to proactively seek out lessons learned and knowledgeable CIDA staff prior to the first level of sign-off (see Note below), a key ingredient in improving the cost-effectiveness of our aid interventions will be the role of the project approving authority. If probing questions are asked when projects are submitted for approval, thereby ensuring that the lessons learnt from the reviews are incorporated into program/project design and implementation, the probability of the performance review function having value-added will be greatly increased.

{ Accountability Framework Clarification of the accountability for proactively learning from the past for the three key levels in the project approval process (Officer, Director, V-P).

{ Leadership & Cultural Change Management, at all levels in the Agency, must take on the responsibility for re-enforcing an environment in which quality of content is valued equally with timely processing. Specifically, renewed efforts must be made to ensure that there are incentives in-place for learning in a knowledge-based organization.

Note: A recent, informal review of the way in which branches ensure that the lessons are considered, revealed a trend to re-instituting -in some form, the former branch review committee. In other words, some form of quality assurance function for the branches' Strategic Planning' divisions.



DAC Tokyo workshop on Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

**Making Feedback more effective
the Case of France**

Submitted by

**'Ministry of Foreign Affairs'
France**

Hosted by the Government of Japan
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**"EVALUATION FEEDBACK FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING
AND ACCOUNTABILITY"**

Workshop of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation

Tokyo, September 2000

**Making Feedback more effective: the Case of France
(Ministry of Foreign Affairs)**

This paper reflects on feedback in regard to evaluation of French Co-operation and covers all the components on an evaluation process. The project cycle and the logistic framework should, of course, be interconnected at all stages. This systemic approach, which has always been highly valued by French reflection on its Development Aid and International Co-operation considers the evaluation process globally in the belief that the relations between the different aspects of co-operation are more important than any individual fragment. The case of France calls for two further preliminary remarks.

Preliminary remarks

Development Aid and Retrospective Evaluation are still marked by certain singularities in France. With time, these are slowly reducing, but need to be pointed out, as they are part of the French methods and practices.

A. - The Multi-Agency Context

Generally speaking, French Development Aid is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry (MEFI) on one hand and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE) on the other hand. The percentages for 1998 were respectively 53% for the MEFI (but "only" 41 % in 1996) and 22 % for the MAE. That left some 25 % to be disbursed by other ministries, chiefly the Education and Research Ministry.

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In 1999, the *Comité Interministériel pour la Coopération Internationale et le Développement* (CICID) was created to ensure a better co-ordination of French Development Assistance. Chaired by the Prime Minister, this Committee meets once a year and brings together more than a dozen ministers who, in various ways, are involved in Development Aid and International Cooperation. The predominant ministries (MEFI and MAE) jointly provide the secretariat of the CICID.

A special Working Group on Evaluation prepares an annual report addressed to the CICID on the effectiveness of Development Aid and International Cooperation. This report is not made public.

The *Agence Française de Développement* (AFD) is presented as the hub of French Development Assistance, the key operator of the two ministries (MEFI and MAE).

The present paper will focus mainly on evaluations within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (MAE) and, more precisely, in the *Direction Générale de la Coopération Internationale et du Développement* (DGCID). It should be noted, however, that collaboration is being reinforced with the two other evaluation units of the MEFI and AFD.

B. - Evaluation: a new concept, which started from the fringe

In France, ex-post evaluation is a new concept introduced some ten years ago and not yet easily accepted and implemented in the French Administration. Retrospective evaluation has mostly been used by political authorities to legitimise their action in new fields.

Traditionally, in France, as in most other European countries, the Nation-State - which is taken in a global vision including the Government, the Administration, Local Authorities - intervenes within the framework of the authority conferred on the State (justice, police, defence...) and according to responsibilities assumed by the social sectors (health and education). The Administration carries out its duties under a dual control: internal control of the Inspectors or Auditors (up to the *Cour des Comptes*); and external control of the representatives of the nation (members of Parliament). Inspections and elections were, and

still are, the two main mechanisms of control, adjustment and improvement. Sometimes also of censure.

It should be pointed out that evaluation, *stricto sensu*, has effectively first appeared on the Administration scene in the infra-governmental sector and in the supra-governmental sector. Presently, within the infra-governmental sector, evaluation is systematically applied to all programmes decentralised to local administrations: every single contract between the Central State and a Region, by which the Central State allocates funds to a specific region under a long-term programme, has to be regularly evaluated. Regional Programmes of the European Commission (supra-governmental sector) are evaluated in the same way. This dual system, which confirms that evaluation is most to be likely practised when legitimisation is needed, shows that decentralised administrations in France are nowadays more familiar with evaluation than the Central Government.

Evaluation at the national level has been introduced hesitantly and cautiously, giving priority to new and "marginal" zones that are often open to controversy, such as environment or Development Assistance.

Definitions

Before entering into the topic of "Feedback and Communication" it is necessary to explain the five different definitions which correlate to different objectives, specific audiences, various transmission supports, from the briefly outlined to the more explicitly described:

- **communication** can be defined as pro-active, one point to many points, anticipatory, general material transmitted to other media or directly to the general public, it is clearly oriented and aims to deliver precise material ;
- **information** would be more "professional", responding to an expectation, directed to a specific public, eventually under the pattern of «questions & answers» ;

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- **transmission** is even more determined as it would deliver consolidated and very accurate data to some high-ranking officials (minister, member of Parliament, journalist, NGOs executive...) in order to support some statement and/or policy ;
- **reversion** is a way to feed the main conclusions of an *ex post* evaluation of a project, a programme or a policy, back to the different stakeholders ;
- **retroaction** (or active feedback) would be the definition of the main lessons learned from an evaluation, and the design, preferably jointly, of the next phase based on the recommendations spelt out by the consultants.

Each one of these specific feedback actions commands a particular kind of communication strategy. Restricting our attention to publications, the following are texts produced by the Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

- ◊ *a long synthesis (10 to 20 pages) is edited together with the final report;*
- ◊ *a two-page summary presenting the most meaningful information contained in the evaluation (most likely also to be translated and put on the Web site);*
- ◊ *a one-page presentation in three sections: subject of the evaluation, main conclusions, recommendations;*
- ◊ *an abstract prepared for the decision-makers by the Evaluation and Technical Departments putting forth lessons learned, reactions to the evaluation and propositions for the follow up;*
- ◊ *and of course, occasionally, in order to answer to precise queries from different officials or to prepare a paper (such as for this workshop), some parts of the evaluation results are extracted.*

Present feedback system implemented by the Evaluation Department (MAE)

Feedback is certainly not an issue that has to come at the end of an evaluation process. From the start, and at every step, there is an opportunity to ensure that the expected feedback mechanism is operational.

- ◆ **Terms of reference** are always prepared distinctly for every single evaluation, and adapted according to the objectives anticipated by the partners: this document also displays the method of investigation required in order to involve the different stakeholders (Technical Department, implementing agency, partner country, beneficiaries...) in the process;

In parallel to a ten years' Country Evaluation of the French Co-operation in Ivory Coast, it was proposed that the partner country undertake a prospective study "Ivory Coast in 2020". This exercise was highly beneficial for both countries, and became of prime interest during the Joint Commission to settle the main objectives of a new long-term programme. This device helped to prepare and share the recommendations.

External offices, in the Priority Solidarity Zone (Zone prioritaire de solidarité), which consists of 61 countries, attached to French Embassies, were offered, right from the beginning, the opportunity to join in the preparation of a new evaluation related to decentralised funds. The use of Internet and the support of a consultant firm, (which opened its Web site, contributed additional documentation and answered questions through e-mail) made this possible. A specific workshop might be proposed to participants during next summer, under the responsibility of the consultants. This scheme would contribute to the future ownership of the conclusions and involve the operators in the implementation of new instructions.

- ◆ **The Steering Committee** is seen always as the most reliable technique to ensure that the conclusions and recommendations of an evaluation are taken into consideration. The participation of the Technical Departments responsible for the project or the programme is, of course, systematically requested.

The composition of the Steering Committee, with other partners not directly involved in the implementation of a specific project or programme, in fact opens the way for new partnerships in the future. It also ensures transparency. For instance, UNAIDS is taking part, along with the European Commission, IRD (ex-ORSTOM), a member of the Parliament, and other institutions not directly involved, in the Evaluation Steering Committee of the French programmes against HIV/AIDS. The recommendations will certainly benefit from this external participation.

- ◆ **Local expertise** is also a manner in which to place the results of an evaluation. Its use might, however, present some difficulties, particularly in poor countries where national - and independent - experts are a scarce resource.

The Cape Verde Ministry of Foreign Affairs was very interested in taking part in a Country Evaluation of the French Co-operation. Two aspects were of particular interest to our partners: the possibility to designate an independent and qualified local expert, and a specific training on evaluation to be given by the French consultant. This partnership was maintained through to the end of the evaluation, as the final report was ratified by a Steering Committee in Paris attended by Capeverdean officials and the local expert.

- ◆ **Several reports** are requested from the consultants at successive steps of the evaluation exercise: incentive report, mission report, draft report... until the final report, which is published and distributed (from 300 to more than a thousand copies). Members of the Steering Committee (numbering from 10 to 20 individuals) systematically receive a copy of all the intermediary documents.

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The long process of the evaluation, nourished by several documents, marked by regular meetings, usually helps everyone involved to come to some kind of agreement by the time the final report is published. As an annex to the report on the "environment dimension in the Development Co-operation Ministry's policies and projects" (n°30, 1996) an additional note was published giving for the Department in charge of evaluation the possibility to express his dissension.

- ◆ Various meetings may be organised at the end of an evaluation process, besides the Steering Committee. There are no fixed standards for these meetings, it being recognized that the main difficulties are firstly the unavoidable time lapse before publication of the final report and secondly the unequal interest of different stakeholders and other participants. According to the type of evaluation, a meeting can be simply a discussion open to stakeholders unable to take part in the evaluation; a conference, largely open to outsiders; or sometimes a seminar with the participation of technical services and local partners.

In fact, post-evaluation meetings are not so frequent and it seems more suitable and efficient to make use of miscellaneous events such as a conference, an international seminar, the nomination of a new director or a budget discussion. A political incident (Coup d'Etat in Niger) was the opportunity to recall that the decision to interrupt development co-operation proved that there is always much to learn from earlier reports; in this case the report «Consequences of the suspension of development co-operation: evaluation based on the cases of Togo, Zaire and Haiti" (n°29, 1996) was useful."

The two sets of circumstances have helped to observe the failures and successes of the "aftermath" of an evaluation:

In 1998, a study was undertaken on nearly thirty evaluations of previous years, in order to have a synthesis and to find out what was the follow-up of the recommendations. The pleasant surprise was to discover that, in the case of projects, recommendations were largely applied in the new developments, although this was less obvious for sector programmes.

During recent years three specific country evaluations were produced to discern how recommendations from previous country evaluations were adopted and implemented. The results of this inquiry did not engender too much enthusiasm, probably partly because evaluation was considered an evil to avoid..... ten years ago. Times might have changed.

- ◆ **New projects** introduced for funding from the *Fonds de Solidarité Prioritaire* (FSP), which will shortly become the new name of the FAC, have to give clear information on past evaluations, results and recommendations, as well as a guarantee that a new evaluation will be conducted at the end of the project. Performance indicators have to be established.

Regular participation by members of the Evaluation Department in the FSP projects "Examination Committee" has succeeded in making other Technical Departments aware of

the importance of evaluation and familiar with accountability. This participation, every two weeks, in a committee where 10 to 25 projects are reviewed, with the obligation to study documents beforehand and provide written comments, is a strenuous work. But it pays.

Some provisional statements

Past, present and future, have to be kept separate

There is always a certain amount of overlap between different phases of an evaluation process (past, present and future). An evaluator should be careful to follow the sequence and to avoid anticipating the recommendations before a thorough examination of past actions and conclusions reached has been made. There is a distinct danger that evaluators, in trying to respond favourably to Technical Departments expecting only validation of their past actions and new ideas, may go too quickly to the recommendations in order to be able to propose the next phase: it is essential to take the time to study and learn from past events.

The pressure to sort out the findings and to come up with recommendations can come also from decision-makers who want to be able to "confirm" their views. Not only does all financial and budgetary management lead to decisions concerning new expenses, rather than the study of past actions, but also the Evaluators themselves feel more important if they have their say in new financial decisions. Consequently, the analysis can be carried out with a view to future decisions, to the detriment of a comprehensive study of past endeavours.

At the same time it is contradictory to assume that the recommendations are reached blindly, since the consultant experts are usually well aware that the orientation of their intervention has been clearly established. Usually the expert would know if the results of the evaluation are expected to lead to:

- (i) A continuation of the present policy (justification);
- (ii) An improvement of the policy (rationalise public expenses);
- (iii) Eventually an amplification, promotion, of the policy (communication); or
- (iv) To bring the policy to a close.

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External expertise and internal transformation

The consultant, an independent, neutral, and qualified outsider, will never have the responsibility of thinking and acting in the place of stakeholders directly involved in the action. Nevertheless, by his intervention, the consultant unquestionably influences the final results of the evaluation. Indeed, by his very presence, the consultant - who must first seek to understand the object being evaluated and in doing so may already bring about certain modifications - will almost automatically set in motion a certain number of changes. In other words, merely by launching an evaluation process, modifications can be noted.

To expand on this topic it should be recognised that any person involved in any kind of task also makes an evaluation on his/her own work. He/she is well aware of what he/she is doing, but more and more often any kind of assignment is not to individually complete a special job, which could be measured by output, but to accomplish a specific function within a team as part of a team effort. In order to understand his/her own role, a team worker has to share his/her experience with others. Psychoanalysis has shown that a person can have access to his/her own difficulties only through others people's interpretations.

The final aim of an evaluation, which is originated from the exterior and carried out with some internal participation, is to transform the organisation under review, its culture and its "way of life". But who wants to be told how to change? A recent study identified four prerequisites for an evaluation to have significant impact on the organization:

1. *The evaluation - with participation of stakeholders - is most likely to have an effect in terms of apprenticeship, learning and knowledge (news methods, news schemes of thought...); evaluation introduces new values (ethical, transparency, self-critical temper, team-work...); evaluation may change a person's sense of where he/she belongs: human beings tend to stick more to their "material" organisation (establishment, corporation...) rather than to their "intellectual" fellowship or affiliation (theme of research, study in a particular sector or geographic field...); evaluation helps to legitimate one's action, particularly on the part of the managers.*
2. *Evaluation has to come up with results and recommendations, which can be more or less stringent: sometimes just descriptive, stating only weak and strong points, with the follow up of suggestions remaining uncertain; or alternatively, in other circumstances, the financial consequences of an evaluation can be rigorous.*
3. *Ownership of the results of an evaluation relies in the long run on the method of the exercise (timely, focusing, participatory...), on the value, the precision and the ability to apply proposals. There should be also a clear allotment of responsibilities and a strong management, with appropriate legitimacy.*
4. *The final condition necessary for an evaluation to have enduring consequences is the setting up of a permanent internal evaluation mechanism, with a database, indicators, quality control, under the supervision of an independent body.*

Natural Ambiguity of Evaluation

Although an evaluation must be autonomous from the subject evaluated, at the same time, it must encourage participation. Autonomy ensures the quality of the analysis and impartiality, while close cooperation and the participation of the stakeholders results in a gain of confidence, freer exchange of information and better acceptance of the recommendations to come.

Evaluators are requested to play four different characters: a specialist (at least in the specific field under study, but also in methodology, management and human resources...); a judge (telling the truth and stating where the veracity stands); an instructor (able to teach and to conclude the report by the "lessons learned"), and finally, an adviser (delivering accurate advice). This constant ambiguity as to who exactly an evaluator is – as opposed to an inspector, an auditor or a controller - could be considered as an impediment to his work. However, these qualifications - emphasizing, where needed, on one or other of the roles – will certainly help at the end of the evaluation, when the time comes for communication.

The leading role of the Steering Committee in the feedback process

The Development World can be characterized by a very large autonomy of every single thematic sector (subdivided into a large number of geographic sectors). This provides every "specialist" with the possibility to conceal his/her activity. Even transversal disciplines tend to introduce new specialisations reserved for the "experts". Faced with this situation the Steering Committee offers two advantages. First, it provides a forum where different specialists can share their experiences. Secondly, no one would accept to change his/her way of operating unless he/she is personally convinced of the advantages of such a change. It is only through discussion and exchanges that participants of a Steering Committee can anticipate results and endorse proposed recommendations. This group of individuals can become, through time and opportunity, a new network, more or less informal, that can be reactivated easily through e-mail, as everyone has experienced these days.

The Steering Committee is, however, not always the ideal place: as with any gathering of people, it can become a stronghold to acquire power by one party against another, a place of

power where what is revealed is as important as what is left unsaid. From the start of the evaluation, modifications can be observed; indeed, even the decision to make an evaluation is sufficient to change the status, even more so with the Steering Committee meetings as they are a semi-public space where transparency is operational. By and large, hostility is somewhat subtle and there is no need to impose new rules of conduct: many recommendations given by the experts in their final reports are gleaned directly from the different stakeholders. Evaluation gives different partners an opportunity to express their difficulties and to find solutions for their own problems. Ideas ripen and then evaluators have only to harvest the crop.

A recent study on learning through participation at Steering Committees (SC) has come to the following conclusions:

1. *The level of knowledge acquired, by members of the SC, who have all read the final report, is linked to their effective participation in meetings over a period of time: the greater the motivation the better the result;*
2. *Acquisition of information relates more to exchanges between members of SC than to the data collected by evaluators;*
3. *Evaluation provided SC members the opportunity to get to know each other, to share common ideas on issues already "in the air", but with marginal transformation of the conceptual position;*
4. *In the short term, individual learning - even at a group level - is not acquired and dispensed on a large scale through the organisation.*

Shortcomings (an extract)

Before coming up with new propositions, we should be aware of the numerous constraints before of us. We should not delude ourselves; here are some examples of potential misunderstanding:

- ◆ **Indicators** and manifold kinds of measurements are a constant bias of pseudo-scientists. One could recall the hazardous tendency, at the turn of last century, to scale every single part of the skull in an attempt to understand human nature. A collection of numbers, figures, ratios or graphs is not the only *modus operandi* to come to understand and grade an action.

- ◆ **Rational choices** do not come straight out of an evaluation report. If it were so simple, our work would have been over a long time ago. In fact, faced with a complex system, human decisions, may not appear rational (wise and judicious) but could be well envisioned: any space left open to uncertainty - and error - is also full of potential, creation and innovation.

Many Evaluation Departments have experienced the case whereby an evaluation exercise is requested even though an administrative or political change is clearly in view, and subsequently new circumstances are in place even before the end of the evaluation. The report on "Evaluation of Relations with Multilateral Partners" (n° 43, 2000) was produced in draft after the dismantling of the previous organisation and the printed document was mostly historical. Fortunately, the report was still valid regarding instruments and operators.

- ◆ **Everlasting tendencies, amelioration or decline** are not possible in this world. Back and forth movements always lead back to the average. The exact position of this average is something that can be debated during an evaluation exercise. And further criticisms brought forward during the evaluation might contribute to shift the median position.

A pilot instructor in an eminent Middle East Flight Army noticed that jet Fighters, whose accomplishments had been praised, turned out to be mediocre the next day; while those who received criticism, were improved. Panegyric evaluations might deserve their beneficiaries?

- ◆ **Announcement of feedback** supports the decision to accept a new project: More and, more often, the simple proclamation that an evaluation will be conducted at the conclusion of the project is an argument presented in favour of new projects, giving the assurance that feedback would be "collected" and "recycled". Decisions-makers feel happier.

In short, there are two main types of funding operations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One concerns renewable actions, year after year, and depends upon the decision of the Bureau, under the supervision of the Director, the Ambassador and the General Inspection (...and the partner country). Evaluation is hardly ever mentioned. A Commission decides the other type of funding on the basis of documentation, where evaluation becomes standardised (although with no guarantee of its value or assurance that the lessons learned will be applied).

- ◆ **Scattered responsibilities:** one of the main task of the Evaluation Department is to undertake cross-sector or horizontal evaluations, which implicate several departments

and other partners. The main difficulty of these evaluations is that unless instructions are given, the lessons learned and recommendations remain inactive.

The final report on "Evaluation of recourse to external expertise in development by the Development Co-operation Ministry" (n° 36, 1998) proposed several measures, fully agreed by the Steering Committee; but as no definite bureau had been given responsibility for the implementation of recommendations, nothing was done.

Further steps to complete

Preliminary study

Evaluations have taught us the importance of the preparatory stages preceding any activity: setting objectives, clearing out databases, defining available resources, encouraging participation. Looking at "Feedback and Communication" we also had confirmation that the first steps of an evaluation exercise need to be improved. Preliminary studies are required to consider the complexity of the evaluation: multiple partnerships, cross-sector approaches, clearing out the problematic and defining the most important objectives of an evaluation. Lacking facts and figures, and needing to gather documents and calculate statistics, evaluators can spend up to a third or even half of their time on these elementary tasks, thus greatly reducing the period that can be devoted to analysis and study of new propositions.

Abridged and more precise terms of reference

Over time, there has been inflation in the expectations and requests laid down in the terms of reference. Recently an attempt has been made to make them more intelligible and accurate, but the terms of reference are not always realistic. If the objectives, the problematic and the criteria usually appear clearly and in detail in the terms of reference, the field studied, available data, time required, are often not well defined. This becomes apparent when the time comes for feedback and communication.

Final reports and synthesis

Feedback is without fail an essential component of the evaluation process. The part played by the Steering Committee largely serves this purpose. On the other hand, communication is a new instrument that can come into action only at the conclusion of the evaluation. Communication requires the design and the undertaking of specific actions. Unfortunately, Evaluators and Evaluation Departments are not always aware of the importance of communication, or are unable to bring it about. Communication is a different job to evaluation and new contacts have to be made with the Information Department, as the final report, even with the synthesis, cannot be disseminated indiscriminately.

Accountability

It would be over protective, much too expensive and certainly time consuming to plan an evaluation on every single action. Evaluation cannot be systematically designed and executed in all sectors, all countries and for all kind of politics. But even independently of evaluation, there is a need for all executing agents to be accountable for their own actions.

Accountability has to be a sequential process, going from one level to the next one. Top to bottom, and back to the final deciders (electors), if possible with external, and professional, points of view. This scheme - originated from accountability - creates an automatic mechanism whereby new methods are implemented and the lessons learned are applied.

DAC Workshop on Feedback and Communication

(Tokyo, September 2000)

MAKING
FEEDBACK MORE
EFFECTIVE:
THE CASE OF FRANCE

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The Case of France : Summary

1. Preliminary remarks

2. Terminology

3. Present Feedback System in Use

4. Some Provisional Statements

5. Shortcomings

6. Further Steps to Achieve

1. Preliminary remarks

- The Multi-Agency context

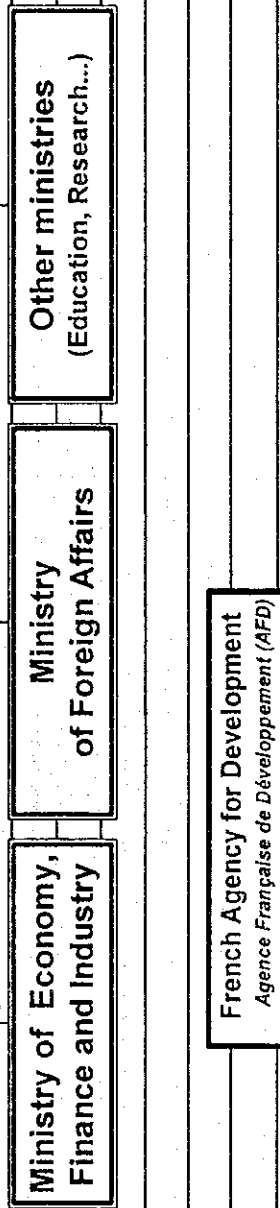
- Evaluation : a new concept

The Multi-Agency Context

Ministry of
Foreign Affairs

Ministry of Economy,
Finance and Industry

The Multi-Agency Context



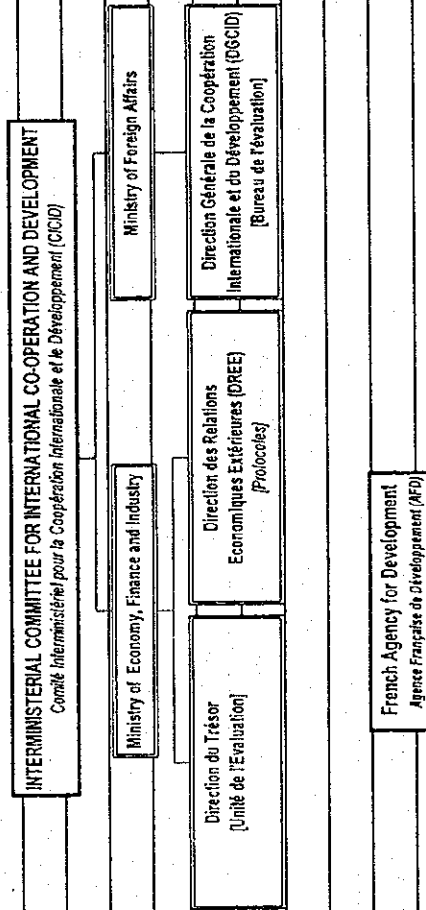
The Multi-Agency Context

INTERMINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Comité Interministériel pour la Coopération Internationale et le Développement (CICID)

Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Multi-Agency Context



The Multi-Agency Context

• French Co-operation was reorganised and became operational on 1st

January 1999 :

• 1/ Two poles are designated :

• - Economic pole : the Ministry of Economy,
Finance and Industry

• - Diplomatic pole : the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

• 2/ The central operator is the *Agence Française de Développement*

• 3/ The CICID, chaired by the Prime Minister, enhances co-ordination between the ministries involved in international co-operation and development aid.

• 4/ The Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs jointly provide the secretariat of the CICID

• 5/ An Evaluation Working Group has to present an annual report to the CICID

CICID

- In its first operational year, the Evaluation Group of the intergovernmental body on Development Aid focused on the following topics :
 - move rapidly towards a mutual methodology
 - promote shared information on evaluation programme
 - undertake joint evaluations on cross-cutting issues

Evaluation : a (rather) new concept

- General Inspectors, *Cour des Comptes*

(auditors)

- Decentralisation (Central State/Regions Contracts)

- European Commission (Regional Programmes)

- Marginal matters (Environment, Development Aid)

2. Terminology

» Communication

» Information

» Transmission

» Reversion

» Retroaction

3. Present Feedback System in Use

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs : please refer to the document prepared)

- Terms of reference
- Steering Committee
- Local expertise
- Reports
- Final meetings
- New projects

Self-evaluation in the Evaluation Department

- The person in charge • A colleague from the same Department, but who has not been directly involved in the evaluation, studies the final report, with regard to the delays, costs... terms of reference :
 - design
 - implementation
 - quality of reports
 - validity of recommendations and follow-up
- tabulates the results at the end of a specific evaluation, adding his own reflections :
 - methodology used, participation, quality of the study
 - design
 - implementation
 - quality of reports
 - validity of recommendations and follow-up

4. Some provisional statements

a) Past, present and future have to be kept apart

b) External expertise and internal transformation

c) Natural ambiguity of evaluation

d) The leading role of the Steering Committee

a) Past, present and future have to be kept apart

- Going to conclusions too rapidly

- Anticipating the recommendations

- Pushing for hasty financial decisions

- Anticipating inevitable results:

- justification

- rationalise public expenses

- promotion / communication

- bring to a close

b) External expertise and internal transformation

- Analysis, by external evaluators, not only stimulates knowledge, but is in itself an activity, that may cause modifications
- Other people's interpretations can help one to understand one's own situation (difficulties)

c) Natural ambiguity of evaluation

- Independence and participation
- Multiple (and contradictory ?) roles

- a specialist

- a judge

- an instructor

- an adviser

d) Leading role of the Steering Committee

- Bringing stakeholders to work together (on cross-cutting issues)
- Open discussion contributes to a change in attitudes and ensures ownership of the recommendations
- Power can be exerted... overtly

5. Shortcomings

(an extract)

- **Indicators** (how to be overwhelmed)
- **Rational choices** (human decision in complexity)
- **Everlasting tendencies** (moving average)
- **Caution** : “Feedback ahead”
- **Dispersed responsibilities** (who’s in charge?)

6. Further steps to achieve

- Preliminary study
- Abridged and more precise terms of reference
- Final reports and synthesis
- Accountability

Making Feedback more effective :
The Case of France

The End

Thank you

