

# Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability



DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE COMMITTEE

OECD



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# **Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability**



ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

# ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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## Foreword

Evaluation systems face many challenges. In addition to the quality, relevance and timeliness of the evaluation itself, a major challenge lies in conveying the evaluation results to multiple audiences both inside and outside development agencies. Thus feedback and communication of evaluation results are integral parts of the evaluation cycle. Effective feedback contributes to improving development policies, programmes and practices by providing policymakers with the relevant evaluation information for making informed decisions.

The origin of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation's (WP-EV) attention to feedback issues stems from the 1998 "Review of the DAC Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance". This report highlighted a concern widespread in DAC Members' central evaluation offices about the adequacy of current practices for disseminating lessons from evaluations. In a subsequent document, "Complementing and Reinforcing the DAC Principles for Aid Evaluation" (1998), it was concluded that feedback and communication practises need to be improved, and that evaluation results should be used more actively in order to enhance current and future aid policies and programmes.

To take this work forward the Japanese Government hosted a DAC WP-EV workshop in Tokyo on 26-28 September 2000 entitled "Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability". The purpose of this conference was to share experiences among WP Members and other participants and to draw lessons from current practices in the area of feedback mechanisms.

This publication is composed of two parts: The *Workshop Report*, based on the fore-mentioned meeting, highlights the various issues raised, topics of discussion and different feedback systems, and outlines the areas identified by participants as most relevant for improving evaluation feedback. The *Background Synthesis Report*, intended as a starting point for discussion at the workshop, outlines the main concerns and challenges facing evaluation feedback and the means to address these. The report is based on an analysis of questionnaire results, and a review of previous initiatives in this area.

I would like to thank the Japanese Government, and in particular the evaluation departments of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Japan International co-operation

Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International co-operation (JBIC) for hosting the workshop, and for their financial support for the conference and this publication. I am also grateful to members of the Steering Group who helped prepare the event, and to workshop participants for contributing quality presentations and papers. The Workshop Report draws heavily on participants' individual contributions, including power point presentations, papers and speeches. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), and in particular Geoff Barnard (Head of Information, Project Manager) and Catherine Cameron (Senior Consultant), was commissioned by Japan to prepare the reports and I would like to express my appreciation to both authors for their contributions.

Niels Dabelstein  
Chair of the Working Party on Aid Evaluation

The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Working Party on Aid Evaluation is an international forum where bilateral and multilateral development evaluation experts meet periodically to share experience to improve evaluation practice and strengthen its use as an instrument for development co-operation policy.

It operates under the aegis of the DAC and presently consists of 30 representatives from OECD Member countries and multilateral development agencies (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Commission, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, African Development Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, UN Development Programme, International Monetary Fund, plus two non-DAC Observers, Mexico and Korea).

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# Table of Contents

<b>Part 1. WORKSHOP REPORT .....</b>	<b>9</b>
Executive Summary .....	11
1. INTRODUCTION .....	13
2. THE CHANGING AID LANDSCAPE .....	15
3. THE FEEDBACK CHALLENGE .....	17
3.1. Learning and accountability.....	17
3.2. The learning frontier .....	18
3.3. Obstacles to learning.....	20
3.4. Addressing the demand side .....	21
4. UNDERSTANDING TARGET AUDIENCES .....	22
4.1. Better targeting.....	22
4.2. Parliament, ministers and boards .....	22
4.3. The Media .....	24
4.4. NGOs and CSOs.....	25
4.5. The general public .....	25
4.6. The case for disclosure .....	26
5. GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS .....	27
5.1. Learning by doing .....	27
5.2. Relevance.....	27
5.3. Timeliness.....	28
5.4. Quality issues.....	28
5.5. Language barriers.....	29
5.6. Intelligent use of the Internet.....	30
5.7. Interagency lesson learning .....	31
5.8. The value of face-to-face communication .....	31
6. INVOLVING PARTNERS.....	33
7. INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES.....	39
7.1. The status of evaluation units.....	39
7.2. Institutionalising lesson learning .....	40
7.3. Results based management.....	40
7.4. Staffing and resourcing .....	41

8. CONCLUSIONS.....	44
ANNEX 1. WORKSHOP PROGRAMME .....	47
ANNEX 2. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS TO THE DAC TOKYO WORKSHOP.....	49
ANNEX 3. PRESS RELEASE .....	53
<b>Part II. BACKGROUND SYNTHESIS REPORT .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Executive Summary .....	57
1. INTRODUCTION.....	59
1.1. The story so far .....	59
1.2. So what is new? .....	59
1.3. Current practices: the starting point.....	62
1.4. Structure of the report.....	62
2. CHALLENGES .....	66
2.1. Dual objectives: learning and accountability.....	66
2.2. The move away from project-level evaluations .....	68
2.3. The dissemination challenge .....	69
2.4. Institutionalising lesson learning.....	70
2.5. Process and politics .....	71
2.6. The role and status of central evaluation units.....	74
2.7. Encouraging participation and ownership .....	75
2.8. Responding to information overload .....	77
3. OPPORTUNITIES.....	81
3.1. Taking advantage of the Internet.....	81
3.2. Using evaluation feedback to enhance learning in the organisation .....	85
3.3. Linking in with the International Development Goals.....	89
3.4. Looking ahead .....	91
ANNEX 1. CONCLUSIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATION FEEDBACK STUDIES.....	94
ANNEX 2. BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE AND RESULTS .....	95
ANNEX 3. EVALUATION PRODUCTS.....	111
ANNEX 4. REVIEW OF EVALUATION WEB RESOURCES.....	113
Bibliography.....	115

## Acronyms and Definitions

<b>ADB</b>	Asian Development Bank
<b>ADF</b>	Agence Française de Développement
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>BMZ</b>	Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (Germany)
<b>CDF</b>	Comprehensive Development Framework
<b>CDIE</b>	Centre for Development Information and Evaluation
<b>CGAP</b>	Consultative Group to Assist the Poorest
<b>CIDA</b>	Canadian International Development Agency
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>DAC</b>	Development Assistance Committee
<b>DANIDA</b>	Danish International Development Agency
<b>DGD</b>	Development Co-operation Directorate
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development
<b>EBRD</b>	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>EEC</b>	European Economic Community
<b>EFELA</b>	Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability
<b>ELDIS</b>	Gateway for Sources on Development and the Environment
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organisation
<b>GTZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (Germany)
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>IADB</b>	Inter-American Development Bank
<b>ICTs</b>	Information and Communication Technologies
<b>ID21</b>	Information for Development in the 21
<b>IDGs</b>	International Development Goals
<b>IDML</b>	International Development Mark-up Language
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada
<b>IDS</b>	Institute of Development Studies
<b>IFAD</b>	International Fund for Agricultural Development
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>IPDET</b>	International Programme for Development Evaluation Training
<b>JBIC</b>	Japan Bank for international Co-operation
<b>JICA</b>	Japan International Co-operation Agency
<b>KfW</b>	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
<b>KM</b>	Knowledge Management
<b>MEFI</b>	Ministère de l'Économie, des Finances et de l'Industrie
<b>MFA</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation

<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>ODI</b>	Overseas Development Institute
<b>OED</b>	Operations Evaluation Department (World Bank)
<b>PDR</b>	People's Democratic Republic
<b>PM&amp;E</b>	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>PRISM</b>	Performance Reporting Information Systems for Management
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction strategy Papers
<b>RBM</b>	Results Based Management
<b>SIDA</b>	Swedish International Development Agency
<b>SURF</b>	Sub-Regional Resource Facilities and Communities of Practice (UNDP)
<b>SWAps</b>	Sector Wide Approaches
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Program
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WB</b>	World Bank
<b>WP-EV</b>	Working Party on Aid Evaluation

*Part I*  
**WORKSHOP REPORT**

# Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability

*Tokyo, 26-28 September 2000*

## Executive summary

1. There was a keen recognition among all the agencies present at the Workshop of the need to improve their evaluation feedback practices. However the differences between agencies in their background, structure and priorities means that this is not an area where a blueprint approach is appropriate.
2. Several important challenges were laid down at the Workshop, in particular the need for much fuller involvement of developing country partners in the evaluation and learning process, and the importance of identifying target audiences more carefully and becoming more demand led, rather than supply driven.
3. There were differences of opinion on the relationship between learning and accountability, and the pros and cons of evaluation units guarding their independent role. Some agencies argued that the accountability that comes from full independence is an essential foundation for learning. Others were of the view that too much emphasis on independence can be counterproductive if it gets in the way of the partnerships needed to facilitate learning.
4. There was agreement, however, that this is not an either/or situation. Both accountability and learning are important goals for evaluation feedback. Of the two, learning is the area where agencies recognise the greatest challenges.
5. There are many obstacles to learning relating to organisational culture, lack of incentives to learn, unequal aid relationships and other factors. These need to be identified and specifically targeted if progress is to be made.
6. Discussion of different stakeholder groups emphasised the need to tailor feedback approaches to suit different target audiences. This is a clear case where one size does not fit all.
7. Despite the risks involved, the case for full disclosure of evaluation reports was widely accepted. Relations with parliaments and the media, for example,

hinge on trust. This requires an atmosphere of openness and a willingness to discuss problems as well as success stories.

8. Getting evaluation lessons across to a range of diverse audiences requires a sophisticated and concerted approach, particularly given the information overload affecting many. The importance of relevance, timeliness, brevity and quality were stressed. Moving from project evaluations to a higher level country or thematic focus was seen as an important way of increasing impact, particularly when evaluations can be timed to coincide with major policy reviews.
9. Internet-based communication tools are seen as an important addition to the evaluation toolbox, though they need to be used intelligently and are not a replacement for conventional approaches. While acknowledging the potential offered by new communication approaches, the value of “learning by doing” and of face-to-face dialogue is still widely recognised.
10. Involving developing country partners in evaluation and lesson learning is seen as a major priority by many agencies, as most recognise that current practices fall far short of what is required for meaningful partnerships. Participation and dialogue needs to start right at the beginning of the project cycle rather than getting tacked on at the end, or squeezed out because of time constraints. Language issues and capacity building also need to be addressed much more seriously than in the past.
11. With new trends in aid delivery, the need for effective donor coordination is more urgent than ever. This points to the need for more joint evaluations and for much greater attention being given to lesson sharing between agencies.
12. The status of evaluation units is a big determinant of their impact within an organisation. For evaluation to become a key focus for learning and accountability, evaluation units need to have clear backing from senior management.
13. Evaluation units will need an injection of new skills, particularly in communication work, if they are to improve their feedback practices. Lack of resources, however, was not seen to be a major constraint since the case for better feedback is strong.
14. Although it was accepted that a standardised approach to improving evaluation feedback would not be appropriate, a number of areas for action were identified at various levels (see Box 2).
15. The overall consensus was that in relation to evaluation feedback the challenge for development agencies is to do more *and* do it better.

# 1. Introduction

The need for improved evaluation feedback is widely recognised by development agencies, both on grounds of accountability and learning. Greater accountability is seen as a prerequisite for continued support for development assistance within donor countries, while also being a vital component in creating robust and meaningful partnerships with countries and organisations that are recipients of aid. Better learning is crucial for improving the effectiveness of aid and ensuring that the hard won lessons from experience – both positive and negative – are heeded. Evaluation feedback is an umbrella term describing the various channels and mechanisms by which these crucial messages get through – and make a difference.

The Tokyo Workshop “**Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability**” (EFELA), held in September 2000, was convened by the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation in order to focus in on this important topic. The Workshop brought together representatives from 22 donor countries and multilateral development agencies, and participants from 6 partner countries. Lasting two and a half days it consisted of a mix of plenary sessions where agencies gave short presentations on their experience, and a series of smaller working groups looking at particular themes in more detail. The highlights of the discussion at the workshop are summarised and included in the Press Release by Prof. Ryokichi Hirono, Chairman of the DAC Tokyo Workshop and Mr. Niels Dabelstein, Chairman of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation. A full programme, list of participants and the press release is provided in Annexes 1, 2 and 3.

In preparation for the Workshop, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), at the University of Sussex, was commissioned by Japan to prepare a Synthesis Report. This provided information on agencies’ current feedback practices and an insight into the issues that Working Party Members see as being most crucial in improving evaluation feedback.<sup>1</sup>

This Workshop Report builds on this earlier document and should be read in conjunction with it. This Report seeks to highlight the main points raised during

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1. The Synthesis report was based on responses to a background questionnaire sent to all Working Party Members, and follow-up interviews with a cross-section of agencies.

the Workshop and draw out the areas of consensus that emerged, as well as the differences in approach and outlook between agencies.

These differences were one of the underlying features of the Workshop. As was pointed out in the earlier Synthesis Report, agencies are not all starting from the same place in terms of their approach to evaluation feedback, their audiences, their relative priorities, or the institutional context in which they work. So while everyone at the Workshop agreed on the urgent need to improve evaluation feedback it was clear that no one approach, or set of approaches, would suit all agencies. As one participant from China put it, this is a case where *“one medicine cannot cure all patients.”* This point was reinforced by a colleague from the Philippines who commented that *“we shouldn’t be looking for prescriptions ... it’s outcomes that count”*.

Discussions at the Workshop ranged over a wide area and tackled the subject of evaluation feedback from a number of different angles. This Report is grouped under a series of broad headings that correspond to the principle areas of debate.

## 2. The Changing Aid Landscape

The Workshop took place against the background of a rapidly evolving aid landscape. Change is nothing new to the development assistance business. But at present there is a sense that the rate and extent of change is greater than it has been for many years. Some of the aspects that were highlighted include:

- **New agendas** – as Norway observed, development agencies face challenges caused by the crowded policy agenda. There are many elements to this including the need to address issues such as conflict reduction, anti-corruption and governance. Many of these suffer from definitional problems and unclear time horizons, which makes them intrinsically difficult to evaluate.
- **New mechanisms** – there are also a whole range of new aid mechanisms being tried. These include Sector Wide Approaches, the Comprehensive Development Framework, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, Poverty Reduction and Growth Frameworks, Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks, and the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach. Some of these imply fundamental changes in the way donors work, requiring significant shifts in how evaluation is approached.
- **New partners** – development agencies are finding themselves working with new partners and in different partnership configurations. Multi-donor consortia are becoming more common, and agencies are moving beyond government-to-government links to forge direct links with civil society. Some brand new partners are also emerging, such as the military, which is becoming a key partner for donors working in post-conflict or conflict resolution situations. This may mean working with UN-led forces, or developing working relationships with Ministries of Defence for interventions in countries such as Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and East Timor.<sup>1</sup>
- **New pressures** – the growing influence of international pressure groups is adding a new dimension to aid debates, as demonstrated in the recent

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1. In the UK, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DFID and the Ministry of Defence have agreed to pool money into a joint conflict prevention budget to maximise effort.

Seattle and Prague protests. Often focusing on single issues, these groups have become highly skilled in gaining international media attention and using the Internet to organise and mobilise. These groups may not be elected, representative or accountable, in a conventional sense, but they have become increasingly powerful and certainly cannot be ignored.

- **New horizons** – aid delivery has been shifting from project, to programme, to country level. But there is now an array of issues on the agenda which require a regional or global approach, for example, issues such as trade, migration, climate change, genetically modified organisms, and HIV/AIDS.
- **New Emphasis on Aid Effectiveness** – The recent emphasis on aid effectiveness is not only due to increased demand for better development results and accountability, but is also partly a result of budgetary constraints.

Agencies are having to adapt to these changes and this is creating many new challenges for evaluation units, requiring them to think and work in new ways. Discussion of evaluation feedback needs to be considered within this evolving context, learning from the past, but also looking to the future of where evaluation is heading.

## 3. The Feedback Challenge

### 3.1. Learning and accountability

There was much discussion of the relationship between these dual goals of evaluation feedback, and their relative importance. While it was recognised that there is significant overlap between them, it was also seen that they are not identical, involving different target audiences and requiring sometimes quite different approaches. A range of views were expressed on how the two functions relate:

- Some agencies argued that accountability is still the core function of central evaluation units, and that the new emphasis on learning needs to build from this and not be seen as being in opposition to it. Separating them out, they felt, was creating a “false dichotomy”.
- Others see it differently and pointed out the tensions that can arise between the two; IFAD, for example, is now putting learning explicitly at the top of its agenda.
- SIDA suggested that it was useful to decide on a case-by-case basis whether learning or accountability was the priority in a particular evaluation. This would then affect the design of the evaluation and the role of stakeholders.
- The World Bank suggested that accountability should create the “**incentive framework for learning**”.
- From a partner country perspective, Lao PDR argued that learning and accountability are two sides of the same coin. Bangladesh commented that for them learning and accountability are a little different in practice, since learning is based in the Ministry of Planning implementation and monitoring unit, and accountability is more the preserve of the Auditor General. Therefore learning may not be owned across the system and may not translate into future activities.
- Japan emphasised the importance of establishing an effective “Feedback Mechanism” to senior policy makers, senior evaluation department and operational department staffs.

These contrasting attitudes are partly a reflection of the differing backgrounds of agencies and the relative positioning of evaluation units within them. Evaluation units reporting directly to governing boards or to parliament, for example, are clearly in a different position compared to those more closely linked with policy or operational units. This has an important bearing on which audiences or stakeholders are *de facto* the highest priority, and what kinds of feedback tend to take precedence.

While there are differences in approach, it was agreed that this is not an either/or situation – both learning and accountability are vital. Of the two, however, learning is the area in which most agencies see the greatest need for improvement. Accountability has long been a core concern for evaluation units; learning is now the “new frontier” where a whole range of new opportunities and challenges exist.

### 3.2. The learning frontier

Concepts of knowledge management and “learning organisations” borrowed from the corporate sector have made considerable inroads into development agency thinking recently, although approaches and terminology vary. The Workshop considered how these concepts can be applied in an evaluation setting, recognising that evaluation units do not have a monopoly on knowledge. Compared to other departments, however, it was pointed out that they do have the advantage of being one of the most systematic in their approach, and having often the most comprehensive coverage. They therefore have an important role to play as central knowledge holders and a significant stake in how new thinking on knowledge and learning evolves.

A number of agencies stressed the need to “unpack” the language on learning and to clarify what is meant by it. Learning at the individual level, for example, is quite different than learning at the organisational level. There are also different stages in the learning process – from finding new results, to validating and verifying them, transferring them to others, and codifying them into guidelines. The World Bank contrasted three types of learning – learning from “doing”, from research, and from evaluation – and noted that mechanisms need to be in place to allow effective learning from sources outside the institution, as well as within it. France noted that evaluation reports are just one component in decision making, commenting that “*if it were so simple, our work would have been over a long time ago*”.

If evaluation units are to take on a proactive learning role they need to develop a more sophisticated view of how learning takes place within and between organisations, and where the bottlenecks arise. Several agencies are already addressing this challenge (see Box 1: Signs of improving conditions for evaluation-based learning in German aid agencies). AusAID is undertaking a study to understand how their staff and consultants learn, as part of a wider exercise revising their lessons learned database. The study will be looking at formal and informal systems for knowledge management, information sharing and lesson

### Box 1. Signs of improving conditions for evaluation-based learning in German aid agencies<sup>\*</sup>

- Germany's diversified development co-operation structure is now gradually moving towards greater **concentration** on particular issues, priority areas and countries. There is also a parallel trend towards greater decentralisation.
- German official aid agencies see themselves more than ever as **learning organisations**, and are beginning to restructure their management systems accordingly. **Evaluation systems** are intended to play a key part in this, and are being given greater priority and greater institutional independence.
- The **quality of evaluation** is improving. More sophisticated methods, more impact orientation and a greater number of broader-based evaluations (not confined to a single project) all offer the prospect that in future more of the knowledge will be generated that is needed for both quality improvement and conceptual advancement of development co-operation work, and for greater external accountability.
- Aid agencies themselves believe it is important to increase the extent to which they systematise and institutionalise their **feedback system** for evaluation-based learning and accountability.
- The organisations are making increasing use of modern, **intranet-based information and documentation (I&D) systems**. These reduce information gathering and search costs, and help to establish an institutional memory. However, the functionality of I&D systems leaves room for improvement. In particular, efforts are needed to manage the growing flood of information. Further problems, given the diversity of institutions, are how to network the I&D systems and how to cater for upward feedback in heavily decentralized organisations.
- Aid agencies see a strong need to do more to promote the **internalisation** of evaluation lessons, taking a more systematic and innovative approach. Some are currently appraising the inclusion of this in an overall system of knowledge management.
- **Implementation monitoring** (i.e., implementation of evaluation lessons) is essentially based on established M&E systems.
- The foundation of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation (German Society for Evaluation) and the annual evaluation meetings now staged by the BMZ with the major German aid agencies have both given a substantial boost to **horizontal learning** among German aid agencies in recent years.
- By putting its evaluation reports on public release, the BMZ has initiated a turn in the tide for German aid agencies' **public disclosure policy**. Numerous agencies have said they intend to follow, or at least look into the possibility of following the Ministry's example. Others remain hesitant to make this move.

**Box 1. Signs of improving conditions for evaluation-based learning in German aid agencies (cont.)**

- Most German development aid organisations have in the past largely addressed their feedback to internal audiences. The media and general public have not been a high priority for them as target audiences. **In-country partners and stakeholders** still tend to be passed over too often in the feedback process. However, the need for greater participation is generally recognized.
- Given that Germany's aid organisations usually have well-developed project controlling and M&E systems, feeding back evaluation findings into **on-going projects** is relatively straightforward. In contrast to this, utilising the lessons learned from **broader-based evaluations** is a considerably more challenging task.

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\* Adapted from "Evaluation Based Learning – The German Case", German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development, study submitted to the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (WP-EV) Workshop, Tokyo 26-28 September 2000.

learning across a range of functions, not just evaluation. Once they have a better understanding of this it will be possible to consider the format, design and modes of communication to be developed for evaluation feedback. CIDA has a Continuous Learning Division which works with the Performance Review Branch to develop best practice modules and ask the question "how are we learning?" It also has a Corporate Memory Unit, which together with a contractor is working to organise the lessons learned into a coherent, subject-based, easily retrievable database.

### **3.3. Obstacles to learning**

There are many obstacles that can get in the way of learning. Those brought up at the Workshop include:

- **Organisational culture** – some organisations have a culture where accountability tends to be associated with blame. This has the effect of discouraging openness and learning. In others, it is more acceptable to own up to mistakes and see these as opportunities for learning, recognising that there is often as much to learn from poorly performing projects as there is from success stories.
- **Pressure to spend** – learning takes time, and pressure to meet disbursement targets can lead to shortcuts being taken during project planning and approval stages, with lessons from previous experience being ignored or only selectively applied in the haste to get decisions through.

- **Lack of incentives to learn** – unless there are proper accountability loops built into the project cycle there may be little incentive to learn. This is particularly the case when staff or consultants shift from task to task, and have generally moved on long before the consequences of failure to learn are felt.
- **Tunnel vision** – the tendency of some staff or operational units to get stuck in a rut, carrying on with what they know, even when the shortcomings of the old familiar approaches are widely accepted.
- **Loss of institutional memory** – caused by frequent staff rotation or heavy reliance on short-term consultants, or by the weakening or disbanding of specialist departments.
- **Insecurity and the pace of change** – if staff are insecure or unclear what their objectives are, or if the departmental priorities are frequently shifting, this can have an adverse effect on learning.
- **The unequal nature of the aid relationship** – which tends to put donors in the driving seat, thereby inhibiting real partnerships and two-way knowledge sharing.

Many of these obstacles are deep seated, and cannot be changed overnight. However there was a broad acceptance of the need to “dig deep” to locate where the obstacles to learning lie, and to find ways they can be attacked. Agencies expressed this in different ways, but many recognise that this is not just a question of fine-tuning; what is needed is a radical rethinking of how organisations learn and are held accountable.

### 3.4. Addressing the demand side

A common feature of most evaluation feedback is that it tends to be supply driven, with the evaluation unit pumping out information on the assumption that it will be picked up. Though inevitable to some degree, several agencies pinpointed this as a key weakness in current feedback practices. Evaluation units were doing a reasonably good job on the supply side, as CIDA put it; it is the demand side that is their “*Achilles heel*”.<sup>1</sup>

The introduction of evaluation “help desks” is one concrete way of addressing this. This idea has been tried out at the World Bank and is seen as a successful way of pointing people to relevant evaluation lessons (both within and outside the Bank) as and when they need the information. Help desk queries are currently running at 1 000 per year, with 60% coming from outside the organisation. The Netherlands also plans to set up a help desk or knowledge centre to support decentralised evaluations.

1. Making this point another way, FAO commented that since demands are changing all the time, evaluation units need to “respond to these changes if they are to survive”.

## **4. Understanding Target Audiences**

### **4.1. Better targeting**

The Synthesis Report made a start at separating out some of the main audiences for evaluation feedback, distinguishing twelve main target groups and indicating which are likely to be priorities for learning purposes, as opposed to accountability. The aim was to underline both the diversity of audiences that evaluation units may be aiming to reach, the different reasons for wishing to target them, and the very basic point that one feedback approach is not going to suit them all.

This was a first approximation, and the Workshop provided an opportunity to break down target audiences further and start to look in more detail at different sub-groups.<sup>1</sup> No attempt was made to draw up a comprehensive list of all possible audiences for evaluation feedback. The essential point is that priority audiences vary depending on the type of evaluation, the messages coming out, and the particular context in which evaluations are taking place. There was a recognition that more effort is needed in identifying and prioritising target audiences in specific cases, and that attention needs to be given to this early on in the process, not after the evaluation is completed.

Careful targeting allows intelligent tailoring of feedback approaches, a point that was underscored in the presentation by DANIDA. This broke down external audiences into three main groups and explained how different feedback “vehicles” are used to target each of them (see Box 2). The point was made that given the diversity of potential audiences it is not realistic to try and reach everyone; agencies have to decide who is most important in specific cases, and make sure they get to them effectively.

A number of audience groups were discussed in more detail. Experience of agencies in relation to four of the important external audiences within donor countries is summarised below.

### **4.2. Parliament, ministers and boards**

For bilateral agencies, key ministers and parliamentary committees are often a crucial target audience, whereas governing boards of various forms play the equivalent role for most multilateral agencies. In both cases they require delicate

**Box 2. Danida's approach in matching feedback vehicles to specific audiences**

Primary purpose	AUDIENCE GROUPS		
	<i>Accountability</i>	<i>Learning</i>	<i>Partners</i>
FEEDBACK VEHICLES	Parliament Opinion makers/leaders General public	Academics, students, researchers External resource base (consultants, etc.) NGOs	Developing country partners Other development agencies
Evaluation reports		•	•
4 page summary	•	•	•
25 page popular version	•		
Press events	•		
Video/film	•		•
Annual report to Board	•		
Danida's annual report	•		
Danid@visen newsletter	•		
Public meetings and professional associations		•	
Lectures at universities and high schools		•	
World Wide Web	•	•	
Seminars/workshops			•
Participation in evaluations			•

Source: Danida (2000), "External Feedback – Danida's Dissemination Vehicles", paper presented to DAC Tokyo Workshop on Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability, September 2000.

handling. If good relationships are created, based on trust and regular dialogue, they can be a vital ally; anything less can spell serious problems for the agency.

Specific situations vary a great deal, depending on the reporting structures and personalities involved. For example:

- In Norway, aid evaluation is located in the Policy Planning and Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When an evaluation report is finalised, a memorandum containing proposals for decisions is drafted and presented to the Minister and relevant political staff in order for follow-up decisions to be made. These meetings are a recent development and have provided a useful interface between the operational and the political

levels, helping to raise awareness among political staff of the dilemmas and systemic difficulties in development cooperation. They have put the onus on the evaluation unit to make sure that recommendations are concrete and well thought out, and are based on a consensus among the relevant parties involved (a process which can take time, but which is valuable in its own right, and essential in terms of subsequent impact).

- In the Netherlands, there is an established system for feedback to Parliament. Evaluation reports are presented to the relevant Minister who then passes them on with an accompanying “policy reaction” for discussion in Parliament. Creating a routine of regular meetings has helped sustain interest among the political staff, and means that bad news as well as good news can be discussed in a more balanced and informed way.
- In the UK, the Parliamentary Committee on International Development established by the current government has created a new axis of influence and power, and is keeping a much closer eye on the performance of DFID than in the past. It receives submissions from a wide range of sources and provides a very public forum where policy issues and controversies are aired.

A general message that came through at the Workshop is that frankness and openness are essential components in developing good relationships with these kinds of high level audiences. USAID commented how the US Congress are particularly suspicious of “glowing reports”, and has appreciated the Agency’s efforts to be honest about where difficulties have occurred.

### 4.3. The Media

This same point was also emphasised in relation to feedback to the media, although relatively few evaluation units have a lot of experience working with the media. The risk of evaluation material being selectively quoted or used to create potentially damaging headlines was acknowledged. But, at the same time, most recognise the important role of the media in holding agencies accountability and the valuable part they can play in raising awareness about development assistance more generally.<sup>2</sup>

Senior management are highly sensitive to media reports – both positive and negative – so getting media relations right is important. DANIDA is one the agencies that has done the most in terms of working with the media. They made the point that damaging headlines are based on three ingredients: *a)* a development fiasco of some kind, that *b)* is being covered up, and *c)* is an exclusive story. By adopting an open policy, and releasing evaluation reports widely, the last two of these ingredients can be removed. So press releases are routinely issued, and these are backed up by press conferences which provide an opportunity for in depth explanation of the evaluation results. This approach has not solved the problem of occasional

development fiascos, but it has led to a much more mature and constructive relationship with the media, which in turn has been important in maintaining the widespread support for development assistance among the Danish public.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.4. NGOs and CSOs

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) of various kinds are seen as an important audience for evaluation feedback, as well as partners in the evaluation process, and sometimes pioneers in developing new evaluation approaches, such as participatory monitoring and evaluation. Some agencies have taken steps to engage with these groups more systematically. The French now have a High Council for International Cooperation which includes academics and NGOs and enables an exchange of opinion with the government about development issues. Some agencies have a strategy of sending reports to key NGOs, CSOs, academics and other leading opinion makers in the development arena.

Establishing a constructive relationship with such groups is seen as an important step in broadening out the learning loop, and demonstrating accountability. But this is not without its pitfalls. One agency spoke of its experience in bringing NGOs in as participants in a major sectoral review, and how it was taken off guard when, the day before the publication of a major report, some of the NGOs released a press statement attacking the document. From this they have learned that in future consultations of this kind they need to establish clear “ground rules” and be alert to the possible diverging agendas involved, particularly when working with NGOs that have an active campaigning role and a sophisticated media department to go with it.

#### 4.5. The general public

The general public within donor countries are not normally regarded as an audience that can be reached directly with evaluation feedback. However, Japan underlined that the budget for ODA is provided by the general public as taxpayers, and that therefore the public is important as a target audience. Japan has pioneered a programme to involve “ordinary people” as citizens’ monitors of the country’s development assistance effort.

The scheme started in 1999 and is deliberately targeted at non-specialists such as “small shop owners from down the street”, “students”, “fishermen”, or “ordinary housewives”. Groups are made up of eight to ten volunteers. They start with a one-day orientation seminar, then spend a week in the field visiting projects in several countries. They are asked to write a short report on their return giving their common sense assessment of what they saw. These are combined into one document, so as to present a range of impressions side-by-side. These are then distributed in large numbers by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, using public outlets such as libraries, schools and the Internet.

The scheme has proved popular and has been steadily expanding. About 100 separate monitoring trips were organised in the scheme this year. The scheme does not claim to be rigorous, and it is not appropriate for all kinds of development projects.<sup>4</sup> But it has succeeded in shedding a totally new light on the Japanese aid effort, one which seems to be appreciated by the “ordinary people” whose taxes fund the aid programme.

#### 4.6. The case for disclosure

There was a broad consensus on the desirability of full disclosure of evaluation reports and considerable progress has been made in this direction in recent years. Several agencies admitted, however, that theory and practice were not always the same thing, and that they needed to do more ensure that reports are made available more promptly and systematically.

Disclosure of negative or controversial evaluation findings can obviously create difficulties for agencies, so it is important not to be naïve about possible fallout. But the overall view was that the benefits of disclosure in the long run make it worthwhile. Agency credibility is enhanced, and the willingness to publish negative reports helps to boost the validity of the positive ones.<sup>5</sup> Greater disclosure can also increase the pressure for more systematic follow-up of recommendations, while motivating those involved in evaluations to produce a better product, since they know their report will be made public, rather than being buried on a shelf somewhere.

### Notes

1. The wide range of potential audiences for evaluation feedback was underlined in the presentation by Germany, which identified 17 main actors in the aid sector, within Germany alone.
2. Japan has taken this a step further and has included journalists in evaluation teams.
3. It was noted that according to a recent opinion survey in Denmark there is 73% support for the 1% GNP target for development assistance, even though only 50% believe that aid works.
4. Practical projects such road building schemes, or support for elementary schools, are easiest for non-specialists to assess. This approach would not be appropriate for more complex projects such as balance of payments support.
5. One agency commented that in making all its evaluation reports public it recognises that it is providing potential ammunition for critics. But it wants to develop a reputation as being an agency “that can make mistakes”.

## **5. Getting the Message Across**

The Workshop provided a valuable opportunity for agencies to share experience on feedback approaches. Some of the most important communications lessons that emerged are summarised here.

### **5.1. Learning by doing**

It was agreed that “learning by doing” is often the most effective feedback route. People who are directly involved in evaluations, or the consultations surrounding them, have the greatest exposure to the specific lessons being learned and the context in which they apply. They are in the best position to internalise these lessons, and if the activity is to continue, to feed them in to the next stage of planning and implementation. It therefore makes sense to maximise these opportunities where possible, broadening out the consultation loop, and taking the time needed to share drafts and encourage buy-in to the evaluation process among key stakeholders. DANIDA and IFAD are among the agencies that placed particular emphasis on the need to do more in this area.

Though clearly important, this kind of feedback is obviously not the end of the story. Lessons need to be spread much more broadly if they are to have an impact beyond the immediate stakeholder group. This means sharing lessons with a wide variety of other audiences. The problem is that most of these are bombarded with material from other sources, are already suffering from information overload, and may have little time or motivation to pick up on lessons learned from evaluations that they have no direct connection with and no responsibility for. So this is where some of the biggest communication challenges lie.

### **5.2. Relevance**

The perceived relevance of evaluation lessons is of prime importance in determining whether they will be picked up. The classic criticism of project evaluations is that the lessons emerging are either too specific or too general. An important way that agencies are addressing this is by shifting emphasis towards higher level, country-based, or thematic evaluations. These are likely to have much wider relevance and are therefore worth investing more in.

In some agencies there is an active debate on whether it is still appropriate for central evaluation units to carry out individual project evaluations at all. Some argue that this should be devolved entirely to operational departments, allowing evaluation units to concentrate on thematic or country work. Others make the case that independent project-level evaluations are an essential raw material for higher level analyses, so need to be continued in parallel.

### 5.3. Timeliness

Closely related is the question of timeliness. Because of the lag time in producing final reports and other spin-off products, evaluation feedback often ends up being “too much, too late”, as the Inter-American Development Bank put it. This can mean that the substantial investment in producing evaluation outputs is largely wasted, since the messages contained are written off as being out-of-date. This is particularly the case with ex-post evaluations, which tend to be looking back at initiatives that were planned quite a long time ago, and therefore reflect previous generations of aid thinking. Though the lessons emerging may be valid, that will often be dismissed as being no longer relevant.

Various approaches were put forward as ways of addressing this:

- Planning ahead so that evaluation outputs are timed to coincide with major policy events, for example, key conferences, or the preparation of sector or country strategies. These provide an ideal opportunity for evaluation lessons to be fed into broader processes.
- Putting more emphasis on mid-term evaluations, so the results can feed directly into subsequent planning.
- Finding ways of encouraging feedback during the evaluation process. There is obviously a balance here between obtaining final sign-off from all the stakeholders involved, and getting results out quickly. But if this can be tipped in favour of early release, especially when results are particularly significant or controversial, this is likely to increase the chance of messages being picked up. A briefing note to senior management in advance of the publication of evaluation reports, for example, can be a useful way of alerting them to evaluation findings while they are still “fresh”. This can increase the possibility of early follow-up action, while giving managers a chance to prepare an appropriate response if major problems are uncovered.

### 5.4. Quality issues

Several agencies stressed the importance of rigour and precision in drawing up evaluation lessons and good practice guidelines. Where recommendations are too vague or diffuse, where the evidence and analysis backing them up is weak,

and where no distinctions are made between lessons that are locally applicable and those that have wider relevance, it is hardly surprising that messages fail to get through. Indeed, evaluation reports that are seen as sub-standard can do long term damage to the credibility of the evaluation unit.

A variety of approaches can be used to help assure quality – for example, reference groups, and peer review processes. Well-designed iterative consultation processes also help to raise standards. The point was made that evaluation units *“live or die by the quality of their work”*, and that is a fundamental issue that need to be addressed. Some are tackling this specifically. The World Bank, for instance, is currently developing guidelines and training to improve the quality of evaluation recommendations.

There were differing views, however, about the extent to which evaluation lessons can be successfully codified into good practice guidelines. EBRD sees this as a key function for evaluation units, whereas some other agencies argued that with the types of development assistance they were providing, the specificity of local country situations makes it difficult (and potentially dangerous) to generalise in this way.

### 5.5. Language barriers

The way that messages are phrased, and the language they are in, are crucial in terms of impact – whatever the medium being used. The Workshop underscored the importance of:

- **Brevity** – messages need to be presented in a way that is short, arresting, and to the point, otherwise many audiences will simply pass them by. *“We need to recognise that the time of people we’re trying to reach is very valuable”*, as one participant put it. Yet all too often the impression is that consultant’s reports are paid for by the kilo, rather than on the basis of their usefulness or digestibility. The more senior the audience, the more succinct the message needs to be. But in presenting *“the tip of the iceberg”*, it was stressed that the rest of the iceberg needs to be there to support it.
- **Terminology and language** – cutting out technical jargon is the first step. But most agencies are also acutely aware of the huge communication gap that exists when evaluation results are only made available in one language (usually English). This does not imply that all reports need to be translated into local languages, or that donor agencies are necessarily the best placed bodies to do this (in country partners may be in a better position to take it on). However, the need to address this major failing – possibly in creative ways using radio, TV or video, for example, rather than paper-based approaches – was repeatedly underscored.

## 5.6. Intelligent use of the Internet

The new generation of internet-based communication approaches, including websites and internal intranets, are widely seen as a valuable addition to the evaluation toolkit. From a disclosure perspective, publishing evaluation reports on the agency's public website is an excellent and cost-effective way of opening up access to the material, although not necessarily a very targeted one. In addition, the Internet has proved to be effective not only for disclosure but also as a database. It can also be a useful consultation tool. In the recent World Bank review of the forestry sector, for example, the draft placed on the website attracted comments from over 200 people.

Internet tools need to be used well, however, in order to reap these benefits. While Working Group members have made an important start in setting up evaluation sections on their agency websites and/or intranets, most recognised they have a considerable way to go in climbing this new learning curve. A number commented that their "first generation" websites and intranets were due for an overhaul, and that further work was needed to make them more accessible, up-to-date, and easy to navigate.

As more and more evaluation reports are made available electronically, the question emerges of how this data can be intelligently searched in order to extract the most relevant material when you type in search terms, rather than being swamped with screens full of variable quality data matches that need to be waded through. One way of tackling this problem is through more thorough indexing and "tagging" of material, so the contents of documents are more clearly flagged with keywords. Another is through using new data "mining" tools. The World Bank has been investigating the potential for using computer-based linguistic analysis. They have tested this out on a subset of 1 200 evaluation summaries, with encouraging early results, suggesting that these tools can help in zeroing in on relevant material and unearthing "*what we don't know we know*".

Another creative use of technology was mentioned by CIDA, which is developing a computer-based system whereby relevant prompting points "pop up" on staff computer screens at key stages in the project development and approval process. These link in to CIDA's lessons learned database, and are a reminder to staff to consult previous experience.

But the limits of new technology and in particular the Internet were also accepted. Though connectivity is improving fast, there are still big problems with Internet access for many developing country audiences. There is also a strong tendency for systems to be designed based around supply side criteria, rather than a clear understanding of the way information is actually used. So it was recognised that while computer-based systems can be highly effective and need to be exploited, they are not a panacea, or a substitute for conventional feedback approaches.

### 5.7. Interagency lesson learning

The need for more effective sharing of evaluation lessons between donor agencies has long been recognised. This need is becoming even more acute with the advent of the new generation of Sector Wide Approaches and the introduction of Poverty Reduction Strategies. These and other joint initiatives<sup>1</sup> are premised on the assumption that coordinated agency action will be more effective than individual efforts. Yet mechanisms for exchanging evaluation lessons between agencies are still weak, and practical hurdles continue to get in the way of more frequent joint evaluations – which, when they do occur, are generally seen as a very good way of sharing lessons and methodologies. It was suggested that agencies have “*not been very imaginative*” in tackling this problem.

The DAC Inventory of evaluation summaries, set up in 1988, was an important first step in improving lesson sharing.<sup>2</sup> However, comments at the Workshop confirmed the view that the potential for the Inventory has yet to be fully realised and that it suffers from a number of significant shortcomings – notably its patchy coverage due to the inconsistent submission of data by many donors, the prevalence of older material in the database, its limited functionality, and that fact that it is not systematically cleaned.

The Workshop agreed that there is a need for a fresh look at the Inventory, and that this might be usefully discussed at the next Working Party meeting. With the increased publication of evaluation reports on donors’ own websites, it was suggested that a more decentralised approach to data storage might be preferable, with a user-friendly central search engine pointing users to relevant reports on agency websites. This would eliminate the problem of donors having to remember to submit summaries to the central database, though there would still be issues to tackle due to the lack of a standard format and approach in preparing reports.

One possibility would be for the redesign of this facility to be incorporated as part of the Global Development Gateway initiative being led by the World Bank.<sup>3</sup> The DAC is already collaborating with this in carrying out tests on distributed data sharing. There is some debate, however, about the scope and direction of this initiative, so views may differ about the wisdom of linking these together.

### 5.8. The value of face-to-face communication

In evaluation feedback, as in other spheres, face-to-face dialogue is still the most effective way of sharing ideas and getting messages across. While recognising that new communication approaches are opening up important new channels of influence, several agencies made a point of underlining the continuing value of meetings, seminars and briefings of various kinds – both within the organisation and externally – as a indispensable focus for learning.

## Notes

1. For example, New Zealand is preparing recommendations on co-financing policies with multi-laterals and USAID has recently agreed to undertake pooled funding programmes.
2. The DAC inventory is hosted by CIDA and IDRC. See *miniweb.idrc.ca/cida/dacloge.htm*.
3. See *www.worldbank.org/gateway*.

## 6. Involving Partners

There was widespread recognition at the Workshop of the need to do far more to involve partner country stakeholders – both as participants in the evaluation process and as audiences for the lessons that emerge. Although agencies were able to point to examples of where efforts had been made, most were very frank about their shortcomings in this area. SIDA is one of the few that have gone as far as to look at how big this gap really is, and where the problems lie.

Reporting on a detailed study of the impact of nine previous evaluations among different groups of stakeholders,<sup>1</sup> SIDA presented a revealing picture of how evaluation lessons fail to reach many of them, particularly those in partner countries. The report concluded 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.”* Many stakeholders were barred from acting on the results of evaluations because they never get to see the evaluation findings.<sup>2</sup>

The study also looked at the political context in which evaluations are conducted, noting that power relations tend to be heavily weighted in favour of the donor. It went on to state that *“for the majority of stakeholder the evaluation process could just as well have been left undone”* and that *“in terms of adherence to the present policy framework of Swedish aid (which stress partnership and ownership), the evaluation process as we know it is in dire need of reform”*.

These hard-hitting conclusions underlined the size of the challenge facing agencies if they are to turn the rhetoric of partnership into a reality.<sup>3</sup> Among the points raised in discussion were the following:

- **Starting early** – trying to build meaningful participation in to ex-post evaluations is difficult if the project has not been planned or implemented in a participatory way. Buy-in from partners is likely to be much greater if they are involved right from the beginning of the project cycle.
- **Capacity building** – is an important priority if in-country partners are to be more fully involved in evaluations, and is a particular challenge in countries that are implementing active decentralisation policies. A number of initiatives were mentioned in this context.<sup>4</sup>

- **Trade-offs** – although involving partners in evaluation work is a highly desirable goal, the process takes longer and there may be compromises to be negotiated in terms of maintaining rigid standards of quality and impartiality. But these are trade-offs worth accepting if the process leads to greater buy-in and learning.
- **Risks** – in cases where controversial or politically unpopular findings are emerging, there may be risks for the local nationals involved in evaluation teams, either at a personal or organisational level. Evaluation teams need to be sensitive to these risks otherwise they can leave local team members in a very awkward situation when the visiting team has gone.
- **Seminars** – in-country seminars are a valuable way of encouraging greater participation. Difficult messages can sometimes be delivered more easily if they are presented orally, especially in countries where there a culture of consensus being reached through discussion, rather than through reports on paper.
- **Participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E)** – was recognised as a valuable addition to the evaluation toolkit, and one which agencies need to gain experience in and set aside adequate time for. Engaging partner countries in evaluation feedback systems is essential. The need for capacity building in partner countries is crucial. There was wide consensus on the need for integrating evaluation feedback into the planning and monitoring of programs and strategies in partner countries. The need for establishing and collecting the necessary indicators was also underlined. Japan suggested that similar workshops should be held involving development agencies and stakeholders in partner countries as well as development agency evaluators. But some stressed that this needs to be kept in perspective, as it is not the answer in all situations.

An encouraging picture of how coordination between donors and partner countries can work was presented by the representative from the Lao PDR. She described a new Roundtable Process that has been introduced involving annual meetings between donors and government representatives.<sup>5</sup> These are designed to harmonise donor funding with evolving national development priorities, and to *“improve national development planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, by continuously integrating lessons learned through an effective evaluation feedback mechanism”*.

This has opened up a useful *“two-way street”* for sharing lessons and priorities and has provided a forum where pressure can be applied on donors for them to be more accountable and to coordinate their efforts better, including sharing evaluation results. The point was also made that lesson learning needs to happen as soon as possible in the project cycle. This implies the need to share project monitoring information, not wait for ex-post evaluations before lessons can be learned.

### Box 3. Examples of partner country involvement: The Netherlands<sup>1</sup>

#### Trying to improve feedback in the partner country: the case of country programme evaluations

IOB has undertaken seven country programme evaluations, in Bangladesh, Bolivia, Egypt, India, Mali, Tanzania and the Palestinian Territories. The overall objective of each of these studies was to assess the policy relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the results of the bilateral aid programme. Each one covered the full period of the bilateral development cooperation relationship and had a similar approach and structure. The evaluation started with an inventory of all activities. Subsequently, a number of sectors were selected for detailed evaluation involving field investigations. Teams of independent experts, including Dutch and local evaluators, carried out all studies. Each country programme evaluation was coordinated by an IOB staff member and one external advisor, who were responsible for writing the final report.<sup>2</sup>

Attempts were made to involve the authorities, other stakeholders and local experts in the design and implementation of the country programme evaluations in order to:

- improve the quality of the evaluation by incorporating the views of these institutions into the analysis and making use of their detailed knowledge of society and social change in the partner country; and
- stimulate the feedback of the evaluation in the partner country by exchanging ideas about the results of the evaluation and, where possible, reaching a shared understanding of the issues to be addressed in order to improve policy implementation.

Participation took place through a combination of approaches, which generally involved sharing draft terms of reference with the local authorities, conducting intensive discussions with partner institutions at various stages of the evaluation, working with an in-country advisory group of independent experts, involving local experts as evaluators, organising workshops with stakeholders to discuss the setup of field studies, sharing preliminary results and organising a seminar involving all relevant stakeholders at the end of the evaluation study. Moreover, the official response by the partner country authorities was incorporated into the final evaluation report.

#### Feedback involving in-country stakeholders: the study “Institutional Development in the Water Sector”, Mozambique<sup>3</sup>

Following field investigations and initial analysis of the results of the study, IOB organised a seminar in Maputo in order to share the results with a wide range of stakeholders such as the embassy, the field staff of the development activities studied, senior staff of counterpart institutions, and other donors. During the meeting the purpose of the evaluation was reiterated and its results presented. The participants were invited to voice their views on the preliminary outcomes of the study. Where points of view differed and where the accuracy of the findings had been questioned, the evaluators followed up with additional investigations and analyses. Later, the draft of the evaluation report was distributed among the stakeholders, who were invited to comment on its contents.

**Box 3. Examples of partner country involvement:  
The Netherlands (cont.)**

Sharing evaluation information with stakeholders and encouraging them to participate at an early stage contributed to the acceptance and implementation of the findings. It also gave donors sufficient time to adapt their planned activities in the water sector. Counterpart organisations were able to use the information in negotiations with the Netherlands and other donors, which were scheduled to take place before the final report on the IOB evaluation could be published.

1. From "Evaluation Feedback: Experiences and Recent Changes", R. D. van den Berg and T. Kliet, paper prepared for the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation Workshop, Tokyo, 26-28 September 2000.
2. For a full description of the way in which IOB's country programme evaluation on Egypt was conducted, refer to the proceedings of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation's seminar "Evaluating Country Programmes", Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness No. 2, OECD/DAC, 1999.
3. Institutional Development: Netherlands Support to the Water Sector, 1988–1998. IOB Evaluations No. 284, March 2000.

**Box 4. Partner country perspectives: some highlights**

Three partner country representatives at the workshop (Indonesia, Laos, and Philippines) presented their respective systems for dealing with evaluation feedback, and current efforts to improve them.

**Indonesia**

Bappenas (the National Development Planning Agency) issued a Ministerial Decree in 1996 offering guidelines to line agencies and institutions involved in development planning to implement a Performance Evaluation System. These guidelines emphasise results, outcomes and impact and provide information on how to set project priorities based on these elements. The most recent decree (2000) further elaborates on evaluation, providing illustrative examples for further clarification. A separate set of guidelines for monitoring systems has been developed. Within this evolving system of evaluation and monitoring, emphasis is being put on disseminating information from evaluation studies to relevant audiences. Although a large part of evaluation activities is de-centralised, undertaken by line agencies and provincial and district government, effort is made to ensure the feedback/dissemination of results "upwards" to central policy makers and planners.

**Box 4. Partner country perspectives: some highlights (cont.)****Laos PDR**

The government of Laos has launched a new “dialogue process” with their partners in development. The intent is to change the traditional Round Table Meetings into a dynamic *process* instead of periodic meetings. This new approach sets three main objectives. Among these is the “improved national development planning, programming, monitoring and evaluation, by continuously integrating the lessons learned through an effective evaluation feedback mechanism...”. The government is currently in the process of “institutionalising” the process of evaluation feedback in order to further integrate results into policy.

Laos is also in the process of an extensive decentralisation effort, whereby provinces are being given new responsibilities. Implementing units are required to use evaluation systems and monitor their development plans. It is expected that decentralisation will make it easier to translate evaluation feedback into improved ongoing projects and future programmes due to closer links between feedback levels.

**Philippines**

In the Philippines implementing agencies are required to report on project outcomes and impact in the drive towards ensuring that the objectives of development projects are achieved (National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board Resolution No. 3 of 1999). The Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (1999-2004) provides for the setting up of a public expenditure management system, which includes the establishment of a system to enhance data collection and reporting of results and outputs of various agency programmes and activities. Corresponding to this mandate, implementing agencies are required to incorporate Results Monitoring and Evaluation (RME) in project plans and proposals. Information obtained through evaluations will be submitted to NEDA, and are then integrated into the Annual ODA Portfolio Review, which in turn is used as a tool in planning future activities.

## Notes

1. "Are Evaluations Useful? Cases from Swedish Development Cooperation", J. Carlsson *et al.*, Sida Studies in Evaluation 99/1.
2. The study distinguished between different kinds of use of evaluation results, contrasting "instrumental use" (where results feed directly into some kind of action), with "conceptual use" (where they feed into policy processes), "legitimising use" (where they are used to justify existing positions, "ritual use" (where they are largely symbolic), and "no use" (which speaks for itself). Worryingly, it found that "instrumental use" is quite rare and that the most common pattern was "no use".
3. IFAD talked of the need to consider "shifting the fulcrum of evaluation feedback to the South".
4. For example, the Asian Development Bank is sponsoring a major programme in China to develop capacity for budget monitoring at a decentralised level; several representatives from this programme participated in the Workshop. The World Bank is developing an "International Program for Development Evaluation Training" (IPDET) in partnership with several other institutions.
5. The process is coordinated by the Committee for Investment and Cooperation, in the Prime Minister's Office.

## 7. Institutional Issues

### 7.1. The status of evaluation units

Underlying many of the Workshop debates was the question of the status of evaluation units within agencies. There is no doubt that this is a big factor in determining their impact. Evaluation units that are seen as being marginalised and remote from the centre of power are hardly likely to have a major influence in organisational learning terms, even if they are doing good work. To be taken seriously, evaluation units need to have strong senior management backing, with staff of sufficient status and qualifications. Some agencies argued that it is particularly important to have staff with experience at the implementation level. This is one way of avoiding the “ivory tower” tendency – either real or perceived.

There was hot debate over the pros and cons of independence. Some agencies said that it is fundamental to the role of evaluation units, and is in fact their key attribute. Others argued that it can be a hindrance if independence becomes a barrier to partnership and dialogue. For example, FAO suggested that in a learning organisation with teamwork and a flow of knowledge within a learning cycle it may be more appropriate to de-emphasise the need for full independence, as there may be a risk that *“independence can lead to irrelevance”*.

There were similar divergences on the merits of rotating staff between evaluation units and operations. Some agencies advocate stability, which allows knowledge and expertise to accumulate, and makes it easier to maintain an independent role; the contrary view was that staff rotation is beneficial and encourages learning throughout the agency. However staffing is organised, it was pointed out that an “us and them” view of operations and evaluation is not the best mindset for a learning organisation, and that where staff rotation does occur, it is helpful to have a system of debriefing to make sure experience is passed on rather than being dispersed.

Where there is a legacy of evaluation units being seen as policemen there is clearly work to be done. In the past, evaluation and audit functions tended to be perceived as being mostly about highlighting mistakes and allocating blame. With the shift to a more explicit learning role, it is possible to move on from this, although this transition will take time. Inevitably, evaluators have to be bearers of bad news at

times, pointing out what has not worked. They need to balance this with efforts to communicate what the good news is, and where successes have occurred.

## 7.2. Institutionalising lesson learning

Institutionalising lesson learning, so that it becomes more reliable and systematic, was widely seen as being a key priority. “*Learning cannot be optional*”, as one participant put it.

A variety of examples were presented of where specific steps had been introduced to encourage this. These included the European Commission's use of a “*Fiche Contradictoire*”, a two-column table with the recommendations drawn out by the Evaluation team in the left hand column, and the responses and action taken by those responsible in the right hand column. This is made available on the intranet for comment and published with the evaluation report.

The challenge is to make such systems effective in practice, not just on paper. Some of the points raised in this regard were:

- **Leadership** – senior management needs to champion lesson learning and recognise that it may mean working in different ways across the agency, including at senior management level. This is a point that is well accepted in the corporate sector. Quoting one leading source: “*The quality of leadership, embodied in the top management team process, determines the organisation's ability to learn.*”<sup>1</sup> It was suggested by Japan that senior management would benefit from specific seminars to underline this message and make clear their pivotal role.
- **Consultants** – the high level of contracting out of work is an important factor to be considered. Consultants should be a key group in a learning organisation – both as producers and users of knowledge – but they are rarely identified or treated as such.
- **Staffing issues** – high staff turnover and staff shortages are a significant barrier to institutionalising lesson learning.
- **Carrot and stick** – improved packaging and distribution of evaluation lessons will not automatically lead to institutionalising lesson learning. Incentive structures to encourage learning need to be built into the system, or else penalties established for not taking account of previous lessons.

## 7.3. Results based management

As the Synthesis Report pointed out, there are parallels between evaluation feedback and some of the concepts involved in Results Based Management

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1. From “How Organisations Learn”, edited by Ken Starkey, International Thomson Business Press, 1996.

(RBM). The Workshop highlighted the varying levels of enthusiasm for RBM among agencies, as well as the different ways it is used.

USAID introduced Results Based Management in 1994 in order to encourage decentralisation of decision-making, and link budget allocations to objectives rather than activities. They presented a paper describing their experience. Some of the lessons they highlighted included the importance of collaborating with partners in performance management, and the need to use a variety of performance indicators and balance annual performance assessment and reporting with longer-term sustainable issues. They also stressed that assessment of results is just one factor in resource allocation decisions; other important factors include development needs, foreign policy considerations, and contributions of other donors.

A number of other variants on Results Based Management were also discussed. The DFID presentation focussed on the way the agency is responding to the introduction of “Public Service Agreements”, a government-wide initiative setting down commitments and targets over a three-year period. In the case of DFID, these are tied to the International Development Targets. Their presentation pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of the approach, but concluded that it does provide opportunities for linking decisions to performance more intelligently, provided it is applied carefully in a flexible, not mechanical, way. A paper was also submitted by Indonesia on their experience with performance evaluation as a management tool.

Evaluation units can play an important role as advocates of RBM approach, although there were mixed views as to how active this role can be. Some made that point that RBM is more useful for operational or policy departments, rather than evaluation work.

#### 7.4. Staffing and resourcing

The question was posed as to whether improving evaluation feedback is going to be constrained by lack of resources, since many of the measures discussed will undoubtedly cost money. The consensus was that this is generally not the case. The constraints that exist are more to do with lack of time, and not having the right blend of staff skills. Provided the case for better evaluation feedback is clearly stated, and it is treated as a sufficient priority, most agencies felt that resources could be made available. And where there are trade-offs that have to be made, the clear view was that it is better to do fewer evaluations, but make sure the lessons from them are properly communicated, rather than carrying on with a large evaluation portfolio and wasting the opportunities they provide for learning. Otherwise, “*what is the point?*” as the Netherlands put it.

New staff skills will certainly be needed if agencies are going to gear up their feedback efforts in a significant way. Particularly important will be communication skills – in areas such as editing, translating, web site management, facilitation of

### Box 5. Japan's efforts to strengthen feedback and evaluation\*

Evaluation of development co-operation activities has recently received increased attention from the Japanese public. Budgetary constraints and public concern about ODA effectiveness has prompted a demand for greater transparency and accountability. Consequently, it has become increasingly important to demonstrate the concrete results of development assistance and to ensure the greatest possible effectiveness of current efforts. The Japanese authorities are now stressing the importance of having an effective evaluation system and are actively taking steps to further improve it.

A report from the Administrative Reform Council published in 1997 emphasised the importance of a mechanism to adequately take into account evaluation findings. The Basic Law for the Reform of Central Government Offices enacted in June 1998 states that "all government offices must strengthen their objective evaluation function and reflect the evaluation findings on policies".

In 1998 the Council on ODA Reform for the 21st century, an *ad-hoc* advisory group for the Minister for Foreign Affairs, released a report which included a call to further improve the evaluation system. Following this report, a working group was formed with a mandate to examine the evaluation function of the Japanese aid system. A series of recommendations for improvement was issued in March 2000. Among the main points raised was the need to establish a feedback system with a direct link to the policy making process, and a call for better co-ordination between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JICA and JBIC, and with other central government agencies.

To address these major recommendations in greater depth, a new advisory group called the "ODA Evaluation Study Group" was formed (July 2000), composed of a wide range of actors from the development aid community (university professors, aid experts from the private sector, international organisations, the business community, journalists, NGOs and officials from MoFA, JICA and JBIC).

The Study Group report underlines the importance of *i*) strengthening policy-level evaluations and the improvement of programme-level evaluations, *ii*) strengthening its feedback system, in particular by the establishment of an effective feedback mechanism in Japanese aid organisations and *iii*) more effective ODA evaluation through promotion of cooperation and co-ordination among governmental organisations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already taken steps in these areas.

In order to ensure the swift dissemination of information to the public and to assure transparency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has started to promptly publish outlines of evaluation findings on its web site, in addition to annual evaluation reports.

\* Adapted from Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "Role and Responsibility of Central Evaluation Unit", submitted to the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (WP-EV) Workshop, Tokyo 26-28 September 2000.

workshops, media work, and suchlike. Since evaluation staff are not normally recruited with these skills in mind, for most agencies this will require bringing in qualified staff, or contracting work out to communication specialists. “*We are professional evaluators not professional communicators*”, as the Chair of the Working Party put it in his closing remarks. His advice was that agencies should bring in expertise where it is needed, not try and “*do it all yourself*”.

## 8. Conclusions

The overall conclusion of the Workshop was that agencies need to take evaluation feedback much more seriously if they are to achieve the dual benefits of greater accountability and more effective learning. Many have already made considerable strides in gearing up their thinking and introducing more consistent and coherent feedback practices, as was evident from the presentations made. But most recognise that a lot more needs to be done.

This is not an area where a blueprint approach would work. The diversity among agencies in their background, institutional context, and specific priorities, means that agencies need to work out their own solutions bearing in mind their particular circumstances, target audiences, and objectives. There were, however, many useful suggestions made at the Workshop that struck a chord, and which are clearly relevant to a good number of the agencies present, if not all. The most important of these are summarised in Box 6. These are presented in the form of a checklist of action points, with points divided into the following four categories, depending on the level at which they apply:

- Central evaluation units
- Agency-wide and senior management
- Inter-agency
- Partner countries

This adds up to a substantial agenda for action, one that will present a considerable challenge for evaluation units, and for development agencies more broadly. However, the clear message that came through at the Workshop is that this challenge needs to be confronted, and in an imaginative and decisive way. Greater accountability and more effective learning are not options; they are essential if the development community is to deliver on the ambitious targets it has set itself, and if it is to retain the support of taxpayers at home, and the trust of partners overseas. The Workshop was seen as valuable step in facing up to this challenge.

## Box 6. Checklist of action points to improve evaluation feedback

Level	Checklist of action points*
CENTRAL EVALUATION UNITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take steps to understand how learning happens within and outside the organisation, and identify where the blockages occur.</li> <li>• Assess how the relevance and timeliness of evaluation feedback can be improved, and take steps to ensure this happens.</li> <li>• Be explicit in identifying key audiences for evaluation feedback and the reasons for wanting to reach them, both in general, and in specific cases.</li> <li>• Get to know target groups better to find out what they want from evaluations, how they use evaluation information, and how feedback systems can respond better to these demands.</li> <li>• Develop a more strategic view of the how feedback approaches can be tailored to the needs of different audiences.</li> <li>• Make sure the quality of evaluation outputs is up to standard – particularly from the point of view of brevity, clarity and presentation.</li> <li>• Consider diversifying the range of approaches used to communicate with audiences, using “non conventional” methods where appropriate.</li> <li>• Continue efforts to improve evaluation websites and intranets, recognising that ease of access and user-friendliness are key factors.</li> <li>• Take steps to ensure that full disclosure of evaluation reports becomes the norm and that proper approval and notification processes are in place so that senior management or key partners are not caught unawares by controversial findings.</li> <li>• Put much more effort into finding better ways of involving partner country stakeholders in evaluation work, including the feedback of evaluation lessons, recognising that language barriers are a key constraint.</li> <li>• Recruit specialist staff where necessary to fill skills gaps, particularly in communications work.</li> </ul>
AGENCY-WIDE AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review whether the role of central evaluation units needs to be reconsidered in order to improve knowledge flows and the exchange of skills and expertise between evaluation, operational or policy departments.</li> <li>• Consider whether the current positioning and status of evaluation units is limiting their effectiveness and undermining their ability to play a more active role in promoting learning and accountability, and take steps to rectify these problems if necessary.</li> <li>• Ensure that senior management is fully behind the move to improve evaluation feedback, and is providing leadership in this area.</li> <li>• Consider how evaluation lesson learning can be more effectively institutionalised, and identify where current feedback loops break down.</li> <li>• Establish a routine of briefing senior management on evaluation lessons, and involving them in the communication of major findings.</li> <li>• Take steps to increase the space and incentives for learning within the organisation (both from evaluations and other sources), and make it clear that failure to learn is no longer acceptable.</li> </ul>

**Box 6. Checklist of action points to improve evaluation feedback (cont.)**

<i>Level</i>	<i>Checklist of action points*</i>
INTER-AGENCY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put more serious effort into making sure joint evaluation missions happen, and that problems caused by differing approaches and timetables are addressed.</li> <li>• Reassess the future of the DAC Evaluation Inventory and develop a new strategy to ensure this becomes a more effective tool for lesson sharing.</li> <li>• Continue to use the DAC Working Party and other fora as a means of exchanging experience on evaluation feedback, and seeking out good practice.</li> <li>• Support initiatives to improve training and capacity building in development evaluation work, and create links between evaluation professionals internationally.</li> </ul>
PARTNER COUNTRIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Put pressure on donors to coordinate their evaluation efforts more effectively and involve in-country stakeholders in a more consistent and meaningful way.</li> <li>• Insist on being involved in evaluations right from the beginning of the process, and push for more ownership and control by local stakeholders.</li> <li>• Work to develop in-country capacity in monitoring and evaluation and an open culture where evaluation is seen as a positive opportunity for learning.</li> <li>• Decentralise responsibility for evaluation work, including feedback, beyond central ministries, bringing in civil society partners where appropriate.</li> <li>• Adopt a policy of full disclosure of evaluation results as a means of demonstrating accountability and opening up possibilities for learning.</li> </ul>

\* This list is not comprehensive but aims to set down some of the main areas where action was called for at the Workshop.

*Annex 1*

**Workshop Programme**

**DAC Tokyo Workshop on  
“Evaluation Feedback For Effective Learning And Accountability”  
26-28 September 2000**

**Tuesday, 26 September**

**09:00 Registration**

**09:30 Welcome Addresses:**

Mr. Yutaka Iimura, Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
Mr. Niels Dabelstein, Chair of DAC Working Party

**09:45 Opening Session – Plenary**

Prof. Ryokichi Hirono (Chair): Workshop Aims and Objectives

**Theme: “Challenges- Sharing experiences to identify good practices, difficulties and problems”**

Mr. Geoff Barnard and Ms. Catherine Cameron: Key Findings from the  
Synthesis Report based on the Questionnaire and Interviews

**12:00 Lunch**

**14:00 First Session – Plenary**

**Theme: “Internal (learning): Feedback to improve effectiveness and efficiency of aid assistance”.** Topics:

1. Evaluation as a learning process (Germany: Mr. Axel Borrmann)
2. Feedback for Better Decision-Making (Norway: Mr. Jan Dybfest)
3. Role of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in Managing for Results in USAID: Lessons Learned (USAID: Ms. Jean Du Rette)
4. Role and responsibility of central evaluation unit (Japan: Mr. Mitsunori Shirakawa)

**14:40 Discussion**

**15:00 Tea/Coffee**

**15:30 Discussion in Working Groups**

Topics:

1. Feedback for better policy
2. Feedback for better practice

\*two working groups for each topic (4 working groups)

**17:30 Brief reporting back to Plenary**

**18:00 Close**

**19:00 Reception hosted by Mr. Yutaka Iimura, Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau, Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the “Ume” room (Hotel New Otani)**

**Wednesday, 27 September**

**09:00 Second Session – Plenary**

**Theme: “External (learning and accountability): Feedback of Evaluation results to parliament, media and the public”.** Topics:

1. Feedback to Parliament, Media and the Public (Netherlands: Mr. Rob D. van den Berg)
2. Reporting Performance for External Accountability: DFID’s Public Service Agreement (UK: Dr. Colin Kirk)
3. Dissemination Vehicles (Internet, report, video etc.) (Denmark: Mr. Niels Dabelstein)
4. Involving Partners more effectively (Lao PDR: Ms. Khempheng Pholsena)
5. Partner’s Use of Evaluation Results (Sweden: Ms. Ann Marie Fallenius)

**09:50 Discussion**

**10:00 Tea/Coffee**

**10:30 Discussion in Working Groups.** Topics:

1. Feedback to parliament, the media and the public
2. Feedback to partner countries [two working groups for each topic – 4 working groups]

**12:00 Brief reporting back to Plenary**

**12:30 Lunch**

**14:00 Third Session – Plenary**

**Theme: “Making Feedback More Effective”.** Topics:

1. Dissemination: Ensuring Integration of Lessons (CIDA: Mr. Robert C. Jones)
2. Making Feedback more effective: the Case of France (France: Mr. Michael Ruleta)
3. Learning from Evaluations: the World Bank’s Experience (World Bank: Mr. Gregory K. Ingram and Mr. Osvaldo N. Feinstein)
4. Results-oriented Management and Evaluation (UNDP: Mr. Sukehiro Hasegawa)

**14:40 Discussion**

**15:00 Tea/Coffee**

**15:30 Discussion in Working Groups.** Topics:

1. New challenges in the changing aid landscape
  2. New tools for improved feedback (*e.g.* Effective use of the Internet and other channels)
- \* two working groups for each topic (4 working groups)

**17:30 Brief reporting back to Plenary**

**18:00 Close**

**Thursday, 28 September**

**09:00 Closing Session – Plenary**

**Theme: Overall Summary and Recommendations to improve feedback system for the better use of evaluation results:** Mr. Geoff Barnard and Ms. Catherine Cameron

**09:30 Discussion**

**10:30 Tea/Coffee**

**11:00 The way forward to Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability:**

Prof. Ryokichi Hirono, Mr. Niels Dabelstein  
Mr. Hans Lundgren, DAC Secretariat

**Concluding address:**

Mr. Yushu Takashima, Vice President, Japan International Cooperation Agency

## Annex 2

## List of Participants to the DAC Tokyo Workshop

1	Chair	Mr. Ryokichi Hirono	Professor Emeritus of Seikei University
2	Assistant to the Chair	Mr. Kimihiro Kaku	Professor of Toyo University
3		Mr. Ryujiro Sasao	Consultant
4	Chair of the DAC Working Party	Mr. Niels Dabelstein	Head, Evaluation Secretariat, Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
5	Vice-Chair of the DAC Working Party	Ms. Ann Marie Fallenius	Director, Department for Evaluation and Internal Audit, Sida, Sweden
<b>Member Countries</b>			
6	Australia	Ms. Elizabeth Brouwer	Director, Performance Information and Assessment, AusAID
7	Belgium	Mr. Etienne de Belder	Special Evaluator for International Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
8	Canada	Mr. Robert C. Jones	Evaluation Manager, CIDA
9	Denmark	Mrs. Ellen Buch-Hansen	Advisor, Evaluation Secretariat, Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
10	France	Ms. Anne-Marie Cabrit	Head of Development Activities Evaluation Unit, Ministry of Economy and Finance
11		Mr. Michael Ruleta	Charge de Mission, DGCID, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
12	Germany	Mr. Axel Borrmann	Senior Economist, Hamburg Institute of International Economics
13		Mr. Sigfrid Schroeder-Breitschuh	Senior Policy Advisor, Evaluation Department, GTZ
14		Mr. Horst Breier	Head of Evaluation, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
15		Mr. Ruediger Hartmann	Division Chief, Evaluation Department, KfW
16	Netherlands	Mr. Rob D. van den Berg	Director, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
17		Mr. Ted Kliet	Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
18	New Zealand	Ms. Jackie Frizelle	Economist, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
19	Norway	Mr. Jan Dybfest	Assistant Director General, Head of Evaluation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

20	United Kingdom	Mr. Colin Kirk	Head of Evaluation Department, Department for International Development
21	United States of America	Ms. Jean Du Rette	Chief, Program and Operations Assessment Division, USAID
22		Mr. Constance A. Carrino	Counsellor for Development Cooperation, Embassy of the United States of America
23		Ms. Rie Yamaki	Embassy of the United States of America
24	European Commission	Mr. Simon R. J. Robbins	Evaluation Manager, Evaluation Unit, Service Commun Relex

#### **Non-Member Countries**

25	Republic of Korea	Mr. Taejoo Lee	Director of Legal Affairs, Korea International Cooperation Agency(KOICA)
26	Bangladesh	Mr. Kamrul Hasan	Deputy Secretary, Economic Relations, Ministry of Finance
27	China	Mr. Jin Xide	Research Professor, Institute of Japanese Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
28		Mr. Chen Daijiang	Division Director, Office of Key Project Inspectors, State Development Planning Commission
29		Mr. Liu Shi-hu	Assistant Inspector, Office of Key Project Inspectors, State Development Planning Commission
30		Ms. Feng Xiang-hua	Assistant Inspector, Office of Key Project Inspectors, State Development Planning Commission
31	Indonesia	Mr. Syahrial Loetam	Bureau Head for Financing Monitoring and Evaluation, BAPPENAS
32	Lao P.D.R.	Ms. Khempheng Pholsena	Vice-Minister to the Prime Minister's Office
33		Mr. Bounnheuang Songnavong	Counselor, Embassy of the Lao P. D. R.
34	Philippines	Mr. Rolando G. Tungpalan	Director, Project Monitoring Staff, National Economic and Development Authority

#### **International Organizations**

35	World Bank	Mr. Gregory K. Ingram	Director, Operations Evaluation Department
36		Mr. Osvaldo N. Feinstein	Manager, Operations Evaluation Department
37	UNDP	Mr. Sukehiro Hasegawa	Director, Tokyo Office
38		Mr. Hidenori Miyama	Assistant to Director, Tokyo Office
39		Mr. Matthew Thornton	Programme and External Relations Assistant, Tokyo Office
40	ADB	Mr. Peter C. Darjes	Manager
41		Mr. Jungsoo Lee	Resident Representative of Tokyo Office
42	EBRD	Mr. Fredrik Korfer	Director of the Project Evaluation Dept.
43	IADB	Ms. Julie Feinsilver	Evaluation Officer
44	FAO	Mr. John Markie	Senior Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Service
45	IFAD	Mr. Luciano Lavizzari	Director, Office of Evaluation and Studies
46		Mr. Ashwani Muthoo	Evaluation Officer
47	OECD/DAC Secretariat	Mr. Hans Lundgren	Adviser on Aid Effectiveness

48	Consultant	Mr. Geoff Barnard	Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
49		Ms. Catherine Cameron	
<b>Japan</b>			
50	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Mr. Yutaka Iimura	Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau
51		Mr. Yukihiro Nikaido	Director of the Development Cooperation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
52		Mr. Mitsunori Shirakawa	Director of the Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
53		Mr. Michio Harada	Deputy Director of the Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
54		Mr. Naoki Mitori	Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
55		Ms. Shoko Kimura	Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
56		Mr. Ryo Sasaki	Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau
57	JICA	Mr. Takanori Kitamura	Managing Director of Planning and Evaluation Department
58		Mr. Koichi Miyoshi	Deputy Managing Director of Planning and Evaluation Department, Managing Director of the Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
59		Mr. Mitsukuni Sugimoto	Senior Assistant to the Managing Director of Planning and Evaluation Department
60		Mr. Katsuhiko Haga	Deputy Director of Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Department
61		Mr. Yoshitaka Sumi	Deputy Director of Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Department
62		Mr. Takuo Karasawa	Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
63		Ms. Haruko Kase	Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
64		Mr. Muraoka Keiichi	Director of Planning and Coordination Division, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
65		Mr. Eiji Iwasaki	Planning and Coordination Division. Planning and Evaluation Department
66		Mr. Robin Ruggles	CIDA-JICA Exchange Officer, Planning and Evaluation Department.
67		Ms. Yumiko Tanaka	Managing Director of Social Development Cooperation Department
68		Ms. Yoko Konishi	First Research and Development Division, Institute for International Cooperation
69		Mr. Nobuaki Kouguchi	Second Research and Development Division, Institute for International Cooperation
70		Mr. Shinji Yoshiura	Planning Division, Forestry and Natural Environment Department

71	Mr. Masao Yoshida	Development Specialist
72	Ms. Yoko Suwa	Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
73	Ms. Keiko Muramatsu	Office of Evaluation and Post Project Monitoring, Planning and Evaluation Dept.
74 JBIC	Mr. Yoshihiko Kono	Executive Director
75	Mr. Ikuro Sato	Director-General, Development Assistance Operations Evaluation Office, Project Development Department
76	Mr. Hachiro Ida	Director of Evaluation Division, Development Assistance Operations Evaluation Office, Project Development Dept
77	Ms. Yuki Todoroki	Evaluation Officer, Evaluation Division, Development Assistance Operations Evaluation Office, Project Development Dept
78 Management and Coordination Agency	Mr. Katsuhisa Shimakura	Deputy Director of the Office, Task Force for Introducing Policy Evaluation
79 Ministry of Finance	Mr. Takashi Kihara	Director for Development Issues, International Bureau
80	Mr. Kintaro Makioka	Special Officer for Development Finance, Devmt. Policy Division, International Bureau
81 Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture	Mr. Masaru Osanai	Director, of the Educational and Cultural Exchange Office, Science and International Affairs Bureau
82	Mr. Takayuki Seike	Senior Specialist, Development Cooperation, Educational and cultural exchange office
83	Mr. Kazuo Anazawa	
84 Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries	Mr. Masanori Kozono	Deputy Director, International Cooperation Planning Division
85 Ministry of Construction	Mr. Ryosuke Kikuchi	Director for International Construction Engineering, International Affairs Division, Economic Affairs Bureau
86 Others	Mr. Hiromitsu Muta	Professor of Tokyo Institute of Technology
87	Ms. Yuriko Minamoto	Consultant
88	Ms. Yoko Ishida	Consultant
89	Mr. Yasunaga Takachiho	Tamagawa University
90	Mr. Motoki Kusaka	The International Devmt. Journal Co., Ltd.
91	Mr. Makoto Tashiro	The International Devmt. Journal Co., Ltd.

*Annex 3*

**Press Release**

*by*

***Prof. Hirono, Chairman of the Workshop***

*and*

***Mr. N. Dabelstein, Chairman of the OECD/DAC  
Working Party on Aid Evaluation***

**DAC Tokyo Workshop on  
“Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability”  
26-28 September 2000**

Japan hosted the DAC Tokyo Workshop on Evaluation Feedback for Effective Learning and Accountability on 26-28 September 2000. This was the first time Japan hosted a DAC Workshop on evaluation. This Workshop coincided with the establishment of the Japan Evaluation Society on 25 September.

Eighty representatives from DAC countries, multilateral development agencies and banks, and participants from six Asian countries met to discuss and share experiences in the feedback of evaluation results. From Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan International Cooperation Agency, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, together with other government agencies, participated in this Workshop.

Many development agencies are seeking to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid programs and aid policies. They recognise the central role of evaluation in these efforts and the importance of learning lessons and feeding back those lessons for the improvement of implementation and preparation for better aid programs.

The Workshop participants shared experiences on communicating evaluation results to policy makers, operational managers, the public and the media in both donor and partner countries.

Some highlights of their discussions include:

It was generally recognised that present feedback systems should be further improved to meet the needs of wide range of stakeholders in donor and partner countries. Proper feedback mechanisms should involve senior policy makers in the lesson learning process in development agencies.

The importance of honesty and transparency in reporting evaluation successes and failures was underlined. The public's understanding of the challenges involved in development cooperation will be enhanced by transparent evaluation feedback.

Engaging partner countries in evaluation feedback systems is essential. The need for capacity building in partner countries is crucial. There was a wide consensus on the need for integrating evaluation feedback into the planning and monitoring programs and strategies in partner countries. This would improve development effectiveness and enhance accountability. The need for establishing and collecting the necessary indicators was also underlined. It was suggested that similar workshops should be held involving development agencies and stakeholders in partner countries as well as development agency evaluators.

Without proper feedback, evaluation loses its life and value. The real value of evaluation should be assessed by the impact it has on the improvement of present programs and on future aid policies.

Participants discussed the new challenges and opportunities in evaluation feedback brought about by the new aid landscape (such as conflicts, governance and human rights issues), new ways of delivering aid and new information technology.

The OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation will consider the results of the Workshop and their implications at its next meeting on 22-23 November 2000. A publication with a summary of the Tokyo Workshop will be prepared. Individual agencies will take home experiences and lessons discussed at the Workshop for possible adaptation in their domestic context.

*Part II*

**BACKGROUND SYNTHESIS REPORT**

# **Background Synthesis Report**

## **Prepared for the Tokyo Workshop of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation**

**26-28 September 2000**

### **Executive summary**

1. This report concludes that there are now excellent opportunities for development agencies to improve their evaluation feedback for effective learning and accountability.
2. It highlights the progress that has been made in the last decade and goes on to assess what is new in the context of the changing development assistance landscape in which agencies are now working.
3. Evaluation departments are alert to the need for better evaluation feedback, particularly given their changing and widening area of responsibility. Many agencies have taken steps to address this, but most recognise the need to do more, and to be enabled to do more.
4. Some of the key challenges facing evaluation departments include:
  - Resolving the contradictions between the dual roles of evaluation feedback – learning and accountability.
  - Responding to the shift from project evaluations to the new generation of broader-based evaluations focusing on themes or sectors.
  - Further improving dissemination strategies.
  - Finding better ways of institutionalising lesson learning
  - Reinforcing the reputation of evaluation units as a source of useful learning.
  - Increasing participation and stakeholder involvement in evaluations, without sacrificing core evaluation principles.
  - Responding to the growing problem of information overload.
5. The main opportunities identified were:
  - Harnessing the Internet as a means of improving transparency and facilitating lesson-learning within and between agencies.

- Tapping in to the new organisational management agendas of “knowledge management” and “managing for results” to enhance learning and accountability.
  - Responding to the wider challenge presented to development agencies by the International Development Goals (IDGs).
6. All three provide important opportunities for improving evaluation feedback so it becomes part of the “virtuous circle” of organisational learning, rather than being seen the “end of the line”.
  7. Many agencies will have to step up a gear if they are to capitalise fully on these opportunities. However, if they are able to rise to this challenge, evaluation units have the opportunity to fulfil a much more central role within their organisations, and within the wider development process.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The story so far

The challenge of how to ensure evaluation feedback for effective learning and accountability (hereafter “**efela**”) is not a new one. Development agencies have been alert to this for many years, and the DAC and other groups have considered these issues in detail on a number of previous occasions. As a starting point for its work, the Study team was directed to three particular reports produced in the last 15 years:

- The 1985 DAC report<sup>1</sup> on “Good Feedback Practices”, which identified four priority areas relating to the *mechanisms* for effective feedback, the *audiences* for feedback, the *nature* of evaluation findings, and the need for *monitoring action* on feedback.
- The 1990 DAC “Review of Donors’ Systems for Feedback on Aid Evaluation”,<sup>2</sup> which gives a progress report based on a review of donors’ feedback systems. It separated these into two categories, *dissemination mechanisms* and *institutional mechanisms*, and went on to discuss what impact feedback was having in terms of changes in policies and procedures, and satisfying the information requirements of senior management.
- The 1991 “Review of the Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms in Member States and the EEC Commission”, which made fifteen recommendations, eight concerning feedback materials and seven concerning feedback mechanisms.

The main conclusions and recommendations of the 1990 and 1991 reports are summarised in Annex I. They deserve rereading. Although progress has been made since they were written, most of the points highlighted are equally valid today.

The 1990 report also provides a working definition of the term “evaluation feedback”, which has been adopted for the purposes of this Report (see Box I).

## 1.2. So what is new?

Feedback practices have moved on considerably since these reports were written. Most agencies can point to a whole series of improvements and enhancements introduced over the past few years, especially in relation to the quality of

### Box 1. What is evaluation feedback?

Previous reports have varied in their approach to defining evaluation feedback. The 1990 DAC review (op. cit.) states that:

*“Evaluation feedback has been broadly defined as a dynamic process which involves the presentation and dissemination of evaluation information in order to ensure its application into new or existing development activities... feedback, as distinct from dissemination’ of evaluation findings, is the process of ensuring that lessons learned are incorporated into new operations.”*

This report continues with the use of this definition, as it recognises that feedback implies more than just dissemination of evaluation findings. It is about taking steps to ensure that evaluation lessons become part of a learning cycle within organisations.

evaluation materials being produced, the recognition of the need for targeted information products, and the advent of the Internet as a new communication and information management tool.

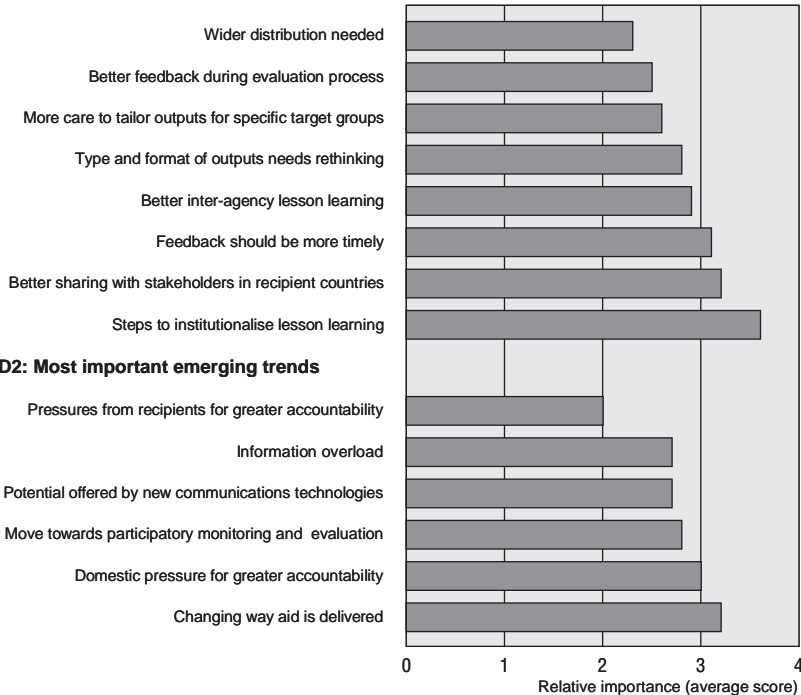
However, as the broader landscape of development assistance has evolved, the context of evaluation feedback has also changed. This has opened up new opportunities. But it has also put extra demands on evaluation units and created new expectations.

In order to get a sense of how evaluation units regard these changes, and the challenges they now face, the **efela** questionnaire asked agencies for their views in two areas:

- What they see as the most important emerging trends relating to evaluation feedback?
- What they see as the areas of evaluation feedback most in need of improvement?

In each case, agencies were asked to score various options according to their importance, on a scale of one to four (1 = not important, to 4 = very important). The results are summarised in Figure 1, where the options are ranked according to the average scores given.

Two important general points stand out; firstly, that evaluation units have a lot to deal with in terms of the number of emerging trends that they see as being important, and which are competing for their attention; and, secondly, that evaluation units are far from complacent about the need to do better on evaluation feedback – they see many areas where improvements are necessary.

Figure 1. Emerging trends in aid evaluation and feedback<sup>1</sup>**D1: Areas most in need of improvement**

1. The data presented here were collated from the responses to question D1 and D2 of the efela Questionnaire (see Annex 2). There were 29 respondents in total. The base for the averages was calculated from the total number of responses to each individual option within the two questions.

Source: OECD.

The **emerging trends** rated as being the most important were:

- The changing way development aid is delivered.
- Domestic pressure for greater accountability.
- The move towards participatory monitoring and evaluation.

In terms of the **need for improvement**, the areas rated as the highest priority were:

- Institutionalising the process of lesson learning within the agency.
- Sharing evaluation results with stakeholders in recipient countries.
- Timeliness.

These were the top three responses in each case. Most of the other options were not far behind, however, reinforcing the view that evaluation feedback is an area of active debate and concern among most agencies.

### **1.3. Current practices: the starting point**

The **efela** questionnaire also yielded a great deal of useful information on current agency practices and thinking. The picture that emerges is complex. As well as differences in policies and approaches, it also reflects the diverse backgrounds and institutional contexts of the agencies involved in the survey. Agencies are not all starting in the same place in their approach to evaluation feedback. This makes a big difference in terms of the mandate and objectives of evaluation units, their lines of reporting and accountability, and their relative priorities.

A broad typology of DAC Working Party Members is presented in Table 1, along with some of the implications and issues arising in relation to evaluation feedback.

Because of this diversity, it is difficult to draw generalisations that apply equally across all agencies. Instead, the emphasis in this Report has been on highlighting emerging issues, and contrasting different approaches and experience.

However, a number of broad headline messages did emerge from the Questionnaire, and these are summarised in Box 2. For a more detailed analysis of the results, including a synopsis of the comments provided individual agencies, see Annex 2.

### **1.4. Structure of the report**

Evaluation feedback is a multi-faceted subject that impinges on many aspects of evaluation thinking and methodology, and cuts across into many other related areas. This was demonstrated in the questionnaire responses and reinforced in the interviews with individual agencies. Both showed the wide range of perspectives on the subject, and the rapid evolution of current thinking.

This makes it difficult to draw a boundary around the subject, or divide it into neat categories. For the purposes of this Report, which is intended as a stimulus for discussion at the Tokyo Workshop, the topic is considered under two broad headings:

- Challenges – the current issues and dilemmas that agencies face when seeking to improve their evaluation feedback practices.
- Opportunities – areas where new thinking is emerging and new possibilities are opening up for improving evaluation feedback practices and linking efela with other objectives and initiatives in the development policy arena.

Table 1. **Typologie of DAC Working Party Members and Observers**

Type*	Agencies		Implications and issues arising
Co-ordinating agency	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD (DAC)		Authoritative policy guidance Periodic critical reviews Centralised statistics and reporting
Bilateral donors	Australia Austria Belgium Canada Denmark Finland Ireland Italy Luxembourg	Netherlands New Zealand Norway UK US Portugal Spain Sweden Switzerland	Primary accountability to domestic parliament and taxpayers Usually grant financing Fewer commercial considerations Fairly stable unitary structure Disclosure not usually a major issue
Bilateral donors with a tripartite split of Ministries and implementing agencies	Japan – MoFA, JICA, JBIC France – MFA, MEFI, AFD Germany – BMZ, KfW, GTZ		Foreign ministry, technical assistance, financial aid split three ways Primary accountability to domestic parliament and tax payers Tripartite structure can lead to longer reporting lines, need for increased co-ordination with varying objectives Mix of grant and loan funding Disclosure practices vary
Multilateral agency	European Commission		Accountable to Member States, European Parliament and Court of Auditors Accession states issue and reform of Commission, so size and structure likely to change Grant funding (loans are channelled through European Investment Bank) Could be useful linkages with bilateral DAC members who are also EU members
Observers: Multilateral Development Banks	African Development Bank Asian Development Bank EBRD IADB IMF World Bank		Loan based funding (hard/soft) Accountable to broad body of shareholders Disclosure issues, commercial considerations, can affect evaluation feedback policies
Other agencies	UNDP, Czech Republic, Korea, Mexico		

\* DAC Members' organisational structures are more fully broken down in DCD(99)6. The classification here has been simplified from an efela perspective.

In each case the report aims to draw out some of the main areas of thinking and learning and points to where good practice – or at least “better practice” – is beginning to emerge.<sup>3</sup>

## Box 2. **Headline messages from the questionnaire\***

### **Strategy and responsibilities**

- Fourteen of the twenty-nine respondents have a formal strategy for dissemination and feedback of evaluation results, and most of the other agencies have elements of a strategy in place, or are currently working on one.
- Internal agency audiences (policy makers and senior managers) are seen as a somewhat higher priority than stakeholders in partner countries; the media and the general public are seen as the least important.
- Most evaluations units have prime responsibility for feedback for learning purposes within the organisation, whereas in the case of feedback for external accountability this responsibility is more often shared. Disclosure is an issue for some agencies.
- Relatively few agencies employ staff or consultants specifically for dissemination and feedback work – more often this is incorporated into general staff responsibilities.
- Only a few agencies have a specific budget for dissemination and feedback work.

### **Feedback and dissemination mechanisms**

- Evaluation reports are seen by half the agencies as the main vehicle for disseminating evaluation results.
- All agencies now require that evaluation reports contain short summaries, although the length and format of these varies considerably.
- Separate summaries are now much more common, but only a third of agencies produce these on a systematic basis.
- Feedback of interim results during the evaluation process is seen as a priority by half the agencies.
- Two thirds of agencies take active steps to ensure evaluation reports are fed back to in-country partners and stakeholders.
- Agency intranets and web sites are now being used by about a third of agencies for disseminating evaluation results; another third have plans to do so.
- A wide variety of other channels are also used for dissemination and feedback of evaluation results. The most frequently mentioned were: annual reports; staff workshops, seminars and training events; and summary reports covering particular sectors/regions.
- Various mechanisms are in place to make sure that lessons from evaluations are taken properly into account. The most common of these is the requirement for senior management to respond to evaluation findings and recommendations.
- Arrangements for inter-agency lesson learning are quite patchy. Joint evaluation missions are rare, and tend to be contracted out to consultants. Although 15 agencies contribute to the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory on a frequent basis, only 5 report that they use it frequently.

\* See Annex 2 for a more detailed summary of the Questionnaire results.

## Notes

1. "Good Feedback Practices" – DCD/DAC/EV(85).
2. "A Review of donors' systems for feedback on aid evaluation" – OECD/GD(90).
3. Relatively few agencies are ready to nominate their procedures as being "good practice", since, despite the progress that has been made, most are very much aware of the shortcomings of their existing mechanisms and practices.

## 2. Challenges

Getting evaluation feedback right is not easy. Evaluation units face a whole series of challenges. And as they make progress in some areas, new demands and complexities open up in others. For small agencies and those with limited resources, this makes for a daunting agenda. Given the range of challenges to confront, and the pressures to perform, even the largest agencies are being fully stretched.

### 2.1. Dual objectives: learning and accountability

The title of the Tokyo Workshop encapsulates the dual objectives of evaluation feedback: learning and accountability. There are many crossovers between the two, both actual and potential. But they are *not* the same thing.

This point is now well recognised and has its parallels in other areas. The recent DAC Report on Results Based Management (RBM)<sup>1</sup> notes that performance information serves two primary uses: improving internal management (managing for results), and external reporting (accountability for results). The report goes on to observe that as experience grows, the potential for conflict between its two intended uses is emerging, as they may not be entirely compatible. Information is required at different levels, with different data collection and analysis approaches. So there is a growing dilemma for donor agencies.

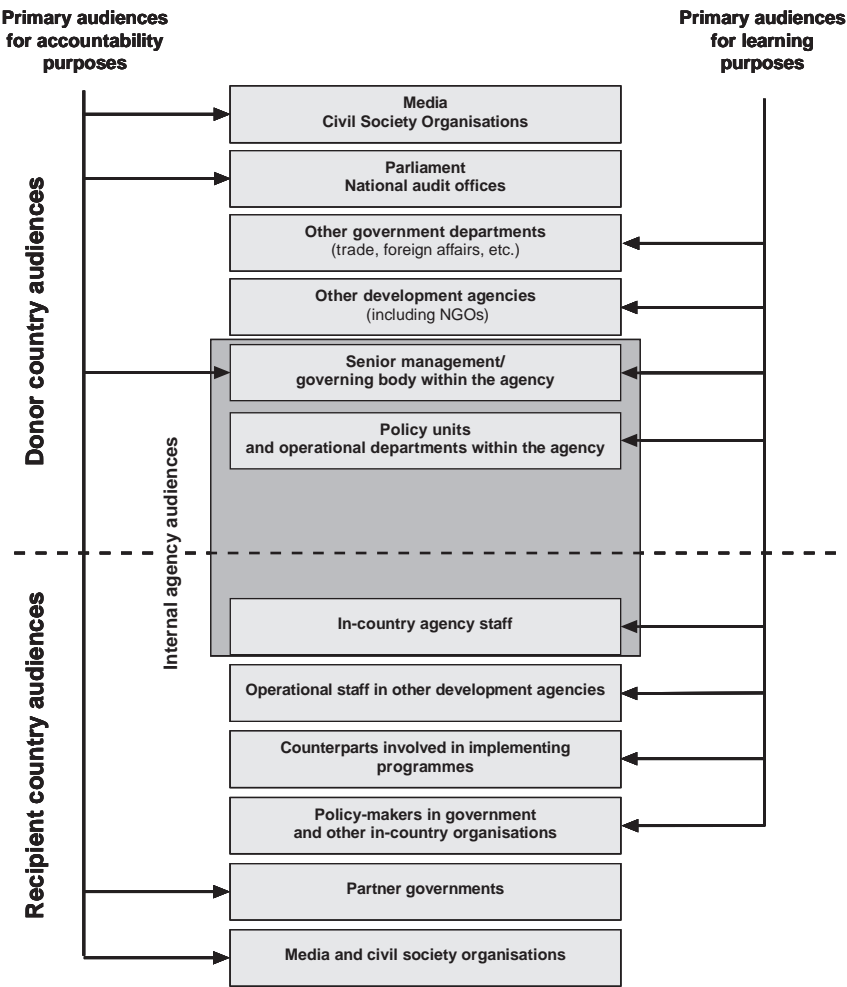
Box 3 illustrates how the target audiences for learning and accountability purposes differ. In both cases the range of audiences has expanded in recent years, especially with the new emphasis on accountability, partnership with recipient country stakeholders, and better coordination between agencies. But although there are some overlaps, for the most part the audiences are quite distinct. This has implications for the kinds of products and mechanisms needed to reach different target groups, and underlines the message that one approach cannot be expected to suit all audiences.

It also has implications for how the whole evaluation process is managed:

- Where **accountability** is the priority, the traditional virtues of rigour, independence, replicability, and efficiency tend to be the primary concerns.

Box 3. Target audiences for evaluation feedback

In the last decade, as the scope and ambitions of evaluation have expanded, the range of target audiences for evaluation feedback has increased. The characteristics and demands of these audiences vary, as does their relative importance in accountability and learning terms.



- Where **learning** is the priority, the emphasis is more likely to be on achieving “buy-in” from stakeholders, focusing on the process, and creating space to make sure that experience is properly discussed, and lessons drawn out. Timeliness is also a more important factor, since the desire is to pass on lessons now, not in a year’s time when the final report is eventually published.

These two objectives are not necessarily incompatible, and many agencies are looking hard at how to find compromise methodologies that satisfy both sets of criteria. But they are sufficiently different to merit separate consideration. Feedback strategies that blur the distinction between the two run the risk of falling short in both areas.

## 2.2. The move away from project-level evaluations

Over the past decade, there has been a significant shift in the way development assistance is delivered and measured.<sup>2</sup> For many agencies, the traditional project-based approach is giving way to broader country programmes with thematic initiatives and sector-wide approaches.<sup>3</sup> This has had major implications for the way evaluations are conducted and for the methodologies and management approaches used.<sup>4</sup> It also has changed the whole context for evaluation feedback, increasing its importance within the agency.<sup>5</sup>

From an evaluation perspective, individual projects have the advantage of being discrete and relatively easy to define. They generally have a reasonably clear boundary in terms of their geographic and sector focus, their timeframe, and the stakeholders involved. A well-managed evaluation has a good chance of identifying the most obvious direct outcomes of the project, and the lessons that have emerged from it. The process is relatively neat and contained. Results can be fed upwards to satisfy accountability requirements. If the necessary consultation mechanisms are in place, the stakeholders most closely involved in the project can contribute to, and benefit directly from, the lessons emerging.

The problem with project evaluations is that they can be too discrete. Lessons tend to be very specific, making it hard to generalise from them. And because evaluations are normally carried out at the end of the project cycle, the lessons learned may be too late to affect that particular case.

With broader-based evaluations the situation tends to be reversed. The boundaries are much harder to define, there are far more stakeholders involved, the focus is more diffuse, and it is often harder to identify outcomes in a way that they can clearly be attributed to a particular donor’s intervention. This makes the process much more complex, particularly when it comes to demonstrating aid effectiveness. It means that evaluations can take longer, and tend to be more staff and resource intensive.

The attraction of broader-based evaluations is that the lessons learned are likely to be more widely applicable, both in policy and operational terms. It therefore makes sense to invest more in repackaging them for different audiences, and in ensuring they are widely communicated. By involving a wider range of stakeholders there is also a much better chance of building lesson-learning into the evaluation process itself, and of sharing experience between donor agencies, governments and civil society partners.

This shift in focus is taking evaluation units into new territory where much is still to be learned. But it is also increasing the potential influence of evaluation work, and offering the prospect of a much more effective learning process.

### 2.3. The dissemination challenge

Making information available in an appropriate format for its intended audience is one of the most basic rules of good evaluation feedback. Progress has been made on this front in the last few years, and the standard of evaluation products has improved substantially across the board. In Annex 3, some of the main types of evaluation products are described, using examples from a cross-section of agencies.

Some agencies are further ahead than others in terms of the effort they put in to producing tailored evaluation products for different audiences. DANIDA, for example, on the basis of an evaluation of its health sector programme in Bhutan, produced a full report in English (150 pages); a 30-page booklet in Danish, a 4-page evaluation summary, and a video aimed at the general public.<sup>6</sup> Japan has also produced a video outlining the Japanese aid programme and explaining the evaluation process using examples from India and Fiji. Other agencies have a more standardised approach, and rely on the main evaluation report, usually with an executive summary, as the chief communication vehicle.

Producing well-edited and professional-looking evaluation products is an important step. But it is not enough, by itself, to ensure they are read and used. Agencies are becoming increasingly aware of other factors that come in to play:

- **Timeliness:** a beautifully produced synopsis of a project which finished several years ago will be of little interest to most audiences. Any lessons that emerged have probably already been learned, or will be seen to be past their “sell by date”.
- **Relevance:** products need to respond to current agendas, debates and needs, otherwise they are likely to be dismissed as irrelevant.
- **Marketing and distribution:** evaluation products are of little use if they sit in boxes (or databases), or get sent to out-of-date mailing lists. Though most agencies recognise this as an issue, relatively few are well geared up in this area. Some make special efforts and organise press conferences to “launch”

evaluation reports.<sup>7</sup> More commonly, by the time the final product emerges, the momentum behind the exercise has fallen away, and the staff involved have moved on to other tasks. Though a great deal of effort and thought may have been invested in producing the product, marketing and distribution is often left to chance or is treated as a routine exercise, with very little systematic attempt to target products intelligently.

- **Credibility:** users judge information based on the credibility of the messenger, not just the quality of the message. Although they may have a good reputation in terms of their professional competence as evaluators, evaluation units generally have some work to do in establishing their status as good communicators, or as potential sources of cutting-edge new thinking.

All four of these factors pose challenges for evaluation units, challenges that can only be addressed through concerted action. The first two are perhaps the most critical, however. Evaluation products that are seen as both timely and relevant will generate their own demand, and are one of the best ways of helping build the reputation of the evaluation unit as a source of information that is worth tapping.

## **2.4. Institutionalising lesson learning**

Influencing policy and practice is one of the key objectives of aid evaluation. The way this happens in practice, however, is far from being an exact science. Agencies are very different in their culture and the way they work, and have developed a range of internal mechanisms to try to institutionalise this. Some recent examples include:

- Following the recent reform of Japan's evaluation system it is proposed that explicit policy level evaluation will be introduced. This will include reviewing medium term policy, country assistance programmes and particular themes.<sup>8</sup>
- DFID has introduced the concept of Performance Scoring and further developed its' Performance Reporting Information System for Management. In addition external reporting requirements for the Public Service Agreement have focused attention on the need for improved country level information.
- BMZ has a systemised follow-up approach to their evaluation work, where after a year evaluation recommendations are tracked to see whether or not they have been implemented. France did this as a one-off exercise in 1998 and may systemise this process. JICA and KfW have a five-year follow-up programme; JBIC conducts follow-up after two and seven years.
- In SIDA, the central evaluation and audit functions have been combined in an independent department, under a joint director who is responsible to the Board. The crossover between audit and evaluation functions has reportedly been helpful, as it has encouraged a more focused and targeted

response to evaluation recommendations. Senior management, for example, is required to draft a specific response to evaluation reports.<sup>9</sup>

- EC – the Quality Support Group is a relatively recent development and has attracted interest and participation at a senior level, significantly raising the profile of evaluation feedback work at a senior management level. With the recent expansion in the responsibilities of the Evaluation Group as a part of the DG re-organisation this has been useful. Ways and means of improving evaluation quality and feedback are under review, including an idea for a harmonised rating system.
- The World Bank continues to develop the concept of results based management, including the development of a Corporate Scorecard, and the recent production of Fast Track Briefs to inform senior management. It is in the process of revising its use of Management Action Records, a feedback loop whereby key action points for management emerging from an evaluation are identified. These are tracked subsequently to make sure they have been implemented.

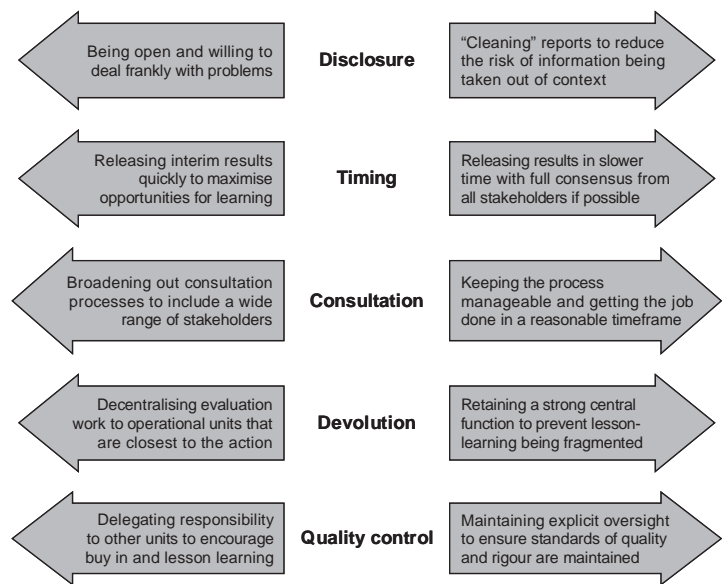
Despite these and other efforts to systematise the procedures involved in making sure evaluation lessons are learned, there remains a substantial element of randomness in the process. Some evaluations prove to be much more influential than others and this is often due to factors that are beyond the control of evaluation units. In this respect, evaluation is similar to development research, which also seeks to influence policy and practice, but is equally susceptible to factors outside the immediate control of the researchers themselves.

Some of the reasons for the divergence between theory and reality, and the implications for evaluation units, are explored in Box 4. While there are no easy solutions to this problem, recognising the complexity of the policy process is an important first step.

## 2.5. Process and politics

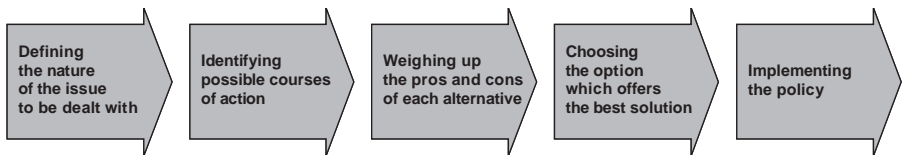
In planning feedback strategies, there are a whole series of dilemmas and internal tensions that evaluation units have to come to terms with, which are to do with the process and politics of dealing with evaluation information. At times, these can be quite sensitive, though their relative importance will vary depending on the specific circumstances. Some of the more important of these tensions are summarised in schematic form below.

None of these dilemmas are easy to resolve, and in particular circumstances agencies have come to different conclusions on what is the best way forward. These are all active areas of debate, however, where sharing of experience would be welcomed.



Box 4. The feedback fallacy

One of the primary aims of evaluation feedback is to ensure that evaluation work influences policy and practice. Given this objective, it is helpful to reflect on the process by which policies are set, and are converted into practice. Behind much evaluation work there is an implicit assumption that this process happens in a rational and broadly linear fashion, which, in a highly simplified way, can be represented as a series of steps:



Box 4. **The feedback fallacy** (*cont.*)

The implication is that by feeding in credible, well-expressed information, at the right point in this chain, evaluation findings will have a direct influence on policy and practice. The reality, of course, tends to be more complex. Evaluation lessons are just one of the ingredients in what has been termed the “**policy soup**”. Despite management efforts to systematise lesson learning and feedback loops, there are a whole range of other factors which come into play that can have a big impact on how policies are determined, and whether or not they get implemented. Some of the most notable of these are:

- **Political factors** – at every level, from internal agency power struggles to global politics.
- **Vested interests** – which can promote or block change, depending on who stands to gain.
- **Chance** – a report arriving at the right place at the right time, for example, can have a disproportionate impact.
- **Bureaucratic inertia** and aversion to risk.
- The persistence of conventional wisdom – even when proved wrong.
- **Inspired leadership** – which at times can shift thinking dramatically.
- **Bandwagons** – which can have a major influence (good and bad), once they get rolling.
- **Pressure to spend** – which can result in evaluation lessons being heard selectively, given the pressures on staff to turn projects around quickly, and get funds disbursed.

Evaluation Departments have little control over most of these factors. This helps explain why high quality evaluation results, even when they are well communicated, may not be enough to trigger significant change. This is a fact of life within agencies; it is even more the case when the influence of evaluation results on recipient countries and the broader aid community is considered. This needs to be borne in mind both when planning feedback strategies, and in assessing their effectiveness.

If the objective is to maximise impact on policy and practice, a more sophisticated analysis may be needed of how change is likely to occur, and what factors may be blocking it. Looking back at their experience, most agencies can pick out cases where evaluation results were particularly influential for one reason or another. The challenge is to look forward, and identify where timely and targeted interventions can have a greater influence in the future.

\* This box draws on R. Sutton (1999), “*The Policy Process: an Overview*”, ODI Working Paper No. 118.

## 2.6. The role and status of central evaluation units

Underlying much of this analysis there are important issues relating to the role and status of central evaluation units. This varies enormously between agencies, and is shifting over time, not always in a helpful direction. Evaluation units are under pressure on a number of fronts:

**Changing Role:** Over the last decade, central evaluation units have shifted to do much more policy-focused, strategic level work. Project level evaluation and feedback are now increasingly the domain of departments doing the direct spending. The role of the evaluation unit in such cases can become unclear. Do they provide professional oversight? Do they respond to *ad hoc* queries? It is not always obvious where responsibility lies. There is a danger that evaluation feedback can become fragmented, with a tendency for gaps and duplication to emerge. There is also a risk that, in the absence of central evaluation unit bench-marking, a quality versus quantity trade-off may emerge.

**Evolving trends:** As the way of delivering development assistance has changed, so have methodologies to evaluate it. “Blueprint” infrastructure projects, integrated rural development, structural adjustment, programme aid, sector wide approaches, medium term expenditure frameworks, humanitarian assistance, conflict resolution, the good governance agenda: in the last thirty years a whole series of different approaches have been tried. The aid delivery process has become ever more complex and evaluation units have been expected to deliver with each new approach.

**Increased workload, same resources:** The recent DAC report on Results Based Management notes that as evaluation units take on these broader functions there may be competing demands on staff time and resources. Evaluation units now talk the language of performance management and senior management has often delegated the role of supplying information for this purpose to them. But the extent of their existing responsibilities may not have diminished, so some evaluation units are finding themselves being stretched in a new direction without the resources to deliver effectively. There is also a risk of de-emphasising traditional evaluation work.

**Status:** Some central evaluation units face additional challenges due their status within their organisation; the “Cinderella syndrome”. This may be demonstrated by the usual resource constraints of both funding and staffing. It can combine with a reluctance to hear what evaluation departments have to say. The department may be perceived as the policeman or auditor within, an impediment to delivering the programme. Or it may be regarded as an academic ivory tower, remote from the real action. The problem can be self-perpetuating since the highest calibre agency staff may be reluctant to move to evaluation units, which are seen to be remote from the cutting edge of

policy or delivery. Even the physical location of evaluation units can be an issue: those that are located at the “centre” of the organisation are more likely to be taken seriously than those situated in remote offices.

These, too, are realities that cannot be changed overnight. They are areas where leadership from the top will usually be required in re-scoping the work of evaluation units and raising its status and resourcing over a period of time, so it can perform more effectively as a focal point for learning and accountability.

## 2.7. Encouraging participation and ownership

At one time, the main function of monitoring and evaluation systems was to provide information for donor requirements, with the needs of recipient country partners being regarded very much as a second order consideration. This balance is shifting. In the **efela** Questionnaire, twenty agencies rated partner country stakeholders as being “important” or “very important” target audiences. Although this group still came behind internal audiences in the priority ranking, some agencies did comment that their scoring reflected the reality, rather than the ideal situation.

Most agencies reported that they take active steps to ensure that evaluation reports are fed back to in-country partners and stakeholders,<sup>10</sup> but the majority also accept that they are not doing enough. Part of the problem may be the perceived lack of demand within recipient countries. It is significant that pressure from recipient countries for greater accountability was ranked lowest amongst the emerging trends in the Questionnaire. So, for many agencies, increased involvement of stakeholders is being promoted because it seen as axiomatically a good thing, rather than as a response to specific demand.

At the same time, the new wave of participatory thinking is driving the process forward. With the increasing emphasis on the need to incorporate the perspectives of stakeholders, particularly the poor, participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) has emerged as the logical next step. It involves local people, development agencies, and policy makers deciding together how progress should be measured, and results acted upon. Advocates of this approach argue that PM&E provides an opportunity for development organisations to focus better on their ultimate goal of improving poor people's lives. By broadening involvement in identifying and analysing change, a clearer picture can be gained of what is really happening on the ground. For those involved, it can also be a very empowering process, since it puts them in charge, helps develop skills, and shows that their views count.<sup>11</sup>

Though a lot of agencies are talking about PM&E, and have adopted it at the rhetorical level, relatively few have had any hands-on experience of applying it in practice.<sup>12</sup> Encouraging participation in the evaluation process is a natural next step for projects which have been planned and implemented in a participatory

### Box 5. PM&E: new communication challenges\*

Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) is posing a whole set of new challenges for development agencies. Some of these have an important communication angle.

- **Bridging communication gaps** – participatory approaches are all about communication between different stakeholders. This process can be difficult when the status and background of the stakeholders varies widely, and when they are speaking in different languages. Even if they share the same language and dialect, use of technical expressions or evaluation jargon can be a real turn-off for those unfamiliar with the terminology, and instead of encouraging buy-in, may be actively disempowering. These communication gaps can be bridged, given time and the right attitudes and behaviour. But if they are ignored, meetings can end up achieving little in terms of real dialogue.
- **Aggregating lessons** – successful PM&E can generate a great deal of locally relevant lessons. But how can this be aggregated to produce broader conclusions that stand up to analysis and can feed into policy, without losing the detail and diversity which is the essence of understanding individual situations? This dilemma was faced in the recent “Consultation with the Poor” exercise conducted by the World Bank, in which information from participatory work at 220 sites around the world was pooled in order to draw out some broad conclusions. New techniques are being developed to help with this, including databases designed to discern common patterns from large amounts of qualitative data, or from pictures and diagrams. Others argue, however, that trying to aggregate local data is misleading, and that the answer is to make policy more responsive to diverse local situations.
- **Reaching out** – where PM&E is generating new learning, questions arise as to who needs to know and how those messages need to be communicated. If they are to have any impact beyond the immediate stakeholder group, they will need to be communicated in a concerted way. This may require adopting an advocacy role. Or lessons may need to be given scientific respectability to be taken seriously. However it is done, an investment in skills and resources may be needed. If the process is generating controversial conclusions that challenge existing power structures, funding agencies may need to think carefully about how far their role can extend, and how closely they should be associated with the political forces that genuine participatory processes can unlock.
- **Communicating in reverse** – feeding information upwards from the local level poses one set of challenges. But there may be an equal need to communicate in the other direction. It is very common for stakeholders involved in evaluation exercises to have very little idea about why they are being consulted or even what the purpose of the project was in the first place. Without this knowledge, it is hard for them to engage in the process fully or offer a considered view. And once the consultation phase is over, stakeholders are rarely informed of the outcome of higher level decisions that are subsequently taken. Both are serious flaws that prevent real lesson learning and accountability.

\* Based on personal communication with John Gaventa, head of the IDS Participation Group.

fashion; it is much more of a shift in thinking for projects that have not been carried out in this way, and where the basis of trust and partnership is weaker.

A recent review of attitudes to PM&E among DFID advisers concluded that ***“the concept of PM&E is broadly accepted but narrowly understood”***. It found that participation was usually limited to consultation with beneficiaries at particular stages in the monitoring and evaluation cycle. There was relatively little appreciation of the need to engage other actors, such as governments, the private sector, and trade unions, and there were few examples of PM&E leading on to genuine stakeholder participation in decision-making and change.<sup>13</sup>

Much remains to be learnt about how PM&E approaches can be applied systematically, and how they can be integrated in an intelligent way with other monitoring and evaluation efforts. Some of the challenges that PM&E is creating from a communication and feedback perspective are reviewed in Box 5.

Two of the obstacles that prevent greater involvement by stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation, and helps explain the weak demand for it, are the lack of capacity in many recipient countries, and the absence of a strong accountability and learning culture. A number of agencies are beginning to focus on these. A joint African Development Bank and World Bank workshop on in-country capacity building was held in Abidjan in 1998, for example. The World Bank is also looking at options for developing regional “centres of excellence” in monitoring and evaluation.

As part of its partnership agenda, DFID has taken a first step in translating some new country strategy papers into the language of recipient countries, seeking to promote understanding and hence ownership. SIDA had worked to close the feedback gap in-country, for example, in Botswana and Namibia. Such measures are part of a long-term process. It is clear that a great deal of work needs to be done to turn the new rhetoric of stakeholder involvement into a reality. Even dealing with the very basic issue of translating evaluation materials into local languages will be a major task. But until this becomes a routine practice, it is hard to see how widespread stakeholder involvement can take hold.

## 2.8. Responding to information overload

This final challenge is perhaps the most mundane, but is nonetheless important. For development agency staff, and many of those they work with, information overload is a serious and growing problem. A decade ago it could be measured by the size of the stack of unread documents piling up in your office. Nowadays, although the piles of documents persist, it is the number of unread messages in your e-mail inbox that provides the most graphic (and alarming) reminder. Though few would doubt that the new generation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are part of the solution to better information exchange, they are

### Box 6. ICTs – a double-edged sword

The introduction of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) has created problems, as well as offering solutions. For example:

E-mail is allowing cheap and almost instantaneous information sharing between individuals and groups



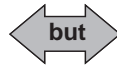
E-mail communication is often less systematic and well thought out than traditional paper-based approaches

E-mail makes it easy to copy people in when sending messages, just in case it is of interest to them



People are deluged with "just in case" information, and cannot distinguish what is really important

E-mail lists and discussion fora are allowing groups with shared interests to exchange ideas easily



It is easy to get buried – deleting messages is quicker than sorting out what is relevant or un-subscribing

Web sites are providing an ever-growing wealth of information and data on almost any topic



How do you know where to start, and how do you assess the quality of the information that is out there?

also becoming part of the problem. Some of the manifestations of this contradiction are explored in Box 6.

Software packages and work practices are evolving to help deal with the problem. But most would agree that at present the overall problem of information overload is getting worse, not better. This is a reality that evaluation units need to deal with in planning their communication strategies.

One interviewee at the InterAmerican Development Bank referred to a more specific variant on this, "lesson overload". He was referring to the proliferation of development lessons, coming at operational staff from all directions: from policy departments, research organisations, pressure groups, and other sources. Amid this cacophony of messages, it is not always easy to make evaluation lessons heard.

Experience from a range of information management contexts<sup>14</sup> suggests that some of the key lessons in combating information overload are that:

- Editing matters – users appreciate information that is short, well drafted, and to the point, and are increasingly impatient with lengthy documents that have to be struggled through in order to extract key messages.
- Less is more – bombarding people with more and more information can be counter-productive. It is better to be selective. Recipients are more likely

to pay attention to messages if the sender is seen to be responsible and thoughtful in what they send out.

- Highlights – short e-mails and other bulletins flagging new information that is available, and showing people where they can find it, can be more effective than sending lengthy full text documents.
- Demand pull – people are generally more attentive to information they have requested themselves, and which matches their specific needs. But demand needs to be stimulated through good publicity and clear signposting.
- Listening to users – it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming you know what users need, or treating them as a uniform group. People's information needs and habits vary, and they change over time. Regular audience research is needed to stay in touch with users, and allow communication strategies to be fine-tuned to match their needs.

## Notes

1. Results Based Management in the Development Co-operation Agencies: A Review of Experience, DCD/DAC/EV(2000)3.
2. The changing way aid is delivered was ranked as the most important emerging trend in the efela Questionnaire; it was rated as “important” or “very important” by 21 of the 24 agencies responding.
3. USAID, for example, no longer has projects, but plans its work around “strategic objectives”.
4. See, example, OECD (1999) “Evaluating Country Programmes”. Report of the 1999 Vienna Workshop.
5. Agencies are at different stages in their response to this shift. Some, such as USAID, are now putting all their emphasis on broader-based country-wide or thematic evaluations. But most are maintaining a mix of approaches, and see a continuing need for project evaluations.
6. The DANIDA video was produced by an independent film crew and tracks the progress of the multidisciplinary team that undertook the evaluation. It takes a frank and broad-based approach, looking at the cultural background to healthcare in Bhutan, and the relationship between the modern approaches being pursued through the project, and the traditional forms of medicine that exist in parallel.
7. This is the case in the Netherlands and Denmark, for example.
8. Summary of the Report on Reform of Japan's ODA Evaluation System, March 2000.
9. This requirement is now quite widespread, according to the efela Questionnaire. 20 agencies indicated that senior management is expected to respond to evaluation findings in one way or another.
10. JBIC now holds two in-country seminars a year to feed back evaluation findings. JBIC are also starting to feed back lessons learnt to third party countries. For a tourism development project in Jordan, for example, representatives from Thailand attended to explain the lessons they had learned.
11. In outline of the approach is provided in IDS Policy Briefing No. 12, “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning From Change” (1998).
12. NGOs and civil society organisations that have been the main pioneers in developing PM&E approaches.
13. See R. Hinton, Briefing Note for the DFID Workshop on an Assessment of Participatory Approaches and Methods in Monitoring and Evaluation, London, July 2000.
14. These lessons are drawn from IDS experience (ELDIS, ID21, Bridge, Livelihoods Connect, CGAP Microfinance Gateway, etc.) and from others in the development information field.

## 3. Opportunities

As well as challenges, there are also important opportunities opening up for evaluation units. These have the potential for substantially improving the effectiveness of evaluation feedback, and for integrating lesson learning and accountability into the heart of the development agency planning and thinking.

### 3.1. Taking advantage of the Internet

For evaluation departments, the introduction of Internet technologies is transforming the possibilities for organising, sharing and storing information. Although separating the hype from the reality remains a problem, the Internet is here to stay, and will be having an ever more important influence on the way development agencies communicate and work. From an evaluation perspective it offers huge advantages in:

- Providing secure storage of large amounts of data but in a form that is much easier to retrieve than conventional filing systems.
- Organising and combining information in better and more useful ways.
- Facilitating the sharing of data, both internally and between agencies, in a way that can be managed and controlled far better than paper-based system.
- Offering a simpler way of providing external audiences with access to information, thereby improving transparency and accountability.
- Allowing rapid communication across the globe at very low marginal cost.

Development agencies have made great strides in the past few years in harnessing the new generation of Internet technologies. A total of eleven agencies report that “most or all” evaluation reports or summaries are now available on their internal intranet, and the same number make this information available on their public web sites. Almost all agencies have plans for putting more information online, and only a handful have no plans of this kind at present.

Working out how to use these new technologies effectively has been a steep learning curve for most agencies. With new possibilities opening up almost every day, one of the problems is that the goalposts keep shifting. Web sites and databases that are state-of-the-art when they are introduced can quickly become outdated as the

technology moves on and the expectations of users rise. Another problem is that of information overload. Systems that are introduced to ease information flows can succeed in some respects, but have the simultaneous downside of swamping people with more information than they can deal with. Putting more and more information up on the intranet or web site does not guarantee people will actually use it. As the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development put it in their questionnaire response, *"whatever means one employs to bring the horses to water, ultimately you have little leverage ... to make the horses drink"*.

The investment needed in gearing up to make full use of internet-based systems is substantial, both in financial and human resources terms. Some evaluation departments are better placed to respond than others. Much depends on agency-wide capacities and policies. In agencies that are already taking steps to improve their information infrastructures and ICT systems, evaluation departments have been able to take advantage of this, and upgrade at the same time, in some cases taking a leadership role in demonstrating what is possible and pushing for improvements. But where the agency as a whole is moving more slowly, and the capacity within the evaluation department is limited, it is hard for the evaluation department to make progress. Indeed, for some, delays in getting even basic material posted on the agency web site or intranet, or in creating links from the agency homepage, has been a cause of frustration.

A comparison of where evaluation units have got to in their web and intranet developments is provided in Annex 4. Good practice lessons emerging from the first and second generation of web sites and intranets are highlighted in Box 7. Some of the key emerging issues are also flagged.

As the use of the Internet has developed, so too have opportunities for sharing evaluation information between donor agencies. The **DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory** set up in 1988, and hosted by CIDA and IDRC, was the first major initiative in this area. The Inventory now contains abstracts from slightly over 5000 reports, contributed by 17 organisations. Search functions allow the user to select reports by donor, country/region, sector, evaluation type, date and keyword.

Experience with the DAC Inventory has demonstrated both the potential for this kind of centralised system and the demands of operating it effectively. Some of the difficulties that have been encountered have been related to:

- Having to depend on inputs from a whole range of donors, some of whom are much more diligent than others in keeping their contributions up to date.
- Differences in cataloguing and indexing approaches among agencies.
- Conflicting priorities between making documents public and maintaining a "private" area where agencies can exchange information on a more confidential basis.<sup>1</sup>

### Box 7. Harnessing the Internet

Good practice for website and intranet design is developing fast. Some of the key lessons that are emerging, and the challenges now on the horizon, are as follows:

#### Basic lessons:

- **Clear navigation** and signposting is essential, so users do not get lost.
- Sites need to be kept **up-to-date**, and be seen to be so, otherwise users lose interest.
- Over-complex designs with a lot of fancy graphics may impress at first, but slow down page loading and soon become a turn off. **Simplicity and functionality** are more important for regular users.
- It is often best to organise information in **layers**, so users see headings and summaries first, and can choose where to dig down further.
- Web sites need active **publicity and promotion**, otherwise nobody knows they are there.

#### The cutting edge:

- As more information is added to websites and intranets, more sophisticated **databases** are needed to handle the volume of material being stored.
- Better **search tools** are also required to guide users to the information they need. These need to be intuitive and user-friendly, since most people are easily deterred by complex looking search screens, or results pages that list hundreds of matches.
- Information needs to be **classified and organised** in a creative and intelligent way. It may be better to structure information in a functional way, based around how people will actually use it, rather than along standard library cataloguing lines.
- Long lists of documents or web links soon become unreadable, even if the material itself is of high quality. Additional text to introduce topic areas, put them in context, and highlight what is new, can help **guide users into the material**, and explain its relevance.

#### New challenges:

- **Accessibility** is being recognised as an increasingly important issue, especially for developing country users. New thinking is going into finding compromise solutions that offer a high level of functionality but do not depend on having the latest equipment or high-speed internet links. Since e-mail is a more robust technology, systems that can deliver web documents on request via e-mail are one promising route.

- The preponderance of older information on the site, and the perceived lack of up-to-date material.
- Not being able to provide direct links through to original source materials, which limits the functionality of the system to users (plans are in the pipeline to introduce this facility).
- Developing a search interface which is powerful but also user friendly.

It is clear that many agencies value the Inventory, and this is reflected in their responses to the **efela** questionnaire. This showed that 15 agencies contribute material on a regular basis. However, it also suggested that it has limitations as a practical tool, since only 5 agencies reported that they use the database regularly.

The DAC Inventory is twelve years old now, and a number of agencies have suggested it may be due for a review. Technology has moved on, and with agencies putting more and more material online on their own sites, fresh options are opening up for sharing information in new and potentially more interesting and powerful ways.

A new impetus for reconsidering these options may be provided by the new **Global Development Gateway** initiative being led by the World Bank.<sup>2</sup> This sets out a highly ambitious vision for global information sharing. Within the draft Business Plan for the Gateway there are outline plans for a section on “Policy Coordination and Lessons Learned”. The Business Plan has been approved in principle by the World Bank Board, and initial seed funding has been released. The intention is to flesh out these plans over the next few months, begin discussions with the many partners who will need to be involved in making the Gateway idea a success, and develop a number of pilot initiatives to demonstrate what is possible.

### 3.2. Using evaluation feedback to enhance learning in the organisation

Development agencies and the evaluation units within them are also being influenced by the latest generation of organisational management models, in particular:

- Knowledge Management (KM)
- Results Based Management (RBM)

Both are directly concerned with questions of organisational learning and accountability, and so overlap very closely with the objectives of evaluation feedback. Since they are usually driven by senior management, and require top level support to get off the ground, they provide an important opportunity for evaluation units to increase their profile and significance within the organisation, cross-fertilise ideas, and build evaluation feedback into broader, agency-wide, processes.

Most of this new thinking originated in the corporate sector, particularly in North America. But it is spreading fast to public sector organisations, and is beginning to be adopted by aid agencies.<sup>3</sup> It has spawned a whole new terminology and

sub-industry. Although some find the jargon off-putting, and regard it as “old wine in new bottles”, these new management trends can be a powerful agent of change.

Results Based Management is already a part of the DAC agenda. The recent review highlighted twelve main lesson-learning areas and underlined high levels of synergy between RBM thinking and improved evaluation feedback.<sup>4</sup> Indeed it is difficult to achieve the former without the latter. The review is due to be finalised by November 2001. There is thus a good opportunity to ensure that ongoing work in these two areas is coordinated in order to optimise progress in both dimensions.

The broad principles behind some of the new organisational learning models are summarised in Box 8. Rather than being an end-point in a linear process, evaluation work, including evaluation feedback, is at the heart of the organisational learning cycle. Evaluation departments do not have a monopoly on knowledge within an organisation, however through using evaluation feedback positively they can have a significant impact. In particular they can play a role in *acquiring* knowledge through evaluation work, and then *disseminating* it through evaluation feedback; this knowledge can then be *utilised* across the organisation more widely.

The private sector has been grappling with knowledge management issues long enough for a substantial body of literature and lesson learning to have built up. A recent survey of 431 corporate organisations<sup>5</sup> found that senior managers understand that an organisation's knowledge depends most on its people, but that organisations do not have the emphasis right so far, with the split between people, process and technology still needing to be reoriented in favour of people. The biggest obstacles to change that were identified were cultural and behavioural.

Within the development assistance community, the World Bank was one of the first agencies to embrace the knowledge management agenda.<sup>6</sup> It has been pioneering new ways of sharing information and knowledge, though it faces particular challenges being such a large and complex organisation. KM has had the advantage in the Bank of having top-level backing, and a substantial investment of resources. Much has been learnt in the past two years, both at a general level, and in relation to evaluation feedback specifically. Some of these lessons are summarised in Box 9.

Other agencies are now looking seriously at knowledge management and are at various stages in the development of new approaches and systems.<sup>7</sup> For example:

- GTZ has adopted a system of “vertical teams”,<sup>8</sup> for example, which are conceived along similar lines to the World Bank's “thematic groups”.
- UNDP has created the SURF System, a series of ten “Sub-Regional Resource Facilities and Communities of Practice”. These are designed to provide support to country offices, encourage networking between UNDP staff and partners, as well as to identify, document and disseminate best practices in UNDP focus areas.

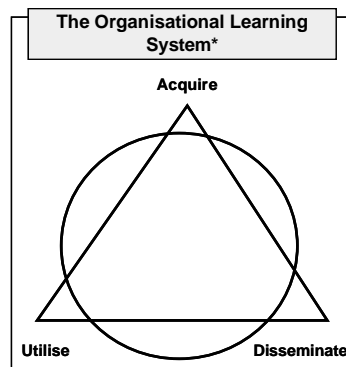
### Box 8. Evaluation as a part of an Organisational Learning System

Far from being a discrete operation, evaluation can be seen as being at the heart of the organisational learning process. Developing the “virtuous circle” of effective organisational learning demands that evaluation departments serve to make system connections between programme effectiveness and organisational effectiveness.

The process of developing mechanisms for effective learning can be seen as a challenge that has three interrelated strands:

- acquisition
- dissemination
- utilisation

This interdependence implies that changes in one part affect other parts and call for a response throughout the whole system.



#### Acquisition

Evaluation has to be based on systematic data collection for the improvement and generation of knowledge about effectiveness. Clear, understandable targets which are shared throughout the organisation are the best basis for managing-for-results.

Acquisition can be improved by ‘making the scanning imperative’ – the ability to look outside ones own department – a part of the knowledge acquisition culture.

#### Dissemination

Underlying a dissemination strategy is the need to establish the nature of the information sharing culture. These include; the degree of openness with which issues and problems can be shared and conflict accepted, formal versus informal methods and their different role, function and effectiveness, and individual versus team orientated objectives for dissemination.

#### Utilisation

The process of evaluation is a highly dynamic, interactive one requiring engagement by all parties. This process demands effective facilitation and an organisational response. Establishing actionable “lessons learnt” is a key requirement, but this cannot be achieved without feeding this process into leadership development. Changes in methods and strategy therefore need to arise from integrated linkages with the evaluation process.

**Box 8. Evaluation as a part of an Organisational Learning System (cont.)**

**A key conclusion: shared understandings emerge as evaluation logic pushes the senders of messages to be as specific as possible, and challenges listeners to reflect on and feed back to senders what they think they have heard.**

Systems of interdependent parts imply that changes in one part affect other parts and call for adaptation through the whole system. Each part will have an effect on the organisation surrounding them, push against boundaries, arrangements, rules, procedure and attitude. Operating at the organisational level may increase the possibility of having impact by being able to deal directly with those who have the power to make changes.

\* This box draws on two main sources: Patton (1999), "Organisational Development and Evaluation"; *The Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation, Special Issue pp. 93-113*; and MIT (1994), "Organisations as Learning Systems – a learning resource guide", *The International Consortium for Executive Development Research*.

- SIDA has a system of mentoring as a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge (which is often held tacitly). Senior staff have a mentor outside the organisation and middle and junior staff are encouraged to have mentors within SIDA. Mentoring is seen as a useful way of exchanging learning, working across traditional vertical reporting lines or sectoral divisions.
- DFID has developed a computer-based "Performance Reporting Information System for Management" (PRISM). This combines basic project management information with qualitative information on the nature and objectives of each project. A series of "markers" are used to tag projects. This allows analyses to be easily extracted showing breakdowns of spending against different poverty objectives, trends over time, the geographic spread of funding, and other information.
- As part of CIDA's knowledge management approach, efforts are been put into creating and managing dedicated "Extranets". These are accessible over the internet using a password, and are being used to facilitate dialogue between communities of practice within the organisation, and with outside partners.
- In USAID, the central evaluation unit is part of a broader-based Centre for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE). This serves as the organi-

### Box 9. Knowledge Management: lessons from the World Bank

#### General lessons

- Establishing “Communities of Practice” around particular themes has proved to be a good way of focusing information exchange and creating crosscutting networks. There are over 100 “thematic groups” in the World Bank at present, each drawing in members from across the organisation.
- Web sites and other online information channels can be useful tools, but they are only part of the picture. People-to-people networks have proved to be much more important, but these only work well when there is a real commitment and shared interest among the participants.
- Help desks and advisory services, staffed by information specialists, can play a very useful role as a focal point for answering queries and coordinating information.
- Developing trust between individuals, so people feel safe to share problems and queries, is the key to successful knowledge networks.
- Creating space for learning and knowledge sharing is essential, otherwise people are too busy to contribute. Time for KM and training activities is now written into job definitions at the Bank.
- Incentive structures are important, otherwise KM activities tend to slip down priority lists. But introducing direct financial incentives is not the best route. The respect of colleagues and the desire to “do the job better” are more effective inducements.
- Simple, compelling stories are often the best way of getting new concepts across, and winning people over to new ways of thinking.

#### Lessons for evaluation departments

- By being part of specific thematic groups, evaluation staff can develop informal links with colleagues in operational and policy departments, and close the Feedback Gap.
- Breaking down the “them and us” barriers that separate evaluation staff from other colleagues takes time, but is essential if healthy learning networks are to be established. Methodology workshops can be helpful here in “demystifying” the evaluation process.
- Evaluation units can help to build their credibility and perceived usefulness if they develop their capacity to respond to specific information demands from colleagues, rather than relying on “supply driven take the medicine” approach to getting information out.
- Evaluation reports may contain a wealth of relevant lessons, but by themselves be of limited use to operational staff because they are too numerous to plough through, or are seen as being too narrow or context specific. Using a specially created lessons database, OED is developing a capacity to sift through back-files to filter out key lessons, and present them in easy-to-read summaries, in response to specific requests.

\* Based on interview with Patrick Grasso, Operations Evaluation Department, World Bank, and with Stephen Denning, Chair of the World Bank Knowledge Management Board.

sation's institutional memory and has become the focal point for knowledge management within the agency. As well as evaluation information, CDIE maintains extensive databases of economic and social data on partner countries. This is only available on the intranet at present, though discussions are underway to see if part or all of this can be put on the public website.

On a more modest scale, knowledge-sharing networks of various kinds are also proliferating, both within agencies and between them. Networks can form and un-form according to need. Recently DFID set up a cluster of networks around the process of drafting its new series of Target Strategy Papers. These groups cut across traditional country and sector boundaries. At a more formal level, the Evaluation Co-ordination Group provides a forum where multilateral development banks can meet to share information, learn lessons and discuss procedures.<sup>9</sup> The DAC Working Groups are also a prime example of knowledge networks – although they have not been referred to that way in the past. DAC Peer Reviews also create periodic nodes of learning which form and un-form, where the results are then disseminated to the wider DAC group.

### 3.3. Linking in with the International Development Goals

A third important area where opportunities exist for evaluation units to transform their role and significance is in relation to the International Development Goals (IDGs). The development partnerships strategy was adopted by the DAC in 1996. The strategy now has agreed goals with a working set of core indicators for measuring progress against those goals. All DAC Members are committed to these goals, and are collaborating with each other to measure them. Hitherto, this has more usually been at the level of their Statistics Departments with some input from Evaluation Units. Regular updates are issued, there is a DAC indicators website and donors now routinely refer to them in their annual reports. Emphasis to date has been on refining the indicators, concern over the quality of in-country data, and trying to address aggregation problems. However there is scope for evaluation units to harness the commitment to the IDGs by their agencies and governments, in order to raise the profile of efela within their agencies, and link evaluation feedback into the virtuous circle of a learning organisation working to improve its development policy and effectiveness.

The recent DAC Review of Results Based Management observes:

“... considerable progress towards performance harmonisation has already taken place among donors on another front. Broad sector development (impact level') goals and indicators for measuring progress at the country and global levels have already been adopted by the donor community in the shared strategy, *Shaping the 21st Century: The Role of Development Co-operation*. The

DAC Working Party on Statistics has been at the forefront of the effort to identify and seek agreement on a common or core set of indicators for measuring progress *vis-à-vis* the shared goals. A number of donor agencies have linked their own strategic framework goals and indicators to these international efforts. An even more ambitious form of harmonisation among donors and partners might be envisioned for the future. Donor agencies' performance measurement/management systems could be co-ordinated and tailored at the country programme level in a way that lessens the burden on partners capacities, builds ownership and enhances development of RBM systems within partner countries."

The Review is quoted extensively as it links so explicitly with the **efela** agenda. The DAC Goals offer a significant opportunity for Members to accelerate their strategic thinking, moving towards a virtuous circle, rather than evaluation feedback being seen as the end of the line. Monitoring and evaluation systems, including feedback measures, could be seen as a part of the solution to the problem of ensuring that institutional level learning can be systemised, shortening the feedback loop, rather than as a way to measure outcomes in order to justify prior investments.

The IDG initiative could be an important step towards a more systematic approach to assessing the impact of donor's programmes and harmonising impact assessment. As donors increasingly move away from project-by-project assistance and towards sector wide approaches and medium term expenditure frameworks, the demand is growing for greater donor and recipient co-ordination in improving the performance monitoring systems that track results. It is already accepted in principle that donors need a common systematic rating to allow comparisons of results.<sup>10</sup> It is also essential in order not to hinder the development and operation of evaluation capacity of partner countries through excessive and conflicting donor information requirements. Donors are now just beginning to use the IDGs as a part of the top-down performance assessment process. DFID, for example, has drawn on the IDGs for its Public Service Agreement with the Treasury (the UK Ministry of Finance) and for its more detailed Service Delivery Agreement. Importantly, reporting against these goals will (at least in theory) determine access to future levels of resources.

Working from the bottom up, from project to programme and sector delivery, donors are also beginning to look at ways to try to measure effectiveness at the country level. This process will be accelerated with the advent of the newly agreed IFI Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) instrument. The first wave of these is planned to be in place by the end of 2000. The PRSPs are meant to be country driven, results oriented, comprehensive, long-term in approach and based on partnership. In other words, they exactly match the model agenda which evaluation departments have been trying to promote and follow. Some recipient coun-

tries are already pursuing this agenda independently. Uganda announced its own poverty reduction strategy last year, for instance, opting to set targets and report against the IDGs. There is thus already a high level of ownership in country, so participation and co-ordination problems should be much reduced.

So whether the methodological approach is from the bottom-up, or the top-down, it appears that there is an opportunity for synergy that evaluation departments are ideally placed to capitalise on, should they wish to. Evaluation feedback will not be the end of a process but part of an ongoing system of reporting against the goals and related indicators. If this is linked to access to future resources, there will be a built-in vested interest on the part of all parties to generate, obtain and use this information. The incentive structures will be systemic. Adopting from Charles Leadbeater's analysis of the role of companies in Silicon Valley,<sup>11</sup> evaluation departments could become the "core junction boxes" for agencies, through which information flows in and is generated out. By 2015 *if* the IDGs are worked towards and measured *then* evaluation feedback for internal and external learning and accountability could be part of the same inclusive process.

### 3.4. Looking ahead

The prospects for evaluation feedback can be looked at in a number of ways. The external pressures for greater accountability, including measuring and meeting the IDGs, could be perceived as a **strength**, improving the negotiating position of evaluation units within agencies. A recent report by the European Centre for Development Policy Management talks of "making evaluation the linchpin of the new management system".<sup>12</sup> Evaluation feedback would play a key role in this.

At the same time, current levels of aid "fatigue" or perhaps the misapprehension by the public that aid is only associated with famine, flood, war or other disaster, could mean that full reporting of aid agency experience may be interpreted as over exposure or **weakness**. To help counter this tendency, Japan has eleven teaching centres nation-wide with a local community outreach and public education mandate. DANIDA and Japan have made evaluation feedback videos aimed at a public audience, while DFID has had a "development bus" travelling around the UK, and France has a new consultation group including 60 members of civil society, academics, industry and commerce.

There is also the **threat** that evaluation feedback can be misused or taken out of context. The recent World Bank experience with the Meltzer Commission is a possible example of this, where evaluation findings may have been taken out of context.<sup>13</sup> USAID may also be said to have suffered at times from extreme cases of "micro-management" by the US Congress,<sup>14</sup> though has recently been praised for their honest and straightforward Annual Performance Reports, and for their open policies on disclosure of evaluation reports.

The overall conclusion emerging from this study, however, is that the **efela** agenda provides an exciting and important **opportunity** for all development agencies. There will no doubt be a range of views as to how possible or practical some of the opportunities outlined in this report may be, or how applicable they are to the agendas of the wide range of agencies concerned. At a recent meeting of the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation four areas of pressure for developing donor-wide evaluation policies were identified:

- The organisational demand to say something positive about progress towards poverty reduction targets, both internal and external (IDGs)
- Financial pressure
- Political pressure
- Administrative pressure

Improving **efela** can be seen as a win-win option addressing all four of these areas. The forthcoming workshop in Tokyo will provide an opportunity for as many stakeholders as possible to discuss how this might best be achieved.

## Notes

1. The advantage of having a “closed space” for donor plans and “non-public” documents has led to an agreement to establish a closed access web-site by September 2000, available to contributors only.
2. See [www.worldbank.org/gateway](http://www.worldbank.org/gateway).
3. A summary of how this new thinking is affecting the development agencies is provided in the recent DAC report, “A Comparison of Management Systems for Development co-operation in OECD/DAC Members”, DCD(99)6.
4. Results Based Management in the Development co-operation Agencies: A Review of Experience DCD/DAC/EV(2000)3 and summarised in DCD(99)6.
5. A Joint Survey by Business Intelligence and The Ernst and Young Center for Business Innovation, 2000 (see [www.businessinnovation.ey.com/research/knowledge/survey](http://www.businessinnovation.ey.com/research/knowledge/survey)).
6. The term “knowledge management” has been phased out by the World Bank in favour of the more organic term, “knowledge sharing”.
7. A more detailed picture of current thinking is available in the background documentation prepared for two recent Workshops on “Knowledge Management: Implications and Applications for Development Organizations”, held in Washington and Brighton, organised by Bellanet (see [www.bellanet.org/km](http://www.bellanet.org/km)).
8. As the GTZ interviewee commented, “the person is the carrier of the know-how, the question is how to liaise with other people to capture the know-how”.
9. The ECG has recently produced a best practice paper for lessons learned in dissemination “Good Practice in Lessons Learned – Dissemination and Application”, Wolfgang Gruber, EBRD May 2000, submitted to the MDB ECG.
10. Donecker, J. and Green, M. (1998), Impact Assessment in Multilateral Development Institutions, DFID.
11. Charles Leadbeater (2000), “Living on Thin Air’ – The New Economy”, Penguin.
12. “Assessing Trends in EC Development Policy – An Independent Review of the EC’s External Aid Reform Process”, ECDPM Discussion Paper No. 16, May 2000.
13. “Development Effectiveness at the World Bank: What is the score?” OED Reach No. 14, spring 2000.
14. A Comparison of Management Systems for Development Cooperation in OECD/DAC Members. DCD(99)6.

Annex 1

**Conclusions from Previous Evaluation Feedback Studies**

1. 1990 DAC Review of Donors' Systems for Feedback on Aid Evaluation

Key observations and lessons learned were that:

- Feedback is a dynamic and continual part of the evaluation process
- A multidimensional approach to feedback is required, including refining and targeting
- A systemic approach to feedback is required
- Effective dissemination mechanisms are needed *e.g.* seminars, synthesis reports
- Effective integration of evaluation into the planning process is needed
- Internal processes need to be strengthened by formal and informal means
- Support from senior management is required
- With donor agency decentralisation effective feedback is even more important
- How to measure success? – the growing importance of impact assessment
- Involving recipient countries in the feedback loop is important, joint evaluations
- Evaluation information exchange between donors can be valuable

2. 1991 Review of the Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms in Member States and the EEC Commission

Recommendations were grouped under two headings, and stressed:

**Feedback materials**

- More focus on sustainability
- Getting the right topics at the right time to the right people
- The need for clues for success as well as for failure
- The need for single sheet summaries with a compatible classification and ring-binder system
- Improved beneficiary participation
- Human-interest media-friendly take on evaluation findings
- Deriving broader lessons
- Annual Reports could include a response to recommendations in evaluations

**Feedback mechanisms**

- Developing informal feedback mechanisms
- Developing an effective feedback chain involving senior management
- Action oriented feedback – digested so that senior management can use it
- Using the Integrated Approach and the Logical Framework
- Building a Corporate Memory, using the DAC Inventory
- Using evaluation reports for staff training
- A policy of openness, selectively where necessary

## Annex 2

**Background Questionnaire and Results**

Replies to the EFELA background questionnaire were received from the evaluation departments of the following agencies:

Australia (AusAid),	Switzerland (SDC)
Austria (Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs)	UK (DFID)
Canada (CIDA)	USAID
Denmark (DANIDA)	France (Agence Française de Développement – AFD, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères – MAE)
Finland (Department for International Development Co-operation)	Germany (GTZ, BMZ, KfW)
Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs)	Japan (JICA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, JBIC)
Luxembourg (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	EC
Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	UNDP
New Zealand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)	African Development Bank (AfDB)
Norway (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	Asian Development Bank (ADB)
Portugal (Institute of Portuguese Cooperation)	EBRD
Sweden (SIDA)	World Bank – OED

Notes on the data:

The following aggregate results reflect the responses of all 29 agencies. However, while most of the questions were answered, at least in part, by all agencies, variations occurred within some of individual questions. Multi-codes answers were given by some agencies and some sections were left blank. The bases given for each question refers to all those who replies to at least part of the whole question. Where relevant, an explanation of these variations has been included.

**B1. Does your agency have a formal strategy for dissemination and feedback of evaluation results?**

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 14 | Yes – we have a formal strategy*                  |
| 15 | Some elements exist, but not a formal strategy    |
| 3  | We are currently working on a strategy            |
| 0  | No formal strategy or guidelines exist at present |

(n = 29)

\* Multi-code responses

Two members responded that they have “some elements exist” and “we are currently working on a strategy”.

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- As there are a number of different types of evaluation (sectoral, geographic, partnership) there is no one system which will work in any situation (France MAE).
- Policy reactions, written by the Ministry will be fed back to the relevant stakeholders, but this is not the responsibility of the evaluation department (Netherlands)
- The plans for dissemination and the response to evaluations should be formally documented and are part of the ordinary planning process (Sweden)
- Strategy to date has focused more on improving the presentation of reports (UK)
- An evaluation committee is formed, including heads of operational departments, policy studies department and management control department – and implementing the resolutions is the responsibility of the evaluation department (France ADF).
- Strategy covers feedback of lessons in the project cycle, but not external dissemination (Japan-JICA)
- Guidelines include the requirement to make findings available centrally through the development information centre (US)
- Informal guidelines in practice and the need to develop a formal strategy is recognised (New Zealand, Canada)
- There exists no single document, but (the ex-post evaluation methods) is a well-known procedure with long institutional experience (Germany-KfW).

**B2. Which target audiences are seen as the main priority for evaluation feedback?**

Not important	Fairly important	Important	Very important		Average
0	5	7	18	Policy makers and senior management	3.4
0	7	7	19	Technical staff involved in project planning and management	3.1
1	11	10	10	Partner countries, and stakeholders within partner countries	2.6
6	9	9	3	The media and the general public	2.0

(n = 28)

*Sweden's response could not be included as they did not rank them, they did however indicate that all the audiences mentioned were important.*

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- Dependent on the objective of the evaluation (Sweden, Switzerland, US)
- Media and public are beginning to become more important (Canada)
- In reality the dissemination mechanisms in Germany are stronger than in our partner countries (Germany-KfW)
- With a limited budget and staff, feedback to partner countries has not happened to a satisfactory level (Japan – MoFA)

- Due to recession in the Japanese economy the general public are more critical of ODA spending (Japan-JICA)
- “Action orientated evaluation” means that policy and technical staff are the first target, public later (African Development Bank)
- We see communication to the public as important, but at present we don't do this as well as we would like (New Zealand)

**B3. Does the evaluation department have primary responsibility for coordinating the dissemination and feedback of evaluation results for learning purposes within the organisation?**

---

18	Yes – the evaluation department has prime responsibility
12	Responsibility is shared with (please specify*):
1	No – it is the responsibility of (please specify*):

---

(n = 28)

*\*Multi-code responses*

*Australia, the EC and World Bank-OED responded that they have the evaluation department has responsibility, but it is also shared.*

*Luxembourg did not respond to this question, on the grounds that “The responsibility lies with the Directorate for Development Cooperation, Luxembourg has no evaluation department”.*

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- The evaluation department writes an information bulletin for each evaluation, the information department writes a press release. In both cases, the text is discussed and adopted in mutual co-operation (**Netherlands**).
- Evaluation is seen as a participatory process of learning, taking place at various levels of management. In this context, responsibilities are shared, with the Evaluation Department co-ordinating activities and, at times, taking the lead role (**Austria**).
- (The evaluation department only has responsibility in the short term). The long-term responsibility lies with the international development information centre, which includes the Corporate Memory Unit, and the initiatives of individuals (**Canada**).
- (Responsibility is) Shared with technical department – external internal split – Germany-BMZ auditor, EVD is the internal (**Germany-GTZ**).
- The Bank's Knowledge Management system incorporates evaluation results through thematic groups as well (**World Bank-OED**).

**B4. Does the evaluation department have primary responsibility for coordinating the dissemination and feedback of evaluation results for external accountability purposes (e.g. to parliament, the general public, stakeholders in recipient country, etc.)?**

---

9	Yes – the evaluation department has prime responsibility
16	Responsibility is shared with (please specify*):
4	No – it is the responsibility of (please specify*):

---

(n = 29)

97

*Selection of key comments and issues raised*

- In many instances (not a standard procedure!) the publication of an evaluation report is combined with a press conference in which the evaluation department provides any background information to the press (**Netherlands**).
- It is shared with political departments and with programming unit but not in a systematic way (**Portugal**).
- The report of the ex-post evaluation is sent to the Ministry (Germany-BMZ) and in very condensed form to the partner organisations with prime responsibility of the country department, whereas the biannual report “Results of Financial Cooperation” for the public is produced mainly by the sector policy department (**Germany-KfW**).
- Responsibility for the dissemination of evaluation reports to third parties is shared between operational departments, the policy and studies department and the evaluation unit, depending on the status or characteristics of the targeted public. (**France – AFD**).
- We get assistance from the Public Relations Division in disseminating evaluation results through Japan-JICA Homepage (**Japan-JICA**).
- (Main, domestic responsibility rests with CDIE). US country field offices have responsibility for coordinating dissemination and feedback of performance and evaluation results to recipient country partners (*e.g.*, governments, NGOs, etc. involved in the activity as well as other donors) (**US**).
- Timing and modus is coordinated with the senior management and press office, the contents/message is formulated by Evaluation Secretariat (**Denmark**).

**B5. Does the evaluation department have staff with specific responsibility for dissemination and feedback work**

---

7	Yes – we have nominated staff working in the department
1	Yes – we use consultant(s) to coordinate dissemination and feedback work
3	No – but we enlist the help of specialist staff working elsewhere in the organisation
23	No – dissemination and feedback work is incorporated into general staff responsibilities
1	Other arrangements ( <i>please outline</i> ):

---

**Multi-code (n = 29)**

*Selection of key comments and issues raised:*

- Head of the mission and consultants involved (**France MAE**).
- Working to establish “knowledge centres” to provide support to operational departments, to become an instrument of dissemination of materials from other donors, analyse the quality of decentralised evaluation work (**Netherlands**).
- Professional editor and information department (**UK**).
- Sector economists, informal sector networks engineering department, internal auditor, management committees (**Germany-KfW**).
- Performance Information and Assessment Section and the Office of Program Review and Evaluations – managing the lessons learnt database (**Australia**).
- An assistant working in the evaluation department (**France Afd**).
- Hired consultant made a system for evaluation database (**Japan-JICA**).
- CDIE has staff who manage contractors (a “clearing house”) that are directly responsible for electronic and hardcopy dissemination of Agency-wide performance and evaluation

reports to internal and external audiences. On request, these contractors also identify and analyse development experience from both internal and external sources and disseminate these to US staff and on a more limited basis to partners (US).

- We enlist help of the Training and Education Department (Denmark).

**B6. Does the evaluation department have a specific budget allocated for dissemination and feedback work?**

---

7	Yes
20	No

---

(n = 28)

Luxembourg did not reply as – “financial resources are made available from the evaluation/audit budget if the need arises.”

France MAE said that there was no specific budget, but “we can consider that the budget allocated for dissemination and feedback work is about 10%”.

*Of the agencies that responded yes – the following (approximate) amounts were quoted:*

UK –	4%
US –	10%
Germany –	10%
Japan-JBIC –	10%
Japan-MoFA –	12%
World Bank-OED –	10%

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- All cost of feedback (such as disseminating evaluation reports, seminars, lectures etc.) are borne by the activity budget (part of the evaluation budget) (Netherlands).
- The budget for feedback work is usually calculated separately and is a share of the budget for evaluation of a programme (Sweden).
- As the evaluation Department is free to decide on how to utilise its budget, funds could be allocated for this purpose. However, so far no funds have been specifically earmarked (Austria).
- 10% includes the cost of publishing/translating the evaluation reports and feedback seminars in partner countries (Japan-JBIC).
- The budget is used for publishing annual report, videos, leaflets etc. (Japan-MoFA).
- We don't distinguish the budget for disseminating and feedback from others in our budget planning (Japan-JICA).
- There is no specific budget allocated but is part of the department's activities which absorbs approximately 10% of annual staff time (African Development Bank).

**C1. How important are evaluation reports as a dissemination vehicle?**

---

15	They are the <i>main vehicle</i> for disseminating evaluation results
12	They are an important vehicle, but <i>not the main one</i>
2	They are not a key dissemination vehicle, <i>other mechanisms are more important</i>

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(n = 29)

99

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- The final report is certainly an important tool as it gives credit to the quality of the work but the dissemination process has to start from the beginning, *i.e.* during the preparation of terms of reference: how the evaluation is going to be used is a question often put forward in the first meeting of the steering committee when participants are given the first draft of terms of reference (**France-MAE**).
- The reports are the basis and prime information source and the reports are widely distributed within the Bank. However, this is not good enough. The evaluation function employs various mechanisms to bring the messages across, including: *a)* PED's contribution to the Bank's Annual Report; *b)* PED's Annual Evaluation Overview Report (AEOR); *c)* on-line availability (for Banking staff) of PED's Lessons-Learned data base; *d)* regular work shops with Bank-approval authorities, individual banking teams (on cross-sector or cross-country issues), new bank staff joining EBRD and other mechanisms (**EBRD**).
- Although the reports are considered as the main vehicle for feedback, it is the experience of the evaluation department that feedback during the evaluation process is equally important. The evaluation department normally establishes so-called reference groups providing advice during the evaluation process (these groups have included officials from the partner country) (**Netherlands**).
- (Reports are the main vehicle for dissemination outside Commission); but internally, participation in evaluation processes ensures dissemination and feedback even before final reports are completed (**EC**).
- The involvement of primary stakeholders in the evaluation process is an important (maybe the most important) learning and dissemination mechanism. The dissemination of reports are mainly important for more audiences further away, *e.g.* researchers, consultants, media and the general public. To reach these audiences it is often necessary to summarise the reports in Newsletters, etc. (**Sweden**).
- Apart of our ex-post evaluation reports (which are also disseminated in a summarised report to the public: "Results of Financial Cooperation") we are also doing cross-section analysis of ongoing and evaluated projects and programmes, in specific themes or sectors. Best practice cases are disseminated monthly via our intranet (**Germany-KfW**).
- While considered extremely important for internal distribution, Australia also disseminates its evaluation findings through seminars, briefings, publications, the intranet, the LLDB, the Activity Management System and the Australia website. In the longer term, the reports are arguably the most important dissemination vehicles particularly in view of their publication on the internet (**Australia**).

**C2. What efforts are made to provide short summaries of evaluation reports?**

---

0	<i>Some</i> evaluation reports contain summaries, but this is not a required feature
25	<i>Most/all</i> evaluation reports now contain a short summary
6	Separate summaries* are produced for <i>selected</i> evaluation reports
10	Separate summaries are produced for <i>most/all</i> evaluation reports

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(n = 29)

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- All evaluation reports have summaries which are distributed to all banking staff. For Board members “cleaned” (from commercially confidential material) versions are produced (**EBRD**).
- Evaluations of wider interest are summarised and presented in a regular Newsletter, SIDA Evaluations Newsletter (**Sweden**).
- We believe that a multi-layered approach is required to ensure awareness at all levels (**Canada**).
- (Separate summaries – of all evaluation reports). Only in Japanese (3-5 pages with photos and a map) (**Japan-JBIC**).
- We do not produce short summaries for our regular ex-post evaluations. In fact, our project evaluation reports are confidential and sent only to the government. Following the regulations of FC we are not allowed to publish them. In the case of evaluations for Germany-BMZ commissioned by Germany-KfW we provide for several versions of short summaries (for Germany-BMZ homepage, DAC, partner country in respective languages). We also produce main reports and summaries of special evaluation missions with the objective of publication (**Germany-KfW**).
- Separate summaries together with proposals for measures to be taken on the basis of the findings and recommendations presented in the Report are submitted to the Management Board (**Finland**).
- Apart from summary sheets (4-6 pages) broader Danish summaries (approx. 30 pages) are prepared for selected evaluations (**Denmark**).

**C3. Is dissemination and feedback of interim results during the evaluation process seen as a priority?**


---

15	Yes – the main mechanisms used are ( <i>please specify</i> ):
7	No – not at present
7	It is in some cases ( <i>please specify</i> ):

---

**(n = 28)**

France-MAE did not respond to this question.

Ireland responded to the question as “no” and “in some cases” (see comments below).

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- Even if it not stated as a priority it often become one under the pressure of decision makers (approval of a new phase), and expectations of different stakeholders. The steering committee which is put up for each evaluation gives the main and more efficient impulse for dissemination (**France-MAE**).
- At least, this is not a formal requirement. However, *de facto*, consultations with responsible banking staff take place during an evaluation process, particularly if it concerns more complex, longer so-called Special Studies (**EBRD**).
- It is our feeling that the feedback during the evaluation process is a very important vehicle for internalising the evaluation results in the organisation (both the ministry as well as at the field level (**Netherlands**)).

- Where major evaluation involve a desk-top and field phase, the result of the desk – top may be presented in the form of an aide-memoire (**Ireland**).
- It is in some cases (please specify): *e.g.* when these interim results give reason to act immediately to strengthen certain aspects during the ongoing implementation, or to prevent problems indicated in the interim report (**Austria**).
- The review of the draft reports probably offer the greatest opportunity for institutional learning (**Canada**).
- Rather than a “priority”, I would say that dissemination of interim results is a normal (and compulsory) step in the production of evaluation reports. Within a week after the completion of their mission in the field, evaluators must produce a short briefing memo that summarises the main findings of the evaluation. Then, they have to produce a “draft evaluation report” which is submitted to the Evaluation Committee. Finally they produce the “final evaluation report” (**France-AFD**).
- Results from CDIE US-wide evaluations are disseminated in draft to selected technical and management staff and in some cases to external technical experts for comment and discussion prior to preparation of final versions. At the country level, interim results may be reported orally to US staff and country partners (**US**).

**C4. Are active steps taken to ensure evaluation reports are fed back to in-country partners and stakeholders?**

20	Yes – this happens routinely
6	It happens in some cases, but not systematically
2	It happens rarely/never

(*n* = 28)

*France-MAE did not respond to this question.*

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- So far, evaluation work is primarily seen as an accountability function towards fund providers (Bank’s shareholders, TC donors) and as a quality management function towards bank staff and management. Note should be taken that related experiences in other organisations generated rather mixed results in addition of external consultation being a rather time consuming process requiring additional administrative resources and which would ultimately require a joint evaluation process (**EBRD**).
- It depends on the purpose of the evaluation (**Sweden**).
- This is going to be an integral part of the evaluation strategy being discussed at the moment (**Austria**).
- This is an absolute priority (**Luxembourg**).
- We need to do better but, we need to remember the additional time requirements (**Canada**).
- We send draft evaluation reports to in-country partners for comment – but seldom receive much by way of written reply or commentary (**UK**).
- It depends on the scheme. Every country evaluation is followed by a seminar in recipient countries. Besides that a limited number of reports are translated and fed back to in-country partners (**Japan-MoFA**).

- In certain exceptional cases, *e.g.* of political sensitivity reports may not be fed back (in full) (**Finland**).
- This is standard operating procedure for evaluations of country field level activities (**US**).
- The feedback to in-country partners and stakeholders most often takes place as workshops/dialogue during or at final stages of the evaluation process. Later feedback is supported by embassy/desk officers/specialists (Technical Advisory Service, TSA) (**Denmark**).

#### C5. Is your agency Intranet used for disseminating evaluation results?

---

2	Some evaluation reports/summaries are now available on our internal intranet
11	Most / all evaluation reports/summaries are now available on our intranet
12	We have plans to make evaluation reports/summaries available on our intranet in future
6	We have no plans at present to use our intranet in this way / we do not have an intranet

---

(n = 29)

*Australia and France-MAE responded with two of the options.*

#### *Selection of key comments and issues raised:*

- Just a note of caution, whatever means one employs “to bring the horses to the water”, ultimately you have little leverage (although more could be done definitely) “to make the horses drinking”. There is still a long way to go before evaluation work is “demand-pulled” rather than “supply-driven” (**EBRD**).
- (no intranet) As we do not want to duplicate the DAC inventory (**Switzerland**).
- Following a recent review, UK’s Intranet is likely to be redesigned with a specific section on “performance assessment” which should help to give increased profile to evaluation and related activities/information (**UK**).
- We have a plan to build a database which will be available (thorough the) Intranet in the near future. We already have a web-site in which evaluation summaries are available. But still reports are the main vehicle for dissemination (**Japan-MoFA**).
- So far our intranet is not used for disseminating evaluations results from regular project evaluation (since we evaluate every single project, the number of evaluations p.a. amounts to about 100 to 120!). However, results of cross-sectional analysis is available. It will be one of the tasks of the new evaluation department to build up a new intranet page for disseminating evaluation results (**Germany-KfW**).
- Until now, only the resolutions of the Evaluation Committee and the list of project evaluation reports are regularly stored on our intranet and updated (**France – AfD**).

#### C6. Is your agency website used for disseminating evaluation results?

---

6	Some evaluation reports/summaries are now available on our public web site*
11	Most/all evaluation reports/summaries are now available on our public web site*
8	We have plans to make evaluation reports/summaries available on our public web site
5	We have no plans at present to use our web site in this way

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(n = 29)

103

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- We are preparing a new web site where summaries, and eventually reports, will be available. Contribute regularly to the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory. Until now summaries have been produced only for evaluation undertaken by the Evaluation Department. We plan to extend it in the future and to make a global base (**France – MAE**).
- Our web site only contains a list of evaluation reports produced since 1998. Plan to make one-page summaries shortly available on our site. Availability of sector summary reports is also envisaged (**France – AfD**).
- We do not yet avail of a page in our ministry's web site. We are presently discussing publication of our reports on a special "development oriented" web site (EUFORIC) in the Netherlands (**Netherlands**).
- There are plans to increase availability on the Internet (**Canada**).
- SDC is contributing to CIDA managed database (**Switzerland**).
- Following a recent review, DFID's Intranet is likely to be redesigned with a specific section on "performance assessment" which should help to give increased profile to evaluation and related activities/information (**UK**).
- Evaluation reports available for public distribution are made available on the website (**Australia**).
- We are in the process of updating our website, and have discussed making evaluation results available on the new site (**New Zealand**).
- Under the webpage subtopic of "Publications/Partners", one may access electronically CDIE-conducted evaluation reports dating from 1995, Agency Performance Reports dating from 1995 and country-level performance reports (R4s) dating from 1999. Included are all evaluations as well as other technical reports, assessments, feasibility studies and the like (**USA**).

**Agency evaluation web sites**

Where the agency has a specific evaluation area of the site, the web address has been shown in bold type. Note that live links to these pages are provided from the efela website ([www.ids.ac.uk/efela](http://www.ids.ac.uk/efela))

Australia	<b><a href="http://www.Australia.gov.au/publications/evaluations">www.Australia.gov.au/publications/evaluations</a></b>
Austria (Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs)	
Canada	<a href="http://w3.acdi-cida.gc.ca">w3.acdi-cida.gc.ca</a>
Denmark	<b><a href="http://www.evaluation.dk">www.evaluation.dk</a></b>
Finland (Dept for International Development Co-operation)	
Ireland (Department of Foreign Affairs)	<b><a href="http://www.irlgov.ie/iveagh/irishaid/evaluations/evaluation.htm">www.irlgov.ie/iveagh/irishaid/evaluations/evaluation.htm</a></b>
Luxembourg (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	<a href="http://www.etat.lu/internet.html">www.etat.lu/internet.html</a>
Netherlands (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	<a href="http://www.dutchembassy.bg/netscape/f_netscape.htm">www.dutchembassy.bg/netscape/f_netscape.htm</a>
New Zealand (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade)	<a href="http://www.mft.govt.nz/nzoda/adaf">www.mft.govt.nz/nzoda/adaf</a>
Norway (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	<a href="http://www.norad.no/">www.norad.no/</a>
Portugal (Institute of Portuguese Cooperation)	Under construction
Sweden	<b><a href="http://www.sida.se">www.sida.se</a></b>
Switzerland	<a href="http://www.sdc.admin.ch">www.sdc.admin.ch</a>
UK	<b><a href="http://www.dfid.gov.uk/public/what/what_frame.html">www.dfid.gov.uk/public/what/what_frame.html</a></b>
US	<b><a href="http://www.info.usaid.gov">www.info.usaid.gov</a></b>

France	Ministère des Affaires étrangères Agence française de développement	<a href="http://www.diplomatie.fr/cooperation/index.html">www.diplomatie.fr/cooperation/index.html</a> <a href="http://www.afd.fr">www.afd.fr</a>
Germany	Germany-KfW Germany-BMZ Germany-GTZ	<a href="http://www.kfw.de">www.kfw.de</a> <a href="http://www.bmz.de/epolitik/evaluierung/index.html">www.bmz.de/epolitik/evaluierung/index.html</a> <a href="http://www.gtz.de">www.gtz.de</a>
Japan	Japan-JBIC Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan-JICA,	<a href="http://www.jbic.go.jp">www.jbic.go.jp</a> <a href="http://www.mofa.go.jp">www.mofa.go.jp</a> <a href="http://www.jica.go.jp">www.jica.go.jp</a>
EC		<a href="http://europa.eu.int/comm/scr/evaluation/index.htm">europa.eu.int/comm/scr/evaluation/index.htm</a>
UNDP		<a href="http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/dima/er/filesearch.cfm">stone.undp.org/undpweb/dima/er/filesearch.cfm</a>
African Development Bank		<a href="http://www.afdb.org">www.afdb.org</a>
Asian Development Bank		<a href="http://oao.asiandevbank.org">oao.asiandevbank.org</a>
EBRD		<a href="http://www.ebrd.com">www.ebrd.com</a>
World Bank -OED		<a href="http://www.worldbank.org/html/OED/evaluation">www.worldbank.org/html/OED/evaluation</a>

\*These sites were accessed on the 29/06/00.

#### C7. What other channels are used by your agency for dissemination and feedback of evaluation results, and how important are they?

Not important	Fairly important	Important	Very important	(n = 28)	Average*
1	4	4	15	Annual reports summarising evaluation experience*	3.0
2	5	11	4	Other summary reports covering particular sectors/regions*	2.3
3	7	6	3	Media briefings/press releases*	1.7
7	3	2	0	Videos and other audio-visual outputs (please specify)	0.7
6	0	2	7	Permanent evaluation review committees	1.5
3	6	6	12	One-off staff meetings/workshops to consider particular evaluation reports or topics	3.0
1	4	10	6	General staff workshops/seminars and training events	2.3
2	5	7	7	Recipient country stakeholder workshops/seminars	2.3
1	4	10	10	Dialogue between evaluation unit and other agency staff in response to specific enquiries	2.9

\*averages are calculated by taking "very important = 4" to "not important = 1". The base of 28 is used, and it is assumed that a lack of response means a "not important" ranking. UNDP's results could not be used, as they were not ranked, only ticked.

#### Selection of key comments and issues raised:

Other mechanisms mentioned:

- Newsletters, management response. The channels depend on objectives and thus audiences of the evaluations. All this should be discussed in the plan for the dissemination of evaluation reports (**Sweden**).

- Synthesis studies have become a key vehicle for collating and disseminating evaluation results. We would like to arrange more in-country stakeholder workshops and seminars, which have good potential for dissemination in-country – the low score reflects current (limited) practice (**UK**).
- Program Quality Committee reviews the broad profiles of all evaluations conducted by the Agency (**Australia**).
- Feedback to the recipient administrations and companies is also important. However, this feedback rarely takes the form of workshops, seminars and such, but rather of working meetings between our staff in the field and the staff of the recipient country... Dialogue with other evaluation units of development agencies is not formalised nor systematic but may occur on the occasion of joint evaluations (**France – AFD**).

**C8. Are any formal mechanisms in place to make sure that lessons from evaluations are taken properly into account?**

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14	Specific evidence of lesson learning is required in new spending proposals
20	Senior management are expected to respond to evaluation findings and recommendations
10	Evaluation unit staff are involved in the review and approval of new spending proposals
13	Recipient countries are expected to respond to evaluation findings and recommendations
4	No formal mechanisms exist
4	Other ( <i>please specify</i> ):

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(n = 29)

*Agencies that responded with more than one answer are denoted by italics.*

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

Other mechanisms mentioned:

- Meetings of the Portfolio Review Committee (PRC) which commissions evaluation work through approval of the evaluation department's work programme, and then reviews key studies produced. Some of these studies are referred to the Development Policy Committee, which has a stronger focus on policy formulation (**UK**).
- The evaluation unit is responsible for the monitoring of the enforcement of the resolutions of the Evaluation Committee. Departments and country offices concerned by the recommendations of the Committee are periodically requested by the unit to indicate the progresses made in implementing these recommendations. However, the evaluation does not participate to the management committees, which examine the new projects. The policy and studies department, which is represented in these committees, should normally verify that the lessons learned from evaluation are taking into account in the design of the project (**France-AFD**).
- We have a formal mechanism to check whether the evaluation recommendations have been put in place approximately one year after each evaluation. The findings of this inquiry are submitted to the State Secretary (**Germany-BMZ**).

**C9. What mechanisms/channels are used for inter-agency lesson learning, and how frequently are they used? (apart from DAC Working Group channels)**

Rarely/ Never	Occasionally	Frequently		Average
6	16	1	We take part in joint evaluation missions	1.5
5	4	15	We <i>contribute</i> material to the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory hosted by Canada	2.1
8	12	5	We <i>use</i> material from the DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory	1.7
12	1	5	We have <i>formal arrangements</i> for sharing documents and experience with other agencies ( <i>apart from via DAC channels</i> )	1.0
3	11	11	We share documents and experience <i>informally</i> with other agencies	2.1
0	2	4	Other ( <i>please specify</i> ):	0.6

(n = 25)

*\*averages are calculated by taking “frequently” = 3, “occasionally” = 2, and “rarely or never” = 1. It is assumed that a lack of response means this channel is “rarely or never”.*

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

Other mechanisms mentioned:

- Annual meetings of EU heads of evaluation is a useful forum for sharing information. The UK Evaluation Society annual conference is also useful (**UK**).
- We take part in working groups of the German evaluation society (DeGEval) with NGOs, governmental agencies and scientists, the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation meetings and workshops, publications of World Bank and other donor agencies (**Germany-KfW**).
- Our problem is that we have rarely made English version of evaluation reports. But from this year we are going to make English version of the annual evaluation report and summary reports of country-wise and thematic evaluation studies. With this new arrangement, we can promote exchanging information on evaluation with other donors (**Japan-JICA**).
- The Bank is member of the Multilateral Development Banks' Evaluation Cooperation Group (**ECG**), established in 1996. ECG meets twice a year (**AfDB**).

**D1. The 1998 Review of DAC Principles found that the adequacy of dissemination practices was a major concern. For your agency, what do you see as the areas most in need of improvement?**

Not important	Fairly important	Important	Very important		Average*
3	8	8	8	The type/format of information produced needs rethinking, with more emphasis on clarity and readability	2.8
4	8	9	6	More care is needed in tailoring evaluation outputs to specific target groups	2.6
7	8	6	4	Evaluation results need to be distributed much more widely	2.3
1	5	10	9	Steps are needed to make evaluation feedback more timely	3.1
3	9	10	3	Steps are needed to encourage lesson-sharing and feedback <i>during</i> the evaluation process	2.5
0	2	6	17	Steps are needed to institutionalise the process of learning lessons within the agency, so evaluation feedback is taken more seriously	3.6
1	5	7	12	Steps are needed to encourage better sharing of evaluation results with stakeholders in recipient countries	3.2
0	7	14	4	Steps are needed to encourage more inter-agency lesson learning	2.9

(n = 29)

\*averages are calculated by taking 4 = very important 3 = important 2 = fairly important 1 = not important. A lack of response is interpreted as implying a ranking of "not important".

**Selection of key comments and issues raised:**

- An evaluation which is not bringing any learning could be worse than no evaluation at all, but many evaluations have some impact even before they give any conclusions, just being participative (**France-MAE**).
- The most important issues here are to encourage harmonisation and collaboration among donors and greater capacity and ownership in partner countries. The high scores here reflect aspirations not practice (**UK**).
- Evaluation on "impacts" of the project should be weighted more, since the public are interested most in this aspect (**Japan-JBIC**).
- We are considering the need of a flexible strategy for broader and "ongoing" dissemination of specific issues from evaluations, such as gender questions, role of private business for various stakeholders and target groups through tailor-made seminars/workshops, handouts etc. (**Denmark**).
- In the specific context of the Agency's projects, Australia is working to tighten the various levels of the relationship between evaluations and lessons so that they can be made more relevant to the different aspects of the activity cycle and impact positively on the quality of projects. It is also examining the structure and function of its administrative units

to break down the “silo effect” and achieve better outcomes through knowledge-based synergies **(Australia)**.

## D2. With the changing context of development assistance, what do you see as the most important emerging trends relating to evaluation feedback?

Not important	Fairly important	Important	Very important	(n = 28)	Average*
1	6	8	12	Domestic pressure for greater accountability	3.0
8	10	5	3	Pressure within recipient countries for greater aid accountability	2.0
2	5	10	7	The move towards participatory monitoring and evaluation ( <i>which raises questions of accountability and feedback to whom?</i> )	2.8
1	3	9	13	The changing way development aid is delivered ( <i>the move towards sector and country-wide approaches – a trend which makes the evaluation process, and feedback from it, more complex</i> )	3.2
2	9	7	8	The new opportunities for sharing evaluation feedback opening up thanks to the spread of the internet and other electronic communication channels	2.7
1	10	7	8	The increasing problem of “information overload” among agency staff	2.7

(n = 28)

\*averages are calculated by taking 4 = very important 3 = important 2 = fairly important 1 = not important. A lack of response is interpreted as implying a ranking of “not important”.

Norway's answers could not be included as they did not give a ranking, only a tick.

### Selection of key comments and issues raised:

- Particularly this section seems “biased” towards “aid delivery” which conflicts with a bank's requirement (at least EBRD's) to remain, on a sustainable basis and seen over all its portfolio, a financially viable institution committed to observe sound banking principles. Again, ultimately the question needs to be addressed to the fund (capital, aid budget) providers of how much they (the governments, parliamentarians) are willing to consider as appropriate for executing evaluation functions **(EBRD)**.
- Concerning participatory monitoring and evaluation and the changing way development aid is delivered one could say that there is much talking but not so much acting **(Sweden)**.
- Pressure from recipient countries at the moment is not a major factor, but more needs to be done to create pressure – perhaps by building an evaluation culture in governments and among officials – and for civil society to press for more accountability. Participatory M&E may have an important role to play in this **(UK)**.
- The (German) public seems to be less interested in scientific analysis and evaluation, but in more practical and stakeholder-based information **(Germany-KfW)**.

- Accepting that in a climate of shrinking resources and greater accountability, the pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of activities will increase, the Agency is pursuing the issues of performance information and monitoring, quality assurance, evaluation and feedback with extreme seriousness (**Australia**).
- The increasing importance attached to the policy priorities related to poverty reduction, environment, democracy and human rights has given rise to the need for evaluations in these areas both as overriding issues and as themes for separate evaluations 2. Low scoring for “pressure within recipient country” does not mean that it would not be important, but to our knowledge it has hardly ever happened (**Finland**).

### Annex 3

## Evaluation Products

Evaluation products have improved substantially over the last ten years. Agencies are paying more attention to the need to produce short and manageable summaries for a wider audience, in addition to the more detailed technical reports. Documents intended for public circulation have also improved in terms of “product branding”, with better quality design and improved presentation. In addition, a review of some of the agencies that participated\* in this study shows that a wide range of products are being produced – targeted at different audiences, internally and externally.

### Summaries

Most agencies have adopted the approach of producing short (4-6 page) summaries of specific evaluations (DFID – *EvSums*, *World Bank – Précis*, DANIDA). For some agencies, the summary is up to 50 pages long (*Netherlands*). In some case the summary is not issued separately, put as a part of the main report (*EC Inventory*, *BMZ Programme Report*).

### Periodicals and newsletters

Some agencies now produce short newsletters that draw on more than one evaluation report, offer updates on on-going evaluations and/or draw out specific lessons learnt (*OED Reach*, *Evaluation Study Updates*, *SIDA – Evaluation Newsletter*, *CIDA Performance Newsletter*). The *EC Feedback* newsletter is an internal document that summarises current or recent evaluations, and gives contact details of the evaluator and a web-site address for the full report, where appropriate.

### Full reports

Evaluation reports range from the inclusive and technical to the subject specific and eclectic. Some agencies have published annexes and sub-reports separately (*Netherlands and SIDA*). K/W produces a number of versions of the same report – an internal version for the Ministry, an external report for specialists and professions and a report for project partners. Many agencies also produce an annual report detailing all evaluation studies to date and evaluation planned (*SIDA*).

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\* Note that the information given here is based on the samples that were sent to the EFELA team, and is not intended to be comprehensive.

### Other products

The Netherlands produces two page **press releases** for completed evaluation. DANIDA has produced a **video** on one of its programme activities in Bhutan. The World Bank and DFID both produce **development magazines** aimed at a wider audience. The World Bank's OED department also provides a **help desk**, which can respond to internal and external information needs. The OED's information **pamphlet** details all of the services on offer and information on the web based resources.

### Dealing with language

English is the dominant language of all the evaluation material, however the need to communicate more widely has been approached in a variety of ways. CIDA's performance newsletter is bilingual, SIDA's is published separately in two languages. OED has some translations available on the web. SIDA has published its full report on Vietnamese. DANIDA publish a separate, booklet-sized Danish version of the full report for the domestic public.

## Annex 4

**Review of Evaluation Web Resources**

A survey of development agencies web resources, and the comments received in response to the **efela** Questionnaire, make it clear that:

- Agencies are at widely different stages with the development of their websites, both internal and external.
- Agencies place differing emphasis on Internet based dissemination in relation to other evaluation dissemination products.

However, all agencies see the Internet as playing at least some role in their dissemination strategy. What follows is a **preliminary review** of some of the issues, techniques and concerns that have emerged across all DAC agencies.

**How to get there**

*Most agencies have an area of their site that specifically hosts information on evaluation. How easy it is to get to this varies, however.*

The simplest way is to have links from the home page, clearly marked, that take the user directly to the evaluation section of the site, *e.g. Asian Development Bank, World Bank.*

Frequently evaluation resources have to be accessed by first clicking on another link on the home page. This can be confusing if it is not obvious where to go, as the path is not standard. Some examples of the buttons that have to be clicked to get to evaluation feedback are “Publications” (AusAid), “Information Resource Centre” (AFDB), “Areas of Work” (SIDA), “What we Do” (DFID). USAID is particularly complicated, with no link from the main page and the evaluation department under a different root directory.

**Format and accessibility**

*Agencies have taken different approaches on the format in which they present summaries and full documentation. This has implications in terms of ease of access.*

Many agencies have used pdf formats to put full reports on the web. Only a few use Word format (IADB). Agencies that have decided to post summaries on the web with links to the full document, make it a lot simpler to see which documents are relevant. Ireland, for example, has summaries in html format, which makes it easier to browse through and select which reports to download. This is much more useful than including summaries as a part of the main pdf file (GTZ). USAID is one example where summaries are provided separately as small pdf files which have to be downloaded.

### **Finding relevant information**

*The usefulness of the site depends not only on the extent and type of information to be found there, but also on the ease of finding relevant information.*

Some evaluation sites seem to be suffering from ever lengthening unclassified lists, so accessing information can be difficult (*AusAid*). Methods such as chronological listing (*DANIDA*) are fairly limiting when searching for a specific type of information. Finding a way out of this either means classifying reports under headings, or using a search engine function that is dedicated to the evaluation section. This is a lot more effective than relying on a search engine for the whole site. Good examples of this have been developed by Asian Development Bank and the DAC.

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