



WHAT'S NEW IN THE EVALUATION DEPARTMENT?

Eval News

1/2015

1. BETTER AID: DANIDA EVALUATION IN POLICY AND PRACTICE – MAY 11, 2015

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs invites you for a full day of discussions of evaluation of development cooperation on 11 May. The intention is to discuss issues related to evaluation of development cooperation. Danida will present a new draft for an evaluation policy for discussion.

The day will feature an address by Professor Emeritus Dr. Elliott Stern on the current international experience in development evaluation as well as the results of the recent peer review of Danida's evaluation function. The draft Evaluation Policy for Danish Development Cooperation will be presented for discussion by Head of Evaluation, Sus Ulbæk. The morning programme also includes discussions on how evaluation processes are organised and their political economy based on a presentation by former Head of Danida's Evaluation Department, Ole Winckler-Andersen.

In the afternoon, two recently finalised and three on-going evaluations will be introduced by the team leaders of the independent evaluation teams. The five evaluations are: The Evaluation of the Business-to-Business Programme, The Evaluation of the Strategy for Danish Humanitarian Action: 2010-15, The Evaluation of the Support for Civil Society, The Evaluation of Denmark's Climate Change Funding to Developing Countries, and The Evaluation of Support to Capacity Development.

More information and registration on evaluation.um.dk.

2. PEER REVIEW OF THE EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

As a prelude to preparing a new evaluation policy a peer review was organised in the autumn of 2014. The peer reviewers were Professor Emeritus Dr. Elliott Stern, UK, and Head of Evaluation Department Norad, Tale Kvalvaag. The purpose of the Peer Review was to provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' management and others interested in evaluation with an assessment of the evaluation function, including its role, the quality of its work and fitness for purpose, as well as provide recommendations for improvement.

The Peer Review concluded that EVAL received strong backing also as an independent entity within the Ministry. EVAL had prioritised usefulness and relevance in its work including efforts to improve programming to enhance evaluability. Although early to make full judgement, the Peer Review found that it was plausible that the new orientation with ToCs and RTEs would lead to programmes becoming more accountable. However, the Peer Review raised the question whether this new orientation left aside enough room for strategic evaluations and whether the trade-offs between such evaluations and the new work had been carefully considered. EVAL was perceived as being independent, but there was a continued need to pay attention to the aspect of independence, e.g. when establishing reference groups, as members of these groups sometimes sought to exert undue influence. The review also pointed to a need to consider knowledge management in the Ministry – here EVAL was only one player among many.

The review basically made 3 recommendations:

- Use the peer review for a discussion of an evaluation policy to guide the work.
- Continue to invest in the new tools ToCs and RTEs – EVAL is doing well, but the tools are still in their infancy and an evaluation of this should be carried out late 2015.
- Use the evaluation policy to address expectations as to the strategic role of evaluation by the Ministry and external stakeholders. Such a policy should also address Denmark's support to development partners within the area of evaluation.

The full Peer Review is available on evaluation.um.dk.

In response to the recommendations from the Peer Review the Evaluation Department has commenced a process of preparing an Evaluation Policy that seeks to address the issues raised in the Peer Review. This process is designed to have discussions internally and externally about the strategic role of the evaluation function as well as the balance between various work streams. EVAL agrees that there is a need to evaluate the use of ToCs in programming and the functioning of RTEs as soon as some experience has been gained.

3. EVALUATION PROGRAMME

The evaluation programme for 2015-16 is now available. All evaluations planned serve both learning and accountability purposes. The programme features a balance between strategic evaluations and programme related evaluations. Strategic evaluations include: The evaluation of the Arab Partnership Programme and the Evaluation of the use of the Value Chain Approach. The first Real-Time Evaluation (RTE) working in parallel with the implementation

of a country programme will be initiated in the late autumn 2015 when the country programme for Kenya is launched. This evaluation is expected to be followed by a similar real-time evaluation of the country programme for Zimbabwe.

[For the full programme follow this link](#)

A number of evaluations are still under consideration for this coming 2-year period. They will be added to the programme as soon as they are more matured and the demand and usability for them are clear.

4. RECENTLY CONCLUDED EVALUATIONS – AND EVALUATIONS TO BE PUBLISHED SOON

[Evaluation of the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund Ghana](#)

The evaluation has examined the Business Sector Advocacy Challenge Fund (BUSAC) at two levels: level one focuses on the functioning of the grant facility and looked at the environment for change through advocacy, and the governance and management arrangements for the facility; level two consists of a detailed in-country review of 38 individual projects. The evaluation was conducted by Oxford Policy Management.

The evaluation shows that BUSAC is an effective tool for strengthening the private sector organisations' advocacy. The capacity to conduct advocacy has increased for a large number of grantees as a result of BUSAC's grants, particularly for Farmer Based Organisations and trade unions. BUSAC has remained coherent with cross-cutting objectives of Danida, particularly with regards to democratization through encouraging debate between government and representative organisations, as well as support for organisations representing relatively excluded groups.

However, the evaluation could not find a direct causal relationship between BUSAC's projects and increased economic growth and employment through an improvement in the overall framework conditions for the private sector in Ghana. This result is partly due to methodological difficulties in estimating how advocacy affects the political decision processes, and partly due to the fact that the connection between the general objectives and programme activities was not sufficiently clear from the beginning.

Danida appreciates the evaluation's efforts in assessing the results of supporting private sector advocacy in Ghana. Danida largely agrees with the recommendations which are constructive and forward looking, although Danida would have appreciated had there been a more systematic analysis of the programme's reconstructed theory of change, as well as a more thorough analysis of the Ghanaian authorities' perspective. The current phase of BUSAC ends in 2015, and the recommendations from the evaluation will be useful for Danida in the deliberations of possible future support.

[Evaluation of the Strategy for Danish Humanitarian Action 2010-2015 \(to be published May 2015\)](#)

The evaluation looks at the relevance and flexibility of the Danish humanitarian engagement in the changing humanitarian context. The evaluation was conducted by ITAD (UK) and has two specific objectives; to inform Danida's decision-making and strategic direction when it formulates its new strategy for humanitarian action after 2015; and to document the results

achieved through the implementation of the strategy. In addition to a synthesis report, the evaluation team conducted two case studies involving field visits; one to South Sudan and another to Jordan and Lebanon for the response to the Syria crisis. It also conducted a desk-based case study of Danida's assistance to Afghanistan.

The report finds that the humanitarian strategy remains relevant despite changes in the humanitarian context. This is partly due to the far-sightedness of the strategy in including issues like vulnerability, resilience and innovation. The strategy reflects its partners' priorities well and the partners are highly appreciative of the quality of the funding, especially its timeliness, flexibility and predictability. At the same time the strategy is very wide and this has led Danida to focus on three areas. Danida has chosen a partnership approach to implementing the vast and growing humanitarian assistance. Danida is seen as a flexible and credible partner and its funding has a high quality. Partnerships are to a large extent build on trust, Danida's current approach to following up on results has been to ensure that partners have adequate monitoring and reporting systems in place, and to rely heavily on partner self-reporting. This is a potential challenge, as strong systems not necessarily transform into effective programmes. Also, it makes it more difficult to base funding levels on performance criteria and to assess the effectiveness of the partners.

Like many other donors, Danida is grappling with how best to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development assistance without compromising its humanitarian principles. Although there is a number of areas of common ground between the Humanitarian Strategy and the policy and strategy documents related to development assistance, the challenge remains to ensure complementary and holistic programming in practice.

The evaluation finds that Denmark's level of engagement in global policy forums and on the boards of international organisations is impressive. The partnership with UNHCR is a good example on how a small donor can exert influence on a wide range of humanitarian issues. However, Denmark's limited humanitarian presence at field levels restricts its ability to participate actively in policy discussions and donor coordination at country level.

The report, along with the Management Response, will be published on May 11, 2015.

EVALUATION DEPARTMENT

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