



A Peer Review of Danida's Evaluation Function

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With support from
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The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

Introduction: Scope and purpose

1. This report has been prepared following a brief peer-review exercise conducted at the request of the Evaluation Department of DANIDA (EVAL). The review was undertaken by Tale Kvalvaag, Head of Evaluation, Norad, and Elliot Stern Emeritus Professor of Evaluation Research, Lancaster University, UK; with support in a Secretariat function of Finn Skadkær Pedersen
2. The review involved familiarisation with key documents and a sample of evaluations; a two day visit to Copenhagen to interview members of EVAL staff; senior management in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; other units/departments in the Ministry and a small number of external stakeholders and experts. (Sources and a list of those interviewed are appended to this report as annex B and C)
3. The ToR for the peer review (see Annex A) stated that the purpose was to *‘provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ management and the Evaluation Department 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 improvements’*. The overall question to be answered was: *‘Are the Danida Evaluation function and its products, including the new products and working methods, independent, credible, and useful for the learning and accountability purposes in the mandate?’* The context is one of a largely reconstructed EVAL function with new staff, new leadership and a new sense of direction albeit building on many of the key priorities of earlier EVAL teams. Hence the timeliness of this exercise.
4. Given the time and resources available this could not be an empirical, in-depth review with a robust evidence base. Rather it was seen by the reviewers as calling for expert judgements that whilst drawing on limited evidence was also rooted in extensive experience of other evaluation functions located in development aid and other policy domains internationally. Despite these limitations the authors of this review are confident that they have had sufficient exposure to the EVAL function and context to provide a reasonable preliminary assessment and recommendations that at the very least identify decision-areas which EVAL and the Ministry should consider in the future. The value of this exercise will ultimately be judged by the use and usefulness of the review process and report to EVAL and the Ministry.

EVAL within its environment

5. EVAL cannot be considered in isolation: it operates within a wider environment that includes the expectations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Parliament and Danish civil society; and a dynamic development landscape that poses new and sometimes contradictory demands for evaluative knowledge and insights. This environment inevitably confronts EVAL with strategic choices that involve prioritisation and trade-offs which are further constrained by available resources, institutional mandates and government policy.
6. A key part of the peer-review process, from the reviewers' standpoint, was to try to understand the choices EVAL had made; to assess the appropriateness of these choices given its operating environment; to assess how well the chosen directions had been implemented; and to understand the risks or gaps that followed.
7. The immediate operating environment for EVAL is an institutional one within the Ministry. A consistent message we heard from senior officials we spoke to, concerned their acknowledgement of the independence of the EVAL function. This was reflected in the lines of accountability (from which EVAL stands apart); and the inclusion of EVAL in the 'Programme Committee' as a separate 'voice'. In general, there is confidence in EVAL's directions and priorities as well as an inclination not to interfere.
8. If correct, this is a positive impression. However, it also explains why some questions about what EVAL is *not* doing have not been discussed. (See paragraph 14, below.) The position seems to be; 'EVAL is energetically pursuing a coherent approach - this is supported within the Ministry'. We were therefore pleased to hear that EVAL is intending to draft an 'Evaluation Policy' building on present 'Danida Evaluation Guidelines' but also addressing broader questions. This will offer an opportunity for the Ministry to engage in a discussion of overall priorities, a discussion to which this report will hopefully also contribute.
9. A central plank in DANIDA's culture is its 'results orientation'. There is a strong commitment at every level in the organisation that we encountered to emphasise the importance of results and effectiveness. This culture has been clearly internalised by EVAL.
10. At the same time we also heard some contradictory messages: that Danish foreign policy was moving towards a 'Human Rights Based Approach' to development that was going to be increasingly difficult to capture within traditional results' frameworks. It is also widely recognised in development circles that donor's inputs, including aid are only one contribution to outcomes and impacts within today's development landscape. (Other development actors, countries own policies and investments and the consequences of 'whole of government' actions well beyond development aid, all contribute to 'results'.) Indeed the fact that EVAL may now be expected to cover foreign policy related issues such as defence

and trade adds to the challenge of maintaining a results' focus. Some we spoke to suggested that the pre-occupation with results was in any case more of a within-Ministry issue, rather than a wider public concern. Even if this is so, good management also requires a concern for results - even if not all can be precisely measured.

11. As part of the immediate operating environment in the Ministry, EVAL also interfaces with other departments and functions. These include in particular the Technical Advisory Services (TAS); Quality Assurance (KVA) and Financial Management; and other parts of the Centre for Global Development and Cooperation such as Humanitarian Action and Civil Society. In addition, given the decentralised way in which aid is delivered, EVAL also has an interest in programmes developed in embassies across the world.

Role choices: Being operationally relevant and strategic

12. EVAL cannot ignore interfaces with the various parts of its institutional and policy environment. The outputs of TAS and KVA 'reviews' and 'assessments' feed into evaluations that EVAL's contractors will ultimately rely on when commissioning evaluations. Programmes developed by embassies need to be evaluable. At the same time the relationship between EVAL and other parts of the Ministry could raise questions of independence. For example an independent evaluation could be compromised if EVAL had been involved in developing the programmes it was subsequently responsible to evaluate.
13. It appears that EVAL is very well aware of these risks. It has focussed its efforts on developing and piloting tools and agreeing compatible protocols that could be useful both to other departments and functions as well as to EVAL. (EVAL's commitment to Theories of Change and Real-Time Evaluation, discussed below, are prime examples of this). It has sought to be relevant and helpful without becoming directly involved in policy or programme decisions. The overall stance of EVAL has been to be useful and supportive. This can be seen in terms of a number of key dimensions of choice. EVAL has chosen to focus more on:
 - Operations rather than strategy
 - The short term rather than the long term
 - Learning rather than accountability
 - Nationally relevant rather than 'joint' (multi-donor) evaluations

These choices have been informed by an assessment of what is needed to support programming and management. EVAL wishes to fulfil an 'improvement' role. It is also clear from discussions we held that these choices are understood and appreciated by others in the Ministry. We also understand the basis of these choices as a way to improve the effectiveness of development aid; and simultaneously ensure the evaluability of DANIDA's programmes. (See section below on Key Evaluation Tools which discusses this further.)

14. We take the view that these choices are sensible in the short-run as a means of guiding the investment of EVAL's scarce staff resources and giving a clear message to colleagues in the Ministry about what they can reasonably expect. However these choices leave unanswered some important and interconnected questions. For example:

- How long will it be possible to avoid strategic issues – thematic¹, informing policy choice – and do present EVAL priorities offer sufficient preparation to answer strategic questions when they are posed?
- Can longer term conclusions be derived from data collected in the shorter-term largely for monitoring and learning purposes?
- Does a learning focus pay attention to certain kinds of evaluation questions prioritised by operational managers whether in Copenhagen or in embassies rather than to accountability questions that policy-makers and policy-planners might pose?
- In a decentralised aid architecture and within a development landscape that engages with developing countries, their civil societies and private sectors to whom should evaluations be accountable to and whose learning needs to be supported – what is the role of development partners?

15. If these questions are seen as legitimate they can be answered in various ways. They could have implications for internal activities of EVAL itself; for the way it works with other departments in the Ministry; and for the kinds of strategic partnerships it chooses to develop with external sources of expertise, including university researchers and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). We return to this topic in terms of recommendations towards the end of this report.

Key EVAL 'tools': Theories of Change and Real-Time Evaluation

16. A concrete expression of the choices identified in paragraph 13 above, can be found in two specific 'tools' that EVAL has prioritised: the use and development of Theories of Change (ToC) and of Real-Time Evaluation (RTE). Both of these tools have the potential to improve the quality of the monitoring data available to managers. Furthermore, by helping managers, planners and policy-makers to specify and review the underlying logic of programmes, these tools should also improve the evaluability of all programmes over time.

¹ E.g. inequality and green growth.

17. The emphasis on ToC is seen as consistent with the drive to restructure Denmark's aid around 19 Country Programmes. It is closely linked to a 'results matrix' and is intended both to provide feedback for programme managers to inform implementation; and to document results at programme end. EVAL has invested considerably in developing, discussing, training and piloting about ToCs. However, the process of embedding ToCs is still at an early stage.
18. ToCs are widely used in evaluations and are variously operationalised. At their most modest ToCs are close to traditional Log-Frames, used for planning and management purposes. This type of ToC is most common at the programming stage, and indeed is often called 'programme theory'. It would appear that EVAL has gone further than this most basic operationalisation of ToCs by incorporating 'risks' and 'assumptions' into their frameworks. To the extent that this is followed through it is likely to help managers of programme to better track their progress towards agreed goals and sensitize them to divergence from what is planned.
19. When fully developed, ToCs should also be able to examine the *means* by which activities are seen to work by describing the content of the arrows that link a ToC's activities and outcomes. When implemented in this way ToCs can help explain *how* and *why* different interventions do and do not work in different circumstances. EVAL staff we interviewed are aware of this and have suggested that this is the direction that ToCs will evolve as their use in Danida become more established.
20. We see the introduction of a consistent ToC framework across DANIDA from programming onwards through the programme cycle as an important first step which can be built upon. One can expect that at country level, ToCs will be further developed to take account of the assumed means and mechanisms of change. (We saw early signs of this deepening of the way ToCs can be used in the preparatory work for the Kenya Country Programme where ToC application is being tested and piloted.) It is also reasonable to expect that during the course of programme implementation a start-up ToC will be populated with additional evidence so that it becomes able to assess the processes of change as well as results.
21. The different expressions of ToCs noted above are important not only for methodological reasons. Questions of causality are important even though evaluations can be more focussed on results and do not always need to address causality. The extent to which more sophisticated ToCs are needed depends on the purposes and mandate of the EVAL function; and the kinds of questions that evaluations are intended to answer – which connects back to policy prioritisation as discussed above.
22. Real-Time Evaluation offers the opportunity to contribute to the further development of ToCs. DANIDA's Approach Paper for 'Country Programme Real Time Evaluation' recognizes that '*understanding and specification of the process by which outputs are transformed into outcomes and impacts may be challenging for new programmes*'

or complex situations' (op cit. page 5). This evaluation approach, close to what is sometimes called 'process evaluation' or 'ongoing evaluation', was first given the 'Real-Time' label as part of the evaluation of technology programmes in the 1980 and 1990s. RTE was rediscovered by the Humanitarian Sector in the early years of this century as a way of addressing evaluation within the relatively unstructured realities of disaster relief and is now gaining traction in the development community more broadly.

23. If RTE is operationalised so that it unpicks and evaluates programme processes as well as results (necessarily in a targeted and selective way) and is appropriately integrated into the ToC framework for country programmes, it could make a considerable contribution to answering the 'how' question needed for explanatory purposes. The first generation RTEs now being piloted will offer EVAL useful opportunities to learn lessons through the implementation process. It will be important to evaluate this implementation experience.

EVAL as part of a wider Knowledge Management System

24. We understand evaluative knowledge to mean knowledge that allows judgements to be made about the effectiveness of programmes and policies that is accessible to policy makers, managers as well as stakeholders and various publics. EVAL can therefore be regarded as part of a necessarily much wider Knowledge Management System (KMS).
25. Not all forms of evaluative knowledge need to be produced by evaluation functions such as EVAL. Evaluative knowledge can be derived from other units or departments in an agency or Ministry such as TAS or KVA which are significant knowledge producers; and from research located in universities or specialist institutes – whether in Denmark or internationally. There are also considerable bodies of evaluative knowledge generated by other bilateral and multilateral development agencies.
26. Throughout the interviews, we were left with the impression that there is considerable in-house knowledge in the Ministry that is not currently being systematized. One informant went so far as to ask how the Ministry could be transformed into a learning organization. In its Evaluation Guidelines, EVAL lists various ways in which they can provide feedback and do outreach (page 36). This again pertains to the role of EVAL and where to draw the boundaries for their role and contribution. There are for example potential synergies between evaluation goals and external research, but it is unclear to what extent EVAL is expected to draw upon and synthesise external knowledge or indeed work with external partners.

27. All of EVAL's evaluation reports are made publicly available. In addition to the printed reports and electronic versions on the web, EVAL produces a short summary of each evaluation in Danish. The reports are also presented at open seminars; and EVAL produces the newsletter 'Eval News'. However, the Evaluation Guidelines and EVAL themselves focus more on the evaluation process than on wider dissemination of evaluation findings; perhaps reflecting the strength of EVAL's commitment to a learning rather than an accountability evaluation purpose.
28. Even without redirecting evaluation efforts significantly towards accountability, existing evaluations could be more systematically communicated to external stakeholders including partner countries, as well as to national stakeholders and the general public. For example, a communication plan could be prepared for each evaluation, identifying relevant users and audiences; and the best ways to engage with them. Communications can also be thought about in terms of interactivity and two-way communication as well as one-way dissemination. This is especially important if the goal is awareness-raising. We note that the Guidelines refer to use of social media which is an ideal way to encourage interactive communication. This is beginning to happen in occasional uses by EVAL of the Ministry's Facebook page.
29. Once a clear policy that reflects EVAL strategies and Ministry's knowledge priorities is articulated the specification of a comprehensive KMS becomes possible. It would need to 'map' likely knowledge requirements; clarify the responsibilities of various internal functions including EVAL to contribute towards knowledge production and dissemination; and identify the distribution of responsibilities internally and with external partners.

Evaluation Quality

30. This review did not set out to assess the quality of individual evaluation reports or products, although in terms of one criteria for assessing quality; stakeholder judgement as to usefulness and fitness for purpose, our interviews did affirm that colleagues in the Ministry considered that EVAL outputs were of value to them.
31. We considered instead whether Quality Assurance systems were in place able to ensure that evaluation outputs are of a high quality. These for example could include:
- Sourcing evaluations from a broad non-dependent set of suppliers
 - Preparation of ToR's and use of Approach Papers
 - Requiring evaluation consultants to put in place their own QA systems
 - Using inception reports as a way of focusing evaluations
 - Ensuring the independence of evaluators to collect evidence and draw their own conclusions

- Use of external reviewers and reference groups
 - The publication of reports
 - Requiring a management response and publishing such responses
32. Overall DANIDA appears to follow accepted ‘good practice’ in relation to Quality Assurance (QA). A brief study conducted in preparation for this peer review² indicated that:
- Major suppliers of evaluation services are active in many markets and are not over-dependent on DANIDA
 - From the point of view of consultants there are few cases of ‘undue’ influence being brought to bear on evaluators
 - EVAL has a reputation of defending evaluator independence
33. We have also confirmed that processes are in place to ensure that evaluators have not been involved in the programmes they evaluate; inception reports are commonplace; consultants are expected to set up their own QA systems; EVAL uses evaluation reference groups and external peer reviews; and evaluation reports are published as are management responses – an innovation introduced in 2012.
34. Difficulties do occur – occasional cases of ‘undue’ pressure being put on evaluators from stakeholders including those with vested interests in programmes; insufficient independent voices (e.g. external peers or academic reviewers) on some evaluation reference groups; and difficulties recruiting universities as well as consultants to bid for evaluation work. However, these kinds of difficulties are widely shared across development agencies and evaluation commissioners more generally. EVAL is aware of these difficulties and will need to address them as part of a continuing investment in quality improvement. However our sense is that evaluation quality is not a matter for serious concern at this time.

Conclusions and Recommendations

35. EVAL has made specific choices at a strategic and operational level to be helpful, useful and supportive to colleagues delivering Danish aid and development programmes. It is committed to improving development programmes and how they are implemented. These choices are generally appreciated and understood by the cross-section of other functions and departments we met in the course of this peer-review exercise. EVAL has also collaborated with other Ministry units such as TAS and KVA in Copenhagen and started to work with embassies to pilot new tools and methods.

² Brief Note on Independence in Evaluations. Finn Skadkær Pedersen. October 2014

36. In a decentralised development programme now concentrated in 19 countries and led by Denmark's embassies; and in a system where many Copenhagen based departments and functions also contribute to evaluative knowledge, it is logical for EVAL to help establish and equip a similarly dispersed set of evaluation activities.
37. In schematic terms EVAL's strategy can be seen as closer to a learning focus than an accountability focus. The concentration is on making aid and development better rather than on answering 'big' policy and thematic questions such as where development resources should be concentrated; or 'what works' over time in different contexts. To an extent the outputs of the recently reformed systems of evaluation now being consolidated will be able to answer some of these questions. However there are certain kinds of longer term, synthetic and cumulative policy questions that go beyond the core capability of the current system. This first of all raises questions about the policy priorities of the Ministry and other key stakeholders.
38. Our sense is that although EVAL is widely supported and valued across the Ministry these kinds of strategic issues have not been discussed. As part of the planned preparation of an 'evaluation policy' such discussions should take place. Our judgement is that serious consideration should be given to building on the existing role of EVAL; assessing what demands could be anticipated for longer term and thematic evaluations. This is likely to require closer cooperation with the wider research community both extending the current 'learning' focus of the Ministry's evaluation strategy and complementing this with a greater consideration of policy 'accountability' priorities.
39. We do not see this as all being carried by EVAL which should be a hub in a Knowledge Management System working alongside other parts of the Ministry and with external partners, especially in the research community.
40. Specific 'tools' such as Theories of Change and Real-Time Evaluation are generally well-conceived and appropriate to the role choices that EVAL has made. These are however in an early stage and will need further development in order to realise their potential. Overall we consider that the present EVAL team building on the work of its predecessors has laid the foundations for a sound evaluation system with the tools and procedures it has put in place and is aware of the need and potential for further strengthening.
41. Moving closer to an operational, supportive and engaged role poses some independence risks. However the concentration on common tools that can be used by other colleagues; concentrating on programme improvement and evaluability; and avoiding engagement in programme management suggests that EVAL is aware of this risk.
42. Insofar as there is an issue with independence at this time it may largely be one of perception. Thus although no strong concerns about independence were brought to our attention some were apparent from interviews conducted with Danish

NGOs. This suggests that the appearance as well as the actuality of independence should continue to be kept under review.

Summary of Conclusions

43. In summary the ToR for this exercise posed three assessment criteria: *Utility*, *Credibility* and *Independence*. *Utility* is understood in terms of usefulness both for accountability and for programme design and decision making; *Credibility* is understood in terms of the quality of outcomes including reports, how these are managed and methodologies used; and *Independence* both in terms of organisational independence of the EVAL function and the impartiality and transparency of the evaluation process.
44. The EVAL function has prioritised usefulness and in our view also prioritises usefulness to programme managers and designers. In this way evaluations reinforced by ToCs and RTE are expected both to improve programmes and make them more evaluable. Although the implementation of this orientation is at a relatively early stage, it is plausible that it will also lead to DANIDA's programmes becoming more accountable. This is important given the decentralisation of Danish development aid. At the same time we are not convinced that bigger questions of usefulness to the policy community including the Ministry, Parliament and other stakeholders including the general public and partner countries have been sufficiently thought through. Policy questions about future priorities and even management questions about the best means of implementation and delivery may require a more strategic level of evaluation that synthesises lessons learned and explores themes in depth across individual evaluations. Such a strategic dimension to EVAL's work would have implications for the overall shape of its activities. For example evaluation activities would need to be planned to include the gathering of evidence that could ultimately inform strategic questions. Broadening EVAL's mandate in this more strategic direction would also have implications for the way EVAL interfaced with external knowledge providers including Universities and other institutes.
45. We have considered credibility first in terms of the processes of Quality Assurance that EVAL has in place and second in terms of reputation among stakeholders inside and outside the Ministry. Overall the kinds of QA processes that would be expected in an agency that commissions most of its evaluations from external suppliers are present. There are some indications that EVAL needs to pay continuing attention to the composition and role of Reference Groups which can on occasions seek to exert undue influence on evaluators. It appears however that EVAL is already well-aware of this potential problem. There is also a need in our view to continue to broaden the supply of evaluation suppliers to include especially Universities and other specialists and researchers able to increase the quality and depth of commissioned evaluations. The reputation of EVAL and its work in the Ministry appears to be high. Our contact with other

stakeholders has been limited nor have we had access to much secondary information. However from the information to hand i.e. our own interviews with Danish NGO representatives and from what we were told by others in the research community, EVAL is generally well-regarded. However, our impression is that the bulk of EVAL's communication activities are inward rather than outward looking. To that extent the level of available information and understanding of EVAL in the wider world is likely to be limited. We think that more attention should be paid to dialogue with a wider set of knowledge providers and users as part of the development of a more outward-looking Knowledge Management System.

46. There is often a trade-offs between organisational independence and relevance and usefulness. Overall we think EVAL has got this balance right. It engages with colleagues in other departments and embassies, is developing a shared tool-set that should strengthen evaluations but is confining its own role to design and piloting; and can make inputs into groups and committees where key decisions are made, but does so with a specialist rather than a policy making or priority setting voice. Relevant evaluations are always situated in contested settings and EVAL will need to continue to support the impartiality of evaluations. This requires both high methodological standards and appropriate structures – such as well constituted Reference Groups as noted above. In the past there have been concerns about the independence of evaluations in DANIDA and although this does not appear to be a concern at this time it is reasonable to regard this as a matter that requires continuing attention. In this respect the importance of the appearance of independence should not be under-estimated.

Recommendations

47. Our main recommendation is that this report is carefully considered and discussed among key stakeholders - in particular EVAL itself and those with policy responsibility within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On this basis, an Evaluation Policy should be identified together with appropriate follow-up processes. Beyond this generic recommendation we would want to highlight three specific recommendations that should be included in discussions that should follow this review process.
48. The broad thrust of this report is that EVAL is doing well in terms of the directions and priorities it has chosen. Many of its initiatives are at a relatively early stage and still need further development.
- We therefore recommend that EVAL continues to invest in its systems and tools such as ToCs and RTE. When fully bedded down they should be able to meet accountability as well as learning and improvement purposes; and contribute to plausible causal accounts of what works and how to improve development programmes. We therefore recommend that these tools in particular are externally evaluated in terms of their ability to contribute to learning, accountability, improvement and causal analysis. The timing of such an evaluation will need to match the pace of implementation however we would see an interim evaluation being appropriate by the end of 2015.
49. There appears to be widespread support for EVAL within the Ministry and an appreciation of its efforts to strengthen development programmes and produce useful evaluations. However we are not convinced that there has been sufficient consideration of the strategic, longer term and broader accountability dimension of EVAL's work.
- We therefore recommend that as part of the preparation of an Evaluation Policy careful consideration is given to the expectations of the Ministry and other key stakeholders as to the strategic role of evaluation. This should consider prospectively a range of policy questions that might be directed at the Ministry from Parliament and elsewhere about strategic priorities; and about general lessons about programme effectiveness and programme implementation. In this context consideration should also be given to whether EVAL and evaluation in the Ministry more generally also has a responsibility to inform and support Denmark's development partners in order to support mutual learning and capacity building. A policy development process such as this would also provide a framework for the kind of skill profile that EVAL will need in coming years. We recognise that there are practical constraints on the employment of specialists not already in post somewhere in the Ministry. A sophisticated evaluation system does tend to require specialists as well as strong policy makers and programme planners.

50. Knowledge that can be used for evaluative purposes is not the monopoly of EVAL even within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. TAS and KVA already contribute evaluative inputs and increasingly as part of decentralisation embassies will do so as well. In addition the research community in universities and specialised institutes; and evaluations conducted in other countries and agencies are all generating relevant knowledge.

- We therefore recommend that the Ministry considers the development of a Knowledge Management System that brings together different sources and types of evaluative knowledge. Whilst it is reasonable to suggest that EVAL should be seen as a hub for a developing KMS, what is envisaged is a system with distributed roles and responsibilities to a wider range of actors including external researchers and others in the Ministry and in embassies. In part this recommendation also depends on priorities identified during the preparation of the proposed Evaluation Policy. However quite apart from this policy it is clear that evaluative knowledge is currently dispersed and needs to be brought together so that useful evidence can be found, made available and taken into account when it is needed. A key aspect of such a KMS is the communication systems and human networks that will be needed to mobilise, gather and distribute knowledge. It would therefore impel EVAL and the Ministry towards a more dialogical, two way communication system more consistent with the interactive potential of contemporary web-based technologies. Commissioning a feasibility study for a Knowledge Management System would be a practical way to flesh out this recommendation if it was supported at a policy level.

Annex A: ToR

Terms of reference

for a peer review of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs's evaluation function

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Denmark is responsible for Danish development cooperation. Development assistance traditionally has enjoyed widespread support in Denmark and still continues to do – although the level of support is up for discussion.

In recent years development assistance is seen increasingly as part of foreign policy. This closer linkage to foreign policy was translated into law by the present government in 2012 and the purpose of development assistance is now more broadly defined as fighting poverty, promoting human rights, democracy, sustainable development, and peace and stability.

Denmark is known for its development assistance and is seen as a serious donor when it comes to partnerships, alignment and harmonization. At the same time Denmark is also known for its pragmatism as a donor and its focus on results. There is some evidence that in recent years it has been difficult to reconcile these two aspects and there is now a renewed emphasis on results.

The Evaluation Department is mandated with evaluating development cooperation. According to the Evaluation Guidelines, evaluation serves two interrelated purposes: It is one of several instruments holding the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accountable for the choices and actions taken to meet the objectives of Danish development cooperation; and it is meant to facilitate learning about the positive and negative experiences of development cooperation in specific contexts. In general, the evaluation practice adheres to principles of openness, strong ethics on integrity and honesty, code of conduct on independence, impartiality and credibility, mutual accountability with partners, coordination and alignment and ensuring quality in accordance with OECD/DAC Quality Standards. The procedures for evaluation are laid out on the Evaluation Guidelines.

The Danida Evaluation Department is an integrated, but independent, part of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Evaluation Department refers directly to the Minister for Trade and Development. The staff of four professionals and support personnel annually manages 6-8 major evaluations and several minor evaluation studies. In addition, the evaluation department contributes with insights and evidence as part of the peer review of programmes under preparation.

The entire portfolio of Danida development aid is under the mandate of the Evaluation Department and may be subject to evaluation. In most years, around 8-10% of the annual Danish bilateral development aid budget is evaluated at various levels. The intention is over a span of years to cover the entire portfolio. In 2014 in recognition of the inter-linkages of aid and other instruments, evaluations going beyond the traditional aid instruments have been initiated covering also defence funds as part of the evaluation of the Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund, and climate change funds as part of an evaluation of Danish efforts to combat climate change.

As a principle, evaluation of Danish multilateral support is embedded with evaluation departments of relevant multilateral organisations and institutions with a mainly oversight mandate left for the Evaluation Department. Multilateral support may though be evaluated as

part of policy and cross-cutting issue-related evaluations, e.g. Danish support for global programmes and cross-cutting issues like sexual and reproductive health and rights.

All evaluations are conducted by external consultants identified through international competitive bidding. The role of the Evaluation Department is to prepare the evaluations, including develop the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, ensure that the methodologies are adequate for the questions that needs answering, steer the process and ensure its quality, including that the evaluators have full and free access to all the information they need, perform quality assurance of the final report, host the Evaluation Reference Group with external experts, and communicate results of the independent evaluation.

Evaluability of Danida aid programmes

For the past 10 years there has been a strong focus on alignment, harmonisation and ownership of the partners. As a response to the Paris and Accra Agenda for Action (AAA) harmonization and alignment action plans were developed. The consequence was a very strong focus on partners' own monitoring and results frameworks and a strong reliance on partners to deliver on the results agenda with a necessary long-term capacity strengthening.

The lack of well-established M&E results frameworks and systematic monitoring in particular at higher levels of outcome and impact has led to a situation where the lack of data impedes evaluations from drawing conclusions as to the results of the interventions. A number of evaluations in the past couple of years have started by reconstructing a theory of change on the basis of which the Danish contribution to a development goal is then assessed. This lack of evidence has in some instances been a contributing factor to a quite low quality of the evaluations providing limited insight into the outcomes, let alone impact, of the interventions and hence limited learning as evaluations tend to be generic in their findings and provide general lessons only. The need to strengthen programme preparation through the elaboration of results frameworks based on the intervention logic and strengthen monitoring with a view to improve programme implementation on a continuous basis are now widely recognised in Danida. Serious steps have been taken to remedy the situation through strengthened guidelines for design and programming of country programmes and projects and strengthening reviews and appraisals. That is a process that is still underway.

The Evaluation Department in response to the situation took steps to enhance focus on evaluability of programmes through the introduction of demands for clearer intervention logics preferably based on the Theory of Change approach as it lends itself well to the complex programmes that Danida is developing these years. In addition an increased focus on using evaluations as learning was initiated with a combination of the development of a real-time evaluation method as well as designing evaluation processes as an input and in parallel with new programming exercises, to ensure uptake of evaluation results in programming.

The Evaluation Department in the spring of 2014 conducted a small survey with internal and external users and potential users of evaluations to get an understanding of how evaluations were perceived and to get input with regards to increasing the usability of evaluations. The results were quite positive. According to the respondents, evaluations are used and there is a strong interest in using results from evaluations provided they are relevant for the work people are doing – providing answers to pressing issues. Furthermore, there is a strong wish for more evaluations of higher quality and of promoting learning through evaluation results that can then again be used to improve new programme design.

Purpose of the peer review

The purpose of the peer review is to provide the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' management and the Evaluation Department 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 improvements.

The output of the review will be used to inform the continued process of developing the evaluation function and as an input into formulation of an Evaluation Policy over the coming 6 months.

The overall question that needs answering is:

- Are the Danida Evaluation function and its products, including the new products and working methods, independent, credible, and useful for the learning and accountability purposes in the mandate?

The Assessment criteria:

Independence should be assessed in terms of the organisational independence of the evaluation function. The evaluation process itself should be impartial and independent from policy development and programme management. Independence should also be considered based on an assessment of transparency and impartiality of the process and the evaluation methodologies used.

Credibility is closely linked to independence and should be assessed in terms of the quality of outcomes, including the evaluation reports, the methodologies and the way the evaluations are managed.

Utility should be assessed with regards to usefulness of the results for accountability purposes as well as the impact the evaluations have on decision-making, programme design etc. Assessment would include relevance and timeliness but also the capacity of the Evaluation Department to communicate the results and learning from evaluations.

The normative framework for the assessment is the OECD/DAC evaluation quality standards.

Scope of the peer review

The peer review can comment on all aspect related to the mandate of the evaluation function and the work carried out by the Evaluation Department.

The Peer Review will look into:

- structural and organisational issues related to the evaluation function
- coverage of evaluations both in terms of issues and channels of assistance
- quality of evaluations including methodologies applied as well as processes – a sample of evaluations carried out in the period 2012-14 as well as on-going will be provided.
- The new approaches regarding enhancing evaluability and real-time evaluation
- Utility and use of evaluations, including follow-up measures
- Communication of evaluations – results and learning

Even though a tight and focused process has been chosen there should be room for ensuring broad consultation with stakeholders in Denmark. However, for the sake of cost and focus, the review does not cover development partner's views of the evaluation function.

Peer panel composition

The peer panel will be composed of

- Professor emeritus Elliot Stern, University of Lancaster and
- Head of Evaluation Norad Tale Kvalveg.

The peer panel will be supported by Finn Skadkær, Tana Copenhagen, in its work.

Peer review process

Primo October: Finalization of the Terms of Reference

Primo October: Forwarding of relevant material to the panel and the consultant

October 20-24th: Teleconference(s) between Peer Panel and EVAL

October 30-31: Peer panel in Copenhagen. Meetings with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (EVAL, management, Departments of Technical Advisory Services, Quality Assurance, Policy and regional Departments. Meetings with external stakeholders (consultants, NGOs and development think tank). All in all 6-7 meetings on Thursday 30th and possibly early 31st .

Afternoon 31st: Feed back to EVAL and Danida management on conclusions and recommendations.

Primo November: Report

Primo November: Possible teleconference on the report.

Reporting

The Peer Panel will submit a brief report not more than 10 pages covering the panel's observations and recommendations.

The findings and recommendations will be discussed with EVAL. Furthermore, the findings and the recommendations will be shared by EVAL internally in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the Council for Development Policy. The report will be made public on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website.

Annex B: Programme for review and list of persons met

Thursday	Participants	Location
9.00-10.30	EVAL	EVAL
10.30-11.00	Martin Bille Hermann, State Secretary for Development Policy	6c02
11.00-11.30	Professor Finn Tarp, University of Copenhagen and UN WIDER	Telephone interview. Lukkede mødelokale
12.00-13.00	Lunch with staff presently involved with evaluation/recently involved with evaluation, see names below	M4
13.00-14.00	<u>Technical Advisory Services (MFA)</u> : Tove Degnbol, Head of Department. <u>Quality Assurance and Financial Management of Development Cooperation (MFA)</u> : Nikolaj A. Hejberg Petersen, Head of Department	M7
14.00-15.00	NGOs: Maria Ploug Petersen, <u>Care</u> Karen Andersen, <u>IBIS</u> Helle Schierbeck, <u>Plan Danmark</u> Henrik Nielsen, <u>Globalt Fokus</u>	M7
15.00-15.30	Georg Sørensen, Chariman for Council for Development Policy	Telephone interview
15.30-16.30	Nanna Hvidt and Lars Engberg, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)	M7
16.30-19.00	Internal meeting peer panel	
19.30	Dinner hosted by EVAL	

Staff: Sanne Frost Helt (UGS), Pernille Dueholm (ALO), Peter Jul Larsen (MENA), Jacob Rogild Jakobsen (GRV), Jette Michelsen (HCP)

Friday	Participants	Location
9.00-9.45	<u>Nairobi Embassy</u> : Lars Bredal, Deputy	M7
10-10.30	Morten Jespersen, Under Secretary for <u>Centre for Global Development and Cooperation</u>	2f56
11:30-12:15	<u>Development Policy and Global Cooperation (MFA)</u> : Mette Thygesen, Senior Advisor. <u>Humanitarian Action, Civil Society and Personnel Assistance (MFA)</u> : Einar Hebogård Jensen, Head of Department, Jens Kåre Rasmussen, Senior Advisor	M7
12:15-13.00	Lunch: Peer panel	M7
13.00-15:00	Internal meeting peer panel	M7
15.00-17.00	Debriefing, EVAL	M7

Annex C: List of main documents consulted

Budgets: 2012, 2013, 2014

Danida Evaluation Guidelines

EVAL News: 01.2014

Evaluation Coverage: Matrix over EVAL's evaluation coverage 2007-2013

Evaluation programmes: 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013, 2013-2014

Evaluation Reports:

- The Danish Engagement in and around Somalia 2006-10
- Danish Neighbourhood programme with a focus on the economic development portfolio
- Danish support to civil society
- Media cooperation under the Danish Arab Partnership programme 2005-12
- The farmer field school approach in the agricultural sector programme support phase II in Bangladesh
- Danish Peace and Stabilisation Fund

Peer Review 2002: A Review of Evaluation in Danida, Follow up memorandum, Terms of reference for preparation of report on Evaluation

Real-Time Evaluation: Approach paper for RTE, Approach Paper for Country Programme Real Time Evaluation, Terms of Reference for Real-Time Evaluation of the Danida Country Programme for Kenya

ToC: Danida Theory of Change final, Moving forward_ToC thinking for results framework and ME preparation June 2014 rev, Status Theory of Change process Country Programme Kenya, The Danida Guidelines for Country Programmes.

Other:

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Council for Development Policy, Title: Evaluation and evaluation programme 2014-2015 (November 21, 2013)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Council for Development Policy, Title: Evaluation of Development Cooperation (October 30, 2014)

Brief note on Independence in Evaluations (Finn Skadkær Pedersen, Tana Copenhagen, 16.10.2014)

Evaluation of Danish Development Assistance – Experiences and new Approaches (Susan Ulbæk and Henning Nøhr, Evaluation Department, Danida)

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