

## Introduction to the workshop

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Monsieur le ministre, Monsieur le Président,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to address the Workshop 'Partners in Evaluation'. More than two years ago, the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation (WP-EV), at its regular meeting here in Paris, organised a brainstorming session on its future work, role and mandate. The session yielded a wealth of ideas. Today, thanks to the very positive response of the French Ministry of Finance, the Economy and Trade, and thanks to the active involvement of many of the members of the DAC Working Party, we are gathered to discuss the options for partnership in evaluation on an unprecedented scale.

The idea was born of a growing sense of unease within the Working Party that in our meetings we were talking about pressing evaluation issues which should really be discussed before a wider audience. The DAC Working Party consists of representatives of the evaluation departments of bilateral donors. It focuses mainly on bilateral concerns. Other concerns are difficult to address. There are at least two other constituencies:

- the United Nations Inter Agency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG), which brings together all the evaluation units and offices of the UN agencies, and
- the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG) of the International Financial Institutions.

These groups address the evaluation concerns of their respective constituencies. The most important group of actors in development, our partner countries, are not represented in these groups. Of course, wherever possible the WP-EV, the IAWG and the ECG involve partner countries and/or other partners in their activities – and most importantly in their evaluations. Furthermore, the three groups exchange observers and collaborate on many issues. However, none of the three groups has a mechanism for consulting beyond its own members. Our question was: how do we meet, exchange information and collaborate with the following constituencies:

- the evaluation community in partner countries;
- the evaluation community in NGOs and civil society, not only in partner countries but also in the development community in OECD countries;
- any other evaluation communities, like the private sector, human rights organisations, humanitarian assistance institutions, networks or associations of professionals, and so on.

This concern about a possible lack of communication channels between different evaluation communities was sparked by the challenges that we were facing in evaluating bilateral aid. First of all, many donors have initiated a shift in funding from projects to programmes, from programmes to sector-wide support and from separate and clearly identifiable funding to co-funding, joint funding or even budget support. Though we know that many donors do not put all their money where their mouth is, this shift still poses a huge evaluation challenge. For many of the bilateral evaluation units it entails a shift from project or activity level evaluations to higher level evaluations. The trend towards joint funding poses the challenge of attribution. It is no longer possible to track the contribution of one donor into a joint basket. A principle that we could adopt as a community in this regard, both to prevent evaluation bombardment and to recognise the problems of attribution, is the following:

*Where donors finance together, they should evaluate together*

Secondly, in the past decade we have seen efforts by the donor community to improve its credentials as a partner in development. Partnership is one of the four principles of the Comprehensive Development Framework. As the call for a truly global partnership it is the last (and perhaps most difficult) of the Millennium Development Goals. In all our bilateral programmes we observe efforts to improve partnership. Again, the reality may not always match the rhetoric. For evaluators, however, increased partnership should have implications for joint learning and for mutual accountability. This brings us to a second principle that the evaluation community could adopt:

*Increasing partnership should include partnership in evaluation*

The third challenge is the drive towards ownership. This is also one of the four principles of the Comprehensive Development Framework, and it has been carried over into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the PRSPs. It is a common refrain in evaluation findings: a lack of success, a lack of sustainability in projects, programmes and policies, all because of a lack of ownership. Apart from being thoroughly backed up by the evidence, the emphasis on ownership is based on a recognition that people do not 'get' developed, but develop themselves. Similarly, countries do not 'get' developed, but develop themselves. The role of aid is nothing more and nothing less than to support or to act as a catalyst for indigenous development. Again, the reality in international relations may not always match these lofty principles. However, the changing role of the donor, with greater emphasis being placed on the part played by the recipient, has implications for the evaluator. This us leads to a third principle that the evaluation community could adopt:

*Increasing ownership should also lead to ownership of evaluations*

These principles are up for discussion. The challenges do not affect the ultimate purpose of evaluation: to learn from the past and to account for what has happened. The changes we need to discuss are in the composition of the teams, in the shift in emphasis in questions, in scope and focus, and in reporting. The purpose of this workshop is not to adopt new principles for aid evaluation – we do not have the mandate to do that – but perhaps we can formulate a ‘Paris declaration’ on the way forward in development evaluation. As a fourth and perhaps final principle in such a declaration, we need to challenge the central role that aid plays in our work. The principle of ownership states quite clearly that development is an endogenous phenomenon in which aid can only play a catalytic or supportive role. The Millennium Development Goals pose the challenge of evaluating what has been done to reach these goals, locally, nationally and internationally. Should we focus on evaluating development rather than just the small contribution made by aid to development? And surely our partners are more interested in an evaluation of the overall development in a sector, rather than just the contribution of the donors to that sector? Furthermore, the last Millennium Development Goal recognises that endogenous development is only possible in an enabling international environment. This presents us with another challenge: ensuring that other areas of international policy, like trade, migration or issues of peace and security actually enable rather than obstruct development. Many donors and partner countries are already working on improving the international enabling environment. How will the evaluation community react to the challenge of the eighth Millennium Development Goal? Should we as an evaluation community go:

*from evaluating aid to evaluating development?*

I predict that this issue will be a topic of discussion in the days ahead.

The purpose of this workshop is not only to learn from each other and to discuss common concerns and issues of interest. It also aims to explore how we can meet the challenges of evaluation. Will we do so as separate communities, or will we be able to identify avenues for future cooperation? Fortunately, we can build on existing forms of collaboration. Let me just mention a few.

- The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance (ALNAP) in Humanitarian Assistance includes non-governmental participants; it has built up a significant track record in supporting, strengthening and learning from evaluations of humanitarian assistance. Is this a model which can be adopted elsewhere? ALNAP will be giving a presentation during the course of this workshop.

- Joint international evaluations; both the evaluation of the Comprehensive Development Framework, led by the Operations Evaluation Department (OED) of the World Bank and the Joint Evaluation of External Support to Basic Education, led by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands have concluded new and innovative partnerships with partner countries and an interesting mix of donor organisations. We can learn from this. Later on, the World Bank will start a debate on this issue.
- The Working Party works on best practices, guidelines and lessons to be learned through a series of evaluations on related topics. Increasingly, partner countries, NGOs and the research community have become involved in this kind of work, often through involvement in seminars in which draft reports were discussed. Will it be possible to broaden the scope of 'best practices' and synthesis work to other evaluation communities?
- The three well-established evaluation communities tend to work through so-called task forces set up to tackle specific jobs. These task forces tend to include external partners, depending on the subject. This is an existing vehicle for collaboration across communities which has not yet been used explicitly for that purpose. Over the next two days we may come up with proposals for cooperation, for which joint task forces could be established, which would report to different constituencies.
- There are currently some mechanisms for information exchange on the internet, such as the Development Gateway and evaluation inventories, which could enable and promote an ongoing debate within the evaluation communities on issues of common interest. Should we look for additional opportunities? Is there a willingness to facilitate discussions?
- The greatest challenge is undoubtedly the mobilisation of our colleagues and partners in the South. The number, scope, level and quality of joint evaluations are increasing, yet there is room for improvement. Training, creating an enabling environment, supporting institutions and individuals – things have got better in recent years, yet there is room for improvement. This workshop is being attended by some representatives from the South, yet there is room for improvement. Funding may be an important obstacle. Many of us have funds available to undertake evaluations, but not to mobilise capacity in the South. Other channels of support need to be explored. Ideas need to be discussed. And IDEAS, the International Development Evaluators Association, may play a role in this. It will be giving a presentation during the course of this workshop

There are many ideas floating around in our community. Nevertheless, we need to recognise that collaboration amongst evaluators is a potential minefield of misunderstandings about definitions, methodologies, concepts, logic and rationalities. It reminds me of the question:

why did the chicken cross the road? The simple answer is that it wanted to get to the other side. But the evaluator wants to know:

1. whether the chicken took the shortest path across the road, and whether it crossed the road in the quickest possible way;
2. whether it can be established whether the chicken indeed and in actual fact reached the other side, and remains there, and is expected to remain there in the future;
3. whether the needs of the chicken have been met by crossing the road.

To answer these questions, the evaluator will in a participatory process with the chicken establish an intervention logic, logframe or theory of 'how chickens cross roads' and 'intended short-term and long-term results of the chicken crossing the road' which will lead to the gathering and analysis of relevant data. Mr Chairman, I hope that the next two days will see a full discussion of chickens and roads and all the ramifications and possible benefits of future cooperation. Thank you.