

**PARTNERS IN DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION
– LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY
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(English translation)

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Means to accountability

Citizens have the essential right in democratic countries to know the results of the use of money invested in public policies. This principle was enounced during the French Revolution in 1789: article 10 of the “Déclaration des droits de l’homme et du citoyen” was thus written in August 1789: “Every public agent is accountable for his administration to the society”.

I would like today to present to you the way France has organised itself in order to fulfil this task and describe its means to accountability. It is an example of the action of a DAC country. We are not the only one. May I catch your attention on the following point : the way each State organise its means to accountability is of course its own responsibility and reflects before all its constitutional organisation and history.

I would like first to remind you shortly how Official Development Aid is organised in France. Two Ministries and one Agency are involved: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, Finances and Industry, hosting this Workshop, and the Agence Française de Développement (AFD), placed under the responsibility of those two Ministries.

The French Official Development Aid amounted to 4.631 billions € in 2001 which represents 0.32 % of GDP. Our objective, clearly set by the French President, is to reach 0.5% in 2007, in order to attain the aim of 0.7 % of the GDP within ten years.

How is ODA split up? The Ministry of Economy, Finances and Industry spends 43.6 %, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 23.6 % and AFD 1 %.

I The institutional framework of the 5th Republic : first means to accountability

I would like to mention this topic which may seem far away from evaluation but is indeed very important and concerns the relationship between the Government and the Parliament.

1/ The Constitution of 1958. The Government is responsible in front of the Parliament (it is classical). Its responsibility can be question by the elected people’s representatives. Several articles describe the way the Government’s responsibility can be engaged.

2/ The budget questionnaire. Ministries begin a heavy work of report each year, during summer before the budgetary debate which traditionally takes place in autumn: every department has to answer precisely the budget questionnaire describing the way the Government has spent expected charges.

3/The written or oral questions. Furthermore members of the National Assembly and of the Senate ask written or oral questions to the Government members. Ministers are also regularly auditioned by the competent commissions of the National Assembly and of the Senate.

II The development of evaluation of public policies in France : second means of accountability

1/ Public policies evaluation started in the mid-eighties. Evaluation has been officialized by a decree issued in 1990. It declares the will to develop existing initiatives and generalise evaluation inside the administration.

2/ What are the objectives of evaluation ? One of them is to improve the effectiveness and productivity of public action. Moreover evaluation is, according to texts, a real political requirement, for it represents a way to give an account to citizens for public action. It thus contributes to strengthening democracy. During the institutional reorganisation of French Co-operation in 1998, evaluation was at the heart of the reform, as one of its major motor.

3/ A window open to civil society. The participation of civil society members to evaluation steering committees enables an opening to the people. Last December in view of the present workshop, concerned Ministries organised a seminary which gave an opportunity to fruitful exchanges on development aid evaluation.

III What is the public aid evaluation situation in France today?

I will present each organisation separately.

1/ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has its own Service of Strategy, Means and Evaluation. One of its objectives is among others to conduct an evaluation program, decided by the Head of Department whom it is accountable to. Evaluations are public, except for some Country Evaluation Reports kept confidential. We do not want to create difficulties in bilateral relation with those concerned countries. In some cases however Country Evaluations involve the partner country along the whole evaluation process and the report is being made public. Our main actual difficulty is the diffusion of reports which is not large enough.

2/ An Evaluation Unit was created in 1987 inside **the Ministry of Economy, finances and Industry**. It achieves evaluation of all projects conducted in emerging countries, financed by the Ministry and including ODA; other evaluations have been more recently achieved such as the evaluation of French contributions to multilateral organisation. These evaluations are made by independent private consultants or State Corpses such as the Inspection générale des finances or the Conseil général des mines. Evaluations Reports are distributed inside the French Administration and, partly, to partner country governments. Efforts are still needed to ensure a larger distribution of evaluation results to the public.

3/ The Agence française de développement, which was just deeply reorganised, has also its own Evaluation Department whose task is to evaluate projects conducted by the Agency. It realises also sector evaluation and achieves thematic and sector synthesis.

The France Peer Review conducted in March 2000 recommended our country to be doted with a unified Aid Evaluation structure. We did not succeed to do so. But the three structures try to work in co-ordination , complementarity and coherence; it begins with mutual information, but also crossed participation to evaluation conducted by each structure. They have decided to stress upon evaluation of policies and strategy in the coming years.

Conclusion : I have presented to you the way France have organised Aid Development Evaluation. Other countries are organised according different ways. Discussion may enlighten it. I do not pretend to speak in the name of all, however I have the strong feeling that the common worry of all OECD governments is to be accountable of the way ODA is spent in order to improve the effectiveness and impact of official aid and also the democratic control upon it.