

Lessons Learned from World Bank Experiences in Joint Evaluation¹

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Abstract: This note explores recent experience of the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department with joint evaluations. It reviews the experience, costs, and benefits of joint evaluations and concludes with a set of lessons learned.

1. Introduction

Over the past several years, donors, recipients, and the general development community have had a growing interest in joint evaluations of development experience for many reasons. For example, a recurrent complaint voiced by developing country governments is that donors do not coordinate their evaluations—leading aid recipient governments to devote time and resources to deal with many evaluation missions that follow different procedures. They are "bombarded" by donors' evaluation missions, in the same way as some recipient countries experience an "aid bombardment".² This has led evaluation units of development agencies, including the World Bank's OED, to try to carry out joint evaluation with other donors in order to reduce the costs of evaluation to aid recipients.

Furthermore, donors have increasingly adopted joint instruments to deliver aid or endorsed the same objectives for aid programs. "Sector wide approaches" (SWAPs) and partnerships for global programs can be appropriately evaluated jointly by the participants, and this has provided an additional incentive for joint evaluation work. The broad adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) also facilitates joint analysis and evaluation work because many donors have an interest in measuring and monitoring the same indicators.

A third reason for joint evaluations, which to some extent emerged as an unintended effect, is the evaluation capacity development that results from doing joint evaluations ("learning by doing").³ Joint evaluations can thereby promote the harmonization of evaluation methods and alignment of recommendations.

Despite the importance given by donors to joint evaluations, their actual number has been rather limited. This note explores recent experience of the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department with joint evaluations to try to cast light on the

¹ Paper prepared for the Development Assistance Committee Working Party on Aid Evaluation workshop "Partners in Development Evaluation: Learning and Accountability", Paris, March 25-26, 2003.

² For a discussion of the "aid-bombardment syndrome" see Operations Evaluation Department: "The Drive to Partnership: Aid Coordination and the World Bank" (Washington D.C., OED, 2001), p.15.

³ The useful publication "Effective Practices in Conducting a Multi-Donor Evaluation" (Paris: OECD/DAC, 2000) written by Annette Binnendijk and which was reviewed by the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation for the DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation, considers a more comprehensive set of reasons for joint evaluations and also offers guidance on how to plan and conduct joint evaluations.

modest progress in this area. It reviews the experience, costs, and benefits of joint evaluations and concludes with a set of lessons learned.⁴

2. Some Recent OED Joint Evaluations

Since 1999 OED has completed or has underway joint evaluations of different types including process evaluations and evaluations at the project, sector, country, and global level. These have involved from one to ten other partners who have normally been bilateral or multilateral donors, although a few joint evaluations have involved the recipient country, non-governmental organizations, or other institutions.

Joint project evaluations. An education project in Jordan, "Education VII", included grants from the European Union, DfID, Japan, USAID and UNDP. Financing for school construction and hardware was provided by the World Bank and by Japan's Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund (OECF), which is now part of Japan's Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). JBIC conducted its performance assessment jointly with OED. The two units focused their evaluations on the parts of the project most closely linked to their funding. JBIC focused on school utilization, observing that costly new facilities were underused. OED focused on technical assistance (noting its deficiencies), on cost and financing data, and on the government's failure to invest in the computer technology, software, and staff training needed to establish a computerized management information system. JBIC's and OED's evaluation missions were in the field at the same time, coordinated mission meetings, and shared their findings and data analysis. Each evaluation department prepared its own internal reports, but the OED *Precis* for the project evaluation summarized the results of the evaluation and included findings from both reports.⁵

Joint country assistance evaluations. OED and the African Development Bank recently completed joint work on a country assistance evaluation for Lesotho that covered Lesotho's economic and social development in the 1990s. The development challenges it faces were assessed jointly, and the roles of each institution over the decade were evaluated in parallel. The table of contents of the resulting joint report⁶ illustrates how the joint evaluation was carried out. The first chapter (on Lesotho's political, economic and social development) and the second chapter (on development challenges and constraints) were prepared by WB's OED. These chapters could have been prepared by a local or regional institution or consultant whose cost was shared by the evaluation units. Chapters 3 and 4, contributed by WB's OED, describe and assess the World Bank's assistance. Chapters 5 and 6 do the same for the African Development Bank and were prepared by the ADB's OED. Chapter 7 discusses the attribution of performance of development partners, and was prepared by the WB's OED in consultation with the

⁴ This note is restricted to joint donor evaluations, without considering other important types of collaboration such as donor-NGO collaboration and donor-recipient country.

⁵ See

[http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/oed/OEDDocLib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/CA2A4E7AB293853C852568A8004FC84B/\\$file/193precis.pdf](http://Inweb18.worldbank.org/oed/OEDDocLib.nsf/DocUNIDViewForJavaSearch/CA2A4E7AB293853C852568A8004FC84B/$file/193precis.pdf) - "Partnership for Education in Jordan", Précis No. 193, Winter 2000

⁶ See "Lesotho: Development in a Challenging Environment" (Abidjan, Washington D.C., The 2002)

ADB's OED. The last chapter, on conclusions and recommendations, was jointly prepared.

Although the evaluation focus and methodologies differed between the two agencies, and the evaluation ratings of the two institutions were not always comparable, the joint evaluation made common recommendations for future World Bank and African Development Bank assistance. Both institutions should continue to focus on reducing poverty and inequality by enhancing the quality of education and human capital development, by combating HIV/AIDS, by strengthening rural institutions, and by enhancing the enabling environment for private sector development. Particular attention should be given to the poor, mountainous regions. The partnership contributed to the country evaluation capacity of the African Development Bank and led to further collaboration with OED. The African Development Bank is currently leading a joint evaluation with OED of the Rwanda country program.

OED is currently carrying out a country assistance evaluation for Jordan jointly with another multilateral partner, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB). The evaluation builds on a joint mission and joint analyses. Because this is the first country level evaluation that the IsDB has done, the WB's OED team leader has provided advice to the IsDB and helped the institution to develop its evaluation capacity. This delayed the completion of the WB evaluation beyond planned deadlines.⁷ A lesson that can be drawn for the future is that in cases where one of the partners is developing experience and expertise for the evaluation, upfront evaluation capacity development (ECD) should be planned and supported by specific training. This would facilitate the joint evaluation work, during which there could still be ECD through learning by doing, without imposing significant delays in the production of the evaluation. Delays that affect the timeliness of an evaluation can reduce its value.

Joint sector evaluations. OED participated in the multi-donor evaluation of the Ghana Road Sector Review that was completed in 2000. This evaluation focused on a single sector in one country. It was a joint exercise with the Government of Ghana, under the leadership of Danida and in partnership with DFID, EU, Africa Development Bank, Japan, Netherlands, and Germany. All the partners shared the cost of the evaluation, and most (including OED) participated in an oversight steering committee chaired by the government. The Review was carried out by consultants managed by Danida and used Danida's evaluation method. The Review concentrated on lessons learned in the roads sub-sector in Ghana between 1996 and 2000, the five-year period following the Government's 1996 policy letter stating what measures it would pursue to support implementation of its roads sub-sector strategy during the five-year period. The study had three objectives: (i) assess the achievements of the sub-sector objectives with a focus on sustainability; (ii) identify key issues, constraints, problems, strengths, weaknesses, and successes; (iii) formulate lessons learned in order to improve future interventions in the sub-sector. A Draft Evaluation Report was issued for comment in August 2000 and was discussed with Ghanaian stakeholders and donors in Accra on September 26-28, 2000. The joint Final Report was issued in December 2000.

⁷ Despite the fact that the CAE for Jordan was not available before the World Bank's Board discussion of the CAS, the latter benefited significantly from the availability of the draft CAE report.

A follow-up study of the joint evaluation of Ghana's road sub-sector program was carried out in 2002 to review the application of the recommendations of the joint evaluation and to identify any constraints preventing the adoption of the recommendations. During the preparation of this study positive feedback on the joint evaluation was received from the Government of Ghana and especially from the donors involved in it. One limitation of this joint evaluation for OED is that it did not contain evaluative ratings. This means that the evaluation cannot be incorporated into OED's rating database and, therefore, cannot be used as one of the inputs for its aggregate measures. The cost for OED of its participation in this evaluation was similar to the average cost of its own project evaluations which include ratings. The benefit to OED of the evaluation is that it covered the performance of all eight participating donors.

The Netherlands is taking the lead in another multi-donor evaluation that addresses a single sector but includes several countries. The focus is on primary education in five countries, and the evaluation includes eight bilateral donors and the World Bank. As in Ghana, the sponsors have constituted a steering group to oversee a consultant who is carrying out the evaluation. The country case studies are now underway, and a synthesis report will be produced in March, 2003.

Joint process evaluations. The evaluation of the "Comprehensive Development Framework" (CDF) is an example of a joint process evaluation which is being conducted according to CDF principles. Due to be completed in the spring of 2003, it is jointly supported by ten donor institutions. Its governance structure is complex because it includes a wide range of participants. Decisions are made by a Management Group including two representatives of CDF countries, one representative from a bilateral evaluation unit, and two representatives from the World Bank. The Management Group is advised by a Steering Committee with 25 members representing bilateral donors, IFIs, non-governmental organizations, and research institutes. The evaluation builds on six country case studies, four thematic reviews, and an exploratory integrative econometric analysis. The relatively complex governance framework for this evaluation has increased the elapsed time of the evaluation (because of the need to get comments from all stakeholders) much more than it has increased the overall cost.

OED is also conducting an evaluation of global programs, an evaluative area which combines elements of process and sector evaluations. Such programs have great potential for joint evaluations because they often involve partnerships among several development agencies as well as private foundations. It is difficult to evaluate the contribution of one partner to a global program without also evaluating the performance of the overall program.

3. Costs and Benefits of Joint Evaluation

Although it would be worthwhile to collect and/or systematize data to quantify the costs and benefits of joint evaluations, little has been done in this area. Tracer studies may be needed to capture the benefits appropriately. While not a systematic study, OED's experience with a relatively small number of joint evaluations suggests as a working hypothesis three costs and three benefits that are likely to be associated with joint evaluations. Of course, as donors learn by doing this type of evaluation, the costs may fall and the benefits increase.

Hypotheses related to costs:

i) Joint evaluations are likely to reduce recipient country costs. Most joint evaluations specify that one of their principle objectives is to reduce evaluation costs to recipient countries. Costs are mainly reduced because the number of country missions in a joint evaluation is less than the number of such missions if each donor carried out their own evaluation. Other cost savings are related to a reduction in data collection, surveys, interviews, and draft reports to be reviewed. OED's experience indicates that its joint evaluations have reduced the cost of evaluations to recipient countries.

ii) Joint evaluations neither increase nor reduce financial costs for donors. OED's experience with joint evaluations is that its share of evaluation financial costs for joint evaluations differs little from what its costs would have been for a stand-alone evaluation of the World Bank components of the joint activity. The financial costs of joint evaluations for donors may decline as they gain more experience with joint evaluations.

iii) Joint evaluations take more elapsed time than stand-alone evaluations. Experience indicates that the elapsed time for joint evaluations is often greater than for stand-alone evaluations. This is due to the greater time taken for comment and review of documents by joint evaluation stakeholders.

Hypotheses related to benefits:

i) Joint evaluations address donor coordination and alignment. The key benefit of joint evaluations is that they address both the programs of individual donors and the interaction among the programs. Stand-alone evaluations normally only address own-agency programs because evaluation units have no mandate to evaluate the operations of other agencies.

ii) Joint evaluations strengthen evaluation capacity and harmonization. Joint evaluations promote discussions of evaluation methods and encourage (but do not necessarily require) the use of common evaluation standards. When evaluation capacity development is part of the joint evaluation, it should be recognized as a separate objective and planned for in terms of both the time and financial cost of the evaluation. Evaluation units that mainly use consultants for evaluation may need to develop special approaches that will enable them to capture some of the capacity development benefits and let them all accrue to the consultants.

iii) Joint evaluation recommendations have more weight. The recommendations of joint evaluations need to be taken more seriously by both donors and recipients than those of stand-alone evaluations because they reflect the views of all joint evaluation participants. Special arrangements may have to be made to monitor the implementation of the recommendations from joint evaluations.

4. Lessons Learned

Drawing on OED's experience, it is possible to draw the following lessons for future joint evaluation activities:

1. Although there are several potential benefits from joint evaluations, it is useful to focus on the reduction of the costs of evaluation borne by recipients as its main purpose. This provides a clear rationale for pursuing joint evaluations.

2. Focusing more on joint processes rather than on joint products while planning and implementing joint evaluation activities can facilitate the identification of opportunities for fruitful cooperation among donors. Producing joint products in the form of single reports may in some cases be problematic or infeasible due to different core requirements of different donors.

3. More work needs to be done to identify opportunities in joint evaluations to achieve reductions in donor evaluation costs. Adopting a value chain perspective can be a useful way to decompose the process of producing evaluation into stages in which there could be cost sharing (and/or division of labor) by donors.

4. In order to reduce the costs of the coordination needed among the many participants and stakeholders for joint evaluation activities, greater use can be made of video conferencing and teleconferencing. These technologies work very well for groups that have established a working relationship.

5. Timely communication among donors of their evaluation plans and work program schedules, by countries and sectors or themes, is crucial for the promotion of joint evaluations while keeping transaction costs among donors low.

6. When joint evaluations involve donors with very unequal experience and capacity building is an objective, it is sensible to carry out some capacity building activity before starting the joint evaluation. Of course, the joint evaluation work itself also strengthens evaluation capacity through "learning by doing".

7. Joint evaluations should include specific plans to address cross donor coordination and alignment issues—topics that are a major benefit in joint evaluations.

8. When planning joint evaluations, it is important to account for the implications of different donors' practices (for example, staff/consultants ratio, the use or non- use of

ratings) in estimating the potential costs and benefits (e.g., the value of training for staff or consultants, limitations of a report without ratings for a donor that uses ratings).

9. Harmonization of evaluation methods, through the development and sharing of good practice standards, procedures, and an evaluation glossary⁸, facilitates joint evaluation activities and, in turn, can be enhanced by it (given the possibility that differences in approaches can be reduced through a process of learning from each other)

10. Given that joint evaluations are a form of evaluation partnership, lessons on critical success factors for partnerships are relevant for joint evaluation. Some of these lessons are that: goals must be adequately defined and fully owned by the partners; partnership must focus on the ultimate objective (e.g., reducing evaluation transaction costs for the recipients); differentiated roles minimize confusion and overlap; capacity development must be built into the partnership to ensure that the weaker members can participate fully and exercise influence and that partners learn from each other and should adjust to each other's interests.⁹

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⁸ See the "Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management" (Paris: OECD/ DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation, 2002)

⁹ for additional lessons on critical success factors for partnerships, see the forthcoming proceedings of OED's IVth. Evaluation and Development conference which focused on partnerships.