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Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices

EVALUATION FOLLOW-UP TO THE PARIS DECLARATION

Note from the Evaluation Network Secretariat

To be held on 5-7 July

This note is submitted for discussion at the WP-EFF Partner Country Caucus on 5 July (am) and at the 8th Meeting of the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness on 5 July (pm) - 7 July (am)

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EVALUATION FOLLOW-UP TO THE PARIS DECLARATION

Note from the Evaluation Network Secretariat

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION AT THE WP-EFF MEETING (5-7 JULY 2006)

AND AT ITS PARTNER COUNTRY CAUCUS (5 JULY 2006)

Introduction

1. Alongside its strong focus on monitoring, the Paris Declaration also highlights the importance of exploring an independent cross-country evaluation process. It states that this process should provide a more comprehensive understanding of how increased aid effectiveness contributes to meeting development objectives and that it should be applied without imposing additional burdens on partners.

2. Evaluation is the “systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results”. It is distinct from but closely linked with monitoring which is defined as, “a continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds”.¹ Monitoring data and information is one source of input to independent evaluation processes.

The Process so far

3. Following the adoption of the Paris Declaration in March 2005, the DAC Evaluation Network began preliminary discussions on how it might contribute to an aid effectiveness evaluation process and on its comparative advantage in so doing (evaluation expertise and independence).² A number of members indicated support for a proposal to design a joint evaluation, with partner country participation and in collaboration with the WP-EFF to ensure complementarity with the monitoring.

4. In September 2005, the Secretariat outlined initial preliminary thinking to the Joint Venture on Monitoring the Paris Declaration (JV-M) to build collaboration from the start of the process. The JV-M welcomed follow-up in this area and encouraged the Evaluation Network to move forward and to ensure a cohesive cross-country process with findings delivered as early as possible and evaluated as far down the results chain as possible, but with minimum extra burdens for partner countries. In October 2005, the Evaluation Network Bureau presented initial thinking at the seventh meeting of the WP-EFF. It was agreed to commission an approach paper elaborating options for developing an evaluation process and the development of the Options Paper was reflected in the draft WP-EFF Work Plan.

5. In November 2005, the Evaluation Network agreed the terms of reference for the Options Paper, which would review the complexity of the evaluation task (given the number of participating countries and agencies and the available timescale for evaluation) and detail the options for the design, management,

¹ DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management (2002)

² The Evaluation Network is a subsidiary body of the DAC. Its purpose is to contribute to improved development effectiveness by supporting robust, informed and independent evaluation. The Network encourages harmonisation and standardisation and supports joint evaluations.

implementation and synthesis of a meaningful evaluation process. The Options Paper would also draw on an accompanying *Review of Literature* (see: www.oecd.org/dac/evaluationnetwork).

6. Following a competitive bidding process, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI, UK) was commissioned as consultants. All members of the JV-M and of the Evaluation Network and a number of representatives of civil society and the WP-EFF were invited to input to the Options Paper through interviews with ODI. The draft Options Paper was presented to the JV-M on 23-24 March 2006 and written comments and inputs invited.

7. The Options Paper (Room Document 2) gives a qualified but positive assessment of the evaluability of the Paris Declaration commitments, provides an indicative outline for a possible evaluation framework, details the various tradeoffs to be considered in designing the process, and proposes a four-step approach:

- i. ***The development of a common evaluation framework*** articulating the logic of the Paris commitments, including the implied linkages between aid effectiveness and development effectiveness.
- ii. A number of ***country-led country evaluation initiatives*** building directly on the joint monitoring activities being undertaken and other knowledge already available.
- iii. A set of ***donor case studies***, which would look at the way in which the Paris Declaration is finding expression across a sample of donor organisations.
- iv. ***A medium to long term programme of analytical work*** designed to draw together and critically evaluate findings from a variety of sources with a bearing upon the common framework. This work would need to be coordinated with the work of the JV-M and the Medium Term Monitoring Plan, to avoid any risk of duplication and to ensure value added.

8. The Evaluation Network discussed the draft paper at its meeting on 30-31 March 2006. The majority of members supported taking forward the proposed joint evaluation process. Some members, however, expressed caution that the Network may be proposing to start work on evaluation too early in the overall Paris Declaration process. Others indicated the importance of undertaking timely evaluative work to feed practical lesson learning into the 2008 HLF. Evaluation Network members agreed to consult further with the WP-EFF and especially to seek a steer from the partner country members on three key questions.

ISSUES FOR DISCUSSION

A- What is the optimal timing for an evaluation process?

9. Summative evaluations will only be feasible once donors and partners have worked to implement the Paris Declaration commitments for some time and once sufficient monitoring data is available to feed into the evaluation process. However, delaying the start of the evaluation process until after 2008 or 2010 would likely make evaluation less relevant and mean that it would not be possible to feed practical learning into aid effectiveness policy debates at the 2008 HLF which will be critical for future commitments and implementation. The Options Paper therefore proposes a combination of initial formative evaluations focussed on lesson learning with a synthesis report to feed into the HLF main report, and more summative evaluations looking back to assess results and impacts thereafter. To develop a synthesis of formative evaluations in advance of the HLF, it will be necessary to start work immediately to develop the framework so that evaluations can be undertaken and synthesised in 2007-08.

10. If this approach is adopted, expectations of what can be delivered in advance of the HLF will need to be managed to ensure there is no expectation that end impacts of the Paris Declaration process can be evaluated within this timeframe. The initial stage would focus on lesson learning and issues such as: What have we learned so far from experiences in different country contexts? Under what conditions and why are envisaged benefits realised or not realised? The focus would be on the twin questions are we doing things right and are we doing the right things. The specific evaluation questions and issues would be identified through the consultative process of developing the evaluation framework (see below).

B- Are partner countries willing to join a task team to coordinate an evaluation process?

11. In 2006, the Evaluation Network is publishing *DAC Guidance for Managing Joint Evaluations*. This would be the key reference document for managing the evaluation process. Building on lessons from the recent *Joint Evaluation of General Budget Support*, undertaken under the auspices of the Evaluation Network, it is widely acknowledged by Network members that a Paris Declaration evaluation process should be more decentralised, in the interests of efficiency, but with sufficiently strong coordination to ensure an effective “cross-country evaluation process” as stipulated in the Paris Declaration. It is envisaged that a small task team would be responsible for developing an overall evaluation framework that ensures comparability of findings from different country evaluations, for coordinating and managing the joint evaluation process, and for effective synthesis of findings and recommendations.

12. A number of members of the Evaluation Network are interested in joining a task team, including: Ireland, Spain, France, Japan, Sweden, Denmark, the UK, UNDP (also representing the UN Evaluation Group) and the World Bank (also representing the Evaluation Coordination Group of the multilateral development banks). Denmark has indicated interest in coordinating or chairing a joint process. Some members have already indicated willingness to contribute financing. Partner country members of the WP-EFF are invited to co-chair and join the task team. Where possible, meetings would be organised back-to-back with meetings of the WP-EFF or JV-M to minimise travel and to facilitate a close relationship with (and ensure no duplication with) the evolving Medium Term Monitoring Plan.

13. The Options Paper proposes that the first stage of the work should be developing an evaluation framework through 2 or 3 regional workshops. These workshops would identify the specific questions and issues to be addressed in the evaluation framework. If meaningful evaluative analysis is to be available by late 2008, the Evaluation Network and partners will need to commence work soonest on developing an evaluation framework through workshops, to the maximum extent possible integrated into regional workshops already planned. South Africa has expressed willingness to give serious consideration to incorporate evaluation into the upcoming Regional Workshop in September 2006 and other partner countries are invited to volunteer to host a workshop.

C- Are both donors and partners willing to volunteer for evaluation studies?

14. The Options Paper stresses that an evaluation process should develop a balanced picture by evaluating aid effectiveness at both the country-level and within individual donor agencies. Issues for evaluation within individual donor agencies are likely to build on DAC Peer Reviews and to include relationships and links between headquarters and country offices and between bilaterals and multilaterals. The Options Paper suggests that partners and donors should be self-selected, to meet the Paris Declaration stipulation that extra burdens should not be imposed on partners. Members of the WP-EFF are invited to volunteer before the end of 2006 for lesson learning evaluations and donors to indicate willingness to support such efforts.