

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR EVALUATION ACTIVITIES IN NORWEGIAN AID ADMINISTRATION

**Approved by the Secretary General, 29 May 2006.**

The instructions to the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad) state that one of the Agency's primary tasks is to "initiate and perform independent evaluations of development cooperation".

This mandate is to be fulfilled by Norad's Evaluation Department and covers all activities linked to the administration of ODA-reportable expenditure in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' budget.

### **1. OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES**

#### **1.1. Objectives**

The purpose of the evaluation activities is to document the extent to which the Ministry's, the embassies' and Norad's efforts to realise the objectives laid down for Norwegian development policy are effective, relevant and achieve the intended outcomes.

The objectives of the evaluation activities will be to:

- evaluate goal achievement and results relative to adopted plans;
- evaluate whether the consumption of resources is commensurate with the results achieved;
- systematise experiences in order to quality-assure and improve future activities through effective learning processes, and
- provide information to funding authorities and the general public

The evaluation activities shall contribute in part to learning and gathering experience from Norwegian participation in international development cooperation, and in part to keeping the actors in Norwegian development policy accountable for its administration. Individual evaluations may give different emphasis to these two objectives.

#### **1.2. Principles**

The activities shall build on the DAC guidelines for evaluation and adhere to the following principles:

Evaluations shall be performed by external specialist environments that are neutral and independent of those responsible for planning and implementing the initiatives in question.

Evaluations shall produce operational recommendations for the future development of the initiatives or of similar initiatives. The recommendations shall be based on an analysis of factors that influence goal achievement and the results of the initiatives.

## **2. SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION**

### **2.1 Background**

Under the Regulations for Financial Management in Government, all activities must ensure that evaluations are performed to acquire information about whether aid schemes are effective in relation to resource consumption, organisation and specified objectives. The concept of 'evaluation' and the related concept of 'review' are defined in Appendix I. These correspond to the international standards for the evaluation of development initiatives; see the DAC guidelines.

### **2.2 The modalities of evaluation activities**

Evaluation activities comprise all types of development cooperation, regardless of cooperation partner or category of development cooperation. Evaluation activities shall reflect ongoing changes in international development cooperation. It is especially important to take account of the fact that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to identify the results of specifically Norwegian development aid, as development cooperation is integrated into national systems and its implementation is performed by the developing country's own institutions.

Prioritisation of initiatives must be based on the requirements concerning importance, nature and risk as ensues from the Regulations for Financial Management in Government and as stipulated in rolling annual programmes.

In line with the DAC's guidelines for coordination and harmonisation, efforts must be made to participate in joint evaluations with international donors and/or the recipient country's authorities. Joint evaluations will normally be preferred to individual evaluations, since they provide a more relevant picture, greater credibility and wider ownership of the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations. In choosing an evaluation modality, account also has to be taken of the workload for the developing country or the organisation being evaluated.

### **2.3. Annual plan, budget and rolling three-year programme.**

The Evaluation Department may take the initiative for, and decision on, performing evaluations. In consultation with relevant departments in the Ministry, embassies and Norad, the Evaluation Department annually prepares a rolling plan, which is submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs via the Director of Norad.

Both the Ministry and the Director of Norad may decide that other evaluations are to be performed in addition to those set out in the plan.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

#### **3.1. Design of mandates**

The Evaluation Department prepares final mandates following consultation with affected parties. Affected parties include the department, agency or embassy responsible for the initiative or the activity to be evaluated, but may also include stakeholders that the initiative is intended to benefit. The cooperating country's authorities or the international organisation concerned should also be invited to express their views. As far as international joint evaluations are concerned, the mandate will be designed in cooperation with international partners.

#### **3.2. Choice of consultant, signing of contract**

The Evaluation Department selects a consultant and signs a contract in compliance with the country's laws and provisions concerning public-sector procurements. For joint evaluations, one of the international cooperation partners can select a consultant, sign a contract and coordinate cooperation with them. In that case, Norad and the Evaluation Department will sign a contract with the cooperation partner. The Evaluation Department also has the authority to sign a contract where the cooperation partner is a governmental bilateral or multilateral organisation. It is assumed that Norad's legal affairs section will be consulted.

#### **3.3. Performance of the evaluations**

In order to perform the evaluations, the consultant will need transparent and full access to written and verbal sources in the Ministry/Norad/the embassies. The responsible department in the Ministry or Norad shall facilitate the consultant's work in consultation with the archives and the Evaluation Department. As a matter of principle, the consultant shall have access to all written material that is relevant to the evaluation.

The Evaluation Department is responsible for coordinating evaluation activities and for performing individual evaluations with other bilateral and multilateral actors. The Evaluation Department may participate as an observer in the performance of the evaluation, as long as this does not influence the principle of neutrality and independence. In order to promote knowledge exchange and shared methodologies, the Evaluation Department may include Norad's specialist departments in the performance of the evaluation, as long as the principles of legal capacity and independence are maintained. This can be done by establishing reference groups that include the specialist departments concerned.

### **3.4. Procedures for comments and follow-up**

#### *3.4.1 Invitation to comment and advance notification.*

The consultant supplies a draft report by the agreed deadline to the Evaluation Department, which is responsible for all communication with the consultant concerning review of the evaluation report, where appropriate via the coordinating international cooperation partner.

The Department invites comments on factual matters, technical evaluations, conclusions and recommendations from affected departments in the Ministry, embassy, Norad and other affected parties. Comments on facts are intended to rectify any errors and misunderstandings relating to the mandate. Technical evaluations relate to the content, including evaluations and recommendations in the draft. The factual comments and technical evaluations are forwarded to the consultant for revision of the draft and the elaboration of the final report. The technical evaluations are also included in the Evaluation Department's basis for assessment of the final report. The agency that is the subject of the evaluation has the right to make objections to interpretations and conclusions reflected in the report, for example in an appendix.

Once the consultant's final report has been approved by the Evaluation Department, it is sent straight to the responsible department in the Ministry or Norad and other directly involved parties for information purposes. In the case of evaluations that are considered to be of particular public interest, a brief summary of the conclusion of the evaluation report is sent to the press officer/head of communications/political secretariat/unit concerned in the Ministry.

#### *3.4.2 Sending of memo with suggestions for follow-up.*

Based on the final report and substantial comments received, the Evaluation Department prepares a *memorandum with suggested points to be followed up* in Norwegian development aid policy. This memo will be sent via the Director of Norad to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the attention of the Secretary General.

The memo will summarise the experiences from performance of the evaluation, the content and recommendations of the report, and the views expressed by the affected parties. The memo will particularly highlight any results of the evaluation that indicate the need for strategic changes to Norwegian development aid policy. The Director of Norad may append his or her own comments to the memo when it is sent to the Ministry.

In terms of international joint evaluations, emphasis will be given to reflecting the attitude to the evaluation results among foreign cooperation partners, as expressed in the final phase of each evaluation. The memo shall conclude with recommendations concerning items that should be followed up.

The Evaluation Department's memo will form part of the documentation in further internal case processing in the Ministry linked to the evaluation.

### *3.4.3 The Ministry's follow-up*

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as represented by the Secretary General, will decide, based on the response from the department, agency or embassy responsible for the initiative or activity being evaluated, what issues need to be followed up, within what timeframes, and by whom. This follow-up plan will be announced within six weeks to the parties concerned, the Evaluation Department and the Director of Norad. The decision will be published as required under the Freedom of Information Act.

Political leaders will be continuously kept informed about evaluation activities, and the findings and recommendations that emerge from it, and follow-up items will be submitted for political clearance when required.

### **3.5. Internal follow-up and reporting of feedback**

The unit responsible will, no later than one year thereafter, report to the Secretary General, or in the case of Norad, to the Director of Norad, with a copy to the Evaluation Department as to what measures have been implemented in order to follow up the decisions ensuing from the evaluation.

### **3.6 Learning and performance follow-up (quality assurance)**

One key objective of the evaluation activities is that systematically acquired experiences are used in future policy-making and form the basis for operational activities. The responsible unit shall ensure that decisions concerning follow-up of an evaluation are adhered to; see item 3.5.

### **3.7 Annual report on evaluation activities**

The Evaluation Department prepares an annual report that summarises the results of the year's evaluations in the light of the objectives of the evaluation activities; see item 1.1. This report is sent via the Director of Norad to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

## **4. PUBLICATION AND EXTERNAL INFORMATION**

### **4.1 Publication of evaluation reports**

In the period before the evaluation report is made publicly available in printed form, questions about its contents are treated in accordance with appropriate routines for the application of the Freedom of Information Act.

In connection with the printing and publication of the report, the Evaluation Department will prepare and send out a press release in collaboration with communications managers. The Evaluation Department is also responsible for preparing a brief summary of the report which is printed as part of a separate series. The reports are published on the internet.

### **4.2. Information submitted to the Norwegian Parliament**

Concomitantly with publication, the Ministry sends the evaluation report to the Parliament for information.

On the basis of the annual report on evaluation activities (see item 3.7), the Evaluation Department, in collaboration with affected departments, draws up a proposal for discussion of evaluation activities for the National Budget (Report no. 1 to the Storting). The discussion of the individual evaluations is given under the relevant chapters and items.

### **4.3. Submission to the Office of the Auditor General**

Concomitantly with publication, the Ministry sends the evaluation report to the Office of the Auditor General for information purposes.

## **APPENDIX to instructions for evaluation activities in Norwegian aid administration**

### **Definitions and general guidelines for evaluations**

#### **Definitions**

Evaluations are systematic and objective assessments of current or completed programmes or policy measures, their design, execution and outcomes, performed by independent experts.

Evaluations differ from systematic monitoring and reviews. Reviews are an integrated part of the monitoring system and are instruments for allowing partners and donors to assess whether the measure/programme is developing as planned. Reviews focus on operational aspects by comparing an initiative, its progress and results with what was planned.

#### **General guidelines**

The evaluation function in Norad is based on guidelines laid down in the Regulations for Financial Management in Government (2003) and in the Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991) of the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) and more recent quality standards.

With respect to evaluations, the **Regulations for Financial Management in Government** (12 December 2003) state:

*"All agencies shall ensure that evaluations are performed in order to obtain information about the effectiveness, goal achievements and results within the whole or parts of the agency's domain and activities. The evaluations shall elucidate the suitability of, for example, ownership, organisation and instruments, including funding schemes. The frequency and scope of the evaluations shall be determined on the basis of the nature, risk and importance of the activity."*

Concerning the evaluation of funding schemes, the Regulations for Financial Management state:

*"The Ministry and funding administrator shall ensure that evaluations are performed to acquire information about whether funding schemes are effective in relation to resource consumption, organisation and specified objectives."*

*The frequency and scope of evaluations shall be based on an assessment of the risk and importance of the individual funding scheme, including how extensive and significant the scheme is, the quality and scope of other reporting, and the extent to which it is possible to describe the annual results. Evaluations must be assessed in the context of the defined reporting requirements; see item 6.3.6 of the Regulations for Financial Management.*

*The resources used for evaluations must be reasonable in scope relative to the utility of the information produced.*

*At the close of each year, the Ministry shall send to the Office of the Auditor General a list of funding schemes that have been evaluated.”*

Important policies are also stipulated in DAC’s guidelines and standards.

**DAC’s main principles for evaluation are<sup>1</sup>:**

*Aid agencies should have an evaluation policy with clearly established guidelines and methods and with a clear definition of its role and responsibilities and its place in institutional aid structure.*

- *The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making, and the delivery and management of development assistance,*
- *The evaluation process must be as open as possible with the results made widely available,*
- *For evaluations to be useful, they must be used. Feedback to both policy-makers and operational staff is essential,*
- *Partnership with recipients and donor co-operation in aid evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of recipient institution-building and of aid co-ordination and may reduce administrative burdens on recipients.*
- *Aid evaluation and its requirements must be an integral part of aid planning from the start. Clear identification of the objectives which an aid activity is to achieve is an essential prerequisite for objective evaluation.*

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<sup>1</sup> **Principles for Evaluation of Development Assistance (1991)**