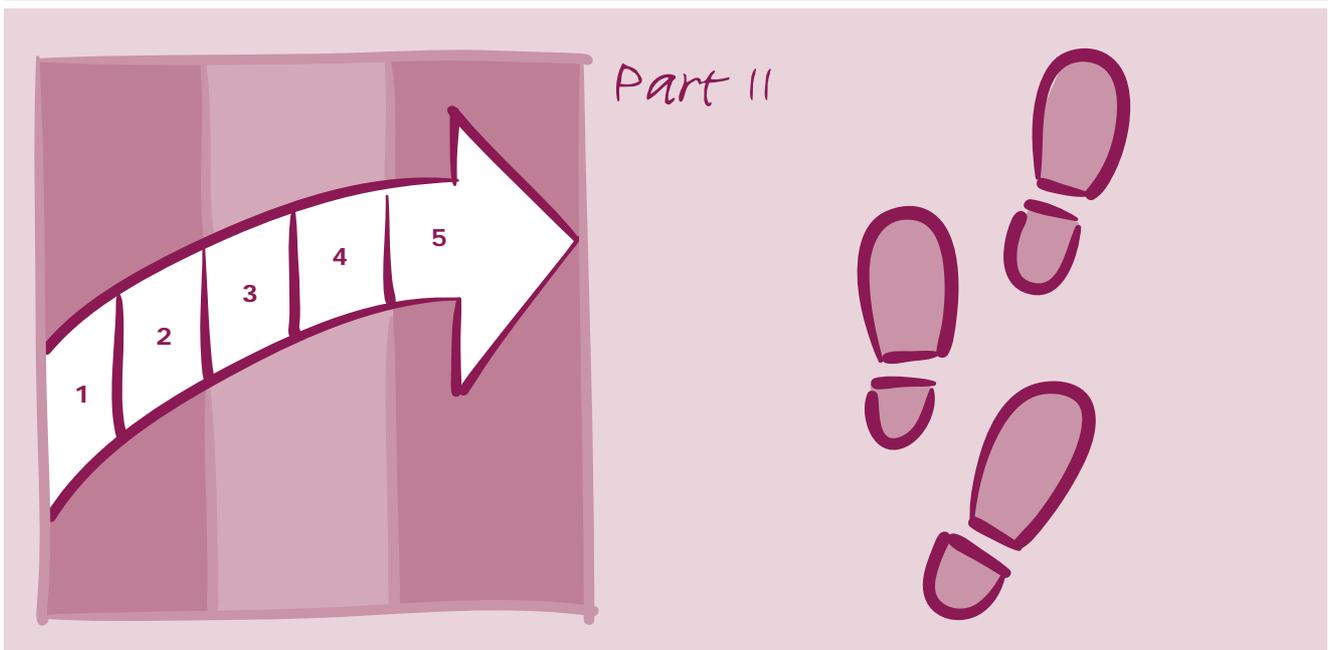
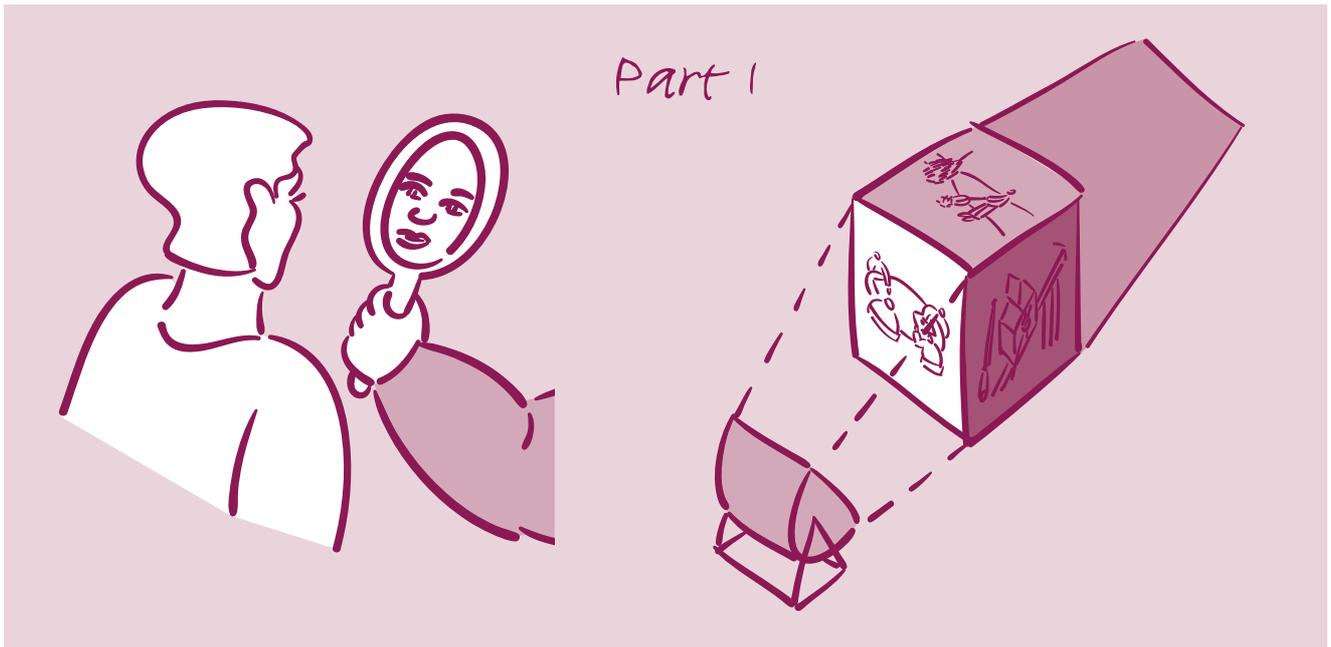


# External Evaluation

*Are we doing the right things?  
Are we doing things right?*



SWISS AGENCY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT  
AND COOPERATION  
SDC

WORKING INSTRUMENTS  
FOR PLANNING, EVALUATION,  
MONITORING AND TRANSFERENCE  
INTO ACTION (PEMT)  
JUNE 2000

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## List of PEMT working instruments

Getting to Know PEMT (1996/30 p.)

Monitoring – Keeping in Touch with Reality (1997/77 p.)

Key Questions and Indicators (1999/19 p.)

Cooperation Planning (1992 /65 p.)

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall... (Self-Evaluation) (1990/70 p.)

Manual on Self-Evaluation (1995/100 p.)

Sustainability of Development Projects (1990/30 p.)

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Participatory Rural Appraisal-PRA\*\* (1997/7 p.)

Integrating Environmental Issues in Planning, Evaluation and Monitoring –  
A Practical Tool for International Development Cooperation (published jointly  
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A Practical Tool for Combating Poverty (2000)

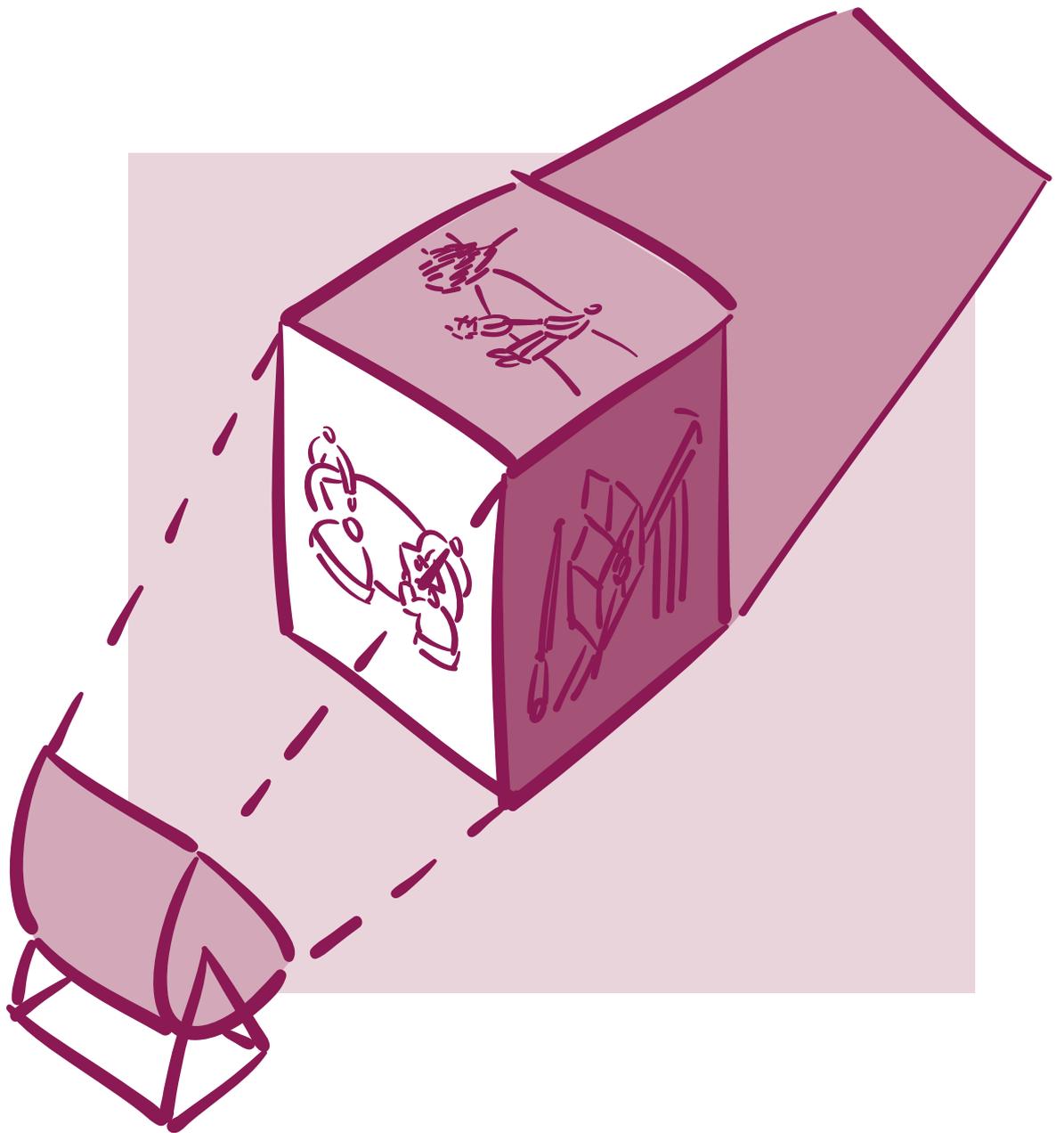
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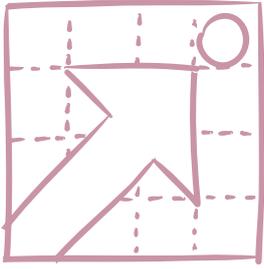
\*\* available only in English and Spanish

# PART I

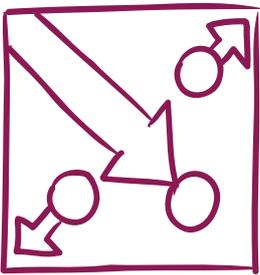
*Evaluation – To what End?*

*Foundations and principles of evaluation*

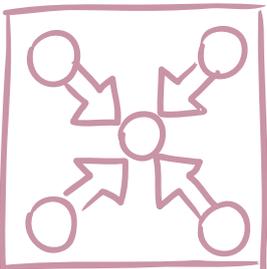




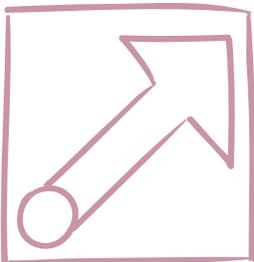
Planning



Evaluation



Monitoring



Transference into Action

# Why evaluation? Foundations and principles of evaluation

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## Introduction

A document designed as a working instrument is hardly a thriller crime novel. Nevertheless, we will have achieved our purpose only when you have read this manual, put it aside, and brought it out again prior to an evaluation. This is no easy task. Although the individual case studies and histories in external evaluations sometimes make fascinating reading, a document concerned with evaluation must also be concerned with explanations, methodology and background information.

Nevertheless, the aim of this publication is to provide all individuals responsible for international development programmes and projects with a **practical, immediately applicable and easy to understand tool**. Hence «External Evaluation – Are we doing the right things? Are we doing things right?» is a working instrument devised by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Transference into Action (PEMT) to replace the earlier manual entitled «External Evaluation of Development Projects», published in 1990.

The revision was prompted by various amendments to procedure and changes in the approach to external evaluations and primarily by the growing importance of **shared learning** during the evaluation process. While historical reporting and documentation on achievements and failures remains one of the key tasks in any evaluation, it is now necessary to justify an evaluation by achieving a future-focused learning effect. At the same time this has blurred the line separating self-evaluation and external evaluation, such that the two instruments can be effectively combined.

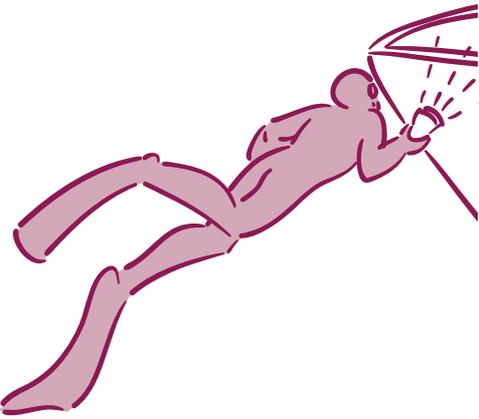
This present document is divided into two sections: **Part I** explains the terminology and principles of evaluation. Part II discusses each of the five stages of an external evaluation. Each chapter in **Part II** contains a) an explanatory introduction to the subject, b) an overview with helpful hints from experts in international development cooperation, and c) a SDC case study.

The document is primarily addressed to persons who commission or participate in evaluations and are responsible for implementing their results. While the actual conducting of an evaluation is addressed in Part II, the competence, methodology and know-how which evaluation experts need to possess are not discussed in detail.

At a time of rapid and sweeping change in all aspects of society and the working world, evaluations offer an opportunity to verify set goals, and create transparency. They offer those working in programmes or projects the **chance** to identify necessary adjustments, learn from experience, and redirect goals if necessary.

But learning also means changing: evaluation results can have major implications for the people concerned. Their work can be radically changed by the evaluation, and in extreme cases their jobs may even be endangered. The quality and **practicality of an evaluation** does not therefore depend solely on the expertise of the evaluation team, but at least as much on the team's social awareness, competence and open-mindedness. An openness to other cultures and traditions is particularly important in the context of international development cooperation. Evaluations are conducted in every culture, but what is meant by them and the way they are performed may vary. Anyone who commissions, conducts or participates in an evaluation should be aware that our type and methods of evaluation are a product of our central European, Swiss perceptions and arise from our own set of values.

## 1. What is evaluation?



On 14 April 1912 the R.M.S. Titanic, the largest ocean-going liner of its time, hailed by the British press as unsinkable and dubbed the “Queen of the Oceans”, hit an iceberg on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York. Shortly before midnight the ice tore a hole six fingers wide but over thirty meters long in the bow of the ship. From then on, five tonnes of seawater per second poured into the 269-meter long hull, and within the space of only a few hours the supposedly unsinkable ship had swept thousands of souls to a watery grave.

How could this maritime disaster have happened? Why did the owners, captains, media and the majority of the public feel so confident in the assumption that this “Miracle of Technology” could never sink? Why did the Titanic sink and thousands of people have to lose their lives? Question after question was posed following the disaster, some of which remain unanswered to this day.

What was clear from the outset was the Titanic’s failure to achieve the **planned objective** (New York) and the **desired result** (to convey a large number of passengers, some in the lap of luxury, across the Atlantic faster than ever before with an eye to profit). In a series of evaluations and inquiries, experts sought answers to the many questions posed in the wake of this disaster. As a result of these studies, no ship was permitted in future to leave port without a sufficient number of lifeboats on board. Moreover, the inquiries led to the foundation of the International Ice Patrol, a type of advance warning troop for ships, and additional safety precautions were introduced. In hindsight the sinking of the Titanic and the inquiries as to its cause proved an important impetus for the development of shipping technology. But the price of progress was high.

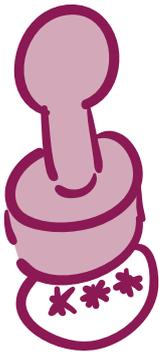
### Have we achieved our objective?

Are we doing the right thing? And are we doing things right? What lessons can we draw from our experiences, and what can we learn to help us in dealing with similar situations? Such questions are an integral part of management and steering tasks within international development cooperation programmes and projects, and can be formulated and partly answered by means of an **evaluation**.

The story of the Titanic is an extreme example. Naturally we do not have to wait for a disaster to strike before we pause for thought, ask questions, draw lessons from experience and make changes if necessary. The example demonstrates that a hierarchical system is not the best control mechanism, because it does not permit any critical questioning. The example also highlights the Titanic project’s failure to ensure coordination between **planning, evaluation, monitoring and transference into action (PEMT)**. The route was risky, and despite receiving iceberg warnings, the ship neither reduced speed nor changed course. In the working instrument entitled “Monitoring – staying in touch with reality”, we have used the example of the Titanic to illustrate how

monitoring allows us to keep a close eye on a development process and hence better control it, i.e. how to stay on course.

While the aim of planning and monitoring is to record programme and project execution before and during the process, evaluation appraises the process of execution only after the intermediate or final stage has been reached. Good planning increases the chance that a task will be successfully implemented, and systematic monitoring can help to safeguard against painful experiences. As a supplement to monitoring, evaluation addresses the questions of **achievement of aims and the effectiveness of our actions**. Posing selected questions, it analyses and compares planning with achievements, results and impacts. We can use this comparison as a basis for further action, in the management and structure of a project, and draw conclusions for application to new, similar tasks. While monitoring is a periodically recurring task, evaluation is always a **special event**.



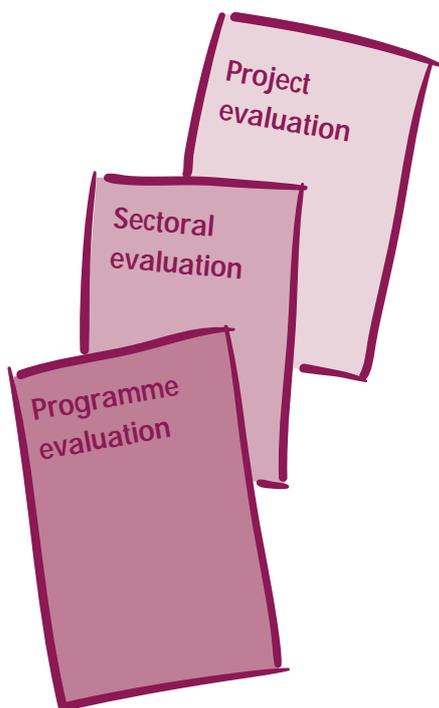
Evaluation involves estimation, analysis, valuation and appraisal. In the broadest sense of the word, every critical statement – for example about a film – represents an evaluation. Within the framework of international development cooperation, however, evaluations are primarily conducted to observe effects in the interests of **creating and ensuring quality**.

Initiating a pause for thought during an ongoing project in order to review original plans provides an ideal opportunity for learning. If key participants are involved in the evaluation from the outset, the prospects of successful collaboration and implementation of evaluation results are enhanced.

The objective of an evaluation can be:

### Evaluations within programmes and projects

- to examine collaboration in detail
- to verify the impacts, objectives or efficiency and thereby account for them
- to answer specific questions associated with the project/programme context
- to draw lessons for the next phase of the project
- to prepare information



Evaluations can be conducted in different ways and be based on individual projects (project evaluation), a number of projects on a similar theme (cross-sectional analysis), a broader country programme (all programmes and projects within a country) or a (sectoral) policy.

A **country programme evaluation** does not differ in principle from a project evaluation, but the methods and questions posed are more wide-ranging. A programme evaluation examines **programme orientation**, the position of individual projects in relation to this orientation, and the approach to cross-sectoral themes. It primarily examines the impact and relevance of the programme in relation to the achievement of overall goals, and analyses synergies and complementarities. While the results of individual project evaluations form an important basis in this process, the sum of these results is not enough to provide answers to questions on the programme as a whole. Whereas a project evaluation considers accountability to lie primarily with the project partners, a programme evaluation (particularly in the case of country programmes) assigns accountability primarily to the donor institution, since such programmes are always an expression of the strategic decisions which need to be embedded in the associated national context.

As a rule, we use self-evaluation or external evaluation for project and country programme evaluations. (The present document is primarily concerned with external evaluation; for information on self-evaluation, see *Manual on Self-Evaluation and Mirror, Mirror on the Wall... Working Instruments for Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Transference into Action*, 1995 and 1990.)

**Objective and purpose of evaluations**

The results of an external evaluation provide information and a basis for:

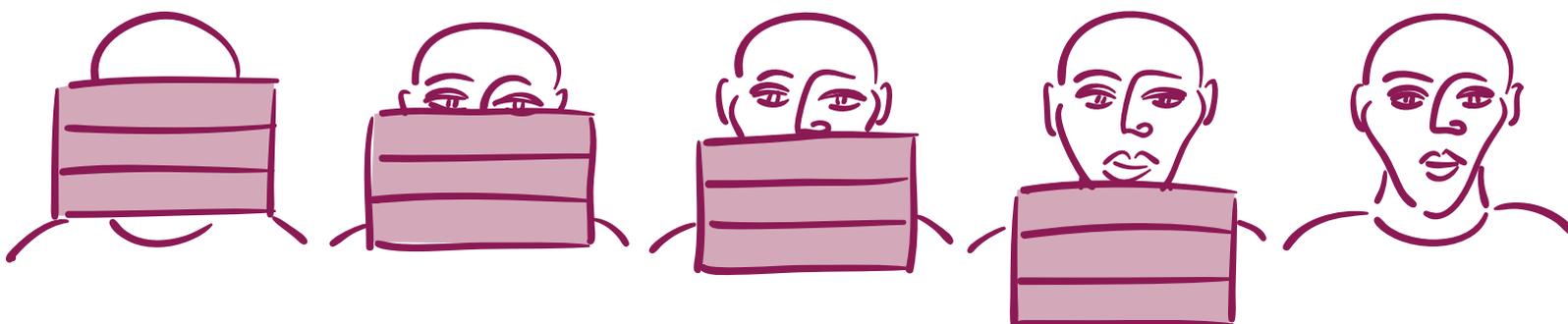
**Decisions** External evaluation is an **external view** of a programme or project phase which is either ongoing or coming to a close. It forms the basis for decisions, and evaluates and identifies future options.

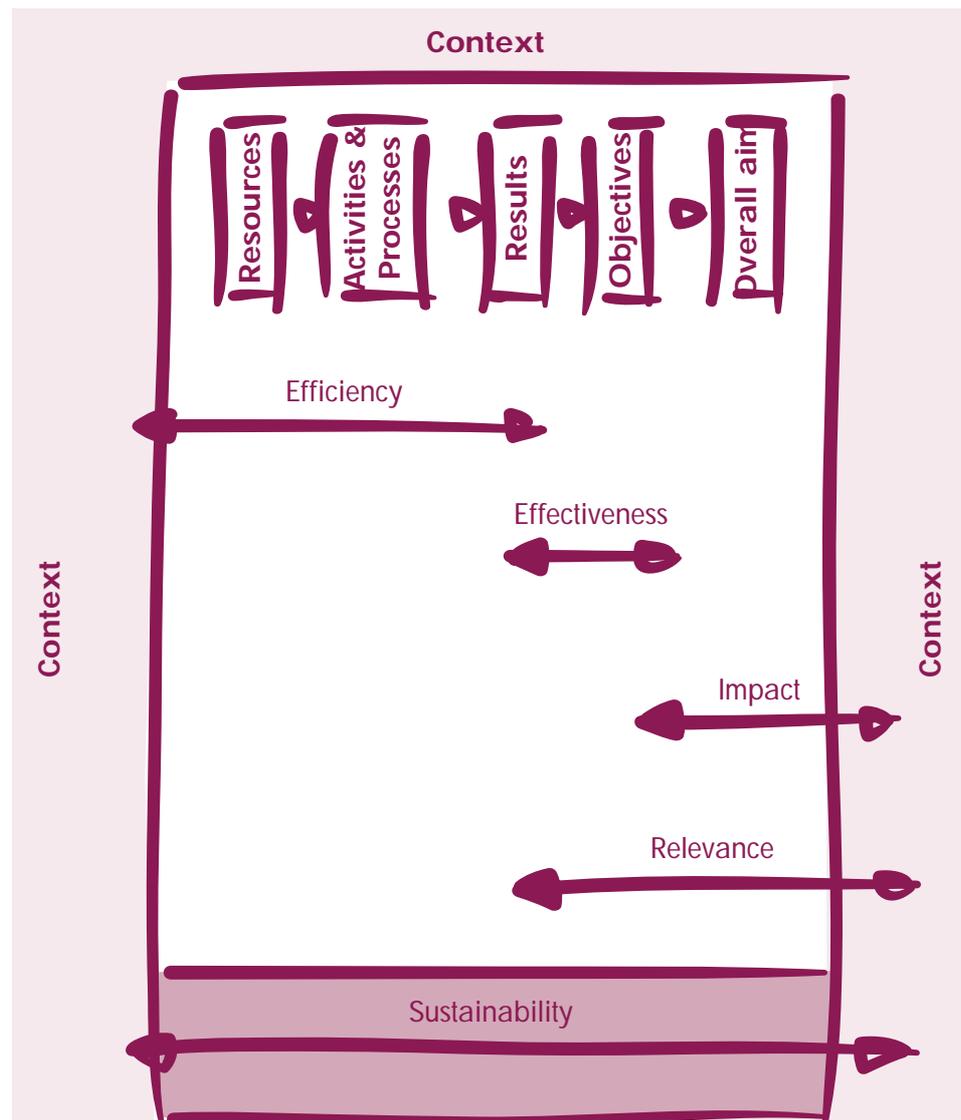
**Clarification** When opinions differ, clarification is required: external evaluation illustrates the strengths and weakness of the programme/project and makes suggestions with a view to promoting mutual understanding and consensus. The evaluation prepares this dialogue.

**Explanation/legitimation** External evaluation can be used to legitimise a programme or project vis-à-vis decision-makers or a government authority.

**Benefit from experience and learning** External evaluation focuses on analysis and assessment of experience with a view to further education and the recording of information. It garners experience for further application in the evaluated programme/project or a similar project.

**Development of quality** External evaluation verifies whether the instruments and methods applied in the programme or project are appropriate and viable. It also provides an opportunity to initiate or improve dialogue between partners and donors.





An evaluation makes it possible to scrutinise the five criteria and aims of a plan: sustainability, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact.

### Evaluation as a balancing act between external control and shared learning

An evaluation ushers in change, the **consequences** of which can vary widely depending on the participants, programme or project staff, implementing organisations and donors. Some regard this process of appraisal as beneficial to their own work and the project as a whole, while for others an investigation by external experts into their work triggers uncertainty. Despite changing attitudes, the notion of evaluation still tends to conjure up an image of external control and intervention. The ability to come to terms with developments within their "own" programme or project calls for (self) criticism, a willingness to address conflict, openness, transparency and objectivity on the part of those involved (see Getting to Know PEMT, 1996).

In every case of evaluation we are involved in a **game of power**. Conducting an external evaluation is a lively process which extends beyond objective-rational boundaries, and in which the participants play a range of different roles whereby particular tasks are coloured by the actors' personal interests. For instance, the personal interests of evaluators can take the form of increased power and influence, enhanced know-how, scientific interests, future missions or financial benefits. Spheres of power and influence within the project or programme can be undermined by an evaluation, and those involved may have to revise their own values.

The uncertainty triggered by the announcement of an external evaluation must be taken seriously. When performing its task, the evaluation team must be continually aware that an action or situation can be assessed from **various perspectives**. Additionally, those who work with projects and people from different cultures should be familiar with their background. Customs, traditions, religious attitudes and practices must be treated with respect. But this also presupposes that the initiator and the evaluator(s) are aware of their own cultural norms and values.

**Who takes part  
in an evaluation?  
Who bears responsibility?**

The need for an evaluation and the form it should take are primarily decided by the persons responsible for the programme within the commissioning institution, either at head office or the local agency level, in consultation with partner organisations in the South or East. These jointly initiate the process and monitor its progress. On the other hand, the evaluation team is responsible for carrying out and reporting on the evaluation. A self-evaluation is ideally launched on the partner organisations' own initiative.

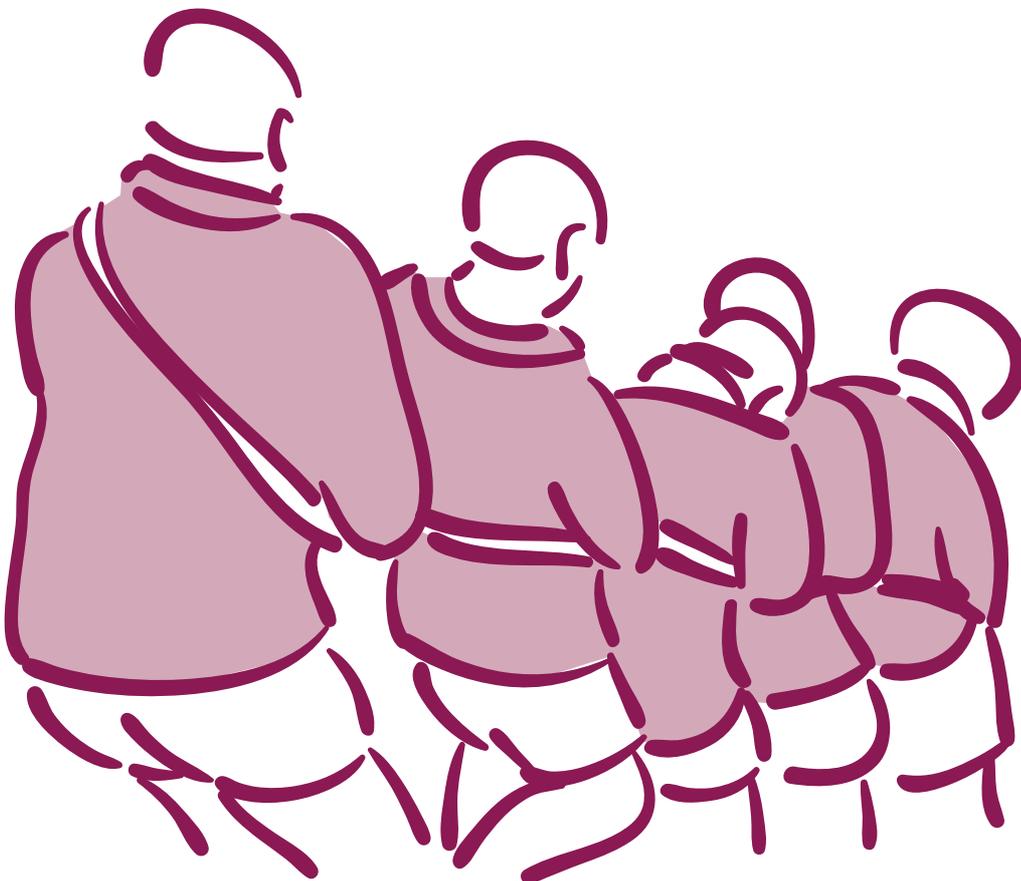
While a self-evaluation is conducted by the programme or project staff themselves, an external evaluation involves numerous organs and persons:

- the programme/project target group
- partner institutions in the South or East
- the project team (including non-governmental organisations and those responsible for project execution)
- the donor institution and its local representative
- the evaluation team

All the actors in this process have their **specific function** and role to perform, which gives rise to different perceptions, expectations and interests. The results of an evaluation can have different implications for different actors, for example within the programme/project target group, depending on gender, social and economic status, or age. Those affected should be involved in the evaluation discourse at the earliest possible stage, and be given the opportunity to help shape the process.

The **Terms of Reference** form the basis of every evaluation. These boundary conditions clarify tasks and responsibilities, pose the key questions, and lay down specifications for the evaluators. In the case of external evaluations, the **key to quality** lies in:

- clear Terms of Reference which have been defined in a preliminary process involving all key actors
- the autonomy of the evaluation team
- an appropriate team composition
- concentration on the key issues
- a realistic approach



### Limits of evaluation

Important as evaluation results can be for the programme or further project activities, and valuable as the associated learning processes may be, an evaluation should not be regarded or portrayed as the absolute truth. An evaluation can be neither a neutral nor provide an objective view, since the individual actors influence its course and outcome in different ways. The selection of external consultants also has an influence.

Moreover, an external evaluation is no more nor less than the external evaluation team's view of a specific situation or action within a **limited time frame**. Nor are decisions based on evaluations valid for an unlimited time; they can be overtaken by changed circumstances even shortly after they have been made. The external evaluation only highlights what can be done. This is why it is so important to combine an external evaluation with other instruments in the PEMT cycle and with self-evaluation.

### SDC evaluations in an international environment

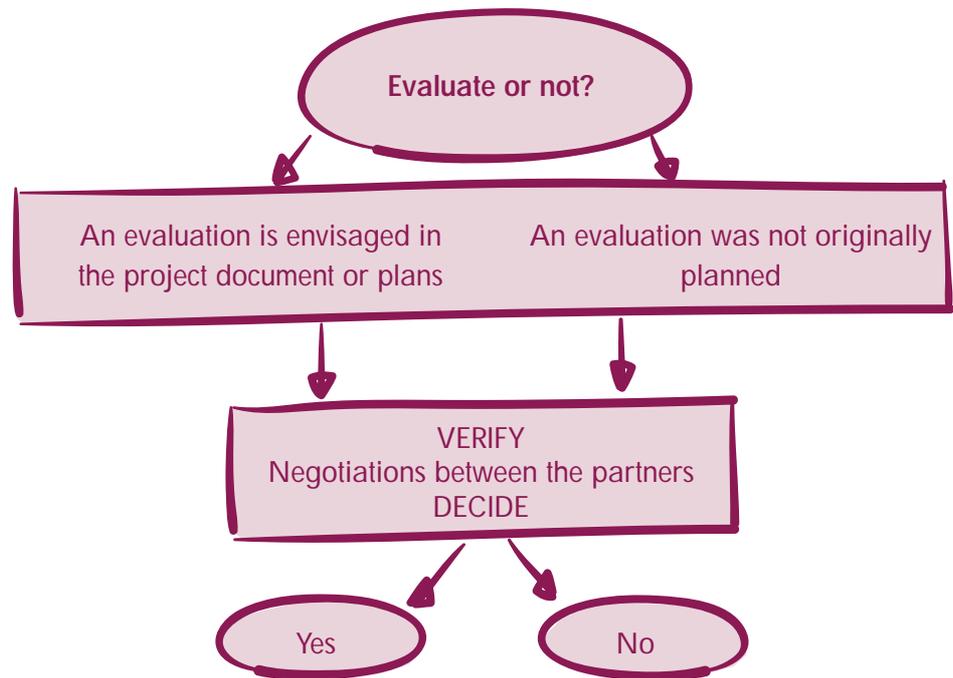
Within the framework of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Development Assistance Committee working party on aid evaluation, development agencies in the North have worked out general guidelines for evaluation and defined the most important principles of **impartiality and partnership**. The aim of these guidelines is to improve communication and coordination between the actors (particularly between donors and partner governments as well as among the donors) and ensure transparency. Thus, for example, abstracts of the external evaluation commissioned by development agencies are published on the Internet (DAC-Evaluation Inventory: <http://minweb.idrc.ca/daclog.htm>).

## 2. Evaluate or not? Good reasons for and against an evaluation

A partner organisation representative discusses a tricky topic with the responsible person in the coordination office: recently, things have gone wrong in their project. Three members of the project team have left the project almost simultaneously, leaving behind a gap in know-how and continuity. The problems that have recently arisen due to their departure are endangering the project, and there is now an element of doubt as to whether the project objectives will be achieved. The programme officer in the coordination office wonders whether an evaluation might be of assistance in this situation and weighs up the pros and cons with her coordinator as well as the desk officer at the head office.

For most programmes and projects, an evaluation is already **built into the plans** and defined in the agreement between the project partners. A look at the agreement could theoretically answer the coordination office employee's question. In reality and in practice, however, the situation proves more complex. Since an evaluation always represents a key event in the course of operations, demanding major **effort** on the part of all those involved and entailing risks as well as opportunities, the necessity and practicality of conducting an evaluation must always be examined in detail. The correct decision for or against an evaluation is therefore subject to a clarification of the status quo (see Checklist on page 16) and careful consideration of the arguments, and is arrived at through negotiations which lead to consensus between the parties involved.

Even if an evaluation is planned in the agreement between donor institutions and programme or project partners, there may be good reasons why it should not be carried out – for example because the project situation has since radically changed, **decisions** on the future of the operation **have already been made**, and an evaluation is only desired to justify them (alibi evaluation). The decision must also be verified if future developments in the region or country might be too uncertain at the planned evaluation date, or if the political environment does not permit an evaluation.



**Situations where the necessity of an evaluation needs to be verified**

- Changes are imminent in the political or institutional environment
- A new phase or cancellation of a programme/project is imminent
- Changes in the context, in personnel or in responsibilities
- The initial phase is completed and the concept must be reviewed.
- Justification is required
- A case study (good practice) is to be presented; experience and knowledge garnered from a particular action is to be compiled and published
- Serious conflict exists between the partners
- Problems make it difficult or impossible to carry out the evaluation; important interim results have not been achieved

**Bases for decision-making**

Because a great deal is at stake for those involved and the results and **consequences** of an evaluation are difficult to predict, and also because evaluations involve conflict and power struggles, it is also important to examine what goes on behind the scenes, i.e. to take a wider view of the situation. Answers to the following questions complete the **overall picture** on which the decision for or against an evaluation is to be based.



**Why and what for?**

- Are there **adequate bases** on which to make a decision to continue the programme/project?
- Should experience be assessed?
- Are there any imminent decisions that would be forced or accelerated by an evaluation?

**What?**

- What experience is relevant? Which questions and topics need to be addressed?
- If an evaluation has already been carried out for the relevant programme/project, does it provide grounds for a new evaluation?

**Who?**

- Who is demanding the evaluation and what are the **interests/expectations** of the actors?
- Who needs to be involved in the evaluation process?
- Once an evaluation has been completed, who is responsible for implementation of the resultant measures?

**How?**

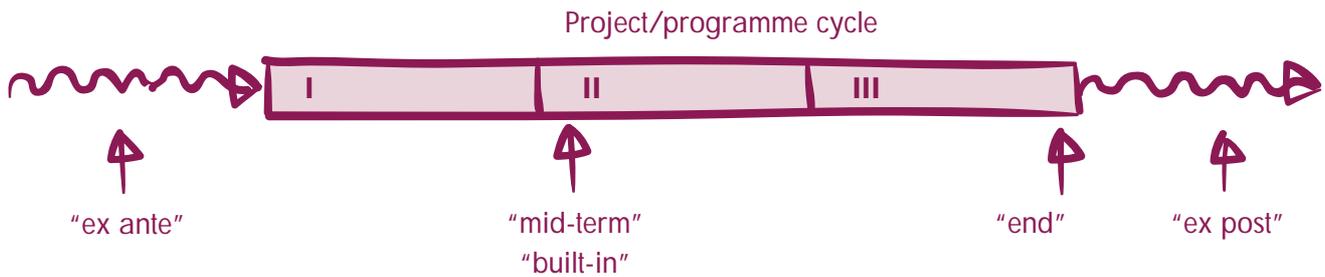
- How is the evaluation **integrated** in the PEMT cycle?
- How deep should an evaluation be and how broadly should it be applied? Are sufficient funds available and budgeted?
- Which **form of evaluation** is most appropriate?

**When?**

- How does the evaluation fit into the other schedules and processes?
- When is the most **suitable time for the partners?** Are the participants available during the projected evaluation period?
- Can sufficient time be set aside for preparation and **implementation?**

### 3. Types of evaluation

Two main types of evaluation are available to us: **self-evaluation** and **external evaluation**. Other defining criteria include the timing of the evaluation within the project cycle, and responsibility.



#### Timing

Before the programme/project begins

During the project

On completion of the programme/project

After completion of the programme/project

#### Evaluation type

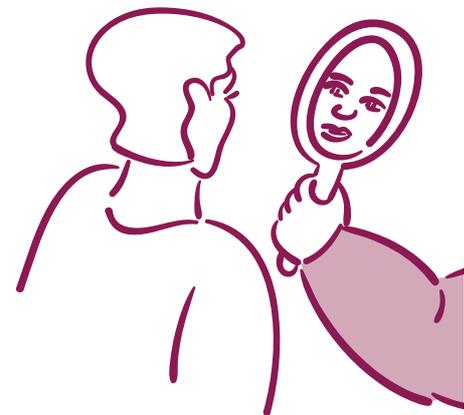
Identification (ex ante evaluation)

"Interim" evaluation (mid-term)

Final evaluation

Ex post evaluation

Evaluation type	Responsibility for implementation
External evaluation	Independent expert  Evaluation team comprising representatives of the organisation commissioning the evaluation and the partners
Self-evaluation	Persons responsible for the project  Persons responsible for the project, supported by an external person



### 3.1 External evaluation

External project evaluation is the classical form of evaluation. In this context “external” means that the evaluators are not project members, but experts from the North, South or East who, owing to their specific skills and in line with specifications, are called in for a period of one to three weeks to investigate the defined questions. External evaluations are therefore suitable for factual issues, relatively complex situations, and **overall appraisals**. With their outsider’s view the external evaluators use appropriate methods to collect information on the project and its environment, in order to assess and answer the questions posed. The end product is a report which they submit to the commissioning party.

**Joint external evaluations** are defined variously according to different institutions. The OECD Development Assistance Committee defines a joint external evaluation as the joint performance of an evaluation by two or more donor institutions. However, SDC regards “joint evaluations” as evaluations which are implemented in association with representatives of partner institutions in the South or East. These are particularly successful when there is a true spirit of partnership within the project. Moreover, a procedure of this type also provides an ideal opportunity to strengthen cooperation and mutual trust between the partners.

The **strengths** of an external evaluation lie in its distance and its independence. On the basis of their experience, the evaluators can make comparisons and hence see things which those who are directly involved cannot or can no longer see. Questions of sustainability, impact and effectiveness can be addressed through an external evaluation.

The external evaluation is the only possible form of evaluation for conducting a cross-sectoral analysis.

The **weaknesses** of an external evaluation lie in the substantial effort required in its preparation and implementation, as well as its limited time frame. Only part of the various realities can be examined within the short time available. This necessarily calls for more detailed analysis. Moreover, an external evaluation provides a mere snapshot whereby current events can completely overshadow any longer-term assessment. However, evaluations that refer to the results of monitoring can better determine the dynamics of a particular action.

**Costs of an external evaluation:** The goal and tasks of an evaluation influence the budget in different ways. A prior self-evaluation can result in a shorter mandate for the external evaluation, thereby reducing external costs. An evaluation involving local experts and limited to specific themes or a specific

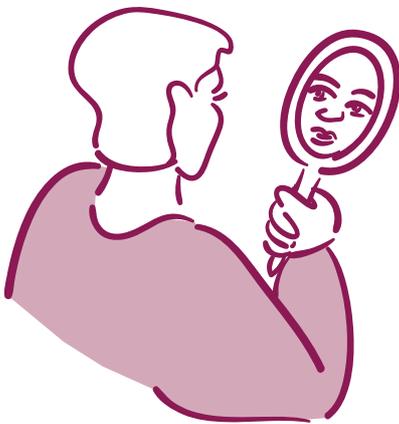
study can be performed for a few thousand Swiss francs. Based on European rates, an evaluation lasting two to three weeks and performed in the field by an evaluator will cost around CHF 15 000 to 30 000.

## 3.2 Self-evaluation

In a self-evaluation, the programme or project members analyse their own work from the **internal standpoint**. Possible questions to be addressed include: Do the results meet expectations or plans? How can the context be better leveraged or our own performance be improved? In what way does collaboration function with other partners, and how does it function internally? Are the tasks and roles clearly defined on all sides? What can be improved? If necessary, an external person is called in to moderate the process.

The **strengths** of a self-evaluation lie in the evaluators' detailed and specific knowledge of the project and the participating institutions in the partner country. It can be flexibly conducted with little effort on a regular basis, and facilitates rapid adjustments. It promises to be successful if those involved are sufficiently self-critical, and generally leads to stronger team building and cooperation.

**Weaknesses** result from the tendency not to see the forest for the trees and when there is no distance from daily operations. Self-evaluation is also less suitable for analysing issues of relevance in a broader context.





Characteristics of self-evaluation and external evaluation (from the programme/project standpoint)	Self-evaluation "Internal view"	External evaluation "External view"
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evaluation object lies within own sphere of responsibility</li> <li>■ More detailed view from within the programme/project</li> <li>■ Periodic process; possible at regular, shorter intervals</li> <li>■ Proximity to those affected and to own project</li> <li>■ More economical</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Evaluation object lies within other's sphere of responsibility</li> <li>■ Incorporation of knowledge of similar actions and themes</li> <li>■ Limited time frame; specific, often one-off action</li> <li>■ Distance from subject/project</li> <li>■ More cost-/effort-intensive</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Combination of self-evaluation and external evaluation

Self-evaluation can be combined well with external evaluation since both forms of evaluation **complement** each other. A self-evaluation conducted in preparation for an external evaluation can reduce resistance and anxieties, while participants' confidence can be bolstered by this preliminary process. Such groundwork also reduces the time and effort to be spent on external evaluation. However, a self-evaluation can also prove useful during an external evaluation (as an alternative option if problems are encountered in the process) or afterwards.

Both processes contribute to the learning curve and to an understanding of the project reality, while the results of a self-evaluation can **provide the impetus** for an external evaluation or vice versa. The key questions, methods and learning processes are identical but the roles and responsibilities of the actors differ.

Self-evaluation can also play a key role in monitoring a country programme (review). Questions about the programme's strategic direction and impact are posed, and deliberations usually take on a political dimension. As an initial step in the reviewing process, detailed questions are analysed and, if available, results from the self-evaluation are integrated. This process can be performed in steps over several months, and external resource personnel are called in.

## 4. Annexes

### 4.1 Glossary

<b>Audit</b>	The audit is a monitoring activity performed after project work and controls have been completed. It involves more than a simple accounting review, since it determines whether the available policies and instruments have been correctly implemented and applied.
<b>Country programme</b>	The country programme defines the binding framework for the medium-term planning and implementation (5–7 years) of SDC's participation in the development of a partner country. It contains thematic priorities, a provisional allocation of resources, and lays down the principles for operational implementation.
<b>Cross-sectoral evaluation</b>	Several projects/programmes in various sectors/countries are analysed from the perspective of a cross-sectoral theme (e.g. environment, gender, poverty, etc.) or sector.
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Effectiveness indicates the extent to which a project or programme has achieved its objectives.
<b>Efficiency</b>	Efficiency compares the use of resources (personnel, time and financial resources) with the achieved results ("Input – Output").
<b>Evaluation</b>	Evaluation asks the questions: Are we doing the right thing? And are we doing things right?
<b>External audit</b>	The external audit is conducted by the Federal Accounting Office, which reports directly to Parliament.
<b>Evaluation team</b>	A group of persons responsible for conducting an evaluation. The group composition must be balanced and contain independent experts, representatives of the partners and/or the beneficiaries, and external and local experts. Care must be taken to ensure that the group possesses social as well as technical competences. Special attention is given to ensuring that the members of the evaluation team are able to handle priority cross-sectoral issues (e.g. poverty, gender, environment).
<b>External evaluation</b>	An evaluation conducted by one or more persons outside the project/programme structure.
<b>Impact</b>	Impact refers to the desirable and undesirable long-term effects of a project or programme which exceed the project's/programme's immediate sphere of responsibility.

<b>Indicator</b>	An indicator is a variable which helps to identify indirect differences in quality or quantity within a defined period of time. To this end, complex problems are simplified and reduced to an observable dimension.
<b>Input</b>	The resources (know-how, financial, personnel, etc.) required for the planned project output.
<b>Internal audit</b>	The internal audit is conducted by an independent entity or inspectorate, which nevertheless reports directly to the Director. The audit is used by the Director as a management instrument.
<b>Logical framework</b>	The process which leads to a planning platform. The various actors within a programme set down their visions, jointly analyse the problems to be solved and the available resources and potentials. Based on this they determine the overall aim of a programme/project, from which they derive the specific goals, and harmonise their activities and the results to be achieved (output and impacts).
<b>Meta-evaluation</b>	A cross-sectoral analysis examines existing evaluation reports focusing on a specific topic or sector, in order to render account at a higher level and garner experience for subsequent incorporation in new policies or implementation strategies.
<b>Monitoring</b>	Monitoring comprises the deliberate selection of observation fields and the targeted, systematic collection and production of data and information during the course of a particular activity. Monitoring begins at the planning stage and is an essential steering element. It is performed in relation to outputs, outcomes, processes, impacts, and the project setting.
<b>Output</b>	The results directly achieved by project activities.
<b>Overall aim</b>	The overall aim to which a project/programme contributes with its results (outcomes), but whose achievement is outside the project's/programme's sphere of responsibility and is still impacted by other factors.
<b>Programme</b>	A programme comprises several projects which pursue a common or similar overall aim. However, a programme is more than the sum of its parts.
<b>Project</b>	A project is a planned package of measures to achieve a defined objective within a limited time and geographical area, and within defined financial parameters. The work plan, the mandate, and responsibility for project execution are clearly defined. A project calls for multidisciplinary cooperation between persons and institutions.

<b>Project cycle</b>	A system which covers the various elements in the course of a programme/project (identification, planning, monitoring, evaluation, implementation). These elements form a single entity, have interrelated themes, and are synchronised.
<b>Relevance</b>	The question of relevance refers to the correlation between a project's/programme's development objectives and prevailing conditions, opportunities and risks in a particular country. Questions are asked about the extent to which a project helps to meet the existing needs and priorities of the target groups/beneficiaries (are we doing the right thing?).
<b>Result</b>	Results contain as well "outputs" (direct products and achievements of a programme/project) and "outcomes" (their direct and indirect effects).
<b>Sector evaluation</b>	Evaluation of various projects/programmes which belong to the same sector and are carried out in one or more countries. The same key questions are asked in sector evaluations.
<b>Self-evaluation</b>	In a self-evaluation the persons who are the object of the evaluation and those who conduct it are identical. They may be individuals, groups or institutions. A self-evaluation examines the internal sphere of responsibility. It may involve an external person acting as a moderator.
<b>Stakeholders</b>	Persons, groups and institutions who actively participate in a project/programme and/or are affected by it.
<b>Sustainability</b>	Sustainability is the primary aim of development processes, with a view to the durability of projects. A project is sustainable if the changes set in motion and supported (effects, processes, etc.) can be continued and further developed over the long term.
<b>Terms of Reference</b>	A description of objectives, key issues, intentions, anticipated results and methodologies for specific short-term tasks. Usually used to prescribe specific mandates for consultants, e.g. for the purposes of conducting an external evaluation of a project or programme.

## 4.2 DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance in the International Cooperation

Abstract from the report entitled “Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance”, Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD, Paris 1991.

### I. Introduction Donor/recipient partnership

(...)

Development assistance is a co-operative partnership exercise between donors and recipients. The developing countries are responsible for their own development and development assistance can only be subsidiary and complementary to the efforts of the developing countries themselves. Aid supports activities for which developing countries have final responsibility and ownership. Project performance depends on both donor and recipient action. Both have an interest in, and responsibility for, the best use of scarce public funds. Both must therefore be interested in evaluation not only for improving resource use for development through learning from experience but also for accountability to political authorities and general publics.

(...)

The principles set out below provide general guidance on the role of aid evaluation in the aid management process, with the following central messages:

- 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 policymaking, 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 policymakers and operational staff is essential.
- Partnership with **recipients** and donor cooperation in aid evaluation are both essential; they are an important aspect of recipient institution-building and of aid coordination 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.

### Definition

An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An

evaluation should provide information that is **credible** and **useful**, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

## II. Purpose of evaluation

The main purposes of evaluation are:

- to improve future aid policy, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learned;
  - to provide a basis for accountability, including the provision of information to the public.
- (...)

The accountability notion of evaluation referred to here relates to the developmental results and impact of development assistance. It is distinct from accountability for the use of public funds in an accounting and legal sense, responsibility for the latter usually being assigned to an audit institution.

## III. Impartiality and independence

**Impartiality** contributes to the credibility of evaluation and the avoidance of bias in findings, analyses and conclusions. Independence provides legitimacy to evaluation and reduces the potential for conflict of interest which could arise if policymakers and managers were solely responsible for evaluating their own activities.

### Institutional structure for managing evaluation

The **institutional structure** for managing evaluation is crucial to ensuring an effective evaluation process. The organisational aspects must address three requirements: developing a policy and a set of guidelines for evaluation; ensuring impartiality and independence; linking evaluation findings to future activities. (...)

Impartiality and independence will best be achieved by separating the evaluation function from the line management responsible for planning and managing development assistance. (...) The organisational arrangements and procedures should facilitate the linking of evaluation findings to programming and policymaking.

## IV. Credibility

The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of **transparency of the evaluation process**. Credibility requires that evaluation should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment.

(...)

Transparency of the evaluation process is crucial to its credibility and legitimacy. To ensure transparency:

- The evaluation process as a whole should be as open as possible with results made widely available.
- Evaluation reports must distinguish between findings and recommendations. Relevant information to support findings should be included in a way that does not compromise sources.

**V. Usefulness** To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They should fully reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development assistance. **Easy accessibility** is also crucial for usefulness. The evaluation process itself promotes a further clarification of objectives, improves communication, increases learning, and lays the groundwork for follow-up action.

Evaluations must be timely in the sense that they should be available at a **time** which is **appropriate** for the decision-making process. This suggests that evaluation has an important role to play at various stages during the execution of a project or programme and should not be conducted only as an ex-post exercise. Monitoring of activities in progress is the responsibility of operational staff. Provisions for evaluation by independent evaluation staffs in the plan of operation constitute an important complement to regular monitoring.

**VI. Participation of donors and recipients** Consistent with the partnership principle stressed above, whenever possible, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process. (...)

Involving all parties concerned gives an opportunity for learning by doing and will **strengthen skills and capacities** in the recipient countries, an important objective which should also be promoted through training and other support for institutional and management development.

**VII. Donor cooperation** Collaboration between donors is essential in order to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort. Donor collaboration should be encouraged in order to develop evaluation methods, share reports and information, and improve access to evaluation findings. (...)

**VIII. Evaluation programming** An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development assistance activities. In elaborating such a plan, the various activities to be evaluated should be organised into appropriate categories. **Priorities** should then be set for the evaluation of the categories and a timetable drawn up. (...)

Evaluation capability is needed to cover a broad spectrum of evaluations: policy, programme and project activities as well as sectors, themes, and cross-sectoral issues. Evaluations further need to look at agency procedures and management issues. (...)

#### IX. Design and implementation of evaluations

Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference drawn up in order to:

- define the **purpose** and scope of the evaluation, including an identification of the recipients of the findings;
- describe the **methods** to be used during the evaluation;
- identify the standards against which project/programme performance are to be assessed;
- determine the **resources** and time required to complete the evaluation.

The purpose of the evaluation must be explained, e.g., to contribute to improving aid policies, procedures and techniques or to consider a continuation or discontinuation of specific current activities.

An evaluation must define the activity that is being evaluated, e.g., projects, institutions, sectors, or programmes and contain such information as background, objectives, activities, expenditures, expected impacts and effects.

It is essential to define the questions which will be addressed in the evaluation – these are often referred to as the “issues” of the evaluation. The issues will provide a manageable framework for the evaluation process and the basis for a clear set of conclusions and recommendations. The following are basic groups of evaluation issues:

- Rationale (...)
- Objectives Achievement (...)
- Impacts and Effects (...)

The aim of asking these questions is to ensure that the evaluator can assess the information and formulate conclusions and recommendations concerning:

- The Overall Results (...)
- Sustainability (...)
- Alternatives (...)
- Lessons Learned (...)

This stage must also define the methods and techniques to be used to address the identified issues. The nature of development assistance suggests that in most cases evaluation will involve a combination of **quantitative and qualitative techniques**. The methods used in the appraisal of an activity should, as a general rule, also be used in the ex post evaluation. (...)

#### **X. Reporting, dissemination and feedback**

Evaluation reporting should be clear, as free as possible of technical language and include the following elements: an executive summary; a profile of the activity evaluated; a description of the evaluation methods used; the main findings; lessons learned; conclusions and recommendations. (...)

**Systematic dissemination** is essential for ensuring improved planning and implementation of development assistance activities. Evaluation results may be disseminated in several ways apart from the evaluation report itself e.g., annual reports providing a synthesis of findings; abstracts/summaries providing a synopsis of findings.

Feedback is an essential part of the evaluation process as it provides the link between past and future activities. To ensure that the results of evaluations are utilised in future policy and programme development it is necessary to establish feedback mechanisms involving all parties concerned.

## 4.3 Matrix for DAC Abstracts

<b>Donor</b>	in abbreviated form; always use the English term for DEZA: <b>SDC</b>
<b>Report title</b>	in original language, avoid abbreviations
<b>Subject number</b>	leave blank; will be assigned by I/D – SDC
<b>Geographic area</b>	mention country, region (if border-crossing), or continent
<b>Sector</b>	more than one may be indicated
<b>Language</b>	Enter the language in which the document is written – e.g. EN (English); FR (French); SP (Spanish)
<b>Date</b>	Enter the evaluation date in YYYY-MM-DD form. You can enter the complete date (i.e., 1998-02-01) or only the year and month (i.e., 1988-11) or only the year (i.e., 1998)
<b>Collation</b>	Enter the number of pages and annexes associated with the evaluation (i.e., 20pp; 4 annexes)
<b>Evaluation type</b>	Timing (mid-term, completion, ex-post) Subject of evaluation (project, program, sector, country/region, synthesis, thematic, multilateral, NGO)
<b>Status</b>	Enter P for planned or C for completed
<b>Authors</b>	Enter the author and/or the Evaluation Office responsible for conducting the evaluation. Avoid the use of Acronyms
<b>Cross-sectoral themes</b>	mention only if relevant to project; e.g. gender, poverty, environment, empowerment, autonomy, institution capacity building, good governance
<b>Type of project</b>	bilateral or multilateral, or multi-bi
<b>Project executing agency in the project country</b>	state-run (i.e. public body)/NGO/others:
<b>Type of cooperation</b>	technical cooperation (TC), financial cooperation (FC), humanitarian aid (HA), Swiss Disaster Relief Unit (SDR)

<b>Subject description</b>	The <b>subject description</b> should attempt to capture the rationale for the intervention (i.e., what development constraint is being addressed) as well as what was/is expected as a result of the activity. If there is more than one paragraph these should be separated by a blank line.
<b>Evaluation methodology</b>	Enter a brief description of the methodology or approach used in conducting the evaluation and the methodological considerations addressed. These could include the objectives, scope and focus with respect to the issues of the evaluation, as well as the methodologies and data sources used. If there is more than one paragraph these should be separated by a blank line.
<b>Major findings</b>	Enter the major findings from the evaluation. These should highlight the relative success of the aid activity in achieving its objective or expected results. If there is more than one paragraph these should be separated by a blank line.
<b>Lessons learned</b>	Enter any lessons learned from the evaluation. If there is more than one paragraph these should be separated by a blank line.

### Evaluation abstract format

The abstracts have to correspond to the following guidelines and be written in **English, Spanish or French:**

**Scope:** The abstract should be limited to 2 pages (Standard A4 format; Font: Arial 12; 30 lines, 60 keystrokes each).

**Structure:** The abstract consists of two parts. The first part contains the bibliographic information. The second part consists of four chapters written in text form. Avoid abbreviations!

### Evaluation reports inventory

All evaluators must write an abstract as an integral component of the evaluation report. This represents part of the ToRs. The abstract must be attached to the evaluation report and an electronic version must be sent to the person responsible at headquarters.

These abstracts are added to the **DAC Evaluation Reports Inventory** which contains information on planned and ongoing evaluations of developmental organisations represented in the OECD. This database is accessible on the Internet: <http://minweb.idrc.ca/daclog.htm>.