

**POLICY AND OPERATIONS  
EVALUATION DEPARTMENT (IOB)**

**GUIDELINES FOR IOB EVALUATIONS**

**WORKING METHODS AND PROCEDURES FOR EVALUATION**

## **PREFACE**

This document provides an overview of guidelines currently in use by IOB in evaluation procedures. The broadening of IOB's mandate in 1997 to evaluation in all fields of foreign policy, brought new challenges. The experiences of IOV, IOB's predecessor, were concerned exclusively with development cooperation. It was by no means self-evident that the working methods so far followed would in future also be applicable to other policy fields. IOB has gained some experience in this respect during the last few years, and has been able to examine those working methods more thoroughly. The guidelines presented in this document are the result of a series of discussions held within IOB and are based partly on past experience. New agreements have also been reached, based on the changed environment and on IOB's broader mandate.

Evaluation will always be 'tailor-made'. Its methodological aspects will therefore not be examined here in detail. Even a comprehensive account could not do justice to the wealth of literature that is available on the subject. Moreover, such a portrayal could not take account of the specific methodological demands that are set by each individual subject of evaluation.

By publishing its guidelines, IOB offers clarity to third parties: to the interested citizen, to organisations and institutions that undergo evaluation, and to users of evaluation results. In each evaluation report, IOB has to justify the investigation that has been carried out. This document illustrates the internal guidelines that are used by IOB with regard to evaluations.

These guidelines are not etched in stone. In the most literal sense, we are concerned with a growth document. New insights may give reason for future change. From time to time, IOB will also examine its current guidelines and revise them if that is thought desirable. An up-to-date version of those guidelines will always be available on our website: <http://www.euforic.org/iob>.

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## **1 THE MOTIVATION FOR THIS DOCUMENT**

The purpose of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) is specified in its mandate as *to meet the need for evaluation, review and advice regarding policy and its implementation with regard to all policy areas that are financed by the homogenous group international expenditure (HGIS). IOB evaluates the execution of Netherlands development cooperation policy, giving particular attention to its relevance, objectivity and effectiveness and to the sustainability of the results achieved. IOB also evaluates other elements of foreign policy.*

The policy areas covered by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are diverse in character and numerous channels and modalities are employed for their execution. Necessarily, therefore, IOB's policy evaluations are largely 'tailor-made'. The most suitable approach is sought to each evaluation, and laid down in advance in the Terms of Reference. Subsequently, the research is accounted for in the evaluation's Final Report.

IOB regularly examines its own working methods and techniques in order to make any necessary adjustments and improvements - a process that has given rise to this general exposé of IOB's working methods which indicates the ways by which tailor-made evaluations are achieved. This does not signify an end to the process of reflection. The guidelines described in this document can be revised and adjusted whenever future practice may show this to be necessary. Evaluation guidelines are described in the main body of the report; in the annexes attention is given to procedures concerning evaluations implemented on an individual and on an international multi-donor basis.

## **2 IOB'S FIELD OF WORK**

The *Regeling Prestatiegegevens en Evaluatieonderzoek Rijksoverheid* (Regulation on Government's Performance Data and Evaluation Research) lays down that, in principle, systematic evaluation should be a permanent element of every policy process. In this respect, evaluation entails critical and thorough investigation into the effect of a policy or programme and a statement of the results achieved. Justification for policy evaluation is provided, on the one hand, by its contribution to quality improvement on the policy-making level, improved planning and management and, on the other hand, by control of, and accountability for, the activities involved. Such justification is relevant, irrespective of the policy field. Each area of policy should be evaluated at least once every five years.

Within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, IOB is largely entrusted with this evaluative task. Policy evaluations are also carried out by, or on assignment for, the policy directorates responsible for particular areas of policy. While, until the 1995 re-orientation, IOB was solely responsible for evaluations in the field of development cooperation, its sphere of operations has since been expanded to include Dutch foreign policy as a whole. So far, however, experience with subjects that are not related to development cooperation has been limited.

The augmentation of IOB's field of operations entails that, in giving form to an evaluation, an Inspector may face new problems of a methodological or political nature. With regard to methodology, for example, other than in the field of

development cooperation, large parts of foreign policy are concerned with subjects that do not primarily involve the expenditure of funds, or the achievement of objectives through (international) negotiation or other forms of promoting Dutch or wider interests. The methodological problem that can then arise is the lack of any clear and traceable route from the targets that are laid down in advance, *via* the application of nominated and/or quantifiable methods, to results. A great deal is deliberately not made explicit or put down on paper: definitions, formulated objectives, indicators, information, etc. may be lacking or inaccessible; the application of an objective-method-result model is then not always simple or self-evident. Another aspect is that, with the expansion of IOB's field of activity to foreign policy as a whole, there is a greater chance that matters will need to be discussed that involve affairs of national importance (e.g. in the field of national security). In such case, the decision regarding whether or not an evaluation can be carried out will be taken on political grounds.

### **3 THE DEFINITION OF EVALUATION RESEARCH**

Although there are numerous and varying definitions of the concept 'evaluation', IOB has adopted that used by OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC/OECD).

*An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an ongoing 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.*

The most important elements of this definition are:

- a documented analysis and evaluation that is as objective as possible;
- systematic empirical research and data compilation;
- appraisals of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, and
- conclusions and recommendations.

The DAC/OECD definition reflects the belief that evaluation is a scientifically-justified instrument for control, information and advice, as broadly accepted within the evaluator community. At the same time, or perhaps because of this, the definition offers scope for various modes of implementation.

The definition needs comment on two aspects.

Firstly, the definition is tailored to development cooperation. Its expansion to cover foreign policy as a whole would imply that concepts such as 'developmental' and 'recipients and donors' must be placed in inverted commas.

Second, the definition includes both a summative element (the legitimisation function) and a formative element (the learning function). IOB takes the standpoint that its evaluations are both summative and formative in character. This is in accord with the DAC/OECD definition. At the same time, for methodological reasons, it has been decided that IOB will make no recommendations but that, in its reports, in addition to its findings, it will restrict itself to points of interest for stakeholders in the subject in question. The reasoning behind this decision is that IOB investigates the past but not

possible alternatives for the future. Solution of the problems ascertained will require more than evaluation research. For these reasons, IOB confines itself to drawing attention to the need to solve the problems it has diagnosed.

#### **4 TYPES OF EVALUATION RESEARCH**

During recent decades, many and diverse forms of evaluation research have been developed and various schools have been formed around the different types. Almost all known textbooks on evaluation start with an attempt to bring order to this diversity. IOB finds three criteria of significance: the moment of the evaluation, the nature and magnitude of that which is to be evaluated, and the degree of involvement by responsible people and institutions.

In general, a distinction is made as regards the moment at which the evaluation takes place: the discussion is then of *ex ante*, mid-term, 'real time' and *ex post* evaluation. Questions may be raised regarding the use of the term *ex ante* evaluation. In the field of development cooperation preference is given to the term 'appraisal' because, in the literal sense, there is as yet nothing to evaluate. With regard to 'real time' evaluations, emphasis will often be placed more on an evaluation of processes and their orientation than on the measurement of results. On the basis of its mandate, IOB is engaged exclusively with real time and *ex post* evaluations.

Evaluations may differ not only with regard to time but also as regards the nature of that to be evaluated. This may be a specific activity, a parcel of activities in a certain country or sector, an executive organisation, a particular field of policy or theme. Moreover, evaluations may be directed towards policy processes. In the past, IOB has experienced a change from project inspections *via* sector evaluations to the evaluation of (country) programmes and fields of policy. In principle, IOB is able to carry out all forms of evaluation mentioned above.

A distinction can also be made according to the degree to which those involved in the activity that is to be evaluated also participate in the evaluation. In so-called internal evaluations, the body responsible for policy and/or its implementation will in some way take active part in the evaluation. In an external evaluation that body will itself form part of the material that is to be evaluated. This does not alter the fact that, in an external evaluation, the responsible body may exercise some degree of influence during discussions when the research is set up and during the reporting. Contrary to evaluations that are implemented by or on behalf of line directorates, evaluations carried out by IOB are always external, with the understanding that interested parties have some input in drawing-up the Terms of Reference and in the discussion of results.

#### **5 EVALUATION CRITERIA**

'Tailor-made' does not infer that quality criteria are abandoned nor that some inconsistency may occur in their application. In all evaluations, evaluation criteria should be applied unequivocally and transparently. Standardisation is of particular importance in this respect in order to enable comparability of evaluations and evaluation results. Evaluation criteria used by IOB are largely similar to those drawn up by DAC/OECD, on the understanding that sustainability is mentioned not as a separate criterion but as a dimension of effectiveness. IOB's evaluation criteria are

concerned with the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of policy and policy implementation.

*Relevance* refers to the degree to which the effects of activities contribute towards realisation of the (development) target: the impact. In this way, the relevance of the policy followed is opened-up to discussion or becomes part of the problem. In some cases, it can also be important to consider the 'policy relevance' of the activities undertaken; in other words, the degree to which they are a logical consequence of, or are connected to, the policy of the parties concerned (for example, Netherlands' policy and that of the receiving country). Care should be taken, however, that varying interpretations of the concept 'relevance' do not become intermingled. It is thus to be recommended that, in report writing, terminology should be used as transparently as possible, and that the use of one and the same term for different topics should be avoided.

*Effectiveness* concerns the degree to which the direct results of activities, i.e. the output, contribute towards (sustainable) realisation of the programme's target(s), i.e. the outcome. Programme targets are those that it is intended to realise with the activities in question.

*Efficiency* refers to the degree in which achieved results, i.e. the output, offset the cost of the chosen means, the input, and the manner in which those means are utilised.

All these criteria have been defined with the policy area of development cooperation in mind. In that sense, their application to other policy spheres will probably need suitable re-definition.

## **6 PROGRAMMING AND START-UP REPORTS**

The quality of any evaluation will benefit from a careful and transparent decision-making process, which begins with programming the evaluation. This is determined on the basis of specific questions asked by Parliament, by government and by controllers of the budget, but also by the extent to which a particular terrain has been evaluated in the past. With respect to the systematisation of programming, IOB uses seven criteria: financial significance, policy significance, political significance, evaluative cover, feasibility, possibilities for cooperation, and the opinions of those involved. Programme priorities are determined by weighing-up all these criteria.

If an entirely new policy field is concerned, it may be desirable in the first instance to carry out an explorative study, a so-called *field reconnaissance*, in order to delineate the field of policy, to designate possible sub-areas, and to give a provisional indication of the kind of evaluation questions that will be asked.

When a subject becomes part of the programming, the pre-research for the evaluation can be prepared. In this start-up phase, in particular, a number of important decisions will need to be taken which will be of far-reaching significance for the further course of the evaluation. It is thus desirable that time should be made available for this purpose. The Inspector will need to orient himself to the policy field that is to be evaluated and to form his own ideas regarding relevant evaluation questions and the most adequate approach. The Inspector will write a *start-up report* to be submitted to initial consultation within the IOB. That report will firstly list the reasons for the evaluation, outline the policy field to be evaluated, and formulate the objective and

core questions to be asked in the preliminary investigation. Second, it will indicate the type of evaluation that seems most applicable for the purpose.

In the third place, it will survey the organisation of the preliminary investigation (duration, magnitude and intensity, the moment at which external consultants will need to become involved). Finally, it will give a tentative opinion as regards the anticipated product of the evaluation, its time schedule, and its budget.

The start-up report will be discussed at an IOB departmental meeting. After decisions have been taken with regard to the points raised above, further work will be undertaken to draw up Terms of Reference for the actual evaluation.

## **7 THE PRE-RESEARCH**

The pre-research includes three activities: reconstruction of the intervention logic, compilation of basic data necessary for drawing-up practicable Terms of Reference, and determination of the evaluation design.

Theoretically, evaluation feasibility assumes the existence of a clearly-formulated policy, clear and specified targets and their desired effects, and a logical cohesion among policy, targets and desired effects. Meeting these criteria, however, is the exception rather than the rule. This applies in the general sense both to development cooperation and to other areas of foreign policy. Policy is often broadly specified with little specific detail, targets and effects are not made explicit, and the logic behind intervention is not clearly formulated. The method by which this problem is most commonly handled is that the Inspector himself designs a reconstructed logic on the base of the pre-research. This reconstructed intervention logic is submitted to the policy-making body to verify whether it is in agreement with the intentions of the policy makers.

The pre-research is not only used as a basis for reconstruction of the intervention logic, however; it should also provide the material on which the Terms of Reference may be drawn up. This signifies that during the pre-research:

- information sources are charted in order that evaluation feasibility may be judged;
- the scope is determined of that which to be evaluated so that the evaluation may be clearly focused, and
- the most efficient evaluation design (approach and methods) is determined.

The mapping of information sources (files, literature, informers) is necessary in order to determine the degree to which a subject is suitable for evaluation and to ensure that the Terms of Reference do not include too many questions to which available data do not permit an answer. Moreover, such inventorisation is essential to allow a well-reasoned demarcation to be reached.

Demarcation of the field to be investigated and reduction of evaluation problems to the most essential offers greater assurance that the evaluation will be clearly focused, and that only questions will be formulated to which a valid answer may reasonably be expected. Demarcation concerns the time and geographic dimensions, and the kind of activity. It may be ensured in various ways: inter-actively through discussion with relevant informers (people involved, external experts), or on the basis of literature and archive research, usually both.

In the pre-research the most adequate design will need to be decided upon. In the first instance, that choice may be made among the following:

- a broad and cohesive evaluation of a theme/the subject of the research;
- a sharper demarcation of the theme/research subject;
- a series research, in which individual evaluations provide an input to a higher level of aggregation;
- the break-up of a larger project into sub-evaluations that may be reported on individually, if so desired;
- a less in-depth evaluation whilst retaining the range of the objective, thus giving the evaluation the character of a review.

In principle, all these variations are possible as long as the choice is clearly motivated in advance and results are formulated in such a way as to accord with the scope and/or profundity of the evaluation.

## **8 THE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The evaluation is guided by its Terms of Reference, which lay down as points of departure the approach and methods to be used, the desired duration, and the available budget. In all cases, the ToR include the following elements:

- the reason and justification: a brief description of the relevance of the proposed evaluation;
- target and key questions: formulation of the principal research problem and derived subsidiary problems;
- delineation and range: a reasoning for the way in which the evaluation field is demarcated in the geographic and thematic sense, and as regards time;
- approach and choice of methodology, including attention for sub-evaluations: a description of the evaluation design, the indicators, data sources and techniques;
- representivity: an elucidation of the manner in which, and the degree to which, representivity plays a role in the evaluation;
- organisation: an explanation of the organisation of the evaluation, the involvement of experts, the organisation of workshops, missions, etc;
- products: an indication of anticipated sub-products, such as working documents or a data base;
- schedule: the timetable of the evaluation;
- budget: a specification of anticipated costs.

During evaluations, value judgements are expressed regarding the actions taken by certain people and the effects of those actions. In this way, evaluation is distinguished from other forms of investigation that also make use of scientific research methods. For that reason, it is of the greatest importance that the methods used are transparent, that pronouncements are verifiable, and that formulations are made with great care. The draft Terms of Reference is not only placed on the agenda of IOB's departmental meeting, but should be discussed in advance with those directly involved. The degree and manner in which possible comments are processed must be clear to all parties. Accountability for the technique(s) chosen is an essential part of any evaluation.

## 9 EVALUATION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

The debate on research methods and the degree to which they can lead to valid results is as old as science itself. When methods and techniques are discussed within the evaluation framework they can refer to the manner in which an evaluation is designed and also to the various techniques of data compilation.

So far, in evaluations in the field of development cooperation, use has almost solely been made of sociological and, to a lesser degree, of economic methods. The majority of evaluation reports consist largely of descriptive research and, to a lesser degree, of verification. As a general rule, therefore, it is a case of qualitative opinion forming.

In the following survey, a distinction is made between evaluation design and methods of data compilation.

### *Evaluation design*

The academic literature on methods and techniques of sociological research usually distinguishes between descriptive, explorative and practical research, according to the object of the exercise. IOB evaluations usually represent a combination of description and testing.

Evaluation concerns an accurate reconstruction of the past. In other words, a description of what has occurred in the past, what the demonstrable consequences of past actions have been, and why they have occurred. This brings one face-to-face with the problem of cause and effect. A tried and tested method by which to chart targets and intervention strategy in an orderly manner and thus to answer the problem of causality, is the use of a *logical framework*. This also offers an opportunity for orderly data compilation and for identifying indicators for systematic testing. The majority of IOB reports contain elements of a logical framework although, in the past, the system of application has varied somewhat. The most serious objection that can be brought against the logical framework is that, if applied too rigidly, it may be based too much on relations of causality and thus involve the risk of preventing insight into the influence of unforeseen (external) effects. This applies in particular when it concerns the relationship between the effects of a particular activity and the degree to which the designated target is realised. Within the framework of development cooperation it is nevertheless still a useful research design in that, in principle, it follows the same systematics as policy development and implementation.

The logical framework is not the only possible evaluation design. Although IOB has so far had little experience with other designs, it is essential that developments in this respect should be carefully monitored and that, by each evaluation, it should be studied which design is most appropriate for the subject in question.

### *Methods of data compilation*

Classical methods of data compilation include reading, interviewing and observation. This has not changed since the beginnings of the social science, but over time, compilation techniques have been improved and refined.

#### *(i) Archive and literature research*

In order to chart the evaluation field, some insight into available published sources is essential. These may involve activity-linked data and/or reports that are more

concerned with policy. This necessitates that files are studied with care, preferably on the basis of a systematic list of items of particular interest. As the amount of information increases that needs to be compiled in some standardised way, the necessity to set up a data base will grow.

With regard to activity-linked information, one of the first methodological questions that has to be asked is whether a sampling method should be used, or whether an attempt should be made to inventorise the entire data stock. In the first case, the criteria on which selection is to be based will need to be clarified and also the consequences that it can have for generic statements. Moreover, if the characteristics of the population are not sufficiently known, the sample will need to increase proportionate to the smallness of the population. IOB evaluations have usually been concerned with statistically small populations.

Evaluation studies are seldom unique or concerned with a solitary research field. In many cases, similar evaluations will already have been carried out and/or the theme will be the subject of fairly considerable scientific literature. It is desirable to gain information in this regard during the pre-research period. Such preliminary study will be of help when mapping the principal and subsidiary subjects, in identifying divergent opinions, and in preventing mistakes in the evaluation design.

(ii) *Interview techniques*

There are two types of interview technique: written and verbal, both of which are applied in IOB evaluations. With regard to written interviews, a distinction can be made between open and closed questionnaires, multiple choice variations, etc. It is essential that questions be clearly formulated. Written interviews are useful when the opinions of a large population are sought, as preparation for more intensive verbal interviews and/or for the selection of respondents for verbal interviews.

Verbal interviews may be held both during the pre-research and during fieldwork. As a rule, a distinction is made between (semi-)structured and non-structured interview methods, dependent on the interview's role in the evaluation and the type of information that is sought. During the initial orientation phase, in particular, interviews will usually be open in order to gather as many opinions and views as possible from respondents.

With regard to monitoring, it is important to know how much data have already been compiled on the subject to be evaluated, since such information is useful when asking pointed questions.

On the whole, respondents to be interviewed fall into one of three categories: responsible authorities, outsiders/third parties, and the target group. Interviews with representatives of the latter represent the most complicated aspect of evaluation, particularly within the framework of development cooperation. So far, the views held by the ultimate target groups with regard to development interventions have played only a marginal role in evaluations. As a rule, they provide no more than a little *couleur locale* to the report, a photograph added to 'dry text'. This is because thorough study of the opinions of those ultimately concerned can cause methodological problems in the framework of relatively brief field missions. The introduction of so-called perception studies (the Anglophone literature speaks of beneficiary assessment) represents an effort to gain more structured insight into the opinions of target groups through interviews and various forms of participatory observation, by establishing life histories, by mapping (charting the social order and

the changes that result from the intervention) and other research techniques. The problems that then arise are as classic as the method itself. With whom and with how many people should discussions be held (representativity), how frequently and how intensively (short-term versus long-term research), which questions should be asked, and how should the bias of the researcher be neutralised in interpreting the responses (cultural influences)?

Representativity refers to selection of the people to be interviewed. A number of methods can be used in this respect. On the premise that 'house-to-house' interviews are rarely feasible, a choice usually has to be made. Interviews may then be random (in the market or on the street corner) or more specifically oriented (e.g. through identification of one or more focus groups).

In addition to problems regarding the interviewing method, representativity and the time aspect, an important factor is the ability of the interviewer to put his/her implicit opinions to one side and to be aware of the own cultural bias. Considerable time is usually involved in winning the trust of the people and becoming able to interpret the true meaning of their pronouncements. The use of evaluators from the same country or region is no guarantee that such problems would be overcome: their involvement would assume a cultural homogeneity that is unlikely to be present in the society concerned. A combination of local and foreign evaluators is probably the most effective method.

### *(iii) Methods of observation*

Observation can be restricted to the physical outputs of an activity but can also be concerned with particular processes. Observation techniques (whether or not with the use of audio-visual means) have always played an important role in field research. It should be noted, however, that this is a time-intensive method which is not always suitable for evaluation purposes. As a general rule, evaluations make use of a quick (more or less structured) tour of physical outputs, a 'transect', and/or attendance of one or more meetings of the respective target group.

Finally, the triangulation technique is frequently applied in evaluations. This entails that a number of methods are used simultaneously in order to verify or magnify the validity of the findings.

## **10 THE INVOLVEMENT OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS**

External evaluators are used in all evaluations, but the time at which they become involved may vary and also the degree of autonomy under which they operate. By and large, two types of external evaluators can be distinguished, i.e. young research staff and experts.

Young researchers are usually involved in field research in the pre-study. They may also participate in field missions now that it has become increasingly customary for research to be carried out in the country involved. In view of the fact that such people are young and inexperienced, it is essential that they are well-supervised: any errors or omissions in the compilation and organisation of basic data will be almost impossible to correct at a later date.

Outside experts may become involved in various ways. It might be decided to use one or more experts as direct counterparts for the Inspector. A relationship based on mutual trust is then eminently desirable in view of the focal role that the experts will play. In addition, it is important that working agreements and anticipated outputs are

clearly laid down in the contract. A waiver will usually be applied in the selection of appropriate experts,

Another frequently-used method is the out-sourcing of (part-)evaluations to an external agency through a tendering-procedure. The Inspector's direct involvement in the execution of (part-)evaluations will then be considerably lightened. *A fortiori* this also applies with regard to involvement in multi-donor evaluations. It is self-evident that the effectiveness of an outside expert's input will be dependent on his/her quality. Good experts are scarce, particularly good evaluators. Sector and theme expertise in itself does not ensure quality, and evaluation expertise will need to be explicitly sought.

One aspect that deserves particular attention is that of involving experts from developing countries in evaluations. This will depend primarily on the subject that is to be evaluated in that such a choice would not always be appropriate. In evaluations where the involvement of such experts is feasible (e.g. at the local level or within a national organisation), particular attention must be given to three aspects: the cultural dimension, availability and capacity, and independence. The fact that a researcher may come from the same country or even the same region as the ultimate beneficiaries of the project does not guarantee better understanding of the cultural dimension. Firstly, developing countries are not culturally homogeneous. Moreover, the high level of education enjoyed by researchers from developing countries is sometimes accompanied by explicit rejection of the popular culture in less advantaged areas. Second, the majority of developing countries do not have a research or evaluation tradition similar to that in the West. If good evaluators are scarce in the West, that applies *a fortiori* also to developing countries. Finally, it is not always possible to gain insight into the degree to which an evaluator can operate independently without endangering his/her own future. All these factors must be given careful consideration when selecting experts from developing countries.

## **11 REPORTING**

In writing an evaluation report, allowance must be made for the fact that the evaluation results will be submitted to various stakeholders with diverse concerns and interests. The point of departure for IOB reports is that they are written primarily for Parliament, and this determines their design to a large extent. Parliament favours a brief and clear report of the main findings and points of special interest. Justification for the expenditure of state funds is the primary focus. Policy makers and institutions will be interested in the degree to which the report provides information on possibilities for adjustment. In all cases, it is essential that the report gives a clear survey of observations, analyses and evaluation.

The Terms of Reference should always be appended to the evaluation report to ensure its comprehensibility. The subjects evaluated should be dealt with systematically in the report, even if no answer can be found to certain questions. If necessary, additional information regarding evaluation methods used should be appended to the report.

Apart from evaluation reports, IOB publishes a series of working documents. These may include report sections if these can be read as independent documents and are of sufficient informative value and quality to be of relevance to interested parties. In addition, an Information Bulletin is published on each evaluation, in the form of a key

sheet in English/French or Dutch. It also issues a Dutch-language press bulletin. Finally, IOB reports are made accessible on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on its own website (<http://www.euforic.org/iob>).

## **12 QUALITY CONTROL**

Quality control will benefit from intensive mutual cooperation and a systematic peer review. It has therefore been decided that, when carrying out an evaluation, Inspectors should be able to count on substantive support from their colleagues. Start-up reports, Terms of Reference, possible subsidiary studies, and the draft final report will be discussed intensively by the Inspector with one or more so-called readers, colleague Inspectors, before being submitted to the departmental meeting.

## **13 FEEDBACK**

Feedback concerns the transmission of evaluation results back to the source in order that lessons learned may be integrated into future policy and its implementation. For the IOB, feedback is not restricted to the post-completion phase of the evaluation. Consultation with, and the transmission of information to, stakeholders occurs throughout the evaluation process: during the pre-research, when drawing-up the Terms of Reference, in the discussion of sub-studies, and with regard to the draft final report. Wherever necessary, consultation and feedback may take place in the developing country concerned. During the evaluation feedback is particularly important at the level of implementation; after completion, it is especially significant at the political and policy-making level.

Feedback may be provided in written or verbally. In addition to the keysheet mentioned earlier, IOB will ensure a wide distribution of the final report, partly by making the text available on internet. Final reports may also be discussed during workshops.

IOB final reports, usually accompanied by a reaction from the policy-makers, are submitted to Parliament by the Minister. The text of the response will only be checked by IOB for inaccuracies and inconsistencies, in the event of which IOB will consult with the policy-making body concerned.

## **14 SELF EVALUATION**

Each evaluation will be rounded-off with a critical review of the course of the project, obstacles encountered, errors made, etc., as a means by which to improve the approach to future investigations. Such a self-evaluation is written by the Inspector, in cooperation with the reader(s) if that is found desirable. The Terms of Reference will also be applicable to the self-evaluation. Systematic examination of the various clauses of the ToR will enable a clear insight into which parts of the evaluation were successful and which were less successful. In all cases, consideration should be given to: (1) the degree to which it has been possible to carry out the evaluation assignment; (2) possible differences between the time planning and the actual duration, and (3) the estimated and actual costs.

## **ANNEXES**

## **ANNEX 1 IOB EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

### **1 ROLLING PROGRAMMING**

Programming has a 'rolling' character in that the aim is to predict what will happen five years hence. The programme is drafted by IOB on the basis of wide consultation within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and elsewhere. The programming has to justify the manner in which it 'tops-up' the HGIS budget and the policy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in terms of the five-year evaluation obligation laid down in the Regulations on Government's Performance Data and Evaluation Research.

The draft programming is submitted to government and to HGIS Comptrollers. After the receipt of possible suggestions and their discussion in the IOB staff meeting, IOB management will determine the rolling plan which is then published as a working document and submitted to Parliament.

IOB's annual plan is a further specification of the rolling plan which enables the (re-) adjustment of priorities, whether as a result of a request by Parliament, by government and/or by budget holders, or of international initiatives that are endorsed by IOB.

In that annual plan, IOB substantiates the proposed activities and the expenditure of funds to be incurred during the coming year. In the retrospective section of the annual plan, i.e. the annual report, IOB accounts for its activities in the preceding year.

### **2 PREPARATIONS FOR IOB EVALUATIONS**

#### **2.1 Start-up report**

Each planned evaluation is initiated with a start-up report written by the Inspector. This should provide insight into the nature of that which is to be evaluated and into the design of the pre-research. The start-up report will be discussed in the departmental meeting and adjusted if necessary.

The pre-research should give rise to draft Terms of Reference for the evaluation and may also provide a data base for an IOB working document (see 3.5).

#### **2.2 Terms of Reference for the Evaluation**

Terms of Reference will be drawn up on the basis of the pre-research. The draft ToR will be discussed with the budget holder and/or with relevant policy-making units, and subsequently submitted to the departmental meeting, after which they will be adjusted if thought necessary. The amended ToR will be submitted by the IOB directorate to the policy-making authority for comment. Finalisation will be by the IOB directorate.

### **3 EVALUATION IMPLEMENTATION**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The Inspector is responsible for the (pre-)research that takes place under his/her guidance, and for which he/she is accountable to IOB management. The evaluation is

carried out within the integrated management framework laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signifying that:

- (1) IOB management is responsible for the appointment and contracting of personnel by IOB, and
- (2) IOB management is responsible for entering into commitments and contracts for the supply of goods and/or services.

A number of stages involved in the implementing evaluations are explained below. Details with respect to financial and control functions may be found in *Administratieve Organisatie IOB* (Administrative Organisation IOB), including responsibility registers.

### **3.2 Commitments and contracts**

The operations manual is applicable to all commitments and contracts. The commitment for the evaluation is accepted by IOB management by endorsing the start-up report or the evaluation's ToR, of which the budget forms part. The Inspector will record any further proposals regarding tendering for (parts of) the evaluation, including whether or not a waiver will be necessary, in an accompanying memorandum.

Within the specified commitment the Inspector is empowered to introduce possible changes to the budget, in consultation with the IOB Controller. It may become necessary to amend the commitment during the course of the project. Proposals in that respect are submitted to IOB management through the office of the Controller.

### **3.3 The Involvement of Outside Experts**

The Inspector will submit a memorandum to IOB management, *via* the Controller, regarding consultants, researchers and trainees who will be involved in the evaluation. That memorandum will also include a proposal contract together with the candidate's CV and the ToR for the work to be implemented. After management's approval and in consultation with the Controller, the Inspector will finalise the contract, adhering to standard regulations for that purpose (Manual Management and Administrative Organisation, IOB).

### **3.4 Reporting on IOB Evaluations**

It is customary for sub-reports (file studies, field research, etc.) to be produced during an IOB evaluation. The information that these provide form the building-blocks for the project's final report. After the parties involved in the evaluation have made their opinions known (written comments), the conclusions reached by the sub-reports together with the complete draft final report are placed before the departmental meeting. The Inspector is responsible for reporting on discussions at that meeting and on decisions taken. The report is finalised by IOB management after comments made during the meeting have been processed. The report is then submitted by IOB to the Minister(s) for forwarding to Parliament.

The Inspector is responsible for distributing the report and the key sheet based thereon, and also for entering the digital version on the IOB Euforic website ([www.euforic.org/iob](http://www.euforic.org/iob)). A summary of the report together with the complete text is submitted for inclusion in DAC WP-EV's evaluation inventory. The Inspector will consult regularly with IOB management regarding the progress of activities.

### **3.5 The Writing and Publication of IOB Working Documents**

Evaluation sub-reports may be published in IOB's Working Documents series if it is considered that their contents are of interest to a wider circle. Other documents may

also be included in the series (research papers, methodological surveys, IOB programming reports). The relevance of whether or not a working document should be published is discussed during the departmental meeting. The series has a bibliographical ISSN number (ISSN:1566-3000). Individual working documents are not given a series number but are listed under month and year.

Reports are classified under the name of the person who carried out the evaluation in question and is responsible for the contents. The Foreword is written by IOB which will provide its own opinion of the report in an appendix, if that is considered necessary. IOB is also responsible for production and distribution.

The expense involved in editing and revising a sub-report to make it suitable for publication as a Working Document, and for its production, is debited to the budget for the evaluation concerned.

Suggestions regarding editorial work and typography may be found in their respective Guidelines.

### **3.6 Counselling on IOB Evaluations**

In consultation with IOB management, the Inspector will ask one or two IOB colleagues to serve as sounding boards during the evaluation process. As a result, each IOB Inspector is counselled during the evaluation by IOB management and by a maximum of two colleagues.

### **3.7 Reference Group**

In monitoring the quality of the evaluation, IOB can make use of reference groups made up of people who are involved in the project and/or interested experts. By preference, the reference group is set up after conclusion of the ToR. It will be chaired by IOB management and will meet at key moments during the evaluation (to discuss sub-reports and the draft final report). The Inspector will report on reference group discussions and/or will summarise the written comments submitted by group members.

### **3.8 Self-evaluation**

After rounding-off the evaluation, the Inspector will write a report in which he/she critically reviews the course of the evaluation and, if possible, draws lessons for the future. That report is then discussed during the departmental meeting.

### **3.9 Policy Report**

The Inspector will check the draft policy report for actual inaccuracies or inconsistencies, in consultation with the authors.

## **ANNEX 2      JOINT INTERNATIONAL EVALUATIONS: THE PROCEDURE**

### **1    PREFACE**

Joint international (multi-donor) evaluations are undertaken under the joint responsibility of a number of donors and/or donor organisations. Such evaluations are usually guided by a steering committee made up of the evaluation services of the donors that support the evaluation. IOB may be involved in multi-donor evaluations in two ways: it may be the initiator and thus mobiliser of the project, or it may be a participant. In each case, IOB will need to make manpower and finance available with which to guide the evaluation process and to bring it to a good end. Decisions regarding the evaluation will be taken by the steering group. It is thus vital that the standpoint taken by the IOB representative in the steering group is nourished by comments of IOB colleagues on the core documents of the evaluation (Start-up report, draft ToR, draft final report).

A number of substantive guidelines for setting-up and conducting multi-donor evaluations may be found in 'Effective Practices in Conducting a Joint Multi-Donor Evaluation' (Evaluation and Aid Effectiveness, No.4, 2000; OECD/DAC Working Party on Aid Evaluation).

*Procedure IOB-onderzoek* ('Procedures of IOB research') serves as point-of-departure for the handling of multi-donor evaluations within IOB. In view of the particular character of multi-donor evaluations, a number of matters are discussed below in the order in which they are treated in the *Procedures*.

### **2    ROLLING PROGRAMMING**

Joint international (multi-donor) evaluations in which IOB wishes to take the lead are announced in the rolling plan. IOB annual plans, in which longer-term plans are specified in more detail, may include new initiatives for joint evaluations to be undertaken together with other donors.

### **3    PREPARATION**

#### **3.3 Start-up Report**

A joint multi-donor evaluation is usually, but not always, initiated by a start-up report. This should provide insight into the nature of that which is to be evaluated and of any preliminary investigation that has been carried out. The start-up report is written by the evaluation department of the donor who initiates the project, and then discussed in the steering group consisting of representatives of the evaluation departments of those donors that wish to support the evaluation. In the event that IOB initiates the evaluation, the start-up report will be discussed at an IOB departmental meeting. If found necessary, amendments will then be made to the report, after which it will be submitted to the steering group. If IOB is not the initiator, the start-up report will also be submitted to the departmental meeting for comment. If that is not feasible (e.g. because the initiator submits it at too short notice), resort can be had to written comments.

The steering group will decide whether a preliminary investigation is needed before the Terms of Reference are drawn up for the actual evaluation.

### **3.4 Terms of Reference for the Evaluation**

The ToR are drawn up by the initiator, if necessary on the basis of a pre-investigation. The Inspector charged by IOB with the leadership or counselling of the joint multi-donor evaluation will discuss the draft ToR with the budget holder or with the relevant policy unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The ToR will then be discussed in the departmental meeting. If IOB initiates the evaluation, the draft ToR will be amended on the basis of that discussion, and then submitted to the steering group for discussion and finalisation. If IOB is not the initiator, comments made during the IOB meeting will be discussed by the steering group. If discussion at the departmental meeting is not possible (e.g. due to the draft ToR being submitted by the initiator at too short notice), a round of written comments will be held. The IOB management will send the finalised ToR to the responsible Minister(s) for information.

## **4 THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MULTI-DONOR EVALUATIONS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The Inspector charged by IOB with the leadership or support of the joint international (multi-donor) evaluation is responsible for the research undertaken within the framework of the evaluation. He/she is accountable to the management of IOB. The research will be undertaken within the integrated management framework laid down by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, signifying that:

1. the appointment and contracting of personnel by IOB is the preserve of IOB management, and
2. the acceptance of commitments and signing of contracts for the supply of goods and/or services is reserved to IOB management.

A number of steps with regard to research within the framework of a joint multi-donor evaluation are explained below. Details regarding financial and managerial operations may be found in IOB's *Administratieve Organisatie* (Administrative Organisation [AO]), as well as in the appropriate tables of responsibility.

### **4.2 Commitments and Contracts**

The Management Manual is applicable with regard to IOB commitments for financial contributions to joint multi-donor evaluations carried out under the auspices of another donor, and with regard to commitments and contracts for research within the framework of such evaluations implemented under IOB leadership. IOB will enter into research commitments on the basis of the ToR for the evaluation which have been finalised by the Steering Group and which include the budget.

In joint international multi-donor evaluations, the actual evaluation is normally contracted-out to consultants. Proposals regarding tendering for (parts of) the evaluation are discussed in the steering committee. If the evaluation is implemented within the framework of Dutch legislation, as is usually the case when IOB is the initiator, the tendering must conform to the regulations of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Within the agreed financial commitment, the Inspector is empowered to make necessary changes to the budget, in consultation with the IOB Controller. Alterations to that commitment may prove necessary during the evaluation, in which case proposals should be submitted in memoranda *via* the IOB Controller to IOB management. If IOB is initiator, changes to the budget will be made known to the steering group. To exceed the budget will require a decision by management.

### **4.3 The Use of Outside Experts**

The involvement of consultants must be in accordance with the tender regulations maintained by the donor leading the evaluation. If IOB is the initiator, the Inspector will write a memorandum proposing that the consultant be contracted who has been selected on the basis of his/her tender. That memorandum will include substantive and financial proposals as well as the ToR for the work to be done. After IOB management has finalised this memorandum, the Inspector will attend to the contracting, in consultation with the IOB Controller. The customary rules for contracting will then apply (Manual Management and Administrative Organisation, IOB).

### **4.4 Reporting on joint multi-donor evaluations**

During a joint international multi-donor evaluation, sub-reports will usually be produced (file studies, field researches, etc.). The information thus provided will form the material for the final report on the evaluation. After the parties involved in the evaluation have made their opinions known in writing, the conclusions of the draft sub-reports and of the draft final report will be submitted to the departmental meeting. The Inspector will report on the discussion of the reports and on decisions taken in their regard.

The results of those discussions will be submitted to a meeting of the Steering Group which will finalise the sub-reports and final report after ensuring that comments made by its meeting have been included. If discussion at the departmental meeting is not possible because the draft reports are submitted to IOB by the evaluation's initiator at too short notice, a round of written comments will be held. The definite final report will be submitted by IOB to the minister(s) for forwarding to Parliament.

The Inspector is responsible for distributing the report and the keysheet based thereon, and also for including the digital version on the IOB Euforic website. A summary of the report together with the entire text will be submitted by the evaluation's initiator for inclusion in the evaluation inventory of DAC WP-EV.

The Inspector will consult regularly with IOB management regarding the progress of activities.

There is a possibility that sub-reports of joint multi-donor evaluations will be published in the series Working Documents IOB. The same procedure will then be followed as laid down in item 3.5 of the Procedures for IOB Research.

### **4.5 IOB Support for Joint International (multi-donor) Evaluations and Reference Group**

This is not applicable since the evaluation will be supported substantively by a Steering Committee made up of the evaluation services of donors who support the evaluation.

#### **4.6 Self-evaluation**

After completion of the multi-donor evaluation, the Inspector will write a report in which he will critically review the course of the evaluation and, wherever possible, will draw lessons for the future. That report will be discussed during the departmental meeting.

#### **4.7 The Policy Reaction**

In consultation with its authors, the Inspector will check the draft policy reaction to the joint international multi-donor evaluation for any inaccuracies or inconsistencies.