EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

by

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26th July 1991

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Appendices

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms. Final Synthesis Report

I. Introduction

1.1 The EEC Council, at its meeting on 16th May, 1989, concluded (inter alia): "The Council considers that the main point of evaluation, for both the Commission and the Member States, is to ensure that full account is taken of the results (of evaluations) in the design and implementation of future development projects. In this connection it is up to the Commission and the Member States, each for its own part, to introduce adequate procedures".

1.2 The Heads of Evaluation Services, at their meeting on September 27th, 1989, agreed to set up a study of the effectiveness or "quality" of feedback mechanisms. Dr Hellmut Eggers (then Head of the Evaluation Service of the Commission) and Dr Basil Cracknell (Evaluation Consultant) carried out an interim review of Denmark, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the EEC Commission, and the report was discussed by the Heads of Evaluation Services in February 1990. It was decided to continue the review along the same lines, and to cover those remaining states that wished to participate. In the event all the remaining Member States have taken part, so this synthesis report covers all twelve, and also the EEC Commission. Appendix I gives details of the various missions, and who participated in them.

1.3 The participation of the former, and current, Heads of the Commission Evaluation Unit in this review does not imply that they have had any share in the formulation of the substantive findings, conclusions and recommendations of this report, for which the consultant has exclusive responsibility. It is on the basis of all 13 reports, together with this final synthesis report, that the Head of the Commission Evaluation Unit will formulate the relevant part of the draft report to the EEC Council, to be approved by the Commission authorities prior to its release to the Council.

1.4 Dr Cracknell, Dr Eggers, Mr Nicora and Mr Waffelaert, would like to express their great appreciation of the warm welcome and full cooperation they received from the Member States, whilst Dr Cracknell would like to record his appreciation of the very positive spirit in which he was received by the EEC Commission. All the participating agencies were given an opportunity to comment on the draft reports, and the final versions were distributed to all Member States and the EEC Commission usually within a few weeks of the mission having taken place. Comments made by the Heads of Evaluation Services on the draft final synthesis report, at their meeting on July 16th, 1991, have been taken into account in this final version.

II. Terms of Reference

2.1 The full Terms of Reference, prepared following approval in principle by the Heads of Evaluation Services in September, 1989, are given in Appendix II. They cover these main aspects:

(a) Lesson learning: assessing the quality of evaluation reports, and the extent to which they are used for feedback.
(b) Practical applications of the lessons learned: what kind of feedback mechanisms exist, and how effective are they?
(c) Conclusions and recommendations: these are to be formulated to improve feedback mechanisms.

2.2 The phrase "each for its own part" in Para 1.1 above reflects the importance attached by the Council to the avoidance of normalisation for normalisation's sake, and the need to keep always in mind, when considering different feedback mechanisms, the particular circumstances in each Member State and in the EEC Commission. The review has amply confirmed the wisdom of this cautious approach. Agencies differ greatly in such respects as: the scale of their operations; the extent to which they have staff stationed in the developing countries; the basic objectives of their aid programmes, etc. Feedback mechanisms inevitably reflect these differences.

Approach Adopted in this Synthesis Report

2.3 In accordance with Para 2.2 above, each review report began with a section summarising the particular characteristics of that aid agency. It is neither practicable, nor necessary, to adopt that approach in this synthesis report. However care has been taken not to infer that what may be a good procedure or mechanism for one aid agency must necessarily be good for another. The purpose of this synthesis is not to look for normalisation for normalisation's sake, but simply to draw attention to feedback mechanisms that have proved to be especially effective, in the hope that the Member States and the Commission might decide for themselves whether they can learn something from a study of how others learn from experience and act on the basis of these lessons.

2.4 The approach adopted in the country reviews was to identify the strong points and weak points of each evaluation agency's feedback mechanisms. For this synthesis, however, a different approach is called for. The emphasis is not on what each agency is doing but rather on the feedback mechanisms themselves, and individual aid agencies are only referred to if they happen to be operating a particularly innovative feedback system. Thus the synthesis is rather like a "menu" of promising feedback mechanisms, from which Member States and the EEC Commission can draw according to their needs.

2.5 A valuable by-product of the review is the library of feedback documents that has been assembled in the Commission.

III. Executive Summary

Main Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions

Feedback Materials

- Most individual project evaluations are now intended to contribute towards an evaluation of a sector or a theme.
- Sustainability is now a key factor in all evaluations, but it is not covered as well as it might be because of the difficulty of having sufficient specialists on evaluation teams: however the situation is improving.
- Some Member States do only inter-phase evaluation (ie evaluating the results of a completed phase before taking a decision on the next phase), but most do a mixture of this and ex-post evaluation. Evaluators in all the Member States and the Commission are becoming increasingly involved in the methodology of monitoring, but it is recognised that "impact" evaluation remains crucially important since it yields evidence of sustainability.
- Most Member States and the Commission now have good procedures for ensuring that evaluations meet felt needs, and arrive at an opportune time.
- There is a consensus that the best way of reconciling the twin objectives of lesson-learning and accountability, is through the use of mixed teams (outsiders plus in-house staff). The recommendations of evaluation reports are of vital importance, and they need to be made operationally relevant if they are going to lead to action. Some Member States have evolved effective means for ensuring this.
- A continuous diet of failures in evaluation reports can give a very misleading impression to the public; moreover operational staff can learn as much from successes as from failures.
- Some Member States and the Commission have introduced short one-sheet summaries of evaluation reports which are proving extremely useful in encouraging wider feedback.
- A weakness of many Member States' evaluation reports is that, despite the efforts being made in this direction, there is still relatively little beneficiary participation, either in the evaluations themselves or in the report-writing, so that the reports tend to present only the donor's point of view and to be weak on sustainability.
- There are differing policies with regard to openness of evaluation reports, a few Member States keeping them all confidential, but most adopting an increasingly open policy. All Member States, and the Commission, agree on the importance of feeding the public with evaluation information, and those that do not pursue a policy of openness nevertheless go out of their way to publish evaluation syntheses aimed at a mass audience.
- In recent years all Member States, and the Commission, have

cooperated in tackling cross-cutting issues in evaluation in a systematic way (role of women, environment, etc). Evaluators are increasingly synthesising the results of monitoring reports to draw out wider lessons of value to the office as a whole.

- Most Member States, and the Commission, now produce annual reports on their evaluation activities, and increasingly these include brief summaries of the main findings.
- With the growing stocks of evaluation reports, and an ever widening circle of interest, it is important to institute good stock and flow management systems, and Member States, and the Commission, have now done this.

Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback Within the Agency

- Informal feedback is probably as important as formalised feedback, but in the nature of things its effectiveness is difficult to assess. It can be said however, that where staff are located at a distance from eachother the need for formalised feedback systems is much greater.
- So far as formal feedback is concerned, this can be either at the policy level or at the sector/programme/project level. Among some Member States, and the Commission, there is a disturbing lack of any effective procedure for ensuring that the policy implications of evaluations are taken fully into account, although three Member States have evolved different. but very effective, means of ensuring policy-level feedback. The factors these have in common are: submission of evaluation findings to a senior management committee; decisions taken on action; and careful monitoring of follow-up.
- It has been found to be essential that Evaluation Units turn what are often fairly vague recommendations of evaluation reports into specific proposals for action, and that they make sure these have the support of colleagues most immediately concerned before they are submitted.
- Feedback at the policy level also takes place (though less directly) through the findings of evaluations being incorporated into various kinds of strategy documents: country policy papers, sector planning papers, and suchlike.
- So far as feedback at the sector/programme/project level is concerned, the situation is far more satisfactory. In the case of inter-phase evaluations, instant feedback to the project or programme is assured. However with ex-post evaluations that is not the case, and appropriate methodologies for ensuring feedback have to be introduced. To help ensure that evaluation findings are not overlooked when new projects are being designed and implemented, two closely interlocking mechanisms have been evolved. The first is the "Integrated Approach", which lists the 7 key factors aimed at ensuring sustainability, and which need to be taken into account at each stage of the project cycle. This is being

formally adopted by the Commission, but the same basic ideas are now being incorporated into project management in the Member States as well.

- The second mechanism is the Logical Framework, which is mainly aimed at ensuring that project objectives are carefully set out, criteria of success identified, and risks and assumptions assessed. This makes an excellent vehicle for the feedback of evaluation findings, and it is rapidly being introduced into most Member States and the Commission.
- In addition to these two basic mechanisms, there are also other important ways in which evaluation findings enter into the "bloodstream" of the aid agency, and these exist in all the Member States and the Commission. They include: involvement on the part of the Evaluation Unit in the development of management techniques covering all stages of the project cycle (but not getting drawn into the project management itself); making sure that evaluation findings are brought to the attention of operational staff; building up the "corporate memory" through databanks, manuals etc; and holding seminars and workshops at which evaluation findings are discussed.

Feedback to, and from, Outsiders

- Feedback to those outside the aid agency can meet the accountability objective, but it should also be two-way, ie facilitating feedback from outside to the agency. Two-way feedback can be achieved through public seminars and conferences, although these are relatively rare among the Member States and the Commission.
- More common are the indirect means of feedback, such as feedback to committees acting as intermediaries between the aid agency and various interested parties outside. Several Member States have very effective committees of this type, and they fulfil an important two-way feedback role. All agencies pay great attention to feedback to the press and the media, although evaluation findings play only a small direct role in this. Nor do they figure prominently in feedback to the development education institutions, the NGOs or the beneficiary countries. However interchange of evaluation reports between the Member States, and with the Commission, is highly developed, whilst Parliament in most Member States and the Community takes a keen interest in evaluation feedback.

B. Recommendations

Recommendations were made in each report relating to the Member State reviewed, and to the Commission, and there is no need to repeat them here. However there were a number of more general recommendations, or rather suggestions for consideration, that would apply more widely, and these are as follows:

Feedback Materials

(1) There is a need to find ways in which the factors of sustainability can more effectively be covered in evaluation reports, eg by improving the representation on evaluation teams of specialisms such as environment, role of women, and sociology.

(2) Most Evaluation Units (ie other than those focussing primarily on broad policy aspects of aid) need to go even further down the road of ensuring client orientation in the selection of topics for evaluation, and in getting the findings in front of staff just when they are most likely to need the information. They also need to ensure that evaluation findings have direct operational relevance, and that they focus on recommendations for action that are realistic and practical. These are both fields where greater interchange of experience and ideas between the Member States, and with the Commission, would be desirable. Both issues have a strong bearing on the general question of ensuring effective policy follow-up to evaluations referred to below.

(3) It is important that evaluation reports throw light on factors making for success as well as failure.

(4) Short one-sheet summaries have proved so generally useful that those Member States that do not already have them might wish to consider introducing them, using a compatible sectoral classification and ring-binder system.

(5) Despite their best efforts, the Member States (but not the Commission, which has advanced a long way in this direction) have a poor record of achievement when it comes to beneficiary participation in evaluations and in the writing of evaluation reports. This introduces donor bias, and weakens their value for feedback, especially as regards the sustainability of projects. It would be desirable if each Member State were to work out its own policy for improving beneficiary participation, eg through improved two-way dialogue with the beneficiary countries (and if appropriate the actual project beneficiaries as well), whilst also bearing in mind the possibility of improved inter-donor cooperation in this field (eg joint workshops in the developing countries centred on evaluation syntheses).

(6) To improve the feedback of evaluation findings to the press and the media it may be desirable to experiment with different ways of "working up" evaluation findings into human-interest stories that would be acceptable to the media.

(7) Whilst evaluators must be careful not to become directly involved in monitoring or review activities, they are increasingly deriving broader lessons, of value to the office as a whole, from the results of these activities, and this

process seems to be worth encouraging. At the same time they have a continuing role in helping to improve the usefulness of monitoring systems from the viewpoint of aid effectiveness and broader policy requirements (examples are the Commission's Early Warning System, and the way evaluators have been able to enhance the usefulness of Project Completion Reports).

(8) Annual reports of Member State/Commission Evaluation Units might go beyond merely recording the key evaluation activites: they might, where possible, also indicate what action has been taken within the agency in response to the recommendations in evaluation reports.

Feedback Mechanisms

(9) So far as informal feedback is concerned, the EEC Commission should be encouraged to continue to develop informal meetings of specialists from the Member States and the Commission, along the lines of the existing ones for Livestock, Trade, Fisheries and Evaluation.

(10) As to formal feedback at the policy level, there is a need for those Member States, and the EEC Commission, that do not as yet have effective feedback mechanisms, to learn from those that do. At present this is the weakest link in the feedback chain, but there is now sufficient experience of effective mechanisms within the Community for other Member States to profit from it, and to introduce effective systems of their own. What is crucial is that senior policy makers should review evaluation findings and recommendations, decide what action should be taken, and then ensure that follow up is monitored.

(11) Evaluation Units need to take great care to "process" evaluation findings and recommendations for senior policy makers in such a way that the latter can take specific decisions - vague recommendations are generally useless. This will usually entail prior consultation with other staff to make sure that the recommendations are realistic and feasible. Lesson-learning, valuable as it is, cannot be sufficient justification for evaluation activity: it should also lead to action.

(12) So far as feedback at the sector/programme/project level is concerned, experience has shown that this is made vastly more effective if certain project management techniques are used at each stage of the project cycle, and the two most important of these are the Integrated Approach and the Logical Framework. As both these techniques are still to some extent in the experimental stage it would be a great help if those who have gained experience in their use could share it with the others, perhaps through the aegis of the regular meetings of Heads of Evaluation Services.

(13) Another avenue of feedback at the sector/programme/project level is through databank systems, and sector manuals....or more practical still, short project preparation and evaluation outlines, for each sub-sector, designed for the non-specialist. Member States and the Commission, are starting to build up their own "corporate memories" through data systems of this kind, and some have nominated members of staff to advise them on where the agency should be going in this field. However many difficult problems are being encountered, and there are legitimate doubts as to the extent to which scarce resources should be diverted to this use. The first priority should be to ensure that the initiatives already taken by the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation (using the CIDA computerised databank system) are given a fair trial and thoroughly evaluated, since this is an area where it makes sense to advance on a common front rather than each agency pressing ahead in isolation. It is also important to monitor carefully what the UN agencies are doing in the broader field of project information systems and data bases generally.

(14) So far surprisingly little use has been made of evaluation reports for staff training, and it is recommended that Evaluation Units investigate the possibilities of more use being made of them for this purpose.

(15) There is as yet no consensus on the desirability of openness with regard to evaluation reports. Many Member States have now opted for a policy of openness, but a few have been reluctant to follow suit, mainly for fear that it might inhibit the evaluators from being frank in their comments. One Member State, which used to share this concern, opted for openness some years ago, and has been very satisfied with the results. It may be that those Member States that still classify all their evaluation reports as Confidential may eventually decide that there are ways of ensuring frankness on the part of the evaluators without having to deny access to the reports to all but a select group, usually the staff of the agency itself.

IV. Feedback Materials

4.1 Each country report examined first the materials available for feedback, ie the evaluation reports etc, and then the mechanisms for feedback. Although there was inevitably a degree of overlap, the approach proved to be a useful one and is adopted again for this synthesis. There are two main types of evaluation reports, those prepared from specific evaluation studies, which are the main body, and those arising from other evaluation activities, which are secondary but still important.

Reports Prepared from Specific Evaluations

4.2 Syntheses Apart from one or two agencies, the general impression was that there is now a good coverage of evaluation reports, by type and sector: and as importantly, the principle is now widely accepted that individual project evaluations should generally contribute towards an evaluation of a sector as a whole, or perhaps a theme. This ensures that evaluation activity can yield results that are useful for broader policy purposes as well as for improving the quality of project and programme implementation. One agency reported that whereas in the past it had used individual project evaluations, carried out independently, as the raw material for syntheses, it found that this was unsatisfactory since the original terms of reference did not always cover the topics of the syntheses adequately. Now they generally carry out individual evaluations with the requirements of the synthesis specifically in mind. It should be added that this particular agency also has a parallel evaluation system which carries out only individual evaluations, so it is better placed to do this than other agencies that only have one Evaluation Unit.

4.3 Sustainability It was also very encouraging to find that most agencies now attach great importance to the proper coverage of the key factors that help to ensure sustainability, such as: beneficiary (target group) participation; choice of technology; socio-cultural factors; role of women; institution-building; the environment; and self-help. The DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation has had a major influence in ensuring that such factors are now fully taken into account, especially through the process whereby members of the Group have agreed to include them as cross-cutting issues in every evaluation. It is now rare for such factors to be omitted in evaluation reports.

However there is no ground for complacency, because it is one thing to ensure that these factors are covered in the terms of reference, but it is another to ensure that they are properly covered in the actual evaluations. The basic problem is that it is rarely possible to appoint specialists in these areas to evaluation teams, which are still heavily dominated by engineers, technical specialists or economists. There are exceptions of course, where one of these factors is perceived to be specially important, eg an environmentalist might well be appointed to a team evaluating a large dam project, but for most projects it would not be economic to appoint such a specialist, and the enviromental issues would have to be covered by the other members of the team. The problem begins even further back, because in some agencies there are no such specialists even on their own staff. One important Member State for example has no professional economists or sociologists on its staff. In these circumstances it is difficult to ensure that these sustainability factors are adequately covered. However the situation is improving as there is a growing recognition of their importance, and increasingly the Member States and the Commission are appointing specialists in such areas as the role of women, environment, and socio-cultural factors. They are well aware of the importance of evaluation activity and are playing an important part in promoting more effective coverage of their own specialisms, eg through nominating evaluators for evaluation teams, suggesting appropriate terms of reference, etc.

4.4 Inter-phase -v- Ex-Post There are substantial differences among the Member States regarding the relative importance they attach to inter-phase evaluation (ie evaluations that take place at the end of a phase of a project and before a decision is taken about the next phase; this is sometimes called "mid=-term review" or "on-going evaluation": it is similar to, yet should always be differentiated from, the process of monitoring), and ex-post evaluation. This difference of emphasis of course affects the kinds of evaluation reports that are produced. Several Member States confine their evaluation activities almost entirely to inter-phase evaluation. This is partly because they have few completed projects to evaluate in any case (either because they are relative newcomers on the aid scene, or because their projects tend to be spread over many years, one phase usually acting as the springboard for the next), and partly because they feel that inter-phase evaluation is more useful because the project/programme is still active and something can be done to improve it if things are not going well. Most agencies now accept the latter argument as a good reason for trying to improve the effectiveness of project monitoring, and Evaluation Units are increasingly enhancing their advisory role with regard to the usefulness of these activities in the evaluation context.

However that trend in no way diminishes the need for ex-post evaluations, since only these can yield valuable "impact" results. The more importance agencies attach to sustainability, the more important becomes ex-post evaluation, since it is only when a project has been operating for a few years that one can tell whether it is sustainable or not. Agencies that only do inter-phase evaluation are placing their main emphasis on aid delivery, whilst most experience shows that aid delivery is not the main problem - the main problem lies in ensuring sustainability. One agency has neatly resolved this problem by carrying out "Final Progress Reports" several years after the aid funding as come to an end. It is true that those who prepare them are mostly the same people who implemented the projects earlier, so there is a lack of impartiality, but even so, there is a very valuable flow of impact information from this process that must surely improve the quality of project preparation and implementation, and improve the chances of sustainability. However another agency reports that it would find difficulty in going back to projects some years after the aid has ceased because the agency no longer has any locus regarding the project. Not all agencies are agreed that this is a problem, but where it exists, one way of meeting it would be for the agency to retain a small continuing involvement, eg with small amounts of technical cooperation, for some years after the main aid flows have come to an end. In this way the agency could retain a window into what happens, and can both learn useful lessons about sustainability and also retain a capability of coming in with further assistance if necessary.

4.5 <u>Client-Orientation</u> One of the most important criteria of a good evaluation report is whether it meets the needs of the client, both in terms of its content, and in terms of its timing. It needs to give the potential user what he wants, when he wants it. This is not easy to achieve because evaluations obviously take time to plan and implement and there is always the risk that when the results become available the immediate need has evaporated. However the risk of this happening can be minimised by trying to ensure that the evaluation programme is geared as closely as possible to the felt needs of the potential users. The Member States have moved a long way down this road, and most of them now go to considerable lengths to ensure client orientation. The EEC Evaluation Unit, for its part, has carried out an extensive survey of staff to find out what are the key issues that need to be evaluated. Member States that used simply to invite the clients to comment on the Evaluation Unit's own proposals have now reversed the process and invite the potential users to nominate topics for evaluation. This is not to say that the Evaluation Unit should not have ideas of its own. Clearly it should. Through its close relationship with senior management it is often in a better position to assess the issues at the broader policy level that need evaluating, than are the operational departments, and through its work of reviewing the broad canvas of results flowing from the monitoring and project completion reports it often has early warning of issues that need evaluating. One Member State has initiated a system whereby it collates information on a regular basis about all new projects coming into the agency's project "pipeline", partly so that it can ensure that evaluation findings relevant to that kind of project are brought to the notice of the operational desk (so achieving the "timeliness" objective referred to earlier), but also so that it is well informed about the kinds of projects that are becoming significant and may need evaluating soon. Several Member States operate a procedure whereby the annual programme of planned evaluations has to be approved by a senior management committee, and this also helps to ensure that the programme is closely geared to the needs of the office.

In most Member States the "clients" are generally the operational departments. But this is not always the case. In one Member State for example, the principal "client" is the Minister himself. In that case "client-orientation" assumes a rather different significance, since the Minister is more interested in policy aspects than in strictly operational ones, and the Evaluation Unit in fact tries not to become too closely involved with the operational desks so as to preserve its independence. There is a parallel "internal" evaluation process in this agency which takes care of the operational aspects. In another Member State the need for independence on the part of the Evaluation Unit is deemed to be more important than client orientation which, it is feared, might lead to the Evaluation Unit becoming too heavily involved in project cycle management.

4.6 Operational Relevance It is not enough merely to ensure that the choice of evaluation topics meets the needs of the office. It is also essential to ensure that the reports themselves address the sorts of issues that are operationally relevant, and that they do so in a practical way so that they can lead to action. This requirement raises the very difficult question of what should be the right balance between the need for operational relevance (which can best be achieved by having staff from the agency itself on the evaluation team), and the need for some impartiality and freshness of approach (which would call for outsiders). In essence this is a choice between emphasising the lesson-learning objectives of evaluation, favouring the use of in-house evaluators, and the accountability objective, favouring the use of outsiders. Using agency staff to do evaluations means that the experience gained remains in-house. It also provides the Evaluation Unit with valuable experience of carrying out evaluations so that it is better placed to commission outside evaluators; and it enhances the attractiveness of evaluation work to the staff concerned. On the other hand, if outside evaluators are used it is often possible to find someone with just the required technical skill and experience for the particular project to be evaluated (one Member State is even prepared to look outside its own country for evaluators if necessary). These are just some of the pros and cons. Member States have adopted different solutions to this problem, but the general consensus now seems to be that teams comprising both agency staff and outsiders are the most effective.

4.7 Member States have found that evaluation reports written entirely by outsiders tend to have an academic flavour, and to fight shy of making recommendations about how the agency operates because they are not familiar enough with those aspects: so the Evaluation Unit has to do a lot of interpretation to turn vague ideas into working recommendations. One Member State avoids this happening by appointing a member of the Ministry's technical services (from outside the Evaluation Unit) as the supervisor for each evaluation. One or two Member States do not have sufficient staff resources to appoint their own staff to evaluation teams, but they insist on their staff having a major input into the drawing up of the terms of reference, guiding the evaluators during their work, and de-briefing them in detail when the report is being prepared. Thus although they may not actually be team members, they have had a substantial role in the whole process of preparing the report. One Member State relies on commissioned evaluators to do the basic field investigation work, but its own staff have an important role to play in the latter part of the evaluation process leading up to the writing of the reports, whilst the syntheses are in fact the sole responsibility of the Evaluation Unit staff. This ensures that whatever recommendations are made are truly operationally relevant. Another Member State usually insists that the member of the Evaluation Unit on the evaluation mission has the primary reponsibility for the writing of the report. Another Member State regards its Evaluation Unit staff member on the evaluation team as an integral member of the team, sharing full responsibility for the report. However when the report has been delivered, the Evaluation Unit then prepares a "cover note" which accompanies the report when it is submitted to the senior management committee. This focusses especially on the recommendations, and conveys the views of relevant specialist staff in the agency about them, and if necessary presents its own proposals for action by the committee. The main objective of most evaluation reports is that they should lead to some improvement in the quality of aid administration, and procedures have to be evolved to maximise the chances of this happening. Nearly all Member States now insist upon recommendations being incorporated into evaluation reports, and some regard these as being even more important than the "lessons learned" since they lead directly to action.

There is clearly a tight-rope to be walked between the need to preserve a reasonable degree of independence from the operational desks, whilst at the same time ensuring client orientation and operational relevance. In a few Member States two separate and parallel evaluation systems have evolved, which enables each objective to be pursued separately. But in most Member States the one Evaluation Unit has to do its best to satisfy both requirements at the same time. On the whole, they seem to have been remarkably successful, and the trend towards increasing operational relevance/client orientation has not been accompanied by any loss of independence on the part of the Evaluation Units.

4.8 Need to Balance Successes and Failures Several Member States commented that one weakness of many evaluation reports is that they tend to over-emphasise failures rather than successes: indeed some commissioned evaluators seem to think that they are being asked to identify only things that went wrong. Attempts are made, in standard terms of reference, to prevent this imbalance, but still it tends to occur. Not only is there a risk, in those cases where the evaluation reports are made public, that the public will get a distorted idea of the effectiveness of aid operations, but it means that the many useful lessons that can be learned from successes tend to be lost. Staff in one Member State said that they are only too well aware of the mistakes they have made, but what they would like to know more about are the successes that they and their colleagues have scored, and how they might be replicated.

4.9 Need for Summaries One of the problems with the full evaluation reports is that very few people within the agency (and probably outside it) have the time to read the full reports, or even the kind of summaries that usually appear in the front of them. Several Member States, and the Commission, have overcome this problem by introducing short summaries (usually on one sheet of paper) which are distributed very widely round the agency and outside. These contain just the kernel of the evaluation. Staff are issued with ring binders and they place the summaries in the appropriate place, by sectors, as they receive them, so that they build up to a useful library of evaluation findings. Examples are given in Appendix III of two of these summaries. One Member State prepares 4/5 page summaries along similar lines, but these may be too detailed for most of the staff, and not detailed enough for a few specialists (who would see the full reports anyway). Another agency attaches summaries to its annual synthesis report covering a substantial batch of evaluations, but this seems to be a less flexible system than the one-sheet summary. A great advantage of the one-sheet summary is that it can be made available to a wide range of staff within the agency, as well as to the press and the public, and in most cases meets the recipients' needs as they generally do not require to see the full reports.

4.10 Need for Beneficiary Participation Although all Member States genuinely accept the need for beneficiary participation (ie not only on the part of LDC governments but, where appropriate, on the part of the project beneficiaries as well), both in the carrying out of the evaluations and in the report-writing, and do their best to implement such a policy, the fact is that they have not been very successful. This is in part due to the inherent difficulties of finding evaluators from the beneficiary countries (especially any who are prepared to be associated with potentially critical reports), and in part due to the practical problems that inhibit the implementation of such a policy. However the EEC Commission (which is of course acting on behalf of all the Member States) has been very successful in implementing formal and effective systems to ensure beneficiary participation as part of the Lome agreements, and nearly all their evaluations (and the reports) are prepared by teams comprising both representatives of the Member States and of the ACP countries. One Member State has arrangements whereby evaluators can be asked to return to the developing countries to debrief the government officials there on the evaluation report after it has been finalised. So long as the beneficiaries are not involved in the evaluations, or the reports, there is always a severe risk that the factors affecting sustainability will not be adequately covered, especially those that relate to such people-related aspects as: local customs and traditions, social acceptability and institutional capability.

One Member State takes the view that the evaluation process is primarily an internal one, of relevance mainly to the agency immediately concerned, whether it be a donor, or a developing country government evaluating its own activities. Thus rather than fostering joint donor/recipient evaluations it would favour LDC governments setting up their own national evaluation capabilities. However it recognises that the results of donor evaluations are also of interest and value to recipient governments and project staff.

4.11 Evaluation Reports and the Media Reference has already been made, in Para 4.6, to the conflict of interest between the objective of lesson-learning to improve the quality of aid, and the need for accountability. In practice every Member State, and the EEC Commission, has to try to kill the two birds with the one stone. Thus the need to provide feedback to the media is accepted as part and parcel of the evaluator's task. But the means used for achieving this vary widely. As discussed earlier, some agencies pursue a policy of complete openness of evaluation reports, making them available to anyone on request. Others make available only the synthesis reports, either broad syntheses of the individual evaluation reports, ie covering many sectors, or (more commonly) syntheses of groups of evaluations covering specific sectors. Nearly all agencies have publications designed specifically for the media, which are attractively produced and of which thousands of copies are distributed regularly - often monthly. These are not primarily vehicles for the publication of evaluation results, but from time to time they are used for that purpose. Some have massive circulations: the EEC's "Courier" for instance claims a total readership of 300,000 people, many of them in the Third World. One of the problems about using these publications as vehicles for evaluation findings is that the latter are usually couched in rather "dry" language, and they need to be written in a style that is more appropriate for the general reader, and to focus on stories of human interest. One idea that is being considered by some Member States and the Commission is to invite evaluators to prepare short articles of human interest for the media, probably as a voluntary (but paid) addition to their normal assignments.

Broad Syntheses of Evaluation Findings in General

4.12 The idea of producing syntheses of the findings from a small group of individual evaluation reports, has been extended by most Member States and the Commission to cover a wider range of cross-cutting issues, such as technical cooperation or training, the role of women, total aid to a particular country, or the effectiveness of an aid instrument (such as structural adjustment). These differ from the syntheses of the former type in that they take a considerable number of evaluations as their raw material and they look selectively at particular aspects. They are especially useful when aid policy issues are under discussion, and they are particularly effective as feedback to the media because they provide information about specific aspects of aid policy and so feed more directly into public debate on the policy aspects of aid. Some Member States give a very wide distribution to general cross-cutting syntheses: the Federal Republic of Germany for instance publishes 10,000 copies of its annual synthesis report in German, 5000 in French and 5000 in English. It is therefore a very important form of feedback to a wide spectrum of interests, and covering many aspects of German aid.

4.13 Another kind of synthesis which is growing in importance, arises from an analysis of what might be called "secondary" sources of data, such as monitoring reports, early warning system reports, mid-term reviews, and Project Completion Reports. These are all reports that are a product of the monitoring process, but they can be used as a quarry for findings of a broader nature. Their great attraction, from the evaluation point of view, is that they are right up to date, since they relate to what is happening now, rather than to what happened yesterday. One of the weaknesses of ex-post evaluations, from the aid delivery point of view, is that many of the lessons relate to what happened a good number of years ago, and they have usually been taken on board already. The EEC Commission has recently introduced its "Traffic Lights" early warning system, whereby the operational desks have to indicate whether their projects are running into difficulties, and if so what action they propose to take. The Evaluation Unit (which is currently improving the system) has played an important part in getting it installed, and will soon be using the information as a valuable new source for analyses of the factors that lead to success or failure in project implementation. One of the Member States has introduced a system of classification of Project Completion Reports according to the degree of success in implementing the project, and it also requires some indication to be given as to whether the project should be evaluated, and why. There is still a great deal of discussion as to the most effective kind of Project Completion Report, and again the familiar conflict as between accountability and lesson-learning arises. The accountability objective would call for considerable statistical evidence of project success, but this is very time-consuming, and in at least one Member State has led to PCRs being completed by outsiders, which greatly diminishes their value as a means of recording experience gained during project implementation. The alternative approach is to reduce the statistical information to an absolute minimum (if any at all), but to insist that the PCRs be completed by those who were mainly responsible for implementing the project. In that case the questions would be as direct and open-ended (ie not pre-coded) as possible and would be designed to record for the future the key lessons of experience, so that future generations learn from the past and do not repeat the same mistakes. The debate goes on, and it is desirable that Member States and the Commission continue to exchange experiences so that the pros and cons of the different approaches can be assessed. As mentioned earlier, one of the weaknesses of the PCR is that it is carried out when the aid stops, but often at the point when the project begins, so that it is impossible to assess sustainability. There may be no way of avoiding this (unless one adopts the procedure of the Member State which defers the Final Progress Report until several years after the aid stops), but one possible improvement might be to require those who prepare PCRs to make an assessment, however tentative at that stage, of likely future sustainability. That might at least give early warning of projects likely to run into severe post-aid problems.

4.14 Annual Reports of Evaluation Units Most Member States have followed the practice of preparing an annual report on their total aid activities, and there is usually a section in it which deals with evaluation. Some Member States go further, and their Evaluation Units produce their own annual reports which set out in greater detail the evaluation activities, and more importantly, a summary of the key results. Last year the EEC Commission carried out the first of such annual reports and it was warmly welcomed by the Member States as an important contribution to feedback. Of course this cannot be a substitute for sector or thematic syntheses since the results of just one year's evaluation activities cannot throw much light on whole sectors or themes, and the former are still needed. A possible useful addition to these Evaluation Unit annual reports might be some indication of the kind of actions taken as a result of evaluation findings. It is surely important to show that evaluation activity leads to action, and it is no bad thing if Evaluation Units feel obliged to monitor carefully what action is taken as a result of the reports they produce. Some Member States are already doing this in a systematic way, but as yet it seems to be only a minority.

Stock and Flow Management Systems

4.15 There is one relatively minor, but not insignificant, issue which has not yet been mentioned. It refers to the systems that Member States and the Commission have instituted for the management of the stock and flow of evaluation reports. This was a small matter in the early days, but now that some

Member States and the Commission have produced several hundreds of evaluation reports it has become important. Most Member States and the Commission have published lists of the evaluation reports available, and they have set up effective systems of storing the reports and recording the flow. This is an important aspect of feedback. It would be most unfortunate if, when an evaluation report was required, there were no copies available in stock, or they could not be quickly traced. Moreover it is important to keep records of who in the agency, and outside it, has received copies of the reports. This is a significant measure of the impact that evaluation is having...especially the records of unsolicited requests.

V. Feedback Mechanisms

A. Feedback Within the Agency

1. Informal Feedback

5.1 Although the Review was obviously centred mainly on formalised mechanisms for feedback, it is important to bear always in mind that informal feedback is probably at least as important, and is indeed the fundamental way in which most feedback takes place. Informal feedback occurs whenever operational staff meet their colleagues and discuss their mutual interests. It occurs when HQ staff travel to the developing countries, or when staff overseas visit Europe. It occurs through the printed word, as and when staff brief themselves on issues of importance to them, and as they build up their own personal datasystems. In fact informal feedback is taking place all the time, and the importance of facilitating it cannot be overemphasised.

5.2 In the nature of things it is not possible to systematically review informal feedback. However it is obvious that if staff are physically remote from eachother, informal feedback cannot take place as effectively as if they are very close. Necessarily in a large agency informal feedback tends to be very selective, ie you may only meet a small cross-section of colleagues, and there may be others you never see. The larger the agency, the more important it is to establish formal mechanisms for feedback. Thus in the case of a very small Member State, such as Luxembourg, there were few formal feedback mechanisms, and few were necessary, since the handful of staff had all the feedback they needed in an informal way. At the other extreme is a large Member State like the Federal

Republic of Germany, with the problems that arise from the physical separation between the BMZ in Bonn, and its two associated agencies, GTZ and KfW, in Frankfurt. Even the latter two are several miles apart. In such a case feedback has to be highly formalised if it is to be effective. In France, coordination among the three ministries sharing responsibility for aid admninistration, and the Caisse Centrale, is achieved through a Working Group on Evaluation which meets regularly. Three Member States bordering the Mediterranean have particular difficulties in fostering informal feedback because much of their aid is handled by other ministries and departments (Agriculture, Health, Education etc), but they have attempted to meet this situation by appointing coordinators. Some Member States have set up procedures aimed at partial formalisation of feedback, eg regular meetings between HQ staff and staff in the developing countries with the express purpose of fostering general feedback, and these are very important. On the wider stage, the EEC Commission has had considerable success in recent years in acting as a focal point for a series of informal meetings between experts in the Member States and the Commission in such fields as Livestock, Trade, Fisheries, and Evaluation. These are basically opportunities for people with shared interests to get together and talk about the work they are doing in an informal way. This Feedback Review is itself a direct result of this process. There would seem to be more scope for slightly formalising informal feedback in this way. Apart from possibilities of this sort, however, there is little more that can usefully be said about informal feedback.

2. Formal

5.3 Feedback within the agency itself can take basically two forms. First, there is feedback at the policy level, ie issues that concern not just the particular projects or programmes that have been evaluated but broader aspects of policy. Secondly, there is the feedback at the sector/programme/project level which does not necessarily raise broad policy issues but nevertheless relates to the efficient implementation of aid. Clearly the first must be addressed to the policy makers, and the second to aid implementers, and different feedback mechanisms are required.

(a) At the Policy Level

5.4 A few of the smaller Member States have no mechanisms at all for ensuring feedback at the policy level. The assumption seems to be that policy makers, when they receive the evaluation reports, will react as they think fit to any policy implications so that no formal mechanisms are necessary. However the others all have mechanisms of some kind, although they are of different types. One Member State has a highly effective system whereby the same committee as approves all new projects (the "Projects and Evaluation Committee") also receives the evaluation reports and decides what action should be taken. The follow-up action is then monitored and a report made to the Committee every six months. This same Committee approves the annual work programme of the Evaluation Unit, including the proposed selection of topics to be evaluated. In this way the evaluation function is closely tied into the agency's policy-making processes. Another Member State has a formal procedure whereby what is called a "Protocol" is drawn up when each evaluation report is reviewed at senior management level and this states in precise terms the action that it has been agreed should be taken. Subsequent action is then carefully monitored and each year a report is published describing the action that has been taken in the light of the evaluation recommendations. This is accompanied by a press conference attended by the Minister himself. In a third Member State the evaluation reports are submitted directly to the Minister (at the same time as they go to the Director General) and the Minister presents them to Parliament. These are not individual project evaluations but substantial synthesis studies, and only two or three will be produced annually. They are then submitted to an intensive process of review within the Ministry, and the Minister eventually reports back to Parliament on the action that has been taken. All three of these mechanisms have the same basic features in common viz: submission of the evaluation findings to senior policy makers, decisions on specific action to be taken, and careful monitoring on follow-up.

5.5 Only one Member State appears to follow the principle that the same committee as approves new projects should also see the results of their past decisions, ie the evaluation reports. It is rather curious that the EDF Committee, for instance, never formally receives, or discusses, the Commission's evaluation reports. In fact the EDF Committee seems to have very little opportunity to review the quality of EEC aid at the broader policy level, but this might change if it had formal access to evaluation reports. It is also rather strange that in the Member State where the evaluation reports are submitted to the Minister and Director General, they are not formally submitted to, or discussed by, the Committee that approves new projects. There would seem to be a basic logic in those who have the responsibility for approving new projects being presented with evaluation findings.

5.6 One Member State submits its evaluation reports to a Committee comprising not only senior staff from the agency but also representatives of outside interests such as trade unions, academics, commerce etc. This has the advantage that actual or potential pressure groups have formal access to, and are consulted on, the results of aid activities, so they feel well informed.

5.7 No doubt those Member States that do not have specific mechanisms of this sort for feedback at the policy level, would claim that such feedback occurs through indirect means. Thus one of these Member States has a policy-making division which produces strategy plans and policy papers, and this division certainly receives, and carefully digests, all the evaluation reports produced by the agency. Similarly, most agencies have various kinds of internal strategy papers, such as Country Policy Papers, or Sector Planning Papers, and evaluation reports are always an important input into such documents. Again, when the agency's annual reports are being prepared the findings of evaluation reports are taken into account and in that way they have an important influence on policy making. It is for consideration whether such indirect means of policy-level feedback as these can be relied upon to ensure that effective action is taken.

5.8 Because senior policy making committees are likely only to have very limited time to spare for the consideration of evaluation findings, it is of paramount importance that the findings be carefully digested and translated into specific policy recommendations, as suggested in Para 4.7 above. This is a very important function for the Evaluation Unit, and it calls for an intimate understanding of the agency's internal procedures, and a willingness to consult widely to ensure that recommendations carry the support of the colleagues most immediately concerned and that they are practical. One of the problems is that most evaluations, sometimes even syntheses, are not directed in the first place at policy issues. The latter emerge to some extent as a by-product of the evaluation of a selection of projects or programmes. However there is one Member State that plans its evaluation syntheses ab initio in terms of broad policy objectives, and it would be very interesting if it could write a paper drawing on its experiences with this kind of evaluation for the benefit of the other Member States.

(b) <u>At the Sector, Programme or Project Level</u>

5.9 The first and most obvious kind of feedback, at this level, is to the actual programme or project that is the subject of the evaluation. This applies especially of course in the case of inter-phase evaluations, where the programmes or projects are still in progress, and in these cases the feedback to the programmes/projects is likely to be very effective since the feedback loop is a very short one. Most Member States have a rule that a new phase of a project should not be funded unless the results of earlier phases have been evaluated. In some Member States, as discussed earlier, inter-phase evaluation is far more important than ex-post evaluation: in others the two different types of evaluation are managed quite independently, one being called "internal evaluation" and the other "external evaluation". It is noteworthy that the EDF Committee has asked to see the inter-phase evaluations (or "mid-term reviews") on a regular basis, but not the evaluations. Because inter-phase evaluations cannot throw any light on sustainability it is unwise for any Member State to rely exclusively on it for feedback.

5.10 The second main kind of feedback at the programme or project level is to the other programmes or projects in the same sector that are coming along in the future, ie these evaluations add to the stock of knowledge and wisdom. The problem here is that, unlike the results of inter-phase evaluations, there is seldom any pressing reason why anyone should read these reports or act upon them. Of course if one is wrestling with a new project, and someone comes along with some highly relevant information from a closely similar one, that is clearly useful. But it seldom happens like that. Staff somehow are expected to absorb the results of past evaluations and store them away so that they can be drawn upon as and when the need arises. How to facilitate this process is the core of the problem of feedback of this kind.

5.11 Clearly some mechanisms are needed to assist the operational staff to store and retrieve evaluation results, and to enable evaluators to make their findings available as and when they are needed. There are several such mechanisms, and they are of supreme importance in ensuring high quality aid administration. The first has been called the "Integrated Approach". This mechanism builds on the findings of all the Member States (and other members of the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation), that there are a small number of key factors (seven have been identified) that are likely to determine whether or not a project or programme is a success or a failure. Unless careful consideration is given to these factors right through the project cycle, from project selection, through appraisal and implementation to evaluation, the programme or project is unlikely to be successful. The factors cover the following key aspects: policy, environmental, socio-cultural, technical, institutional and economic/financial; and they remain the same right through the project cycle. That is why this project cycle management method is called the "Integrated Approach", because it combines "vertical" with "horizontal" integration. Thus the same list of factors is used at every stage: during project preparation and implementation (as factors critical for potential success), and at the end (as the key criteria by which success has to be judged...especially of course sustainability). So far the EEC Commission is the only agency that is moving towards formal implementation of the Integrated Approach, but the importance of using a consistent set of criteria of project success throughout the project's life is now widely recognised, and most Member States are moving in this direction.

5.12 The second mechanism, closely linked to the first, for ensuring that evaluation findings are systematically taken into account throughout the project cycle is the Logical Framework. This is a simple 4 X 4 matrix enabling the objectives of a project to be identified; criteria of success to be determined; and risks and assumptions to be assessed (see Appendix V). Several Member States now operate this system, some of them as a mandatory stage in project funding, ie no Logical Framework, no money. The key characteristic of this approach is that it obliges the project analyst to carefully distinguish between the inputs and outputs on the one hand, and the objectives (immediate and wider) on the other. This helps to ensure that the wider implications of projects are not neglected. Evaluations have all too often shown that these wider aspects of projects have been overlooked, and the projects have failed as a result. The Logical Framework calls for all the relevant factors to be covered. It is therefore a vitally important mechanism whereby the results of evaluations can be systematically fed back into fresh project appraisals, and also into project implementation (because the Logical Framework acts as an on-going project management tool throughout the project's life).

5.13 As has been underlined, there is an obvious relationship between these two mechanims. They are not substitutes for eachother but both are needed for good project management, and once they are in place there is a much greater chance that the results of evaluation findings will in fact be taken into account in future project aid. Thus they should help to ensure a systematic improvement in the results of developoment assistance.

5.14 Important as they are, however, these two mechanisms in themselves are not enough. There are also a number of other ways in which feedback at the programme/project level can be fostered. For example it is important for the Evaluation Unit to be associated with the process of "brainstorming" that should precede project selection, as well as with project identification and design, so that it can make available relevant evaluation findings at that stage. For that purpose it needs to inform itself about the new projects coming into the agency's "pipeline", as indicated in Para 4.5 above. It should also be involved at the project appraisal stage: for example some Member States have a rule that every project submission has to contain a statement that relevant evaluations have been taken into account, and it is the responsibility of the Evaluation Unit to make sure that the relevant evaluations are available at an early stage in the project formulation. The Evaluation Unit also has a contribution to make when terms of reference for feasibility studies are being drawn up: it has an interest in trying to ensure that the factors of sustainability are fully taken into account, and that the Logical Framework technique and the Integrated Approach are understood. One Member State now insists that those submitting appraisals should state not only that they have taken account of evaluation findings but should also state how this has been done. The Evaluation Unit also needs to be involved in the project monitoring and "early warning system" processes, not only because it has a role to play in feeding back general lessons (derived from these processes) to the agency as a whole, but also because it may have a contribution to make (based on evaluation experience) when projects run into difficulties. Effective feedback thus involves some participation by the Evaluation Unit at all stages of the project cycle, and this is increasingly being recognised by all the Member States. Of course the Evaluation Unit must be careful not to take on too much. Evaluators are not supermen: they have to learn to be highly selective in the way they attempt to make their contributions, and often they will have to opt for influencing methodologies rather than getting directly involved in the operational tasks themselves (see also Para 5.21 below).

5.15 Another way in which evaluation findings can be used to improve the quality of aid is through the building up of the "Corporate Memory", eg through databanks, sector manuals, house journals, news-sheets, and the like. These are generally less effective than face-to-face encounters, since staff are usually so busy that they seldom have time to refer to such sources of data. In the context of feedback the spoken word is often far more effective than the printed word. There is no doubt, for instance, that the technical advisers in any aid agency are probably the most effective agents of feedback, and they are always important clients for evaluation reports. However they themselves increasingly need to depend upon stored information, so they too are clients for data systems, and nearly all the Member States are developing them. Up to now progress has been very slow, and most agencies have not advanced much beyond simple management information systems (classification of projects by size and type, aid commitments and disbursements, location, etc): very few as yet contain information of use for improving the quality of project management. However the stage is now set for a major advance in this direction, and the need is urgent because many staff, particularly the technical advisers, are beginning to build up their own computerised systems, even buying their own desk-top computers for the purpose. If there is too much delay there will be severe problems of harmonisation of the different datasystems.

5.16 Some progress has also been made in the direction of sector manuals, but there is still a great deal of confusion as to what the "market" for these should be. Some are too technical for the generalist, yet not detailed enough for the specialist. Many fall between two stools, and there is a need for a thorough review of the potential for such feedback systems. Here is an area where the Member States and the Commission have a lot to learn from eachother. A promising avenue to be explored, in this context, consists in the drafting of sub-sector-specific project preparation and evaluation outlines, along the lines of the criteria contained in the Integrated Approach. This will normally lead to a series of documents containing, say two pages of criteria and, say, six pages of comments for each, and covering the project preparation and project evaluation outlines. These documents, of less than 10 pages each, would seem to be an ideal working instrument in the hands of the non-specialist, who cannot be expected to absorb the content of the bulky sector manuals mentioned above.

5.17 Another promising new development is the introduction of informal news-sheets specialising in certain sectors or special interests such as the role of women. The EEC Commission has encouraged this development in recent years, and there are now several such news-sheets. They have been successful because they grew spontaneously to meet felt needs, and they are thus a form of self-help. One Member State supplements its sector manuals with a series of "Policy Guidance Notes": these are short and pithy papers that address topical issues as and when they arise, quite often drawing on recent evaluation syntheses, and are thus a very useful avenue for feedback. Other such avenues are the Office Procedure manuals (for changes in procedures arising from evaluation findings), and the "Basic Principles" documents that are produced by the EEC Commission and the ACP, which help in the formulation of sectoral policies in a systematic way. There are also various Guidelines and Guidance Manuals, covering such topics as: evaluation, project appraisal, project management, and the Logical Framework Approach. One Member State produces indicatorbanks as a help when the second column of the Logical Framework is being completed. All these perform a very useful function in providing channels for the feedback of evaluation results.

5.18 Another means of feedback of evaluation results at the sector level is through the holding of seminars and workshops. Most agencies do this from time to time, sometimes at the break point between the conclusion of one phase of a project and the planning of the next, and sometimes when syntheses become available. In some cases the process has become almost institutionalised, seminars being held whenever a synthesis study is published. Often outsiders are invited to them (occasionally they are held in the developing countries themselves), and the conclusions are an important input into policy decisions. Sometimes they lead directly to publications. They are often an invaluable way of facilitating two-way dialogue with interested parties outside the agency.

5.19 The EEC operates a special kind of seminar, centred on the Basic Principles procedure mentioned above, which involves holding a week-long meeting in a selected developing country at which the draft Basic Principles are discussed by representatives of the Member States and the Commission on the one hand, and of the ACP countries on the other. This system is particularly valuable because it is a rare instance of evaluation-oriented dialogue, at the sector level, between representatives of the developed and developing countries.

5.20 The final mechanism for feedback at the project or programme level is through the use of evaluation reports in staff training. Evaluations make ideal raw material for training, and some Member States use them in this way, but only a few. Several Member States use evaluations as inputs into training courses on the Logical Framework technique, and one Member State has recently run similar training courses for outside consultants, but, these apart, very few examples of the use of evaluation reports in training were encountered during the feedback review.

5.21 The preceding discussion of formal feedback mechanisms within the aid agency raises the important question - to what extent should it be the responsibility of the evaluators to try to ensure that action follows feedback? All evaluators, in the Member States and the Commission, would undoubtedly agree that it must be part of their task to provide feedback material covering the key lessons emerging from evaluations to the people who need the information, in a form in which they can use it. But is that enough? Should they then get involved in trying to ensure that some action is taken? As yet this issue is mainly relevant to those agencies that have been engaged in evaluation work for some considerable time: the more recent entrants onto the evaluation scene are naturally having to concentrate primarily on getting the evaluations done. However the older-established Evaluation Units find themselves tending to becoming increasingly involved in attempts to ensure that follow-up action is taken, probably because there is no-one else in the agency who has the same motivation. When an evaluator has laboured long and hard to produce some results, he or she is naturally keen to ensure that they yield some fruit. However this trend carries with it certain dangers. Evaluation Units could well run into trouble within their own agencies if they try to take upon themselves the responsibility for ensuring that action is taken, or even worse, if they try to dictate what that action should be. Clearly it must be left to the operational departments themselves to decide what is the appropriate action to take in response to evaluation findings. They have the responsibility, and only they are in a position to decide what should be done. The role of the Evaluation Unit should be confined to trying to ensure that suitable administrative systems are in place that enable the lessons of evaluations to be translated into action, both at the sector/programme/level and at the broader policy level. It may possibly also have a role in monitoring what action is taken. But beyond that it should not go.

B. Fedback to, and from, Outsiders

5.22 So far the emphasis has been on internal feedback, which is geared mainly towards lesson-learning and improving the quality of aid. However another important aspect of feedback is to (and from) interested parties outside, ie mainly, but not exclusively, the accountability aspect.

5.23 The first form of feedback outside the agency (ie additional to simply making the evaluation reports available to the public) is direct action by the agency itself, through such means as seminars, conferences, workshops and the like. These are relatively rare. Where outsiders are invited to attend seminars these have usually been arranged primarily for the agency itself, and the outsiders are "permitted" to participate, ie the events have not been arranged primarily for their benefit. However one agency, some years ago, did arrange a two-day seminar at a university, especially with the needs of outsiders in mind, ie it was deliberately intended as a form of feedback to interested parties and as a means of two-way dialogue. But this is a rare example. Generally speaking feedback to outsiders is seen as a "passive" role rather than as an active one. In other words, Member States are prepared to make available their evaluation results, but it is up to the recipients to do with them what they will, and the Member State does not specifically seek dialogue. One Member State has set up an aid information service which interested members of the public can access by telephone.

5.24 Some Member states pursue an intermediate path between direct feedback to outsiders and indirect methods. For instance some Member States have set up formal committees composed of representatives of various interest groups, such as trade unions, commercial interests, NGOs, etc, and they make evaluation reports available on a formal basis to these committees. These advisory boards, councils, or panels, perform a valuable two-way function. They can provide the aid agency with useful feedback into what people are thinking about development issues outside the agency.

5.25 Member States pursue different policies regarding the openness of their evaluation reports, as discussed in Para 4.11 above, but on the whole there seems to be a growing consensus that openness is desirable. In addition to making their evaluation reports freely available, various Member States have arrangements for ensuring better feedback to (and from) groups of outsiders as follows:

(a) <u>With the Press and Media</u> Some Member States fund visits overseas by journalists so that they can obtain material for articles and for general use. Sometimes they are briefed with evaluation reports, and helped to write up stories about specific projects. Sometimes their visits are timed to coincide with overseas visits by the Minister or senior officials. Some agencies widen the scope of these schemes to include not only journalists but also teachers and researchers and others who have a special interest. One Member State offers prizes for the best articles on development by journalists. Another Member State makes a proviso that those who take advantage of these schemes have to undertake to pass on to others what they have learned (the "spreading effect"). One Member State has taken steps to ensure that journalists have direct access to the Minister, and that operational staff can feel free to discuss projects with journalists without feeling that they must deflect every enquiry to the Press Office. Where most Member States seem to be rather weak is in furnishing interesting and well-written material, derived from evaluation findings, to the press. Most Evaluation Units do not see this as one of their tasks, and since no-one else has the responsibility it goes by default. It is indeed seldom that one sees in the press any articles based directly on evaluation reports.

(b) With Development Education Institutions Most Member States provide some funds, and a lot of publicity and other information material, to development education institutions, but it is noteworthy that evaluation reports are seldom among them. This is presumably because the reports are pitched at a different audience and would not appeal to younger people. However the short one-sheet summaries would be quite suitable, especially if they could be supplemented by human-interest stories, and it seems that a potentially valuable avenue of feedback, especially to the coming generation, is not being adequately exploited.

(c) With the NGOs Similarly, most Member States give generous financial assistance to NGOs, but it seems that they very seldom provide the NGOs with evaluation material. Often of course the NGOs receive the full evaluation reports, but in most cases these are not suitable for use in their own publications, and if they use them at all it is as quarries for material to put into their own articles. Probably this is adequate, since Evaluation Units can hardly be expected to tailor-make evaluation reports for the use of NGOs; however the one-sheet summaries are likely to be very useful to NGOs as they can read them quickly and easily, and can then decide for themselves if they wish to make use of the material (or call for the full report).

(d) With Other Aid Agencies There is a well-established interchange of evaluation reports (and evaluation summaries) between aid agencies through the aegis of the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation, and through the informal meetings of the Heads of Evaluation Services chaired by the EEC Commission. There is also sharing of information about annual evaluation programmes, and interchange of annual reports. Of increasing importance is the system of sharing data through the centralised databank system organised, on behalf of the DAC Group, by CIDA. Although this has run into some technical problems, making use of the diskettes sometimes rather difficult, some Member States have already begun to put it to good use. The more the Member States are able to make their computer systems compatible with the CIDA material the more they will be able to make effective use of this centralised data system.

(e) With the Beneficiaries This is a very neglected area of feedback to outsiders. Most Member States now insist that evaluation teams must debrief the host country before they leave, giving them an outline of their main findings, and in one case it is stated that this should run to at least 6 pages. In addition most Member States now send the evaluation reports themselves to the beneficiary countries. After that there is seldom any follow up, although occasionally workshops may be held in the developing countries, often related to synthesis reports. One agency, with a large number of locally employed staff, goes out of its way to involve representatives of the beneficiary countries in the Logical Framework process, and it wisely calls the expatriates who coordinate this process "moderators" or "facilitators" rather than "leaders", ie emphasising the dialogue nature of the exercise. No Member State has anything comparable to the Basic Principles procedure of the EEC Commission, which provides sustained two-way dialogue, centred on evaluation findings, and taking place in a developing country. Even if some of the actual Basic Principles documents that emerge from this process have been criticised as being somewhat anodyne, and statements of the obvious, nevertheless the week-long seminars are an extremely effective form of feedback in themselves.

C. Role of Parliament

5.26 In several Member States there is a keen interest in development issues among Parliamentarians, and often there are Parliamentary sub-committees that visit overseas projects and carry out their own investigations (usually armed with evaluation reports if these are available). Their reports are usually published, and naturally have a considerable impact on the media. Generally they take a very positive and sympathetic line regarding aid effectiveness, showing real understanding of the difficulties, and appreciation of the achievements. One interesting by-product of this interest on the part of Parliament (including the European Parliament) is that Parliaments have quite frequently exerted pressure on aid agencies to strengthen their evaluation and feedback activities. This has happened notably with regard to the EEC Commission, but with some of the Member States as well.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 The main conclusions and recommendations have been listed in the Executive Summary on Pages 3-8, and there is no point in repeating them here.

Appendix I

Details of Missions to Member States and the EEC Commission

Dates	Mission to:	Carried out by:
October 2-11, 1989	Denmark	Dr Cracknell & Dr Eggers
Oct. 29 - Nov.9, 1989	Fed. Rep. of Germany	"
Nov.26 - Dec. 7, 1989	EEC Commission	Dr Cracknell
April 1 - 6, 1990	Belgium	Dr Cracknell & Dr Eggers
April 23, 1990	Ireland	"
April 24 - 27, 1990	United Kingdom	"
Sept 26 - 30, 1990	Portugal	"
November 4 - 8, 1990	Italy	"
November 25-28, 1990	The Netherlands	Dr Cracknell & Mr Waffelaert
December 13 - 14, 1990	Luxembourg	Dr Cracknell & Mr Nicora
March 11 - 15, 1991	Spain	"
March 18-19, 1991	Greece	"
April 2-3, 1991	France	Dr Cracknell & Mr Waffelaert

Appendix II Detailed Terms of Reference

(Based on the draft letter No. 1 for the attention of Dr B. Cracknell, attached to Circular Letter No. 11 from the Head of the EEC Evaluation Service)

. Feedback Mechanisms

1.1 Objectives

We may call evaluation feedback mechanisms any form of activity giving rise to the application of lessons learned through evaluation, toward the improvement of the development effectiveness of development cooperation operations. The two key elements to be identified are thus:

(a) lesson learning, and

(b) practical application of the lessons learned. In the light of this analysis:

(c) conclusions and recommendations might be formulated to improve feedback mechanisms for Italy itself and for the Member States. These conclusions and recommendations should be formulated, first, for each specific agency after each mission, and then at the end of the entire exercise,i.e. after the feedback mechanisms of the other participants have come under review, and should be closely tailored to fit the specific nature and needs of each agency, excluding any form of "normalisation" for normalisation's sake.

1.2 Lesson Learning

1.2.1 What sources of learning from experience are available? What is the role of evaluation in that context?

1.2.2 Assessment of the quality of evaluation reports and their suitability for feedback.

1.2.3 Can the part of lessons enunciated be estimated when compared to the overall experience existing? In other words, what do we actually learn compared to what we could learn? Differences between "project-level" and "aggregate- level" in terms of optimum coverage?

1.3 Practical Application of Lessons Learned

1.3.1 Are there any compulsory or formal feedback mechanisms in application? Which are they?

1.3.2 Are there any customary practices fostered by persuasion which, without being compulsory, aim at similar effects as the compulsory mechanisms (i.e. enhancement of development effectiveness of aid)?

1.3.3 Who is learning what during the execution of evaluation exercises: documentary studies, field missions, report writing?

Who receives and reads in-extenso reports, summaries, and abstracts?

Who participates in seminars and workshops on the basis of evaluation results?

1.3.4 To what extent do the evaluation results feed into the agency's power structure and decision making processes?

1.3.5 What is the degree of "mass-impact" of feedback mechanisms?

1.3.6 To what extent are the results of evaluation studies applied in practice? To what extent are the following factors, vital for feedback, taken into account: timeliness, professional quality of the reports, operational relevance, compatability with the agency's capacity, political feasibility?

1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of the experience of the agency concerned, what can be done to improve learning of lessons and their practical application, bearing in mind the specific constraints and possibilities of that agency? Upon completion of the pilot study (Denmark. FRG, and the EEC) a preliminary synthesis will be drawn up. As further agencies are then included, a final synthesis will be produced covering all of the agencies.

Structure conclusions and recommendations along the lines of questions as raised under 1.2 and 1.3 above.

2. Methodological Issues

What can be said about the methodology as incorporated in the present terms of reference and tried out in the previous cases? How can that methodology be improved before pursuing the review of evaluation feedback practices and non-priority topics in the remaining EC development cooperation agencies?

EvINFO

EV 8.1 ONG Janvier 91 N° 1/91

Objet: Analyse des méthodes d'identification/étude et de suivi/évaluation ainsi que des mécanismes de financement des projets ONG cofinancés par la CEE (Rapport d'étude et Guide méthodologique).

1. But:

Cette étude entend proposer aux ONG d'Europe et du tiers-monde des moyens et des outils pour améliorer la qualité de leurs actions de développement. Elle cherche donc dans un premier temps, à analyser les pratiques des différents acteurs de la filière de l'aide, et dans un deuxième temps à proposer des améliorations "à la carte" en matière d'identification, de suivi et d'évaluation, qui devraient permettre aux ONG de s'orienter plus facilement dans le choix, l'accompagnement et les leçons à tirer de leurs projets. Ces propositions d'améliorations donneront les indications, d'une part sur le cheminement à suivre, et d'autre part sur les réflexions à mener.(*)

2. Synthèse des conclusions et recommandations:

Le rapport d'étude présente un bilan des pratiques observées dans la filière par les ONG d'appui du Nord et du Sud et les ONG de financement, principalement du Nord. Dans le domaine de l'identification des acteurs, les ONG de financement ont tendance à rechercher des partenaires stables et de confiance dans le Sud. Dans le domaine du suivi des actions, des lacunes importantes ont été constatées. Le suivi se cantonne dans le domaine administratif et financier. L'évaluation des actions revêt le plus souvent une connotation de contrôle plutôt qu'un outil de gestion interne des actions.

Le rapport présente des conclusions et des recommandations sur les modalités de financement qui devraient permettre aux ONG du Nord et du Sud de mettre en pratique ces conseils.
Après un bref constat sur le contexte actuel des systèmes de cofinancement et sur leur adaptation à un appui optimal aux actions de développement à la base, le rapport propose des recommandations s'adressant aux organismes de financement, tant publics que privés, qui mettent à la disposition des ONG du Nord et du Sud les moyens financiers nécessaires à la réalisation de leurs objectifs.

(*) étude exécutée par COTA, Bruxelles.

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<u>Le Guide méthodologique</u> structuré en fonction des quatre étapes des actions de développement (identification, programmation, suivi et évaluation) constitue une aide mémoire comprenant des points de repère, des démarches opérationnelles et des outils méthodologiques.

Le Guide méthodologique qui s'adresse aux ONG du Sud et du Nord, n'est pas à proprement parler une méthode. Le lecteur est donc encouragé à utiliser sans rigidité les conseils méthodologiques présentés, et il doit prendre le temps de refléchir à leur adaptation à la situation à laquelle il est confronté: chacun recherchera dans ce guide les éléments qui lui seront nécessaires.

Les chapitres relatifs à chacune des quatre étapes sont eux-mêmes structurés d'une manière identique:

- une première partie consacrée aux "points de repères", c'est-à-dire aux aspects auxquels il faut être particulièrement attentifs, et aux questions qu'il est fondamental de se poser à chaque étape.

- une deuxième partie qui propose les démarches opérationnelles et les outils méthodologiques pour appliquer ces idées importantes.

***

Le rapport et/ou le guide méthodologique peuvent être obtenus chez Mme Petrillo, VIII/A/2 tél 51512.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
EV 472

INDIAN RAILWAYS: TRAINING PROJECT FOR THE MODERNISATION OF WORKSHOPS - 1990

The Project

From 1984-89 the project financed 20 courses run by British Rail Engineering Limited (BREL) in Derby. The purpose was to give Indian Railway (IR) managers the opportunity to deepen their theoretical and practical understanding of relevant workshop practices. The total cost was some £1.1 million for 175 study fellows.

The Evaluation

In order to establish the impact, a sample of returned study fellows were interviewed. Benefits which could be attributed solely to the training of the individual were identified, described and then assessed. The aim was to establish "clear-cut cases" where the tangible benefits of the training were either worth significantly more than the unit cost of £7,000 or significantly less than that unit cost.

Overall Conclusion

This project has been highly successful in that it has produced benefits far in excess of the training cost. The main benefits were obtained by study fellows observing technology and practices in BREL and British Rail which were new to IR, which they then applied in their job on return to India. Even higher returns, however, were potentially capable of being achieved.

Main Findings

1. Identification. IR and British Council identified a generally sound set of training needs for courses to meet. Specific jobs were not identified but skills and subject areas for training were indicated. There was a general recognition that operational constraints within the IR personnel system meant that it was not always possible to assign individuals to posts which utilised fully the specialised character of the training.

2. Course Design. Some of the theory and classwork was found not to have been of much relevance and applicability. In any case some of this work could have been carried out in India at least as effectively and at lower cost. There should have been more focus on the initial objectives. These emphasised the exposure to current practices with new technology.

3. Pre-course. Early notification to selected candidates of course details, by allowing them time to select relevant topics and to prepare a job study or task with line manager involvement, was found to be highly beneficial.

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4. It was found to be of particular importance that the post course job enabled the study fellows to apply the result of their training. It was more productive if they knew this prior to leaving India. Training was most productive when the training provided matched both the needs of the subsequent job and those of the individual study fellow.

5. Implementation. The provision of the training was generally good but more communication and contact visits between the provider (BREL) and the client (IR) would have enabled the courses to be better tailored to needs. More follow-up action could have been taken on the results of the study fellows' post course evaluation forms and on the recommendations of the joint reviews which identified a number of improvements which could be made to the procedures. The ex-post evaluation has revealed the importance of more active management during the training process by both the client and the provider.

6. Unit Costs and Cost effectiveness. In comparison with other training projects the overall cost per study fellow was very reasonable. The course size was increased from eight to ten to increase cost effectiveness but could with advantage have been increased further to twelve.

Lessons Learned

1. Courses designed to support a particular industry will be more effective if explicit objectives are set. These objectives should specify the particular topics, skills and level of attainment and what the individuals should be able to achieve as a result of the training.

2. Designers of courses for high-level technical managers should note that benefits are often greater from practical exposure to different practices than from theoretical classwork and lectures.

3. There are advantages in making course details available to the study fellows well before courses. They can then, in suitable cases, produce a job study or task with their line manager. This will also allow them to arrive better prepared.

4. In order to maximise the benefits from training projects there should be a procedure to try to ensure that the course matches the training needs both of the individual and the job to which the trainee is to be assigned immediately on return. Otherwise, general operational needs on the study fellows' return may prevent them putting the specific skills learned to immediate use. Such operational needs should always be weighed against the benefit to the organisation and the individual of the very specific technical job related skills being put to use on return to duty.

5. Training projects can facilitate an examination of means to improve staff management. In this way evaluation can play a positive part in the institution's development.

6. The methodology of establishing "clear-cut cases" of benefits by assessing them in relation to the actual costs, should be used in evaluating training projects to assess impact. This method allows a judgement to be made on effectiveness and also helps draw out the lessons to be learned.

CADRE LOGIQUE

INTITULE DU PROJET :
REFERENCE :

DU CADRE

PERIODE DE FINANCEMENT CEE

STRUCTURE DU PROJET	INDICATEURS DE REALISATION (DESCRIPTION ET VALEUR)	COMMENT QUANTIFIER OU EVALUER LES INDICATEURS	HYPOTHESES, RISQUES ET CONDITIONS
OBJECTIFS GLOBAUX (SECTORIELS OU NATIONAUX) Quels sont les problèmes globaux que le projet contribuera à résoudre ?	Quels sont les moyens quantitatifs de mesurer ou les moyens qualitatifs d'apprécier si ces objectifs globaux ont été atteints ?	Quelles sont les sources d'information qui existent ou qui peuvent être fournies à un coût raisonnable ?	Quelles sont les conditions extérieures au projet qui sont nécessaires pour que les objectifs immédiats du projet contribuent à atteindre les objectifs globaux ? Quels sont les risques qui ont été pris en considération ? Certaines conditions doivent-elles être réunies pour améliorer les perspectives de succès ?
OBJECTIFS IMMEDIATS Quels sont les effets immédiats recherchés pour le domaine ou le groupe cible visé par le projet ? Quels sont les avantages (ou désavantages) escomptés et pour qui ? Quels changements ou améliorations le projet produira-t-il ?	Quels sont les indices quantitatifs (y compris le taux de rendement interne) ou qualitatifs permettant d'apprécier la réalisation et la distribution des effets et des avantages ?	Quelles sont les sources d'information qui existent ou qui peuvent être fournies à un coût raisonnable ? La collecte doit-elle être prévue dans les intrants/extrants ?	Quels sont les facteurs extérieurs au projet qui, s'ils ne sont pas présents, sont susceptibles de restreindre le passage des extrants à la réalisation des objectifs immédiats ? Quels sont les risques qui ont été pris en considération ? Certaines conditions doivent-elles être réunies pour améliorer les perspectives de succès ?

EXTRANTS

Quels sont les extrants (nature, quantité et délais) à produire pour atteindre les objectifs immédiats du projet (exemples : établissement d'enseignement, kilomètres de routes à construite ou à remettre en état, systèmes d'irrigation et de gestion connexes mis en place, personnes formées) ?	Quelles sont les sources d'information ?	Quels sont les facteurs extérieurs qui doivent être présents pour que les extrants prévus puissent être obtenus au moment voulu ? Quels sont les risques qui ont été pris en considération ? Certaines conditions doivent-elles être réunies pour améliorer les perspectives de succès ?
INTRANTS Quels matériels/équipements ou services (personnel, etc.) doivent-ils être fournis, à quel coût et sur quelle période par - CEE - autres donneurs - bénéficiaires ?	Quelles sont les sources d'information ?	Quelles décisions ou actions extérieures à l'influence de la CE sont-elles nécessaires pour le lancement du projet ? Quels sont les risques qui ont été pris en considération ? Certaines conditions doivent-elles être réunies pour améliorer les perspectives de succès ?

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

Addendum to the DANIDA,FRG and EEC Synthesis Report Covering Issues Raised in the EEC Council Resolutions of November 1987 and May 1989

by

Dr Basil E. Cracknell

(Evaluation Consultant)

1st January 1990

Non-Priority Areas

This addendum takes the form of the replies given by the Heads of the Evaluation Services of DANIDA and the EEC Commission, and the Deputy Head in the case of the FRG, to each of the Questions in the Terms of Reference, as follows:

Question 1: Verify if Member States' contributions about their evaluation activities in 1988/9 are sufficient to allow the working out of a brief synopsis, say as an annex to the Commission Services' Annual Report. Would not summaries be a better basis for such a synopsis?

Replies: The general view is that it would meet the needs of the EEC Commission if the Member States were to send them such Annual Reports, as they have readily available, even if they may be up to a year out of date. If no such reports are available it would meet the Commission's needs if Member States were to send a list of their current evaluations, with a brief description of each one, plus a short summary (say 2 to 3 pages) of the main conclusions and recommendations arising from their evaluation work.

Question 2: Is it worth pursuing any further than is possible now, on the basis of existing information, the issue of the contribution to public awareness building? What contribution can the Annual Report of the Commission on its evaluation activities, to be produced as of 1990, make toward this end? Can the Press be motivated to become more open-minded, and less prone to be exclusively hunting for stories on failures, disasters and mismanagement of funds?

Replies: There is general agreement as to the importance of this issue. Both DANIDA and FRG finance visits by journalists to the developing countries, and they try to feed the Press with interesting material derived from evaluation activities, not only success stories but stories of failures as well, otherwise the Press might lose confidence in the representativeness of the material supplied to them. DANIDA has successfully operated a policy of openness to the Press in recent years, but FRG does not allow the Press access to the evaluation reports themselves. The EEC Commission feels that its recently introduced Annual Report on Community development cooperation evaluation activities, covering Community aid in the narrower sense as well as bilateral aid of Member States, might be used, in a manner as yet to be decided, to inform the Press. The EEC Commission may consider reviewing its present policy regarding openness to the Press in the light of the Feedback Review Report.

Question 3: Has there been any practical progress in the area of mutual information on, amd learning from, eachother's evaluation results? What about the application of the CIDA computerised system concerning inputs (abstracts of reports), and outputs (use of material of the agencies represented in OECD)? Could an information exchange system work better on the EEC level? Would it better respond to practical needs?

Replies: As to the exchange of reports etc, this is already taking place to a considerable extent, but if it were extended to cover every Member State and the Commission on a regular basis it is doubtful if the sheer volume of evaluation material would be manageable. It would be better simply to circulate evaluation summaries. The EEC Commission proposes that an attempt should be made to standardise the sectoral classification of such summaries so that each Member State and the Commission could build up its own comprehensive library, by sectors, instruments and themes. Here is a rare case where standardisation (in this case,of the sectoral, instrumental and thematic classifications) might well be justified.

As to the CIDA computerised data system, none of the three agencies has yet been able to make use of the disquettes because of problems of compatability (or in the FRG's case, because it doesn't yet have a computerised data system). However doubts were expressed as to how useful global information of this sort is likely to be, bearing in mind the differences between aid agencies and how they operate. The EEC Commission and FRG (but DANIDA did not agree) expressed the view that a Community-based information system would be more effective.

Question 4: What about the practical working, and the use, of an exchange of information on evaluation programmes? What has been done? What should be done?

Replies: DANIDA was satisfied with the present arrangements as they are, but the FRG and the EEC Commission would like to see the present exchange of information being made more systematic and comprehensive. The Commission envisages that it might then be in a position to provide a useful service to the Member States eg by pointing out any overlaps on the one hand, and possibilities of sharung of work on the other; whilst it would also be in a better position to report to the Council on what is going on in the evaluation field generally in the Community.

Question 5: Is there any merit in further pursuing the debate on personnel and material means for evaluation? What are the reactions to the reinforcing of the Commission's evaluation service, which now disposes of 5 professionals and 3 support staff, plus the systematic support by a member of the informatics service? Is there a case for pursuing this question further concerning EC Member States where evaluation efforts seem as yet insufficient? What about the issue of the independence of evaluation services, its hierarchical position, and notably its relationships with the operational divisions?

Replies: Whilst DANIDA and FRG expressed their satisfaction at the way in which the Commission evaluation service has been reinforced, they felt that what happens in the Member States is strictly a matter for them alone, and it would be counterproductive to attempt to bring any outside pressure to bear on them. On the other hand it could well be helpful to the evaluation service in any particular Member State to be able to quote the situation in other Member States, so that the exchange of information about staffing matters etc could be very helpful.

As to the independence of the Evaluation Unit, none of the three agencies expressed any major concern on this score. DANIDA made the point that the particular location of the Evaluation Unit in the hierarchy may be less important than the extent to which it has real autonomy.

Question 6: Is there a case for the pursuit of the debate on evaluation procedures in general, or could one consider that the concentration on feedback mechanisms is covering the essential aspects for the moment?

Replies: There is general agreement that the first step must be the satisfactory completion of the present feedback exercise. The EEC Commission representative points out that the Council clearly expects the Group of Heads of Evaluation Services to cover all aspects of evaluation work, and not just feedback, although they gave that priority. However he said the Council also made it clear that there was to be no searching for normalisation for normalisation's sake. Rather, the aim should be to share experience and to learn from each other. If standardisation is ever considered it should only be as a last resort, ie if it is seen by all parties concerned as the only possible way in which an agreed objective can be attained.

Question 7: What is the actual state of the implication of beneficiary administrations and target groups in the evaluation process? What further progress can, and should, be made along these lines?

Replies: All three agencies agree that LDC participation is desirable, but that it is difficult to achieve, although the EEC Commission has advanced considerably further down this road than have the two Member States. All are intending to reinforce their efforts to achieve greater LDC participation.

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

Synthesis Report: DANIDA, FRG and EEC Commission

by

Dr Basil E. Cracknell

(Evaluation Consultant)

1st January, 1990

Disclaimer: The author accepts sole responsibility for the contents of this report, which does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Commission.

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

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1st January, 1990

CONTENTS

Appendix

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms, Synthesis Report: DANIDA, FRG and EEC Commission

I. Introduction

1.1 The EEC Council, at its meeting on 16th May, 1989, concluded (inter alia): "The Council considers that the main point of evaluation, for both the Commission and the Member States, is to ensure that full account is taken of the results (of evaluations) in the design and implementation of future development projects. In this connection it is up to the Commission and the Member States, each for its own part, to introduce adequate procedures".

1.2 At their meeting on September 27th, 1989, the Heads of Evaluation Services agreed that, whilst the CIDA Survey had yielded a great deal of useful factual information on feedback (and this should not now be duplicated), there was a case for pursuing the aspect of the effectiveness, or "quality" of feedback mechanisms. They therefore decided that a joint review should be carried out by Dr Eggers, Head of the Evaluation Service of the Commission, and Dr Basil Cracknell (One-time Head of the ODA Evaluation Department and Chairman of the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation, and now an Evaluation Consultant), of two Member States (Denmark and the Federal Republic of Germany) and of the Commission; and that an interim (synthesis) report should be produced for discussion at the next meeting early in 1990.
A decision would then be taken whether to continue the review to cover the remaining Member States, and if so what implementation modalities should be observed.

1.3 The Head of the Commission Evaluation Service participated in the two reviews of Member States, although not of course in that of the Commission; however his participation does not imply that he has any share in the responsibility implied in the formulation of the substantative findings, conclusions and recommendations of this synthesis report, for which the consultant has the exclusive responsibility. It is on the basis of this synthesis report, together with the three agency reports, that the Head of the Commission Evaluation Service will formulate the draft report of the Commission Services to the EEC Council, to be approved by the Commission authorities prior to its release to the Council.

1.4 The visits to DANIDA, FRG and the EEC Commission were carried out during October, Novemnber and December respectively, and each agency gave every possible assistance. Their full cooperation is gratefully acknowledged. Each agency had the opportunity of commenting on the draft reports relating to their own agency and their comments have been taken into account in the final versions.

II. Terms of Reference

2.1 The full Terms of Reference for the review, as approved in principle by the meeting on 27th September, and slightly revised after discussions with the three agencies, are at Appendix I. They cover two main aspects as follows:

A. Feedback Mechanisms:

(a) Lesson Learning: Assessment of the quality of evaluation reports, and the extent to which they are in fact used for feedback.

(b) Practical Applications of the Lessons Learned: What kind of feedback mechanisms exist, and how effective are they?

(c) Conclusions and Recommendations: These are to be formulated to improve the feedback mechanisms of each agency being reviewed, and of the other EEC participants. They should be closely tailored to fit the specific nature and needs of each agency, excluding any form of "normalisation" for normalisation's sake.

B. Methodological Issues: These concern the methodology used in the three pilot case studies, together with recommendations for any improvement if it is decided to take the review further.

2.2 This synthesis report follows the above sequence of topics. The intention has been to focus not so much on the factual aspects of the three agencies' feedback systems as on their effectiveness. The emphasis has therefore been on trying to identify strong and weak points, and especially on trying to see what might be done about the latter, and what there is that the agencies might be able to learn from eachother.

III. Executive Summary

3.1 At the end of each visit the Consultant presented a brief summary of his findings for discussion at a round-up meeting. These summaries are included in each report. The following is a brief summary of the main points contained in these documents.

A. "Each for its own Part"

Feedback procedures have evolved in response to the particular circumstances and needs in each agency - examples are given, There should be no normalisation for normalisation's sake, and standardisation should be pursued only when this is agreed to be the only way of achieving the common objective.

B. Effectiveness of Feedback Materials and Mechanisms

Tables I and II, and the supporting text, present the Consultant's personal assessments of the effectiveness of feedback materials and mechanisms. The main points that emerge are discussed in the next section.

C. Strong and Weak Points

1. Feedback Materials All three agencies are producing an adequate flow of evaluation reports, of good quality and of the required type, and which adequately meet the agencies' felt needs. The main weak points are: lack of operational relevance;lack, in many but not all cases, of LDC participation; and lack of impact evaluations.

2. Feedback Mechanisms

a. Formal All three agencies arrange workshops and seminars; carry out reviews of cross-cutting issues; prepare Annual Reports; have effective systems for maanaging the stock and flow of evaluation reports; and achieve a considerable degree of mass external impact through publications.

Particular agencies have their own strong points. For example: the FRG has an excellent system for ensuring that action is taken as a result of the recommendations in evaluation reports: the EEC Commission has an Early Warning System that ensures that there is feedback of evaluation findings at the monitoring stage, whilst its Basic Principles system involves a high degree of participation by the ACP countries; it has also fostered the production of house journals and newssheets which are valuable for feedback, and it organises regular meetings of sectoral experts in the Community: DANIDA's strong point is the way the Evaluation Unit is so closely integrated into the agency's senior management structure.

So far as the weak points are concerned, the most important shortcoming, which affects only DANIDA and the EEC

Commission, is the absence of any effective machinery to ensure that action is taken on evaluation recommendations. Other major weaknesses, which affect all three agencies to at least some extent, are: the inadequacy of present arrangements for ensuring feedback at every stage of the project cycle; the poor state of the "Corporate Memory" and the failure, especially on the part of the FRG and the EEC Commission, to evolve methods for the speedy and streamlined dissemination of evaluation results in the form of one-page summaries; the relatively small use being made of evaluation results in staff training; and the failure to use Project Completion Reports, or post-completion reports, as raw material for evaluation.

Weak points affecting the EEC Commission in particular are: lack of resources available for financing visits by journalists to developing countries; the difficulties with regard to the Basic Principles approach (especially those for broad sectors like Education or Health); and the fact that the EDF Committee does not see evaluation reports and virtually never reviews EDF aid in general against the backcloth of evaluation findings.

b. Informal

All three agencies have effective informal feedback opportunities, especially DANIDA which is helped by its small size and physical cohesiveness. FRG has problems as a result of the physical separation between Bonn and Frankfurt; whilst the EEC Commission has problems in maintaining adequate informal contact between Brussels and the 250 or so staff in the Delegations.

D. Role of the Auditors

There is generally an uneasy relationship between the State Auditors (or the Court of Auditors in the Case of the Commission) and the three agencies. In the Commission's case this seems to have reached the point where there is outright antagonism between the two parties, and therefore little effective feedback from the Auditors' work to the Commission. In the other agencies as well, there is less use made of the auditors' reports for feedback than would seem to be justified.

E. Conclusions and Recommendations

1. DANIDA and the EEC Commission need to improve their arrangements for ensuring that action is taken as a result of evaluation recommendations.They should each set up a committee of senior management charged with the responsibility for deciding what action should be taken on the recommendations in evaluation reports and then monitoring what action is taken. The FRG should circulate a note describing its excellent "protocol" system.

2. Recommendations in evaluation reports need to be made more operationally relevant, and that could be achieved by ensuring that there are staff members on evaluation teams.

3. There needs to be more effective integration of feedback into each phase of the project cycle, and one way of fostering this would be for the Logical Framework approach to be introduced into the EEC Commission, and for its use to be speeded up in DANIDA.

4. The Corporate Memory needs to be improved e.g. via computerised databanks, improved Sector Manuals, and short (one-page) summaries of evaluation reports.

5. Participation by LDC's, both in carrying out evaluations and in feedback, needs to be made more effective,especially in the case of the Danish and German aid.

6. More multi-year reviews of cross-cutting issues are needed.

7. More impact evaluations are needed eg to provide data on the crucial factors of sustainability.

8. Arrangements are needed to ensure that more "human-interest" stories are obtained as by-products of evaluation reports.

9. The FRG and EEC Commission should reconsider their present policy of denying the Press access to evaluation reports : at the very least the Press should see evaluation summaries.

10. The FRG needs to gear its standard Terms of Reference for evaluation reports more closely to the factors of sustainability.

11.The Evaluation Unit in the EEC Commission needs to be more fully integrated into senior management.

12. The EEC Commission should expand its positive initiative in the direction of informal intra-Community meetings of sector specialists amd should organise more such meetings.

13. The EDF Committee should receive evaluation reports, and should discuss them (especially the sector syntheses, thematic evaluations, instrumental evaluations, and country evaluations) from time to time.

14. The EEC Commission should review the Basic Principles approach, with the possibility in mind that its scope should be confined to more narrowly focussed sectors.

IV. "Each for its Own Part"

4.1 This phrase in the Council resolution of 16th May,1989 (paragraph 1.1 of this report refers) emphasises the importance attached by the Council to the avoidance of normalisation for normalisation's sake, and the need to relate feedback mechanisms to the particular circumstances in each Member State and in the Commission. Often the way feedback procedures have evolved can only be properly understood by reference to the way in which the agency operates. A classic example of this is the Basic Principles approach which is unique to the EEC Commission. This approach grew out of the conviction, inherent in the EDC's relationship with the ACP countries through the Lome Conventions, that feedback of evaluation findings into development policies and procedures needs to be organised on a genuinely joint basis with the ACP partners.No Member State has anything like the Basic Principles procedure because it does not feel the same necessity to share its evaluation findings with the developing countries, nor to strive to produce agreed sectoral policies with the beneficiary countries.The Lome Convention has introduced a special relationship, and this is reflected in the feedback procedures.

4.2 Another special feature of the EEC Commission is the role of the various Community institutions, such as the European Parliament, the EEC Council, and the Court of Auditors. These are unique to the EEC Commission's case, and feedback procedures have to reflect their needs. Also unique is the EDF Committee which gives the Member States the responsibility for advising on all EDF-funded projects and programmes. No Member State has such a body, although the DANIDA Board performs a similar role but not of course involving other countries.

4.3 The way aid agencies are internally organised also has a major impact on how feedback sytstems have developed. A key factor is whether the agency has a major presence in the field (such as the EEC Commission has, with its Delegation offices in every ACP country), or whether it is concentrated mainly at HQ, as is the case with Denmark and the FRG. If there is a strong field presence the problems of monitoring are much diminished since the field staff are able to keep in close touch with what is happening to projects; however the problem of the Corporate Memory is greatly exacerbated, since so many staff are relatively cut off from immediate access to the stock of knowledge and wisdom available at HQ. In DANIDA the problem of maintaining a Corporate Memory is exacerbated by the fact that many of the staff are career members of the Foreign Service and may therefore spend only a short period working in the development field. In such circumstances there is a special need for systematic feedback procedures so that expertise can be speedily transferred from one person to another.

4.4 Staff pressure is another factor affecting feedback procedures. If the ratio of staff numbers to aid volume is diminishing, as it tends to be in DANIDA and the EEC Commission HQ, the opportunities for staff to take the time to absorb the lessons of experience are much reduced, and means must be found of getting information to them in as condensed a form as possible otherwise they simply won't be able to use it.

4.5 The FRG has its own special problems arising out of the separation between the Ministry (BMZ) in Bonn and its two agencies, KfW and GTZ, in Frankfurt. This hampers personal and informal feedback; however the inescapable need to have a highly formalised system of inter-commnunication in fact assists the more formal means of feedback. Even so, there are some sensitive issues involved in this relationship eg the extent to which BMZ feels able to insist on detailed feedback from the two agencies since they have a considerable autonomy of their own. No other aid agencies in the Community have such problems, at least not on the same scale.

4.6 Feedback outside the agencies depends very much on the kind of links that the agency has developed. DANIDA, for example, has an excellent network of communications with the aid-related bodies outside, and there is a great deal of informal, as well as formal, feedback, which is helped by the policy of openness with regard to evaluation reports that the Ministry is now practising. In contrast, the FRG and the EEC Commission seem to have less well developed outside links. The FRG is so uncertain of the attitude of the churches and other opinion-formers in Germany that it appears to be reluctant to let them have access to evaluation reports for fear that adverse comments in the latter might actually weaken support for aid. The EEC Commission also lacks linkages with outside bodies, and feedback outside the Commission is poor. Clearly as a supra-national body the Commission is likely to have greater difficulty in reaching the hearts and minds of the people who comprise the "development constituency" in the Community, and it therefore has problems in fostering feedback to the wider public that the Member States don't have.

4.7 Language can be another handicap to feedback for some countries. The EEC Commission is well placed to cope with the language problem, but the FRG has more difficulties since none of the beneficiary countries, or Member States, have German as a major language and evaluation reports intended for a wider public need to be translated. This may be one reason why the FRG has concentrated its "public feedback" resources on the major cross-cutting reports which appear every two years and are translated into English and French.

4.8 The preceding examples illustrate the wisdom of the Council's advice that each Member State, and the EEC Commission, should introduce adequate feedback procedures to meet its own needs, and that there should be no striving for normalisation for normalisation's sake. That does not rule out any possibility at all of standardisation, but it should only be considered if it is agreed to be the only way of achieving a shared objective, and that is likely to be a rare occurrence.

V. Effectiveness of Feedback Materials and Mechanisms

5.1 This section comprises a review of the main components of the feedback systems of the three agencies, taking first the materials for feedback and then the feedback mechanisms. It centres around Tables I (Assessment of Feedback Materials), and II (Assessment of Feedback Mechanisms). These contain the Consultant's subjective assessments of the effectiveness of each component of feedback. The main purpose of this section is to identify the various components of feedback, and to assess the effectiveness of each one, noting any important differences between the three agencies, as reflected in the scores given in the Tables, and exploring the reasons for those differences. In Section VI the strong and weak points of the feedback mechanisms of the three agencies are discussed: and in Section VII some proposals are made for strengthening the weak points.

Effectiveness of Feedback Materials

1. Client Orientation

5.2 The Consultant was very impressed by the way in which each agency was trying to find out what the felt needs were within the agency, and to build up an evaluation programme accordingly. Fairly typical of this process is the procedure used by BMZ. All the various departments of the Ministry, as well as the two agencies KfW and GTZ, are invited to nominate projects and programmes, or other topics, for evaluation (not only by the Evaluation Unit itself but also by the geographical desks, ie for evaluations not funded directly from the Evaluation Budget), and these are collected together in a booklet which is then the subject of in-depth discussion within the office. Eventually a balanced programme emerges which best matches the resources available to the varied needs. DANIDA has also adopted a far more consultative style in recent years. Instead of simply inviting colleagues to comment on the programme drawn up by the Evaluation Unit, as was the practice in the past, the Unit now invites colleagues to nominate projects etc for evaluation and builds up the first draft programme that way. The EEC Commission similarly makes a special effort to consult colleagues widely, and it invites their suggestions. However, unlike the FRG, the Evaluation Unit

Table I Assessment of Feedback Materials

	FRG	DANIDA	EEC
	(Score out of 5)		
1. Client Orientation			
Do the reports meet the needs of the agency?	4	4	4
2. Quantity of Reports			
Is the number adequate in general?	5	5	5
Are there enough sectoral, thematic, instrumental or country reports?	5	5	5
Are there enough impact evaluations?	3	1	3
Are there enough cross-cutting reports?	5	4	3
Is enough use made of monitoring reports and mid-term reviews in evaluations?	3	3	3
Is enough use made of Project Completion Reports or Impact Reports in evaluations?	3	1	1
3. Quality of Reports			
Is the quality adequate in general?	5	5	5
Is there sufficient emphasis on sustainability?	5	3	5
Do reports put sufficient emphasis on the need to include conclusions and recommendations?	5	3	4
Are the recommendations sufficiently relevant to operational needs?	4	2	2
Are the reports produced by "mixed teams" (ie including agency staff)?	4	2	2
Is there sufficient participation by representatives of the developing countries?	1	1	4

of the EEC Commission does not have any coordination role regarding the evaluation activities financed from other budget lines than the Evaluation one.

5.3 The great advantage of client orientation is of course that the evaluation reports are likely to focus on issues that are both timely and relevant; whilst the staff of the agency who have helped to draw up the programme are more likely to cooperate with the evaluators when the time comes to implement the evaluation, and even more important, are more likely to carefully read the report when it appears.

2. Quantity of Reports

5.4 The Consultant was equally impressed by the volume of evaluation reports being produced. The EEC Commission Evaluation Unit has until recently been badly understaffed, and yet it still managed to achieve a very creditable throughput, mainly by farming out a lot of the burdensome work of searching through files and drawing up, on the basis of standard terms, detailed terms of reference for evaluations. However now that it has been brought up to strength (a total of 8, including 3 support staff), it should be able to produce an even more impressive throughput. Not only is the total volume good, from the three agencies, but all are producing a good mix of types of evaluations ie including an increasing proportion of sectoral, thematic and instrumental studies (and in the case of the EEC Commission, country evaluations as well). The trend is towards fewer of the "one-off" project evaluations and more sectoral and thematic ones, and this is to be welcomed as the latter are more useful for policy and procedural purposes.

5.5 However there are a few deficiencies in terms of the quantity of evaluation reports. As Table I shows, there are fewer impact studies than would be desirable, bearing in mind the emphasis now being placed on the factors of sustainability (ie project survival after the aid ceases). With DANIDA this is a problem because most of their projects are on-going. With FRG it is a problem because the BMZ staff tend naturally to be primarily concerned with projects and programmes that may be causing difficulties, and they tend to rely on the two agencies to learn lessons from completed projects. KfW indeed does this extremely well. It carries out a "Final Report" for every project some two or three years after the aid has ceased, but unfortunately it doesn't seem to make much use of these as raw material for evaluation reports.

5.6 One deficiency, which affects DANIDA and the EEC Commission more than the FRG, is the lack of reviews of cross-cutting issues which cover periods of years, The FRG does this regularly; DANIDA does it, but only for selected sectors: whilst the EEC does it only when it feels there is a special need and not as a matter of course. There is a risk that unless these multi-year syntheses are carried out it may be difficult to present a well balanced picture of aid effectiveness, or to attempt to measure any trends over time.

5.7 A third deficiency is the relatively little use that seems to be made of the mass of information that is now emerging from monitoring reports, mid-term reviews, and project completion reports, as raw material for evaluation reports. In other words, too little is being done to look for broader trends and policy/procedural lessons that are to be found among the growing mass of project-related information becoming available.

3.Quality of Reports

5.8 The general quality of the evaluation reports is good. With only a few exceptions here and there, the Evaluation Units in the three agencies have been able to find experienced evaluators capable of producing work of a high professional standard. By now they each have their own lists of tried and tested evaluators whom they know can be relied upon to produce high quality work. The EEC Commission is the only agency that really attempts to use evaluators from the developing countries on any scale. It is to be commended for its initiative in this direction, and even if occasionally the work of evaluators from the developing countries may fall slightly below the highest standards (and this of course is also true for some European experts), nevertheless their contribution often reflects a distinctive developing country viewpoint and that is particularly valuable.

5.9 If there is a common criticism of the quality of the evaluation reports, it relates to the lack of operational relevance in the conclusions and recommendations. This is a major criticism, and it is taken up as a weak point in the next section.

5.10 A final comment on the quality of evaluation reports is that not all of them yet put sufficient emphasis on the factors of sustainability, an area in which, however, the European Commission has made impressive progress in recent years.This also is discussed in the next section.

Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

A. Feedback Involving the Evaluation Unit

1. Action Feedback

5.11 Probably the most critical test of an effective feedback mechanism is whether the agency has a proper system for ensuring that action is taken as a direct result of the recommendations in evaluation reports. BMZ has established a

Table II Assessment of Feedback Mechanisms

	FRG	DANIDA	EEC
	(Score out of 5)		
5)A. Feedback Involving the Evaluation Unit			
(1) Action Feedback:			
(a) Action on Recommendations	5	2	1
(b) Other Direct Action:			
(i) Workshops & Seminars	4	4	4
(ii) Preparation of follow-up reports:			
-Syntheses & Cross-cutting Analyses	4	4	4
-Reviews of evaluation results spanning periods of years	5	3	2
-Annual Reports	3	5	5
-Basic Principles	-	-	4
(iii)Use of evaluations in training	2	2	2
(c) Indirect Action: Extent to which feedback is integrated into the various stages of the project cycle:			
-Project identification/appraisal	4	2	3
-Project monitoring and review	4	2	4
-Project completion and post-completion	3	1	1
Extent to which feedback is related to the Logical Framework approach	4	2	0
Extent to which feedback is related to country programming	4	4	3
(2) Dissemination Feedback			
(a) Direct Dissemination:			
-Internally within the agency	3	4	3
Extent to which Head of Eval'n unit has frequent access to senior management	5	5	2
- Externally, to other developed countries(incl the Press)	2	5	3
-Externally,to developing countries	2	2	2
-Through use of summaries	1	4	1
(b) Indirect Dissemination:			
- Via the "Corporate Memory":			
-Sector Manuals	3	2	3
-Data Banks	2	2	2
-Office Procedure	4	4	4
-Via internal newssheets & sector-specific journals	2	3	4
-Via publications intended for mass public impact	4	4	4

B. <u>Feedback that Does Not Involve the Evaluation Unit</u>

	FRG	DANIDA	EEC
	(Score out of 5)		
(1) Role of journalists visiting developing countries	4	4	1
(2) Missions to developing countries by Parliamentary and other bodies	4	4	4
(3) Role of intermediaries such as NGO's, Liaison Officers, etc	3	5	3
(4) Meetings between sectoral specialists in the agency and others outside (organised mainly by EEC)	3	3	3
(5) Informal feedback among agency staff in the course of their daily work	3	5	4

highly efficient system, and this is reflected in the high score given in Table II; it could well become a model for others. Evaluation recommendations are discussed in depth, and what is called a "Protocol" is produced which sets out the decisions that have been taken regarding action that should follow. The Evaluation Unit monitors what action is taken, and a year later a report is made. A Press Conference is called annually by the Minister at which he presents the results of this process: the Germans claim that 80% of the recommendations lead to some kind of direct action. The absence of such a system in the EEC Commission, and in DANIDA, is the most important criticism that can be made of their evaluation systems.

5.12 Other kinds of direct action, however, are being pursued successfully by all three agencies, eg workshops and seminars, syntheses and cross-cutting reviews, and Annual Reports. The EEC also has its own unique system of direct follow up in the form of the "Basic Principles" approach. The pros and cons of this are discussed later.

5.13 As regards follow up in the form of indirect action, the main criterion of effectiveness here is the extent to which there is feedback of evaluation findings into each phase of the project cycle. This cannot be expected to occur automatically. Indeed, without some structure to ensure that such feedback occurs, the chances are that "Corporate Forgetting" will be widespread. The two main "structures" that have been found usseful so far, are the Logical Framework and the Early Warning (Traffic Lights) System. The Logical Framework is fully integrated into the thinking of BMZ, GTZ and KfW; staff in all three agencies have been trained in the technique, and the Logical Framework matrix is widely used (especially in GTZ). In DANIDA there has been some training, but so far the Logical Framework system has been used only sporadically. In the EEC Commission the Logical Framework has recently been brought to the attention of all staff, but is not, as yet, being used in practice.This is unfortunate because it means that there is a virtual absence of a satisfactory structure at the Financing Proposal stage and this adversely affects subsequent project implementation and monitoring.

5.14 On the other hand, the EEC Commission has advanced well beyond the other aid agencies with its Early Warning (Traffic Lights) System, by which, every six months, those who are monitoring projects have to indicate on a special form whether the project is running smoothly (green), having serious but soluble problems (yellow), or has run into major problems calling for drastic action (red). The Evaluation Unit has the responsibility for monitoring the progress being made with the introduction of the new system, and so far there are encouraging signs that it will soon be working well. Before long it should be possible to begin analysing what are the factors that help to explain why some projects tend to fall into the green, yellow or red categories. The potential for feedback (in both directions) is considerable.

2. Dissemination Feedback

5.15 This is the second principal form of feedback, and it comprises direct dissemination of reports and summaries round the office, and to interested parties outside, as well as indirect dissemination eg through the processing of information from evaluation reports through secondary channels such as computerised databanks, sector manuals, newssheets, publications intended to reach a wider public, etc. All these aspects, direct and indirect, are discussed more fully in the next section.

B. Feedback that Does Not Involve the Evaluation Unit

5.16 It is a mistake to think that all feedback emanates from, or must necessarily involve, the Evaluation Unit. A great deal of feedback occurs through formal and informal contacts that are taking place all the time, ie in the course of the daily life of the staff. However there are also some more organised forms of feedback that are important, such as the regular formal and informal meetings of sector specialists organised by the EEC Commission; visits of Parliamentarians and journalists to developing countries; and the role of the NGO's, churches and other influential bodies acting as independent channels of feedback to the tax-paying public in general. DANIDA scores heavily with regard to this latter kind of informal feedback, whereas the EEC Commission, for reasons beyond its control, tends to lag behind, even though visits by members of the EDF Committee and Members of the European Parliament are being organised regularly. These issues are also taken up again later.

VI. Summary of Strong Points and Weak Points

A. Feedback Materials

Strong Points (All three agencies)

(1) The annual production of evaluation studies is adequate to meet, in broad terms, the agencies' needs.

(2) There is a good balance between one-off project evaluations and other types such as sectoral, thematic,etc.

(3) With minor exceptions, the quality of the evaluations is good, and in particular the factors of sustainability are now being emphasised in most evaluations,

(4) The evaluation programmes are now client-oriented, ie they reflect the concerns and priorities of all the main parts of the office.

Weak Points

(1) Although the standard terms of reference invariably call for conclusions and recommendations to be included, these are not sufficiently (except in the case of FRG) operationally relevant. This is because most evaluations are carried out by outside consultants who are relatively unfamiliar with the way the aid agency works, and are therefore reluctant to comment on procedural or policy aspects; instead they generally confine themselves mainly to the project-related issues, or to broad comments about the agency's effectiveness, ie without being too specific. The result is that the evaluation recommendations often have little direct impact on what the agency actually does(except in the case of the FRG, which ensures that there is operational impact, although this may not always be sustained).

(2) There is very little participation by the developing countries (except in the case of the EEC), and the evaluations tend to reflect a developed country viewpoint which makes them sometimes unacceptable to the beneficiary countries.

(3) Many evaluations are of on-going projects, and there is a lack of information about the "impact" of projects (ie their survival once the aid has finished), although this is not the case with KfW which in fact reviews all its projects several years after the aid has come to an end.

B. Feedback Mechanisms

(1) Formal

Strong Points (All three agencies)

(a) Workshops and seminars are arranged, as appropriate, to enable the results of sector syntheses, thematic studies, instrumental evaluations, and country evaluations to be discussed.

(b) There has been a welcome trend away from the individual project evaluations towards more cross-cutting evaluations, and including the four types mentioned in (a) above. The latter lend themselves to the drawing of policy inferences and are therefore more useful for management. However they absorb a lot of resources, and the trend has therefore been accompanied by a reduction in the number of free-standing or "one-off" project evaluations.

(c) DANIDA and the EEC Commission are now producing Annual Reports (the EEC has just recently decided to do this), and the FRG produces a Biennial Report. All produce annual (and some also multi-annual) work programmes.

(d) All have effective systems for managing the stock and flow of evaluation reports, ie for ensuring that the reports reach those who need to receive them.

(e) All have arrangements for ensuring that the main evaluation findings have at least a measure of public impact through publications aimed at a mass audience.

Strong Points(Specific to Particular Agencies)

(f) So far as the FRG is concerned, it has an excellent system for ensuring that action is taken on recommendations, recognised as relevant by the Evaluation Unit, that appear in evaluation reports. The "protocol" system described in the previous section, ensures that action is taken, and then monitored.

(g) The EEC's unique system of feedback, the "Basic Principles", has both strengths and weaknesses, but an undoubted strength is the way in which experts from the Member States are brought together with experts from the ACP countries, in an ACP country, for discussions on a sector lasting a whole week. Neither of the other two agencies has anything comparable in terms of feedback to the developing countries.

(h) The EEC has encouraged the development of a few sector-specific house-journals and newssheets, and these have a considerable potential as vehicles for feedback. It might be useful for the Member States to consider fostering something along these lines.

(i) The EEC has also played an interesting role in calling together groups of sector specialists to discuss sector issues on an informal basis, and it might well enhance feedback among the other members of the Community if this development were further encouraged.

(j) DANIDA's particular strength lies in the way the Evaluation Unit is so closely integrated into senior management: in this way it optimises the advantages of small scale and physical cohesion.

Weak Points (All three agencies)

(a) The most important weakness, which relates only to DANIDA and the EEC Commission, since FRG has an excellent system in this respect, is the lack of any machinery for ensuring that action is taken on the recommendations in evaluation reports. In the EEC especially, the evaluation findings do not have sufficient impact on senior management, and all too often they are virtually ignored, simply because no-one has the specific responsibility for taking action on them.

(b) The second main weakness, which affects all three to some extent, lies in the lack of effective systems for ensuring that there is feedback of the key lessons from evaluation work at every stage of the project cycle, ie at the project preparation and appraisal stage, during project implementation, and after the aid has ceased. It is crucially important that the factors of sustainability, identified by the DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation, are taken into account at an early stage in the project's life. Some important progress has indeed been made, notably by GTZ through its "ZOPP" approach, and by the EEC through its Early Warning System (Traffic Lights) approach. The GTZ has found that the Logical Framework approach is an excellent vehicle for ensuring that the project objectives are systematically defined, and criteria of success identified. It would greatly enhance the effectiveness of feedback if the Logical Framework approach could be further developed by DANIDA, and introduced into the EEC Commission. The Commission's Early Warning System is a model of its kind, and may well be adopted by other aid agencies. However, important as good monitoring is, it is still vitally important to ensure that mistakes are not made in the first place, and what is urgently needed is some means of ensuring that the factors of sustainability are fully taken into account as of the project identification and design stages. It is in these vital areas that Community-wide progress could have the most important positive repercussions.

(c) The third weakness links to the preceding one. It relates to the lack of an adequate "Corporate Memory", or, putting it the other way round, the persistence of "Corporate Forgetting". In all three agencies there is still a long way to go to develop a proper corporate memory. The most promising ways of achieving this are through databanks, probably computerised but not necessarily so, and above all through subject-specific (sectors/instruments/themes) Manuals, where the main lessons of evaluation experience can be systematically recorded in a form that makes them readily available to geographical desk officers and technical staff, and as far as policy and management issues are concerned, to policy makers and top development cooperation managers.

So far as databanks are concerned, progress has been very slow in all three agencies, notably in the FRG, but the other two are not much further ahead. The curious situation has been reached where technical staff in all the agencies are beginning to buy their own personal computers so that they can begin to set up their own computerised databases, ie they are not prepared to wait any longer for slow-moving officialdom to provide them.

As to sector, instrumental and thematic, Manuals, the situation is most unsatisfactory. All agencies have them, but in some cases only for a few selected sectors, and in others they are very out of date or unsuitable as vehicles for the feedback of evaluation experience.

This is a field in which, if the above-mentioned improvements could be linked to the criteria of sustainability referred to in A3 earlier, important and practically highly relevant progress could be made, in which moreover close inter-agency cooperation could play a decisive role.

(d) The fourth main weakness is concerned with yet another aspect of the problem of how to feed back the main lessons of evaluations quickly and effectively, ie internal and external dissemination. Internally, the main deficiency is the lack of a good system of preparing short summaries of each evaluation report. In the EEC there are no summaries, other than those that are, of course, systematically included in each evaluation report, so that the only option is for staff to request the full report or not to see even the summary, and being very busy, most of them just never get to see the reports at all. The FRG includes summaries at the back of its cross-cutting reports, but that is most inconvenient as it means that staff have to wait until the cross-cutting report comes out, and then the summaries cannot easily be filed by sectors. Moreover only a relatively small number of staff receive the full cross-cutting reports. DANIDA prepares short summaries, but they are not short enough, since they run to 4 or 5 pages and busy staff seldom have time to read them unless they have a direct interest: moreover they are not labelled by sectors so that staff cannot file them systematically. The net result of this common failure to find a good system of disseminating evaluation results in a rapid and streamlined way is that generally speaking only the few members of staff directly concerned have any awareness of the results of evaluation work.

(e) All three agencies seem to make relatively little use of evaluation results in staff training, which seems to be unfortuante since the lessons from experience should surely be a very important component of training.

(f) Little use seems to be made of project completion reports, or post-completion reports in the case of KfW, as raw material for cross-cutting analyses, and this seems to be a waste of an opportunity.

<u>Weak Points (Specific to particular agencies)</u>

(g) DANIDA and the FRG finance the visits of journalists to developing countries, but the EEC Commission hardly does this at all. It would surely enhance feedback at the public level if the Commission were to do this more often, and to combine the financing with an input from the Evaluation Unit, say in the form of briefing, and the provision of evaluation reports as background material.

(h) The positive aspect about the Basic Principles approach used by the EEC Commission has already been mentioned, but there are also some weak points about this system. The Basic

Principles for the broad sectors like Education, Health, etc tend to be a statement of the obvious, and they have very little practical impact within the Commission, or among the ACP countries. However those for more narrowly defined sectors, like Export Promotion or Livestock Production, seem to be more effective, and this may indicate the direction in which the Basic Principles approach should move. Another problem with these documents is that they tend to quickly become out of date, and it might be better if they were regarded more as discussion documents, along the lines of the proposed sector/instrumental/thematic Manuals, which can be brought up to date regularly. However they are a joint exercise between the EEC Commission and the ACP countries, and any change would of course have to be agreed between the two sides. The time has come when the pros and cons of the Basic Principles approach need to be reassessed.

(i) A weak point with the EDF Committee is that this body, which has responsibility for recommending all EEC-funded projects for approval, never sees the evaluation reports (although it now sees some mid-term reviews), and therefore never has the opportunity of reviewing the outcome of its past recommendations.

(2) Informal

It is difficult to talk about strong points or weak points when it comes to informal feedback because this, by its very nature, is not organised; it simply occurs as a result of the myriad of contacts that those working in the development agencies have both internally and externally. So far as internal informal feedback is concerned all one can say is that the more geographically concentrated the agencies are the more are the opportunities for this kind of informal feedback to occur; which suggests that DANIDA is best placed of all three in this respect, whilst the FRG is the worst placed. The EEC is in an intermediate position; it benefits from the concentration of staff in and around the Berlaymont Building, but against that there is the problem of informal feedback with the Delegation staff overseas. So far as external informal feedback is concerned this depends on the intensity (and warmth) of the network of contacts that the agency has with outside bodies. DANIDA has an excellent network of this kind, and nurtures it carefully, whilst FRG seems to have been less successful in this respect, and the EEC has great problems in achieving any real rapport with external bodies. The role of evaluation work in this context seems to have been relatively neglected, and aid agencies may need to take the thinking public more into its confidence when it comes to disseminating the results of evaluation exercises.

VII. Role of the Auditors

7.1 The relationship between the State Auditors (or the Court of Auditors in the case of the EEC Commission) and the three agencies is an uneasy one. In all three agencies the auditors are regarded as having a basically different job to do compared with the evaluators, even though the methods they use and the reports they produce have similarities. However this is less the case with the audit department of KfW (Treuarbeit) than it is with the other agencies. Treuarbeit acts almost as if it were in fact the Evaluation Department of KfW. It produces around 20 evaluation reports per annum, and it sees its role as being to comment in general on the effectiveness of KfW projects, especially from the point of view of whether the stated objectives were achieved (this is the approach used by all auditors and it is in line with best evaluation practice). Treuarbeit is regarded within KfW as far more than just an audit department, and its reports have a considerable impact on how the agency operates.

7.2 In DANIDA the auditors also have a role not very dissimilar from that of the evaluators, but there is little relationship between the two, and little feedback from the auditors' reports within the agency . The auditors' reports are indeed taken seriously in DANIDA, but that is more because of their potential adverse impact on outside opinion, eg in Parliament and through the Press, than because they are thought to have potential benefit to DANIDA itself. Considering the considerable effort that goes into these audit evaluations it is unfortunate that they are not viewed more positively as a source of feedback.

7.3 However the least satisfactory relationship is that between the Court of Auditors and the EEC Commission. The reports produced by the Court are published (in summary form), and they have a considerable impact on the European Parliament, and sometimes on the general public through Press comments; but the Commission itself tends to take a highly defensive attitude. This seems to arise from the generally negative approach in the Court of Auditors' reports. It is as though they have eyes to see only the failures or inadequacies, and simply disregard the rest. They have also strayed at times into areas of policy where their competence might be questioned, and this has led to difficulties. The Commission may also have been partly responsible for the build up of strained relations, because the staff tend to take any criticism as if it were intended almost personally, and they seem primarily interested only in rebutting it rather than accepting it in a positive spirit and looking for useful lessons in terms of improving their own performance.

VIII. Conclusions and Recommendations

Relating to All Three Agencies

(1) Although important progress has been made in integrating the feedback of evaluation results into all phases of the project cycle(e.g. the GTZ "Zopp" system, and the EEC Commission's Early Warning System), there is still a great need to take this process much further. A particular priority is to ensure that there is effective feedback at the project identification and design stages, especially as regards the key factors of sustainability. An important means of imparting a relevant structure to the project cycle is the Logical Framework approach, and it is important that this be fostered by all agencies. On this basis, project preparation and project evaluation criteria should become closely integrated.

(2) An important means of ensuring that the results of evaluation work are fully taken into account in project administration is through an improved long-term Corporate Memory. The present systems are poor and badly need to be improved. This implies greatly improved computerised databank systems (ie user-friendly, but not necessarily all-embracing), and much improved sector/instrumental/thematic Manuals which can be kept up to date, and which focus more on the key elements of sustainability than on aid delivery. There should be close linkages between databank and Manual systems, with the structures of project preparation and evaluation.

(3) All agencies need to concentrate on making sure that the conclusions and recommendations in evaluation reports are operationally relevant, and one way of doing this is to have "mixed teams", ie having a staff member on every evaluation if possible to make sure that the reports are geared closely to the operational requirements of the agency. Equally as important of course is to have some arrangements for ensuring that the recommendations are formally considered, and such action taken as may be deemed appropriate, but as the FRG already has an excellent system in that regard, this crucially important issue is taken up under the individual agency headings later.

(4) All agencies need to make greater efforts to involve the developing countries in the planning and implementation of evaluations, and especially in the dissemination of the results. More workshops and conferences based on evaluation results should be held in the developing countries (perhaps based, in this particular respect if not in others, on the precedent set by the EEC Commission with its Basic Principles).

(5) The trend towards evaluations spanning periods of years and dealing with cross-cutting issues should be further reinforced. There is a risk that an unbalanced impression as to the

effectiveness of aid might be created if such medium-term reviews do not fully receive the attention they merit.

(6) More impact evaluations are needed so that sustainability can be more effectively evaluated, and feedback on this vital aspect improved.

(7) There is a need for more stories of a "human interest" type to emerge from evaluation reports and to be fed to the Press. One way of ensuring a supply of such stories would be to offer a small bonus to evaluators for any such material they supply as a by-product of their evaluation work.

(8) Evaluators need to find ways in which auditors' reports can be used as part of the general pool of evaluation experience available for feedback. One way of achieving this might be to prepare EVSUM-type summaries covering the more important auditors' reports. Another possibility might be to arrange workshops at which the auditors would present their findings for general discussion. As to the EEC in particular, the Court of Auditors and the EEC Commission need to find ways of diminishing the rather sterile confrontational relationship which has developed, and to move towards a more positive attitude towards audit reports so that the findings can be used for feedback. However this assumes that the Court of Auditors will be willing to adopt a more balanced approach to their work.

Specific to Particular Agencies

DANIDA

(9) There is a need to introduce a certain minimum of machinery to ensure that action is taken on the recommendations in evaluation reports, and to ensure that someone, probably the Evaluation Unit, has the responsibility for monitoring what action follows and of reporting back. A senior management committee needs to be given specific responsibility for this process.

(10) The introduction of the Logical Framework approach, already in hand, should be speeded up.

(11) There is a need for senior management to give rather more emphasis to the "quality of aid" aspects of evaluation work as compared with the accountability aspects.

(12) The existing evaluation summaries are too long and need to be kept to one page if possible. The staff should be provided with ring binders so that they can file the summaries by sectors.

Federal Republic of Germany

(13) The BMZ's "Protocol" system of ensuring that action is taken on recommendations, and monitoring that action, is so relevant to the needs in other Member States and the EEC Commission that it would be most helpful if BMZ could circulate a short paper explaining this system.

(14) The FRG should consider making the evaluation reports available to the Press. Even if it were decided not to let the full reports be made available, at least the summaries should be.

(15) The present system, whereby the summaries are included as an appendix to the cross-cutting reports, should be reviewed. Instead it would be far more convenient if short one-page summaries were prepared separately and circulated widely round FRG and externally. Staff should be equipped with ring binders.

(16) The standard terms of reference for evaluations need to be geared more closely to the factors of sustainability, and made shorter and less confining.

(17) The KfW and GTZ Evaluation Units should produce more evaluation reports, especially of the cross-cutting type, and, in the case of GTZ, more impact studies,

(18) Project Completion Reports, and in the case of KfW the "Final Reports", should be used as raw material for cross-cutting evaluations.

(19) KfW might consider using not only the basic concepts of the Logical Framework but the actual matrix as well.

The EEC Commission

(20) At the moment there is no system for ensuring that any action is taken on the recommendations in evaluation reports.The urgent need therefore is for some machinery to be set up whereby recommendations in evaluations can be formally considered at given intervals by a senior management committee charged specifically (probably inter alia) with that responsibility, and then for follow-up action to be monitored and a report made say one year later.

(21) The Evaluation Unit at present has little impact on the policy or procedures of the Commission, and it needs to be integrated more fully into senior management. Senior management needs to assume more direct responsibility for approving the Annual Report and the future work programme, and for guiding the Unit in general with a view to integrating its activities with the development cooperation effort of the EEC.

(22) The lack of any evaluation summaries is a serious handicap to the effective dissemination of evaluation results, both within the Commission and externally. The Commission should establish a system of one-page summaries, complete with ring binders. These summaries should be made freely available to the Press, and hopefully the full reports also.

(23) The trend towards the holding of regular meetings of sector specialists of the Commission and Member States should be encouraged, and the present programme expanded to cover new activities, as it provides a valuable form of feedback.

(24) More generous financial provision should be made to encourage journalists to visit EEC-funded aid projects overseas.

(25) There is a need for a more structured approach to all phases of the project cycle, and to achieve that the Logical Framework system should be introduced into the EEC Commission's procedures as soon as possible.

(26) It would be desirable for the EDF Committee to receive evaluation reports, and to devote some time to discussing the sectoral, thematic, instrumental and country evaluations in the context of the responsibility they have for recommending EEC-funded projects for approval.

(27) The Basic Principles procedure should be reviewed, in the light of this report, and probably its scope in future confined to more narrowly focussed sectors where there is at present an absence of any clearly enunciated policy.

IX. Methodological Issues

9.1 Each agency gave the team a warm welcome and every possible assistance: their full cooperation is gratefully acknowledged.

9.2 The Terms of Reference, and the general approach, proved to be most satisfactory, and no changes are required.

9.3 Each mission took a total of around 4 weeks to complete, of which two weeks were in the field and the other two weeks were for writing up and the production of reports. Some of the remaining Member States are smaller, or have less well developed evaluation systems, so it will be possible to cover them in a shorter period.

9.4 A full set of documents was collected for each agency, covering basic guidelines, pro-formas, specimen examples of key documents at each stage of the project cycle, and examples of a range of evaluation reports. All these documents are being retained by the Evaluation Unit of the EEC Commission, and may be consulted at any time. They consitutute the beginnings of what could become a very useful source of basic evaluation material for the Community as a whole.

9.5 It was decided, on the suggestion of DANIDA, that the Non-priority Areas should be kept separate as they are of interest only to a more limited number of people: they have therefore been included as separate Addenda to the main reports. The same procedure has been adopted for this synthesis report.

9.6 It was not possible to include the European Investment Bank with the mission to the EEC Commission, but the opportunity should be taken to include it if the review is continued.

9.7 Dr Eggers joined Dr Cracknell for the missions to DANIDA and FRG, but not of course to the EEC Commission. An attempt was made to find someone from either DANIDA or FRG to accompany Dr Cracknell on his mission to the latter, but this did not prove to be possible.

9.8 The results of this pilot phase suggest that the review is proving very productive of ideas that are surely of interest to all members of the Group, and it is most likely that extending the review to include the remaining Member States would yield further ideas that would also be of general interest. The Team therefore recommends that the review should continue until all the Member States have been covered, and a final synthesis report should then be produced. This process would take around a year, so that the final synthesis could be ready early in 1991.

Appendix I Detailed Terms of Reference

Detailed Terms of Reference for the Mission of Dr B. Cracknell to DANIDA, FRG, and EEC Commission

(Based on the draft letter No. 1 for the attention of Dr B. Cracknell, attached to Circular Letter No. 11 from the Head of the EEC Evaluation Service)

. Feedback Mechanisms

1.1 Objectives

We may call evaluation feedback mechanisms any form of activity giving rise to the application of lessons learned through evaluation, toward the improvement of the development effectiveness of development cooperation operations. The two key elements to be identified are thus:

(a) lesson learning, and

(b) practical application of the lessons learned in each of the three agencies. In the light of this analysis:

(c) conclusions and recommendations might be formulated to improve feedback mechanisms for each agency . These conclusions and recommendations should be formulated, first, for each specific agency after each mission, and then at the end of the entire exercise,i.e. after the feedback mechanisms of the other participants have come under review, and should be closely tailored to fit the specific nature and needs of each agency, excluding any form of "normalisation" for normalisation's sake.

1.2 Lesson Learning

1.2.1 What sources of learning from experience are available? What is the role of evaluation in that context?

1.2.2 Assessment of the quality of evaluation reports and their suitability for feedback.

1.2.3 Can the part of lessons enunciated be estimated when compared to the overall experience existing? In other words, what do we actually learn compared to what we could learn? Differences between "project-level" and "aggregate- level" in terms of optimum coverage?

1.3 Practical Application of Lessons Learned

1.3.1 Are there any compulsory or formal feedback mechanisms in application in the agency? Which are they?

1.3.2 Are there any customary practices fostered by persuasion which, without being compulsory, aim at similar effects as the compulsory mechanisms (i.e. enhancement of development effectiveness of aid)?

1.3.3 Who is learning what during the execution of evaluation exercises: documentary studies, field missions, report writing?

Who receives and reads in-extenso reports, summaries, and abstracts?

Who participates in seminars and workshops on the basis of evaluation results?

1.3.4 To what extent do the evaluation results feed into the agency's power structure and decision making processes?

1.3.5 What is the degree of "mass-impact" of feedback mechanisms?

1.3.6 To what extent are the results of evaluation studies applied in practice? To what extent are the following factors, vital for feedback, taken into account: timeliness, professional quality of the reports, operational relevance, compatability with the agency's capacity, political feasibility?

1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

On the basis of the experience of the agency concerned, what can be done to improve learning of lessons and their practical application, bearing in mind the specific constraints and possibilities of that agency? Upon completion of the pilot study (Denmark, FRG, and the EEC) a preliminary synthesis will be drawn up. If further agencies are then included, a final synthesis will be produced covering all of the agencies.

Structure conclusions and recommendations along the lines of questions as raised under 1.2 and 1.3 above.

2. Methodological Issues

What can be said about the methodology as incorporated in the present terms of reference and tried out in the three cases? How can that methodology be improved before pursuing the review of evaluation feedback practices and non-priority topics in the remaining EC development cooperation agencies?

EEC Commission and Member States Review of Effectiveness of Feedback Mechanisms

Addendum to the EEC Commission report covering the other issues raised in the EEC Council resolutions of November 1987 and May 1989

by

Dr Basil E. Cracknell

(Evaluation Consultant)

15th December,1989

Non-Priority Areas

This addendum to the EEC Commission report takes the form of the replies given by Dr Eggers, Head of the EEC Evaluation Service to each of the Questions 1 to 8 in the Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference are as set out in the draft letter to Dr B. Cracknell attached to Circular Letter No 11 from the Head of the Commission Evaluation Service: they comprise the following questions.

Question 1 : Verify if Member States' contributions about their evaluation activities in 1988/9 are sufficient to allow the working out of a brief synopsis, say as an annex to the Commission Services' Annual Report. Would not summaries as mentioned under 2 below be a better basis for such a synopsis?
Reply: The Commission will need to have the annual summary reports on their evaluation work, or anything similar, from the Member States, so that, together with its own Annual Report, it will be able to implement the Council resolution. However it is certainly not necessary for Member States to prepare an up-to-date Annual Report specially for that purpose. It will be adequate if they simply send the latest summary report they have, even though it may be up to a year out of date. If no such Report is readily available, all that the Commission needs is a list of the current evaluations in progress, with a paragraph on each one indicating the subject matter, plus a short (2 or 3 pages) description of the main conclusions and recommendations emerging from current evaluations.

Question 2: Note any regular summaries the agency is producing on its evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. Is it worthwhile to collect these centrally, say in Brussels? Is the production, in future, of an EEC-level (i.e. Member States and Commission) summary report on evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations, a worthwhile idea?
Reply: As the FRG has already pointed out, this question is superfluous since the EEC is already required to produce such a summary by the Council resolution.The question can therefore be deleted from the present Terms of Reference.

Question 3: Is it worth pursuing any further than is possible now, on the basis of existing information, the issue of the contribution to public awareness building? What contribution can the Annual Report of the Commission on its evaluation activities, to be produced as of 1990, make toward this end? Can the Press be motivated to become more open-minded, and less prone to be exclusively hunting for stories on failures, disasters amd mismanagement of funds?
Reply: The issue of public awareness building is certainly an important one, and the Commission will look into the possibility of producing short summaries on the lines of the ODA's EVSUMS, which hopefully will be made available to the Press (say in batches four times a year), as well as to other interested parties. The EEC's own Annual Report, together with

the overview of the work going on in all the Member States, which is to be prepared for the Council,might also be of considerable interest to the Press (if release is authorised by the Commission). The short summaries, as well as the Annual Report, will go to the "Courier" and should reach a wider public by that means. As to motivating the Press to become more open-minded, the Danish experience demonstrates that greater openness on the part of the aid agency may bring about a change in approach by the Press. Rather than constantly looking for "leaks" and scandals,once they have access to everything they will be less inclined to continue probing for "exclusive" stories but instead make use, albeit only rarely,of the material that is sent to them. The Commission will need to weigh up these issues in the light of other agencies' experience.

Question 4: Has there been any practical progress in the area of mutual information on, and learning from, eachother's evaluation results? What about the application of the CIDA computerised system concerning inputs (abstracts of reports), and outputs (use of material of the agencies represented in OECD)? Could an information exchange system work better on the EEC level? Would it better respond to practical needs?
Reply: There has been some progress in the sharing of information, but so far it has not been very systematic. It would indeed be difficult to handle the sheer volume of written matter if we were each to receive everything that the other agencies have produced - it would quickly become unmanageable. But a possible compromise would be if all the members of the Community,together with the Commission, were to produce one-page summaries like the ODA's "EVSUMS"; then we could share these among ourselves. This idea is well worth pursuing since each agency could build up a library of evaluation summaries, sector by sector, and these would be far more valuable than if each agency simply relied on its own evaluation output. Here is a clear case where some kind of standardisation would seem to be necessary ie it would obviously help if each agency producing EVSUM's were to use the same sectoral classification so that the summaries could readily be filed by sector for future use. Preferably the OECD sectoral classification should be the basis since this has already been agreed and is in widespread use. The Commission should introduce its own "EVSUM" system(which it may well call EVINFO since here is a case where standardisation is unnecessary, whilst choosing a distinctive title and livery could be an advantage). The Commission should put forward a proposal along these lines to the meeting of Heads of Evaluation Services on February 1st 1990. This is not "normalisation for normalisation's sake" but very much the reverse: unless we standardise our sectoral classifications we will not easily be able to share the benefit of our evaluation summaries.

On the question of whether an information exchange system would work better on an EEC level than globally, the Commission's view is that it would, partly because the sheer volume of material available globally would make it difficult to manage, but mainly because the members of the Community have a shared interest, and a more homogeneous approach to development aid than would be found world wide.

As to the CIDA computerised system, the Commission is supplying CIDA with the project information on the standardised format system, but as to receiving any benefits from it this has so far not been the case.The CIDA disquettes do not match the Commission's computer system and therefore cannot be used easily. But in any case there would be such an enormous volume of information available that it is difficult to see how one could tap into it effectively. Commission staff are just too busy to be able to cope with a global information system: they could only use it if the system were tailored to their immediate (and usually urgent and specific) needs: there is more chance of this happening through an EEC-level system than with a global one.

Question 5: What about the practical working, and the use, of an exchange of information on evaluation programmes? What has been done? What should be done?
Reply: The Commission would find it useful to receive the evaluation programmes from all Member States, not just a few as at present is the case. It would study them to see if there were any glaring overlaps, and it could draw Member States' attention to these, as well as reporting on the situation in general in the report on intra-Community cooperation to be prepared for the Council. No extra work would be required on the part of the Member States; it would be sufficient if they sent to the Commission whatever they had readily available.

Question 6: Is there any merit in further pursuing the debate on personnel and material means for evaluation? What are the reactions to the reinforcing of the Commission's evaluation service, which now disposes of 5 professionals amnd 3 support staff, plus the systematic support by a member of the informatics service? Is there a case for pursuing this question further concerning EC Member States where evaluation efforts seem as yet insufficient? What about the issue of the independence of evaluation services, its hierarchical position, and notably its relationships with the operational divisions?
Reply: The situation so far as the Commission itself is concerned is now satisfactory, but the debate should continue until it is also satisfactory in all the Member States. So far as the issue of independence is concerned, the Commission has no major problems. It is always difficult to decide where to locate an evaluation unit in the hierarchy because its work has an impact on everything that the office does. The present arrangement in the Commission may not be the ideal, but it works satisfactorily. However there may be a need to review the situation in the light of the recommendations in the Feedback report.

Question 7: Is there a case for the pursuit of the debate on evaluation procedures in general, or could one consider that the concentration on feedback mechanisms is covering the essential aspects for the moment?
Reply: The Council is clearly expecting the Committee to cover everything that the evaluators do, although it identified feedback as the first priority. But of course there is no suggestion that the objective is to look for harmonisation for its own sake- that is why the phrase "each for its own part" was inserted by the Council. Indeed the Commission's view would be that the basic rule should be "No harmonisation except when it is absolutely necessary to achieve the objective". First, all the members of the Committee would have to agree on the objective, and then they would have to agree that some kind of harmonisation would be needed if that objective were to be achieved ie it could be achieved in no other way. Without agreement on both of these points there would be no case for harmonisation or "normalisation". A harmonised approach to the EVSUM system might be an example of an instance where some harmonisation (in this case standardisation of the sectors, but that is all) might be the only way in which the objective of instant accessibility to eachother's evaluation summaries by sector could be achieved. But the expectation is that this will be the exception rather than the rule.

Question 8: What is the actual state of the implication of beneficiary administrations and target groups in the evaluation process? What further progress can, and should, be made along these lines?
Reply: Because of its ACP links through Lome the Commission takes this issue very seriously, at least so far as DG VIII is concerned (the Lome Convention doesn't apply to the work of DG I). The intention is always to have equal representation in evaluation missions, and this is achieved in certain activities, such as the drafting and agreeing of Basic Principles which are truly joint exercises, but not in all others e.g. it is not always feasible to ensure equal representation in evaluation consultancy missions. The main problem is the lack of expertise on the ACP side. However the Commission will continue to try to achieve equal representation as will be required by the text of the Lome IV Convention. A good example of a truly joint evaluation was the one of the CDI (Centre for Industrial Development) in which all three phases were carried out by a joint team. This is the direction in which the Commission should continue to move, otherwise the evaluation reports will not have their full impact on the ACP countries, who will tend to regard them as relevant only to the Commission.