

Evaluation of ODA to Build and Strengthen International Cooperation: Towards Constructing an International Framework of Evaluation for International Cooperation

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Abstract

This paper claims that building international framework for evaluation needs to be recognized as a critical and urgent agenda to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of international cooperation. Most of efforts during evaluation activities are concentrated within an aid agency, not among aid agencies and recipient countries. There is a lack of connection between the efforts of aid agencies. This situation reduces the effectiveness of evaluation efforts and international cooperation. To remedy this situation, two possible future efforts are recommended: 1) building a network centered on evaluation, and 2) establishment of an evaluation archive for knowledge sharing. One possibility for achieving the above mentioned idea is the utilization of existing universities' networks and their capabilities in knowledge accumulation.

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Introduction

The High-level Meeting of DAC (The Development Assistance Committee) of OECD (The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development) adopted the resolution: "Toward the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Cooperation (DAC New Strategy)" in May 1996. With the adoption of The New Development Strategy, which, for the first time, provided the development goals in numerical term, evaluation became more important than before in the field of international cooperation. The new development goals have played an important role to convert the conception from the inputs of cooperation, which is represented by the ratio of Official Development Assistance (ODA) to GDP, to the results of cooperation. As this new concept gains acceptance in aid communities, each aid agency is obliged to develop concrete policies and implementation strategies by stressing their results. This concept also affected the development of ideas of sector-wide approach and poverty reduction strategy paper, which are key concepts in international development. Following the New Development Strategy, the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, which was held in September 2000, adopted the Millennium Development Goals. This means that seeking the results of international cooperation, which correspond to the development goals defined by developing countries, requires the establishment of recognition of common goals among donors and

recipient countries. As a consequence, results of evaluation, which confirm the performance, study the process, and clarify the cause and effect relation of international cooperation, have to be shared among donors and recipient countries to perform in order to accomplish the development goals.

Evaluation provides international cooperation activities with various possibilities. The evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy, in terms of its design, implementation and results.

The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability (OECD-DAC 2001). If an evaluation is credible and useful, it enables to incorporate the lessons learned into the decision-making process of recipients and donors.

Therefore, many aid agencies have started to make efforts to integrate evaluation into the various aspects of international cooperation activities so as to maximize the advantages of evaluation. In this case, evaluation performs two important functions: 1) as a management tool for creating ideas, and 2) as a learning tool for all interested parties. More concretely, evaluation is used as an effective tool to improve the policy structure that is composed of policy, program, and project, by assessing their relevance and value, with influence from people concerned. In this case, evaluation provides opportunities to build and strengthen international cooperation by accumulating the

results of evaluation as resources of knowledge and experiences. While each aid agency's respective efforts in promoting evaluation are progressive, the effect is rather small. Therefore, it is important, for more effective evaluation, to integrate various efforts in accumulating and utilizing the results of evaluation by aid agencies in order to maximize the contribution of evaluation. In other words, accumulation of the results of evaluation has to be conducted not only at the state level but also at the international level.

This paper claims that building international framework for evaluation needs to be recognized as a critical and urgent agenda to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of international cooperation. The first section examines an effort of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) as an example of promoting evaluation activities by accumulating the evaluation results at the state level. Following this, the second section clarifies agendas of promoting international evaluation activities stimulated by the experiences of JICA. Finally, the third section provides some implications to build international framework for more effective evaluation that eventually leads to more effective international cooperation.

1. Aid Agency's Efforts: A Case of JICA

In order to show the significant role of evaluation in aid agencies, this section examines the efforts of JICA in shaping evaluation structures. JICA is one of Japan's two aid agencies, which executes technical cooperation and grant capital cooperation activities. In FY 2000 JICA conducted over 800 training courses of technical cooperation in Japan and overseas. The number of participants reached 16,990. The total number of experts dispatched overseas is 15,138. JICA conducted

over 250 technical cooperation projects, and over 250 feasibility and master planning studies. Furthermore, JICA conducted a number of project identification and formulation activities to support the above-mentioned activities. In addition, JICA conducted over 300 grant capital projects mainly on the development of social sectors by providing facilities and equipment. In terms of organization structure, JICA has International Training Centers in Japan and overseas offices outside of Japan. JICA operates technical cooperation activities all over the world.

In recent years, the environment that surrounds JICA has become severe. Discussions on ODA have been conducted in the National Diet more often than before. The ODA budget was cut in FY 2002, which affected JICA's budget. The Diet approved an administrative evaluation bill in July 2001 that became effective in April 2002. Consequently, clarifying the purpose of aid activities and its verification has become an important task for aid agencies. One of the effective ways to pursue this direction is to advance "country and issue oriented approach". Importantly, JICA views evaluation as a crucial element to promote this approach, so that it proceeds by establishing an operational system that stresses on evaluation functions as a component of its management process.

Table 1 shows the current JICA evaluation structure. JICA's evaluation activities are classified into two categories by the level of objectives for evaluation, namely: project evaluation, and program/policy evaluation. Project evaluation mainly focuses on individual projects and their operations, which are performed mainly by the modality of activities. Project evaluation is conducted in the form of ex-ante, mid-term, terminal and ex-post evaluation in the context of

Table 1. JICA's Evaluation Structure.

Type of Evaluation	Objectives	Responsible Department	Nature of Evaluation
Project	Ex-ante	Regional/Sector Dept.	Self-Evaluation
	Mid-term	Regional/Sector Dept.	Self-evaluation
	Terminal	Regional/Sector Dept.	Self-evaluation
	Ex-post	Overseas Office	External evaluation
Program/Policy	Country evaluation Sector evaluation Thematic	Evaluation Office	Internal/ External

project implementation. The ex-ante, mid-term, and terminal evaluations are conducted by respective responsible operation departments, namely: regional and sector departments; while the ex-post evaluation, by overseas offices. The character of project evaluation is categorized as self-evaluation. On the other hand, program evaluation consists of country, sector, and thematic evaluations focusing mainly on policy structure. The nature of these evaluations is categorized as internal/external evaluation.

The staffs in the Office of Evaluation, as well as external evaluators who are independent from directly responsible departments, conduct the evaluation.

It is clear that the aid agencies are required to perform their activities effectively and efficiently. However, in the actual situation, it is not so easy to demonstrate effectiveness and efficiency in international cooperation activities. In 1999 JICA's Office of Evaluation conducted a survey on utilization of evaluation results. It was found that utilization of evaluation results is poor. More importantly, the study showed that there had not been a clear methodology on measurement of accomplishments and verification on effectiveness of activities (JICA 2001b).

The JICA's Office of Evaluation took this issue seriously and took actions to improve the situation by setting up the following processes; 1) establishing an evaluation policy, 2) building an system from ex-ante to ex-post evaluation, 3) studying and establishing evaluation methodologies, 4) strengthening external evaluation, 5) promoting feedback of the evaluation results, and 6) disclosing evaluation results.

In JICA, evaluation is now an integrated component of project activities, eventually providing a framework of project activities. However, the progress of integrating evaluation with JICA's activities is not faster than expected even if steady progress has been seen, especially that it is necessary to work more at the policy and program levels. There is a need to develop an evaluation methodology to conduct policy and program evaluation by synthesizing various modalities of aid activities

For this purpose, JICA recently conducted a thematic evaluation of its cooperation in the field of infectious disease control in the Philippines. In this evaluation, a program defined the policy

structure of aid conducted by JICA. This evaluation approach promoted discussion on JICA's activities as integrated activities in the context of the Philippines' policy structure on infectious disease control, and proposes further approaches concerning JICA's cooperation policy in the future. It also provided the evaluation methodology of the program as well as aid coordination with other donors in this study with USAID. This evaluation shows a new approach, which is more focused on policy structure, and increase in the effectiveness of evaluation. On the other hand, this approach is required to integrate evaluation with the recipient country's policy structure and those of other donors' aid policy structures.

JICA is also currently making efforts to increase external evaluations. One example is the evaluation study conducted by Nagoya University under the JICA contract. The evaluation study examined how the technical cooperation projects in agriculture, forestry and fisheries conducted by JICA in Nepal impacted on farmers at the community level. In particular, the study focused on impacts on poverty and gender issues, as well as the changes in the life of residents. The study had two purposes: 1) to research on new evaluation procedures from the viewpoint of poverty and gender; and 2) to apply the new methods produced as a result of such research to actual cooperation projects of JICA in Nepal in the past. The Joint Study Committee that conducted the evaluation study was composed of representatives from the Graduate School of International Development, the Graduate School of Bio-agricultural Sciences, and the International Cooperation Center for Agricultural Education. This study provided useful evaluation experiences and knowledge by utilizing the university's academic resources and showed that universities are one of prominent organizations to provide excellent evaluators based on accumulated research and study experiences.

2. Agenda for Promoting International Evaluation Activities

In the previous section, the efforts of an aid agency in promoting evaluation and maximizing its advantages were examined by using JICA as a case. This kind of effort is also predominant in other aid agencies. One example is the World Bank's distance education for training evaluators in order to increase the number of evaluators in developing countries. In order to clearly define

the result of international cooperation increasing the number of evaluators is an indispensable task. The number of joint evaluations by aid agencies is increasing nowadays, and provides very prominent opportunity, where aid agencies bring their own experiences for future collaboration in their programming and operation. On the other hand, developing countries make efforts to introduce evaluation system such as performance measurement. Universities are also involved in evaluation works of ODA by utilizing their academic resources. The increase of evaluation activities in various organizations can be seen in the various fields of international cooperation.

Considering these situations, it is important to integrate various efforts of aid agencies for more effective evaluation. In fact, although each agency's efforts are progressive, it is not possible without integrating the efforts of each aid agency to maximize them. As mentioned earlier, the current policies and strategies of aid agencies to developing countries seek the common results, which correspond to the development goals the developing country defines. This means that seeking the results of international cooperation emphasizes establishing recognition of common goals among donors and recipient countries. Consequently, results of evaluation, which confirm the performance, study the process, and clarify the cause and effect relation of international cooperation, have to be shared among donors and recipient countries to utilize for accomplishing the development goals.

What is necessary to accomplish this? The following are issues to be discussed: 1) establishment of effective evaluation methodology; 2) generalization of knowledge based on evaluation results; 3) collaboration work of evaluation among aid agencies and recipient countries; and 4) promotion of stakeholders' participation in evaluation activities.

One of the important issues is to share knowledge on effective evaluation methodologies. Various agencies apply evaluation methodologies based on their own policies and strategies, or guidelines of evaluation. Some agencies stressed project evaluation while others, program evaluation. Most of evaluation defines targets together with indicators. However, they do not always share them with other evaluation. Even in the same field of cooperation activities, different evaluation methodologies are observed. Although utilization

of different methodologies is not undesirable, sharing ideas of methodologies makes more effective execution of evaluation, especially in program evaluation, where policy issues of the recipient country is involved and other activities of aid agencies affect the result to be evaluated. In particular, the evaluation on capacity building needs to consider the contribution of other aid agencies because each agency often shares activities each other.

Furthermore, conceptualization and generalization of evaluation results are necessary in order to share the knowledge created by evaluation. In conceptualization and generalization of the results of evaluation, evaluation methodologies, purpose of activities, and assumption of activities are clarified, and a series of evaluation results are analyzed in a comprehensive manner. Through these procedures, the results of evaluation conducted in the past are firmly converted to and accumulated as knowledge, and are then disseminated to the peoples concerned. The comparison of results of various evaluations provides the best practices and appropriate way of thinking in international cooperation.

Collaboration work of evaluation among aid agencies and recipient countries is indispensable in the era of aid coordination. There is a change in aid coordination. In fact, in many developing countries, poverty reduction strategy papers are under formulation and sector-wide approaches are introduced in various sectors so that evaluations conducted by one aid agency have not always provided substantial results. The development of these approaches depends on the capability of recipient countries. Therefore, it is desirable that most of aid agencies, which participate in the development of these approaches, conduct evaluation jointly by allowing greater involvement of the recipient country for more useful evaluation results. Basic education is one of the sectors where joint evaluation is indispensable to access policy and program, due to the involvement of various aid agencies.

Finally, promotion of stakeholders' participation in evaluation activities is an important issue to address in order to make evaluation more effective. As discussed before, stressing on the evaluation at the program and policy levels requires more involvement of stakeholders of recipient countries, especially when focused on poverty as a development issue.

3. International Frameworks for Effective Evaluation

Based on discussions on aid agency's efforts in evaluation and agenda for international evaluation activities, it is understood that in order to make evaluation more effective for international cooperation, it is necessary to improve evaluation not only within an aid agency but also among aid agencies. It is also indispensable to improve policy structure both of recipient country and aid agencies.

However, it was observed that most of efforts during evaluation activities are concentrated within an aid agency, not among aid agencies and recipient countries. There is a lack of connection between the efforts of aid agencies. Therefore, it is necessary to increase a linkage among aid agencies for more coordinated evaluation efforts. On the other hand, the establishment of this kind of bond stimulates the efforts of aid agencies' evaluation works.

In conclusion and to facilitate this situation, two possible future efforts are recommended for more effective evaluation activities: 1) building a network centered on evaluation, and 2) establishment of an evaluation archive for knowledge sharing. Firstly, as discussed in the first section, the success of establishing an effective evaluation methodology, generalization of knowledge based on evaluation results, collaboration of evaluation work among aid agencies and recipient countries, and promotion of stakeholders' participation into evaluation activities fairly depend on the interchange of ideas and knowledge of people who are involved in international cooperation. Therefore, the creation of vehicle for interchange of ideas and knowledge, that is, the establishment of networks, is indispensable.

Secondly, accessibility is also an important issue in order to increase sharing experiences and knowledge based on evaluation results. In the past, this kind of issue is difficult to solve, but nowadays, a knowledge base created by utilizing the developed information and communication technology enables increased accessibility without the restriction of time, distance or place. The knowledge base accumulates explicit knowledge created by evaluation results. Therefore, it is possible to share more easily these information by creating an evaluation archives of knowledge on evaluation.

One possibility for achieving the above mentioned idea is the utilization of existing universities' networks and their capabilities in knowledge accumulation. As I introduced in JICA's case, there is an increase in the involvement of universities into evaluation activities. When evaluation is focused on policy /program and become more complex, this tendency is accelerated because universities can accumulate academic resources, and provide appropriate evaluators. Furthermore, the experience of evaluation can be integrated into various academic activities and can be utilized in academic discussions through academic exchange. This accumulation of knowledge on these kinds of activities increases the possibility of utilization of evaluation results.

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