

CHAPTER 1 RECENT TRENDS IN ODA EVALUATION

1.1 World Trends Regarding ODA Evaluation Activities

In recent years, there has been growing emphasis on the significance of evaluation in the field of international cooperation. Increased attention and emphasis on evaluation have been observed not only on the part of the World Bank and various UN organizations but also on the part of many donors, including the US, Canada, France, the UK, Scandinavian countries, and so on.

International aid organizations and donors are experimenting with new approaches in the quest for a better evaluation system.

What is the reason for such worldwide emphasis on evaluation? This emphasis is, in fact, borne from the restrictions posed on ODA by the fiscal situation of each donor, the increasing demand for the accountability of the administration and the need to ascertain the contribution of ODA to poverty reduction and improvement of the living conditions of people in developing countries.

(1) Shift Towards Result Based Evaluation

The focus of ODA has conventionally been placed on the actual implementation of aid projects. However, there is a growing trend of focusing on the verification of the effects on local people which are realised through project implementation. To be more precise, the emphasis has been shifting since the mid-1990's from reporting of the amount of financial input and the number of experts dispatched to qualitative evaluation of the actual improvement effects of ODA in terms of the conditions of the lives, health and education, etc. of people in developing countries. There has also been a pressing need to explain the results identified by such qualitative evaluation to the people of one's own country.

The annual meeting of the Working Party for Aid Evaluation, a subordinate organization of the DAC, OECD, was held in New York in 1998 with the theme of "the Management and Evaluation of Results". Based on recognition of the importance of a new approach to evaluation, the approaches of bilateral and international aid organizations were explained at the meeting, including "Management for Result" by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "Management and Result Based Evaluation" by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), "Result-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation" by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and "Activity Audit System" by the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AUSAID). Moreover, it was reported that evaluation systems based on a similar line of thought were being introduced in the UK, Denmark and Sweden, etc. What is common to all of these is the placing of greater emphasis on concrete results.

Even though the actual method and procedure vary slightly from one aid organization to another, the basic method employed is the establishment of project objectives, performance indicators and target values at the pre-planning stage of individual projects, followed by regular monitoring of the degree of attainment of each target. This new method is generally called "performance measurement".

The evaluation findings are essentially meaningless unless they are fed back to the planning process of aid policies in an appropriate manner. Improvement of the feedback system has proven to be a crucial issue as well as one of the greatest concerns of many donors and international aid organizations. In fact, most donors and international aid organizations regard evaluation based on results as a part their organizational management and are seeking to achieve meaningful feedback.

(2) Establishment of Consistent Evaluation System

To measure results, it is necessary first to establish the state prior to the implementation of assistance. For example, in the case of a water supply system construction project aimed at the supply of clean and safe drinking water, ex-post measurement of the results is impossible unless the water supply extension rate prior to project implementation is established. Such establishment of the pre-project state has become increasingly essential for the judgement of project success or failure.

It should be unnecessary to state the extreme importance of examination at the planning stage prior to project implementation. In other words, as an ODA project is implemented with a limited budget, it is essential to thoroughly examine (i) the necessity and suitability of the project in the light of the development policies of the recipient country concerned and (ii) the consistency and suitability of the project in terms of the ODA policies of Japan prior to the implementation of the project, indicating the ever increasing importance of a systematic study and evaluation at the planning or pre-implementation stage.

Once started, it is not necessary for an ODA project to be implemented as originally planned at any cost. There may be occasions when it is more advantageous to modify the original plan to suit the actual conditions in the field because of unanticipated situations caused by the occurrence of natural disaster, the spread of an infectious diseases or the upheaval of the international economy. Considering such eventualities, donors and international aid organizations share the general recognition that mid-term results of an ODA project in the process of implementation should be measured with a view to immediately introducing improvement measures if the expected results have not materialised.

On the other side of evaluation based on results described in 1.1, there has been strong recognition in recent years of the importance of establishing a consistent evaluation system from

advance-evaluation⁽¹⁾ to ex-post evaluation and swift feedback at each stage in order to assist the planning at the pre-project stage, to assist the improvement of project implementation at the mid-term stage and to assist the formulation of subsequent projects through verification of the results at the ex-post stage. Many donors and international aid organizations are making strenuous efforts to establish and consolidate such a consistent evaluation system.

(3) From Evaluation of Individual Projects to Evaluation at a Higher Level

Up to the present, the evaluation of ODA projects has been dominated by the evaluation of individual projects. In recent years, however, the scope of evaluation has been widening. This type of evaluation at a higher level than individual projects has seldom been considered in the conventional scope of evaluation.

The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the UNDP, the USAID and others have recently stepped up their efforts to formulate country-specific and theme-specific basic aid policies to establish firm foundations for the planning and selection of individual projects. As typically shown by the formulation of the Strategic Plan⁽¹⁾ which has been implemented for several years by the USAID, the formulation of a clearly defined management strategy by aid organizations is becoming very popular. Attempts are continuing to evaluate the degree of attainment based on such policies and strategies. These movements are also discussed every year in line with specific themes for each development issue by the Working Party for Aid Evaluation of the DAC. In short, there is a growing trend for evaluation at a higher level, such as at the policy, strategy and programme levels, marking a departure from the conventional evaluation of individual projects because of the strong recognition of the necessity to conduct new types of evaluation. The movement to evaluate a number of related projects having the same objectives as a single package, i.e. programme, has also become a global trend. Nevertheless, evaluation at the policy, strategy and programme levels is not yet a firmly established practice and the present situation can best be described as the stage where major donors and international aid organizations are still in the process of trial and error.

Japan commenced the formulation of the Country Assistance Program (CAP) for recipient countries in 1999 and has so far completed the said Plan for nine countries, i.e. Vietnam, Thailand, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Ghana and Peru. The number of countries subject to the Program will increase and the evaluation based on the formulated CAP will be conducting in coming years.

(1) The Strategic Plan is described in the form of a simple tree diagramme where the clearly defined goal of the entire aid organization is placed at the top while several objectives are placed below the goal and individual programmes and projects are placed further down. Based on this tree diagramme, the detailed strategy to achieve the goal is formulated. (This explanation is based on the Annual Report and other documents published by the USAID.)

(4) Continuously Emerging New Themes for Evaluation

The Asian economic crisis is said to have reverted many people in developing countries to their original state of poverty. Although it is true to say that Asia is now making a fair recovery from the crisis, the series of crises in various countries has raised a serious question for development assistance: whether or not Japanese ODA has really contributed to alleviating the poverty of local people.

Since the occurrence of the Asian economic crisis, both the World Bank and the ADB have been pushing poverty reduction to the forefront of aid efforts. Following this move, evaluation is now beginning to consider the extent to which ODA contributes to poverty reduction and the fulfillment of the BHN of people in developing countries.

The annual meeting of the Working Party for Aid Evaluation of the DAC, OECD in 1999 was held in Edinburgh with the theme of "Poverty Reduction and Evaluation". The key issues for discussion were how to define "poverty", the subject of evaluation, and what methods would be suitable to evaluate the results of poverty reduction. There appears to be increasing interest in evaluation focusing on social aspects the effects of an improved daily life of people living in the areas of assistance—on top of the improvement of the national economy of developing countries.

It must be said that activities relating to the strengthening of viewpoints such as environmental issues and women in development (WID), the participation of local people in evaluation, the expansion of joint evaluation work with NGOs and information disclosure using the Internet, etc. will be quite important for the evaluation of ODA in the coming years. The role played by evaluation will assume increasing importance in association with significant changes of the environment for ODA. Further improvement of the evaluation system worldwide is required in response to these new global trends.

1.2 Trends in Japan Regarding ODA Evaluation Activities



ODA is an international activity which constitutes one of the important arms of Japan's diplomatic policies and, as such, an internationally recognised method has long been used for its

evaluation. The evaluation of Japan's ODA commenced as long ago as 1975 and rich experience has been accumulated over the past 25 years. During this historical process, the scope of evaluation has greatly widened from the evaluation of individual projects to country-specific as well as theme-specific evaluation together with evaluation of the ODA implementation system. The OECD, the membership of which consists of industrialised countries, has a subordinate body called the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) which evaluates the ODA implementation systems of several selected member countries each year. The DAC evaluated Japan's ODA implementation system in 1996 and pointed out that, in regard to Japan's aid evaluation system, only a few DAC member countries have a system to solve the problems identified by evaluation which match that of Japan, illustrating the high international reputation of Japan's aid evaluation system.

In the face of the ongoing significant changes to the ODA environment, Japan's ODA evaluation system has not necessarily reached a satisfactory level to respond to such changes. In fact, the evaluation of Japan's ODA implementation system conducted by the DAC in 1998 pointed out that "emphasis must be placed on the cost-benefit performance, sustainability, technological appropriateness, socioeconomic effects and impacts, etc. in the formation, monitoring and evaluation of projects". Reflecting one of today's major global trends, the DAC's Working Party for Aid Evaluation is debating how to improve "result-based management" and "performance management".

Discussions in Connection with Administrative Reform in Japan

There is strong demand in Japan for the establishment of a reliable evaluation system for aid policies and a system to implement evaluation findings as part of the discussions on administrative reform. The final report of the Administrative Reform Council published in March, 1997 emphasised the "importance of a mechanism and system to reflect properly the findings of rational and precise evaluation on policies through the firm establishment of a policy-level evaluation system" under the theme of "Collaboration Between Policy Formation Department and Implementation Department and its Evaluation". The Basic Law for the Reform of Central Government Offices enacted in June, 1998 clearly states that all government offices "must strengthen their objective evaluation function and reflect the evaluation findings on policies in an appropriate manner".

Recommendations of the Council on ODA Reform



The Final Report of the Council on ODA Reform for the 21st Century (chaired by Saburo Kawai, Chairperson, International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ)), of which the work proceeds in parallel with discussions on administrative reform, states the following.

In the present discussions on administrative reform, there is a strong demand for the establishment of an evaluation system, including verification of the effects of implemented projects, with a view to revising policies and reflecting the evaluation findings on future policies. Even though the evaluation of ODA has long been conducted, further efforts must be made to improve the evaluation system to ensure that the current need for a further qualitative improvement of ODA is met.

Following the above recommendation, the same report refers to improvement of the evaluation methods, clarification of the division of the roles played by the MoFA and implementation organizations (Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)), publication of the evaluation findings and other issues, and a further improvement of the present evaluation system.

Discussions at ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel and Establishment of the Evaluation Working Group

Following the recommendations made by the said Final Report, the Evaluation Working Group (Chairman: Hiromitsu Muta, Professor, Tokyo Institute of Technology) composed of university professors, journalists, aid experts from think tanks, accountancy firms and the Evaluation Office of the MoFA and evaluation officials from implementation organizations (JICA and JBIC) was established in October, 1998 to discuss the desirable improvement of Japan's ODA evaluation system as a subordinate body of the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel (Chairman: Saburo Kawai, Chairman, International Development Center of Japan), a long-standing private advisory body to the Director-General of the Economic Cooperation Bureau. This Evaluation Working Group has since held 13 meetings in a period of approximately one year and the discussion results have been compiled in the Recommendations for Improvement of ODA Evaluation System which were

subsequently published under the joint names of the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel and the Working Committee for Evaluation Study and which are described next.

Submission of Recommendations for Improvement of ODA Evaluation System (Interim Report) in November, 1999

In November, 1999, 10 recommendations on various problems believed to require urgent attention at that time and tentative directions to solve these problems were compiled in the form of the Interim Report and were submitted to Mr. Azuma, then Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. The key recommendations made are listed below.

The scope of ODA evaluation, which has so far mainly focused on ex-post evaluation, should
(1) be expanded and the formulation of a pre-project evaluation plan using appropriate evaluation indicators and the introduction of quantitative evaluation methods should be further promoted to “establish a consistent evaluation process from the advance (ex-ante) to ex-post stages”.

While the evaluation of individual projects has been the mainstay of evaluation activities so far,
(2) the introduction and expansion of policy-level and program-level evaluation should be promoted in the coming years.

The “expansion and speeding up of information disclosure” should be promoted by means of
(3) the swift disclosure of evaluation findings through the active use of the Internet and other means and expansion of the private sector monitoring system for ODA.

(4) Third party evaluation by knowledgeable persons should be expanded and further research should be conducted on the training and appraisal of evaluators.

Submission of Final Report on Improvement of ODA Evaluation System in March, 2000



Following submission of the Interim Report, Evaluation Working Group continued its examination efforts and discussions. The systematic as well as comprehensive discussions featured all aspects of evaluation activities, i.e. what purpose, which, when, who (system as well as actual evaluators), how (system as well as methods to be used) and manner of utilisation (feedback, information disclosure and publicity). The present state of each of these aspects was analysed,

pending tasks for reform were clearly identified and a concrete reform plan (draft) was compiled. This was the first attempt to systematically discuss Japan's ODA evaluation activities. The Final Report was submitted by Chairman Saburo Kawai of the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel to Mr. Kono, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 15th March, 2000 and was widely reported in the newspapers and on the television news, etc.

The history up to the submission of the Final Report is described next while the contents of the recommendations are briefly described in Section 3.

The Final Report naturally incorporated the recommendations made in the Interim Report which was systematically expanded with new recommendations based on the subsequent discussion results.

In April, 2000, the ODA evaluation-related budget was newly approved for fiscal 2000, incorporating a number of budgetary measures for the implementation of recommendations made by the Interim Report, ranging from the necessary study required for the introduction of policy-level and program-level evaluation and the study required for the training and effective utilisation of evaluators, to the trial implementation of the advance evaluation of projects and the expansion of third party evaluation.

Final Report on Improvement of ODA Evaluation System

1. History

In January, 1998, the Council on ODA Reform for the 21st Century made a number of recommendations in its Final Report submitted to the Minister of Foreign Affairs to enable Japan's full-scale commitment to the more effective as well as more efficient implementation of ODA in general. Emphasising the importance of the establishment of an evaluation system (1) for the evaluation of ODA, the Final Report specially pointed out that there is room for improvement in terms of the expansion of third party evaluation, development of evaluation methods, clarification of the divided roles to be played by policy-making bodies and implementation organizations and strengthening of feedback.

In November, 1998, the Evaluation Working Group was established under the ODA Evaluation (2) Reviewing Panel to examine various issues relating to the evaluation system in general, including those pointed out by the Council on ODA Reform.

The Working Committee compiled the Recommendations for Improvement of the ODA (3) Evaluation System (Interim Report), featuring those areas of the evaluation system requiring urgent improvement, and submitted them to the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel.

On 24th November, 1999, Saburo Kawai, the Chairperson of the Reviewing Panel, submitted (4) the Interim Report to Mr. Azuma, the Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs.

- Based on the Interim Report, the Working Group continued systematic as well as comprehensive discussions on the various aspects of evaluation, including the purposes, (5) subjects, regime, system, personnel, timing, techniques, feedback, information disclosure and publicity, and submitted the Final Report recommending a concrete reform plan (draft) to the Reviewing Panel for approval on 6th March, 2000.
- (6) The Final Report approved by the Reviewing Panel was submitted by Saburo Kawai, Chairman of the Reviewing Panel, to Mr. Kono, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on 15th March.

2. Composition of AID Evaluation Reviewing Panel and Working Committee for Evaluation Research

– the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel

Saburo Kawai	Chairman, International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ) (formerly Vice-Minister of Administrative Management Agency)
Kiyoshi Nakamura	Honorary Chairperson of Maeda Construction Co., Ltd. (formerly President of the Board of Audit)
Chairman Chie Nakane	Professor Emeritus, University of Tokyo
Ryokichi Hirono	Professor Emeritus, Seikei University (formerly Director of the UNDP Bureau of Planning and Policy Evaluation)
Hirohisa Kohama	Professor, Faculty of International Relations, Shizuoka University

– Evaluation Working Group

Hiromitsu Muta	Evaluation Working Group Professor, Graduate School, Tokyo Institute of Technology
Mitsuya Araki	Editor-in-Chief, International Development Journal
Hajime Koizumi	Executive Director, Koei Research Institute
Yasunaga Takachiho	Professor, Tamagawa University
Chairman Masaoki Takeuchi	Head of Operations, International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ)
Mitsunari Hagi	Partner, Tomatsu Accountants
Yukihiro Nikaido	Head, Evaluation Division, Economic Cooperation Bureau, MoFA
Yumiko Tanaka	Head, Evaluation and Monitoring Office, JICA (until July, 1999)
Kimiaki Yamaguchi	Head, Evaluation and Monitoring Office, JICA (from August to December, 1999)

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