CHAPTER 2 RECENT ACTIVITIES IN JAPAN TO IMPROVE EVALUATION OF ODA

The ODA evaluation system is now truly in "a period of reform" as described in Chapter 1. Following the submission of the Interim Report for Improvement of the "ODA Evaluation System" in November, 1999 and the Final Report in March, 2000, the MoFA is proceeding with wide-ranging efforts to further improve the ODA evaluation system. Similar efforts are being made by the JICA and JBIC, the implementation organizations. In this chapter, the ongoing improvement efforts are concisely explained.

2.1 Attempts to Evaluate Policies and Programs

The MoFA has decided to conduct studies on methods for policy-level evaluation and program-level evaluation within its budget for FY 2000. The first step will involve dispatching study missions to other donors and international organizations. The goal of these missions will be to study existing and proposed methods of evaluation, and to determine which type of policy-level and program-level evaluation methods are suitable to introduce in Japan. After examination, the next step will be to apply the proposed examination methods to specific developing countries in order to verify their applicability. In particular, a study on evaluation methods was conducted from late June to early July with international aid organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, OECD and FAO as well as national aid agencies such as the USAID, CIDA and those in the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Scandinavian countries. The study findings will then be compiled in a report. The application of the evaluation methods proposed by the said report to several selected developing countries in late 2000 is planned to verify the effectiveness of these methods and to produce further recommendations for the improvement of the ODA evaluation system.

Moreover, the existing country program evaluation (the subject countries in FY 1998 were El Salvador and Mongolia) and evaluation of the aid implementation system (the subject country in FY 1998 was Senegal) which the MoFA has been conducting for some time will be expanded in the coming years with emphasis, in principle, on policy-level evaluation rather than on project evaluation. Program-level evaluation should be conducted in several fields and themes which are deemed to be of increasing importance in the future. Such evaluation will take the results of the above-mentioned study into consideration.

Furthermore, evaluation needs to be carried out for the schemes said to have insufficient evaluation by the report. To be more precise, the Acceptance of technical training participants, the Dispatch of Experts and the Dispatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteer (JOCV) will be evaluated in due course. The evaluation of different sectors and schemes will be conducted by close collaboration among the MoFA and implementation organizations (i.e. JICA and JBIC).

These organizations, which have conventionally focused on project evaluation, plan to expand their scope to include program-level evaluation.

2.2 Establishment of a Consistent Evaluation Process Incorporating Advance (ex-ante), Mid-Term and Ex-Post Evaluation

The Final Report includes recommendations for the establishment of a consistent evaluation process incorporating advance (ex-ante), mid-term and ex-post evaluation as well as for the introduction of performance indicators to determine the degree of target attainment.

While project completion evaluation and ex-post evaluation have been the mainstay of evaluation up to the present, the JICA and JBIC have begun to examine viable performance indicators for each aid scheme and sector and they plan the trial application of performance indicators to several projects for which the advance (ex-ante) evaluation is conducted in 2000. They intend to establish a consistent evaluation process featuring advance (ex-ante), mid-term and ex-post stages as soon as possible using the know-how obtained from the trial application. With regard to the expansion of cost-efficiency analysis and the development of guidelines, one idea to be examined is the promotion and expansion of the inclusion of an economist or similar expert on cost-efficiency analysis, that has been conducted mainly in loan-type projects in the study team at the advance (ex-ante) evaluation stage. The scope of cost-efficiency analysis is to be expanded to the fields of social development and technical cooperation to which the application of this type of analysis has so far been considered difficult.

2.3 Expansion of Information Disclosure and Publicity Activities Using the Internet

The Final Report also underlines the importance of the disclosure and publicity of evaluation data. In the past, the public announcement of the evaluation findings has required a certain time lapse. However, there is a growing demand for swift information disclosure to the public and for consistent transparency. In response, the MoFA intends to swiftly publish the outline of evaluation findings on its Home Page in addition to the long-standing publication of the annual evaluation report. In accordance with this policy, the outline of the evaluation of eight cases was published on 6th July. The MoFA Home Page will soon include a single- page outline of the evaluation findings of each case by third party experts shortly after the completion of an evaluation study. [1] This outline will incorporate as many photographs of the project site and scenes of the evaluation by third party experts as possible and will not only include the evaluation findings but also recommendations for further improvement to assist the planning of future policies. An e-mail system for collecting comments from Home Page viewers is already in place and these comments will be referred to in efforts to improve the ODA evaluation system.

(1) http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/hyouka.html

2.4 Establishment of "ODA Evaluation Study Group"

(Photograph of First Meeting of the Study Group)

The Final Report puts forward a proposal to establish the ODA Evaluation Study Group (tentative name) under the ODA Evaluation Reviewing Panel for the purpose of conducting the expert examination of desirable evaluation methods and an effective feedback system. This study group was, in fact, established in mid-July and its first meeting has already been held.

This study group is discussing wide-ranging themes including :(1) policy-level and program-level evaluation methods, (2) a feedback system, (3) the training of evaluators and (4) enhancement of the collaboration between ODA-related government agencies. It is anticipated that the study group will compile practical recommendations for improving the ODA evaluation system, taking the findings of the forthcoming "Study on Policy-level and Program-level Evaluation Methods" and "Study on Training of Evaluators" of the MoFA into consideration. As it is inadequate for the evaluation of ODA to be conducted only by the MoFA, other government offices implementing ODA should actively participate in discussions on government-wide collaboration for ODA evaluation by the study group.

2.5 Expansion of Third Party Evaluation

There have been frequent references to the need to consolidate the evaluation system by third parties with the recommendation to actively recruit university professors and other academics, accountancy firms, NGOs, think tanks and consultants. The expansion of joint evaluation[2] with NGOs as well as the ODA monitoring system of the private sector through the participation of the public has also been proposed.

The MoFA has historically implemented third party evaluation and plans to further expand the scope of evaluation by third party experts, think tanks, consultants and others. The JICA and JBIC also plan to expand the scope of third party evaluation in the coming years.

The MoFA has also been engaged in joint evaluation with NGOs and has developed a concrete plan to expand joint evaluation from FY 2000. The number of monitors dispatched under the ODA monitoring system of the private sector was doubled last year and this trend of expansion will be maintained.

2.6 Promotion of Liaised ODA Evaluation Through the Government

In addition to the improvement of ODA evaluation by the MoFA, it is essential for other ODA-related government offices to be involved in the evaluation of ODA projects. The Final Report recommends the promotion of collaboration and liaison between ODA-related government offices with the MoFA playing a central role, and therefore the MoFA is aiming to improve the quality of ODA evaluation through collaboration with other government offices.

2.7 Other Improvement Efforts

(1) Improvement of evaluation by overseas diplomatic offices:

The MoFA is now examining the new status of ODA evaluation by its overseas offices in view of the recommendation made by the Final Report.

(2) Training of evaluators:

Many recommendations have been made in regard to the training of evaluators. In response, the MoFA plans to conduct a Study on Training and Effective Utilization of Evaluators in FY 2000. This study will involve the dispatching of a study team abroad to obtain recommendations on the future training and effective utilization of evaluators in Japan. The study team will then examine viable measures to improve the training of evaluators and compile its recommendations in a report.

(3) DAC Evaluation Workshop and Seminar in Tokyo:

While the meeting of experts held by the DAC's Working Party for Aid Evaluation had been exclusively held in Europe and the U.S, its first meeting outside these regions was held in Tokyo in September 26–28, 2000. Using this opportunity of the gathering of evaluation experts from other donors and international aid organizations, a seminar on ODA evaluation, which was open to the public, was held in September 29, 2000. A large number of people participated.

(1) http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/shiryo/hyouka.html

(2) A type of evaluation jointly conducted by the MoFA and NGOs featuring ODA projects and NGO projects.
State of Follow-Up for the Report for Improvement of "ODA Evaluation System"