

ODA Evaluation Guidelines

(Provisional Translation)

**ODA Evaluation Division
Minister's Secretariat
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan**

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Introduction

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MOFA) conducts evaluations of its assistance in order to enhance its transparency and accountability to the public, as well as to improve management of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA).

While there are many definitions of the term "*evaluation*", the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) defines it as "the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results," and MOFA conducts ODA evaluations based on this definition.

The "ODA Evaluation Guidelines" set out the principles of MOFA's ODA evaluation, and explain its purpose, functions, roles, evaluation criteria, feedback and follow-up of evaluation results. The Guidelines were first released in 2003, based on national and international discussion on ODA evaluation. Since then, they have been updated, reflecting the MOFA's experiences and trends in ODA such as Japan's ODA reform.

This newest edition comprises of two volumes, "ODA Evaluation Guidelines" which state the basic principles of MOFA's ODA evaluation, and "ODA Evaluation Handbook" which states the evaluation procedures and methods. As for the procedures and points to note upon conducting evaluations, please refer to "ODA Evaluation Handbook".

The Guidelines and the Handbook aim to provide practical and useful information for ODA evaluators, researchers and those who are engaged in ODA activities. MOFA hopes that the Guidelines would be helpful for the general public as well.

MOFA will continue evaluation activities to further improve Japan's ODA, and sincerely hopes that the Guidelines and the Handbook will contribute to that end.

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1 Purpose of ODA Evaluation

Evaluation has two aspects: **management**, which means improvement through learning lessons, and **accountability**.

In the DAC Evaluation Criteria revised in 2019, the OECD-DAC defines that their main purposes of evaluation are¹:

- ◆ Support accountability, including the provision of information to the public;
- ◆ Support learning, through generating and feeding back findings and lessons.

Besides these, some other evaluation purposes the OECD-DAC includes are to promote the dialogue and improve cooperation between the participants in the development process through mutual sharing of experiences at all levels.

In this regard, MOFA's ODA evaluation aims at the following:

(1) Improve ODA Management

To improve ODA management aiming to enhance ODA quality through feeding back lessons obtained from observation of ODA activities to the process of ODA policy formulation and implementation.

(2) Promote Public Accountability

To fulfill accountability and promote public understanding by releasing evaluation results, which leads to increasing transparency of ODA.

2 Mechanism and Roles of ODA Evaluation

Since MOFA is responsible for formulating ODA policies, MOFA mainly conducts policy-level evaluations such as Country/Regional Assistance Evaluations and Thematic/Aid Modality Evaluations, most of which are conducted by third-party evaluators independent from both donors and partner countries. MOFA also makes efforts to ensure impartiality and independence of evaluation and to strengthen its feedback mechanism so that its ODA evaluation can fulfill sufficient roles and functions.

¹ <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/revised-evaluation-criteria-dec-2019.pdf>

(1) Ensuring Impartiality and Independence

(a) Independence of the Evaluation Unit

MOFA aims at improving objectivity of evaluation by ensuring independence of the division that administers ODA evaluation.

(b) Impartiality of Evaluators

MOFA requires those who are engaged in ODA evaluations to conduct evaluation impartially and objectively to be responsible for general and public welfare, and implement effective and efficient evaluation with sincerity and honesty. Also, they are required to maintain their independence as evaluators as well as respect for people.

(2) Reinforcing Feedback Mechanism (PDCA Cycle)

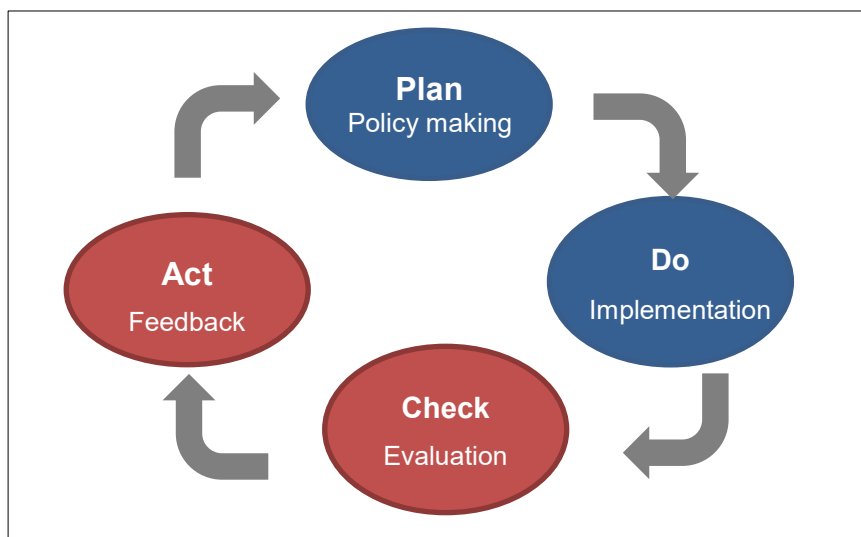
MOFA conducts ODA evaluation in accordance with the Plan-Do-Check-Act Cycle (PDCA Cycle (* Figure 1)) in order to achieve the aforementioned two purposes.

To improve ODA, policy-makers and implementers must know operational performance and achievement of ODA policies/programs. Thus, a proper feedback mechanism is essential for future ODA policy designs and implementation.

(3) Disclosing Evaluation Results

In order to fulfill accountability, accurate and easy-to-understand information needs to be disseminated to the public. The evaluation results are presented in each ODA Evaluation Report and Annual Report on ODA Evaluation which are accessible on MOFA Website.

Figure 1: ODA evaluation in the PDCA cycle



3 Evaluation Standards

Evaluation should be conducted using certain standards to assess plans, implementation and results systematically and objectively. Development viewpoints and diplomatic viewpoints are used for third-party evaluations by MOFA. The evaluation criteria under these viewpoints used for MOFA's evaluation standards are explained below.

Regarding the evaluation standards for project-level ODA evaluations, combined standard of development and diplomatic viewpoints is applied, considering the nature of the projects MOFA is in charge.

(1) Evaluation from Development Viewpoints

MOFA has set its own evaluation standards suitable for evaluating Japan's overall ODA policy based on the OECD-DAC's internationally recognized evaluation criteria (Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Impact, Efficiency, and Sustainability) which were announced in 1991 and revised in 2019. MOFA uses "Relevance of Policies", "Effectiveness of Results" and "Appropriateness of Processes".

(a) Relevance of Policies

Relevance of Policies assesses targeted policies and programs by measuring consistency between target policies and Japan's high-level policies (including related policies such as humanitarian assistance policies and education policies, in addition to ODA policies), international priority issues and partner countries' needs as well as comparative advantages of Japan.

(b) Effectiveness of Results

Effectiveness of Results assesses the degree of achievement Japan's ODA has produced by looking at inputs, outputs and outcomes of development cooperation.

(c) Appropriateness of Processes

Appropriateness of Processes assesses whether policy/program-making and implementing process has been appropriate to ensure the relevance of policies and effectiveness of the results.

(2) Evaluation from Diplomatic Viewpoints

With increased severity in Japan's economic and fiscal conditions, it has become even more important to conduct evaluation from diplomatic viewpoints, not only from development viewpoints. While development viewpoints assess whether or how Japan's ODA has contributed to the development of partner countries, diplomatic viewpoints assess how much contribution has been made by tax-funded ODA to meet Japan's national interests.

MOFA has set the following two evaluation standards for its diplomatic viewpoints: diplomatic importance and diplomatic impact. Both correspond to 'Coherence' of the OECD-DAC criteria.

(a) Diplomatic Importance

Examine how Japan's ODA is important in solving global priority issues, strengthening bilateral relations, and promoting Japan's security and prosperity.

(b) Diplomatic Impact

Examine how Japan's ODA has contributed to boosting Japan's presence in international society, strengthening its bilateral relations, and promoting its security and prosperity.

4 Feedback and Follow-up of Evaluation Results

ODA management would be improved through the feedback of recommendations and lessons-learned from evaluation results and the evaluation process.

(1) Feedback of Recommendations and Lessons-learned

Recommendations and lessons-learned from third party evaluation results are shared among stakeholders in MOFA and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

"Recommendations" are proposals withdrawn from the evaluation results. They are generally for policy makers and implementers of the evaluation target. They should be specific and feasible: they should identify targets, objectives, actions, timeline, priorities, etc.

On the other hand, "lessons-learned" are drawn from the evaluation process and results. Lessons could be used more widely, and not as direct and detailed as recommendations: they could be useful for future policy planning and/or implementation

for other countries or similar issues.

(2) Follow-up

There are three steps to follow-up the actions for improvement after recommendations and lessons learned were shared among stakeholders; (i) formulation of response actions, (ii) implementation of response actions, and (iii) checking the implementation status of response actions. Recommendations and lessons learned are utilized when reviewing the Development Cooperation Charter, Country Assistance Policy for Respective Countries, etc., and also when designing/implementing ODA projects in the International Cooperation Bureau of MOFA, Embassies of Japan, and JICA.

Response actions for the recommendations and their implementation status are made available to the public by the “Annual Report on ODA Evaluation” which is accessible on MOFA Website.

Figure 2: Feedback and Follow-up Mechanism of MOFA's ODA evaluation results

