

Chairperson's Summary

by Prof. Hirono, Chairperson of "The 3rd Tokyo Workshop on ODA Evaluation"

12–13 November 2003

Japan hosted "The Tokyo Workshop on ODA Evaluation" on 12–13 November 2003 at Keio plaza hotel. This was the third workshop on ODA Evaluation following the last two years.

Fifty participants including senior government officials from eighteen Asian countries, evaluation specialists of a donor country and multilateral development agencies, Japanese government officials of ODA-related ministries, staff of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) and academic persons also attended this workshop. A number of people attended the workshop in an observer status.

The participants recognized the importance of donor-partner cooperation to tackle development challenges and global development issues. To enhance effectiveness of development and cooperation, it is necessary to set out a long-term comprehensive development strategy and a management system. Through this workshop, the participants expressed their shared recognition of the importance of donor-partner cooperation based on partner countries' ownership. In particular, joint donor-partner monitoring and evaluation was recognized as an effective tool for management of development assistance and overall development activities.

Participants from Asian countries, together with bilateral and multi-lateral organizations, have discussed and shared their knowledge and experiences on the methods to manage ODA activities. While recognizing the critical importance of a comprehensive development approach, the participants, based on their experiences, exchanged their views mainly on how to manage ODA more effectively, and on challenges and difficulties in conducting joint evaluation.

In each country, the general public is increasingly concerned with transparency, accountability and participation in conducting government activities. In this respect, it was significant that this workshop was open to the public.

All participants appreciated Japan's initiative to organize the third workshop for the purpose of deepening understanding of the importance of monitoring, evaluation and collaboration among Asian countries and the donor community.

Some highlights of the discussions include:

It is necessary to streamline a management cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation for maximum development impact in partner countries. The key is how to integrate monitoring and evaluation systems into the whole development process for greater effectiveness of development and cooperation. Recognizing the importance of country ownership and multiplicity of donors, it is important that the scope of evaluation should cover the sector- and country-level in addition to the project level. The transaction costs are generally reduced when donor and partner cooperate within a common framework, in spite of some difficulties.

What is necessary to tackle the development challenges through collaboration between donors and partner countries is to agree on common development goals. Stakeholders including government, local bodies, private sector and civil society should be involved, wherever appropriate, in the planning process. Also, we need to consider how donor countries and organizations align with the partner country's priority development goals. Coordination should be made in a flexible and country-specific manner. In order to use the limited resources more efficiently, long-term comprehensive strategic goals are essential. In this connection, achieving MDGs poses a great challenge.

In managing development activities, monitoring and evaluation indicators should be set to assess to what extent the objectives are achieved. More reliable quantitative indicators are needed while the importance of qualitative indicators should not be underestimated. Although outcome-based evaluation is important, the assessment of process and secondary impact should not be overlooked. Moreover, the ability to collect and analyze data should be enhanced for regular measurement of the set indicators.

The effectiveness of development activities is improved when evaluation results are utilized effectively. It is, therefore, essential to establish feedback mechanisms so that the evaluation results are incorporated into the planning and implementation process. For this purpose, development organizations are encouraged to make active use of evaluation results.

The key is capacity building in partner countries. There have been many practices of donor-partner and South-South cooperation for human resource development. The workshop provided an opportunity for exchange of knowledge and experiences among donors and partners in monitoring and evaluation. The workshop recommended that, in addition to the establishment of an evaluation association in each country, evaluation networks should be strengthened among Asian countries. The workshop welcomed the proposal made by Thailand to host a joint evaluation seminar next year and the proposal by Vietnam to conduct a joint monitoring and evaluation exercise, with possible impact on capacity building. In this connection, the participants welcomed the initiative of the Japan Evaluation Society in following up these efforts in cooperation with other similar organizations.

The report of this workshop will be published soon. The participants from Asian partner countries are kindly expected to utilize the results of the workshop for further improvement of their monitoring and evaluation systems.