Instructions for evaluation activities in Norway’s aid administration

Approved by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Secretary General of the Ministry of Climate and Environment on 23 November 2015

The instructions for Norad (the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) state that one of the Agency’s primary tasks is to initiate and perform independent evaluations of development cooperation. Norad’s Evaluation Department is responsible for carrying out this work, which includes all programmes and activities that are ODA-reportable under the budgets of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment.

Norad’s Evaluation Department reports directly to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on matters concerning the evaluation of efforts for which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible, and directly to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Climate and Environment on matters concerning the evaluation of efforts for which the Ministry of Climate and Environment is responsible.

These instructions enter into force on 1 December 2015, and replace the instructions of 29 May 2006.

1. Objectives

The purpose of evaluations is to document the effectiveness and relevance of efforts to realise the goals of Norwegian development policy, and the extent to which the intended outcomes are achieved.

The objectives of evaluations are to:

- evaluate the results achieved in relation to specified goals and plans;
- evaluate whether resource use is commensurate with the results achieved;
- systematise lessons learned with a view to assuring the quality of future projects and improving results through effective learning processes; and
- provide information to the authorities and the general public.

On the one hand, evaluation activities should promote the transfer of experience, and on the other, they should hold Norwegian development policy actors accountable for the management of funds. The emphasis given to each of these aims may vary from one evaluation to another.

A key objective is to identify lessons learned in a systematic way, so that they can be used in policy development and as the basis for operational activities.

2. Principles

Evaluations are to be carried out in line with the guidelines on evaluation set out in the Regulations for Financial Management in Central Government and in the OECD DAC quality standards for development evaluation. They are to adhere to the following principles:

- Evaluations should be carried out independently of those responsible for the administration or implementation of the activity/project.
- Evaluations should be carried out in accordance with recognised evaluation methods and principles.
• Evaluations should seek to clarify relevant issues.
• Evaluations should include operational recommendations that can be used when preparing budgets and developing the activity/project that is being evaluated.
• Evaluations should contribute to constructive, open debate.

3. Scope

The Evaluation Department’s responsibility covers the whole spectrum of development cooperation, regardless of the cooperation partner or who manages the funds, whether the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norad, FK Norway (Fredskorpsset), Norfund (the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries) or others. It can be difficult to identify the specific results of Norwegian aid, as it is integrated into national systems, and activities are implemented by the partner country’s own institutions. The decision to carry out an evaluation should be based on the nature of the issue at hand, how important it is considered to be, and the level of risk.

The Evaluation Department can itself initiate and decide to implement evaluations. In this context, ‘evaluations’ are understood to include various forms of evaluation and studies. In consultation with the relevant departments in the two ministries, the diplomatic and consular missions and the subordinate agencies, the Evaluation Department is responsible for an annually updated multiyear evaluation plan, which is sent to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Climate and Environment. The Secretary Generals may decide that additional evaluations should be carried out.

4. Implementation

Mandates and plans for individual evaluations are prepared by the Evaluation Department after consultation with affected parties and following an assessment of what the findings and recommendations might be used for.

Evaluations should normally be carried out by external consultants who are engaged in accordance with Norwegian legislation on public procurement. External consultants are to have free access to information from both oral and written sources in the ministry/mission/agency. This must be ensured by the responsible department, in cooperation with the unit responsible for information and record management and the Evaluation Department.

Where relevant, the Evaluation Department is responsible for coordinating the evaluation with other bilateral and multilateral actors.

In order to promote exchange of knowledge, the Evaluation Department can involve relevant departments in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Climate and Environment and Norad in the evaluation, as long as the principles of impartiality and independence are upheld.

The Evaluation Department is to ask affected parties to comment on the draft report.

Once the report has been finalised and substantive comments taken account of, the Evaluation Department is to write a cover memo setting out its views on the evaluation and making recommendations for follow-up in Norwegian development policy. In particular, the cover memo should highlight any findings in the evaluation indicating that strategic changes should be made to Norwegian development policy, or that could have consequences for budgets.
The final report, together with the Evaluation Department’s cover memo, is to be sent to the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Climate and Environment with a copy to Norad’s Director General, the responsible department in the relevant ministry or Norad, and other directly involved parties.

A separate memo summarising the main findings of the report is to be sent to the relevant ministry before the report itself and the cover memo are sent and made public.

5. Follow-up

The department, mission or agency responsible for the programme or activity that has been evaluated is to draft a follow-up plan based on the evaluation report and the cover memo from the Evaluation Department. On the basis of the draft follow-up plan, the Secretary General of the ministry concerned decides on how the evaluation’s findings and recommendations are to be followed up. The approved follow-up plan is to be sent to affected parties and the Evaluation Department no later than six weeks after the evaluation report has been made public. This decision and the follow-up plan are also to be made public.

The political leadership will be kept informed about the ongoing evaluation activities and the findings and recommendations that are made. Follow-up points will be submitted for political approval when called for.

Within the course of a year, the responsible unit is to report to the Secretary General of the ministry concerned, with a copy to the Evaluation Department, on the measures that have been implemented to follow up the evaluation report.

6. Communication

Prior to the publication of the evaluation results, requests for access to information will be dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The evaluation report and the cover memo are to be made public. Normally the Evaluation Department will announce the evaluation and arrange an open meeting to present the report. In its communication activities, the Evaluation Department is to describe the evaluation in the broad context of international development policy.

In the memo summarising the report’s main findings, described in section 4, the Evaluation Department will indicate at what time it will announce that the report will be made public.

The Evaluation Department is to prepare an annual report summarising the results of the year’s evaluations, based on the objectives for evaluation activities. The Evaluation Department is also to report on its total use of resources in the annual report.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to send the annual report to the Storting and the Office of the Auditor General for information.

7. Organisation

Evaluation activities are organised under the Evaluation Department, a separate department in Norad, which is led by an Evaluation Director.