

Concept Paper

**Impact-oriented evaluation of German Agro
Action overseas activities**

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December 2003

FOREWORD

In the past, development organisations have again and again escaped unscathed when under scrutiny regarding the impact of their measures. Echoing the opinion of a number of social scientists, Manfred Glagow states: “As good as the reputation of the NGO’s is, we know very little about them (...) They are different, but not per se better than market or state organisations ...”. This scepticism has become widespread.

Non-governmental organisations in developing countries and their co-operation partners in the North have to prove that they are efficient. This is certainly going to hold even more for the future than it has in the past. And for us it means measuring our impact, comparing our activities with those of other actors and altering our approach if experience and learning processes suggest that this is necessary.

This Concept Paper is at once a challenge and a commitment. We and our partners are going to address both aspects.

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SUMMARY

German Agro Action (Deutsche Welthungerhilfe - GAA) will be putting more emphasis than in the past on the impacts of its development co-operation (DC) and humanitarian aid (HA) when evaluating its overseas activities in priority and partner countries. This Concept Paper provides a corresponding frame of reference for GAA staff and its partners, GAA committees and the specialists commissioned by GAA to evaluate overseas activities. It describes what GAA is already doing and what it intends to achieve over the next three to four years.

First of all, the Concept Paper describes definitions, objectives, addressees, types, criteria, methods and tools as well as approved quality standards for evaluations in general and impact-oriented evaluations in particular that guide German Agro Action's evaluating activities. It then explains the aims, the role and the various types of evaluation in the organisation's activities and concludes with a set of guidelines for conducting external evaluations as well as an outlook for impact-oriented evaluations.

Impact-oriented evaluation aims at identifying and assessing the various changes which evolve through projects, programmes, policies and instruments as systematically and objectively as possible and at different levels. Such impacts can be intended and unintended, positive and negative, short, medium and long term as well as direct and indirect. For GAA, impact-oriented evaluation also means that the findings and recommendations of an evaluation ought to have an effect on the staff of one's own organisation as well as those of the partner, i.e. that they are made use of and implemented in the various project and programme phases.

In addition to an increased emphasis on the effectiveness of activities with the target groups of GAA and its partners who are poor and lack food security, whenever possible, the criteria of relevance, efficiency, significance and sustainability will be analysed in the evaluations. Thus the evaluation's primary objectives, i.e. learning from success and failure as well as control and transparency, are attained. Moreover, publishing the findings of an evaluation takes into account the aims of promoting dialogue on DC and evaluation as well as legitimising activities.

In its evaluations, GAA ensures that approved principles and quality standards of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (DAC OECD) and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation (DeGE-

val) are observed to the maximum possible degree. These include, for example, impartiality and independence, credibility, planning and terms of reference, benefit, feasibility, fairness and accuracy.

In their projects, GAA and its partners pursue the goal of contributing to positive changes in the living conditions of particularly disadvantaged groups. Whether and to what degree this is accomplished is systematically analysed by impact-oriented evaluation. The findings and recommendations of evaluations are taken into consideration during the entire project and programme cycle of GAA and its partners' activities. Hereby, an appropriate professional and methodical planning and preparation of projects is of crucial importance. The foundations for an impact-oriented evaluation at a later stage are already laid in this phase. Formulating impact hypotheses and impact-oriented indicators is systematically integrated into planning. Since unintended and unexpected impacts are particularly difficult to predict and take into consideration, impacts throughout the course of the project have to be critically and openly scrutinised again and again and discussed and analysed with as many of those involved as possible.

In approving, implementing, monitoring and evaluating projects as well as in developing strategies, the respective responsible actors of GAA and its partners take care that evaluation findings and recommendations are taken into consideration. Both internally and externally, the necessary information for this and GAA's evaluation expertise is regularly and appropriately prepared and made available. The significance of self-evaluation in the project or programme management cycle is being strengthened.

In addition to evaluating individual projects, GAA is increasingly carrying out evaluations which contribute to addressing cross-project, strategic and policy issues. This includes programme and instrument evaluations analysing select individual projects focusing on regional, sector or thematic aspects and assessing the instruments of development co-operation at cross-project level. Whenever necessary and possible, GAA conducts evaluations jointly with other donors in order to minimise the workload of its own staff, partners and target groups and take advantage of synergies.

If the approved quality standards are observed, impact-oriented evaluation of overseas activities can, in principle, be initiated both by the central Evaluation Unit (Unit 01) and by the decentralised units (departments, focus groups, external structure). The decision on who is to be in charge of the evaluation depends on its objective and terms of refer-

ence. In all cases, it is up to the Evaluation Unit to ensure the appropriate quality of all external evaluations. The working relations between the Evaluation Unit and the Auditing Unit are being formalised. GAA spends one percent of its funds provided annually for the implementation of overseas projects on impact-oriented evaluations.

Impact-oriented project or programme activities and impact-oriented evaluations put special demands on the staff of GAA and its partners as well as the international and local evaluators this task is assigned to. GAA ensures that the above-mentioned group of persons either dispose of the specialist, methodical and socio-cultural skills this requires or that these skills are developed depending on the respective demand.

External evaluations continue to be the main pillar of German Agro Action's impact-oriented evaluations. They are supported by an increasing number of self-evaluations. For the medium term, impact-oriented evaluation is planned in a participatory manner and is concretised in annual plans. Terms of reference and contract details are based on existing tools that are flexibly adjusted to objectives and tasks. For more extensive and complicated evaluations, a design phase will precede.

An appropriate level of involvement of partners and target groups in the impact-oriented evaluations is ensured. The execution of the evaluation at local level starts with common preparatory and co-ordinating measures ahead of data collection and analysis proper. Findings and recommendations of the evaluation are covered in a comprehensive overall report and a summary report. They are subjected to a multi-stage process of verification and co-ordination at local level and at GAA headquarters. This ensures that the findings are checked, that the strengths and weaknesses of the object of evaluation bears are treated fairly and that the interests of the actors involved in the evaluation are considered appropriately.

The concept of impact-oriented evaluation takes up the challenge of practice in GAA overseas activities. It puts at the centre of interest the sustainable improvement of the living conditions of the target groups who are poor and lack food security. Learning from success and failure, drawing conclusions from mistakes and improving the effects of co-operating with partners and target groups on an ongoing basis is the leitmotiv of German Agro Action's impact-oriented co-operation and evaluation.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND FIGURES

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| ALNAP | Action Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action |
| BMZ | Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development |
| DAC | Development Assistance Committee (of the OECD) |
| DC | Development co-operation |
| DeGEVal | Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation |
| ECHO | European Commission Humanitarian Office |
| GAA | Deutsche Welthungerhilfe – German Agro Action |
| HA | Humanitarian aid |
| HWWA | Hamburgisches Weltwirtschaftsarchiv |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IIED | International Institute for Environment and Development |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| NRO | Non-governmental organisation |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| OOPP | objectives-oriented project planning / Logical Framework |
| PM | Programme manager |
| PPM | Project planning matrix |
| SDC | Swiss Development Co-operation |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

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1 BACKGROUND

Evaluation has a long-standing tradition in German Agro Aid (GAA - 1979). GAA regularly examines a large number of its measures, conducting 40 to 50 individual evaluations a year. This is regarded as exemplary among German non-governmental organisations. Evaluations provide GAA with important support in making decisions on projects and funding activities. With its Evaluation Unit, GAA has had a central, independent unit at its disposal for years that is responsible for the evaluation activities within GAA.

In spring 2003, the Executive Board commissioned the Headquarters to compile a concept paper on impact-oriented evaluation. The requirement and desire for changes to the type of evaluation executed in GAA in the past has arisen from several developments, including:

- a greater focus of development co-operation (DC) on impacts and sustainability;
- the development of a framework entailing increased legitimisation pressure and a growing significance of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the implementation of aid and assistance measures;
- changes in GAA portfolio, with an increasing share of emergency aid and rehabilitation projects as well as a growing strategic focus on, and activities in, country programmes as well as
- a growing desire to learn on the basis of evaluations.

1.1 Developing the Concept Paper

This Concept Paper takes into account success that GAA has had with evaluations so far as well as proposals on impact-oriented evaluation discussed both internally in GAA and externally in evaluation theory and practice. An intensive consulting process took place in the organisation to allow for an internal reflection on the topic, involving a technical discussion, a one-day workshop, several bilateral talks and a document analysis. External persons were also invited to participate in this process. The external view is further provided by taking a large number of documents into account (see Annex 1). Also, the level of debate among other actors in development co-operation and in the framework of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation (DeGEVal) is contributing to the new concept.

1.2 Objectives of the Concept Paper

The aim of the Concept Paper is to establish a reference frame to optimise GAA impact-oriented evaluation. Thus, rather than representing a guideline for the execution of evaluations, it reflects the understanding, objectives, methods and role of evaluation in the work of GAA. Chapters 5 to 7 describe the evaluation practice GAA is already carrying out or intends to achieve in the next three to four years.

The Concept Paper describes the contents that an evaluation comprises. With a view to short-term implementation, it is oriented on the current organisational chart of GAA. Whether and what organisational and institutional structural changes might become necessary in future in order to achieve an optimum impact in implementing the Concept Paper will be decided at a later stage.

The Concept Paper on impact-oriented evaluation is based on experience GAA has had with evaluations so far and develops this experience. It should not be regarded as a rigid concept but as a process-oriented guideline for the next four years. It is aimed at supporting debate in GAA and among partners involved in the topic of impact-oriented evaluation.

1.3 Addressees of the Concept Paper

The chief target groups of the Concept Paper are the staff of GAA and its partners, GAA committees and the experts commissioned by GAA to execute evaluations. It also serves the purpose of informing GAA donors and the broader public interested in impact-oriented evaluation.

2 EXPLAINING THE TERMS

2.1 Definitions

There are a large number of ways to define terms used in the context of evaluation. This Concept Paper above all uses the definitions of the glossary published by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (DAC OECD 2002).

In accordance with the glossary, **evaluation** is an assessment that should be as systematic and objective as possible of a planned, ongoing or completed project, programme or policy as well as its design, implementation and results. In addition, evaluations may relate to certain instruments of development co-operation. The aim is to determine relevance, development efficiency, effectiveness, significance, impact and sustainability¹. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learnt into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.

Effects are intended or unintended short and medium term changes due directly or indirectly to a development intervention.

Impacts are intended or unintended, positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced either directly or indirectly by a development intervention.

The effects and impacts of projects and programmes can be analysed at three levels:

- immediate improvements in the living conditions of the target groups and the changes that have occurred as a whole,
- structural changes at local and regional level, including changes concerning the partner, and
- strengthening the representation of interests of the poor.

The effects of instruments are above all evaluated at the following two levels:

- changes in the project or programme cycle and improvements in new projects or programmes and
- changes in policies, strategies or the strategic orientation of organisations.

¹ See Chapter 2.5 and Annex 2 for a definition of these terms.

So an **impact-oriented evaluation** aims at identifying and assessing, as systematically and objectively as possible, the various changes at different levels that are due to projects, programmes, policies and instruments. Thus it reaches beyond a comparison of the actual situation with targets, which focuses above all on activities and outputs and is often encountered in DC and evaluation practice. Such comparisons of the actual situation with targets assess the activities carried out and the results a programme or project has attained in comparison to those planned. Thus they chiefly concentrate on the effectiveness of the employment of inputs rather than on impacts reaching beyond the project's objectives.

To GAA as an organisation, impact-oriented evaluation also means that evaluation findings and recommendations have to cause effects among the staff of the organisation itself and its partner, i.e. that they can be made use of and implemented in the various project and programme phases (see Chapter 4). This requires binding regulations on how evaluation findings and recommendations are handled.

2.2 Objectives of an impact-oriented evaluation

According to the DAC (DAC 1991), evaluation above all has two objectives: first, the improvement of future policies, programmes and projects via feedback from lessons learnt (summarised under the headword learning) and second the creation of a basis for accountability, including the publishing of information (summarised under the headwords control and transparency).

- **Learning:** Evaluations supply information enabling common evaluation criteria (see Chapter 2.5) to be analysed and success and failure factors to be filtered out. With these findings, ongoing projects can be steered and, should the need arise, course corrections can be made. Moreover, the findings promote informed decisions on the continuation of projects and, provided that lessons learnt are made use of, contribute to a better design of new projects.
- **Control and transparency:** Evaluations reveal whether all those involved in a project have achieved what they intended. Here, of course, the competence and action of persons are questioned in comparison to the tasks, commitments and objectives, which is usually perceived as control.

Stockmann (2002) additionally distinguishes between the objectives of dialogue and legitimisation, i.e. documenting the success of one's own work. Transparency, dialogue

and legitimisation are above all set as objectives when evaluations are to be accessed and used externally.

- **Dialogue:** Publicised findings of evaluations enable the various actors in DC to engage in a common discourse and share experience regarding topics that are of common relevance.
- **Legitimation:** The findings arrived at via the evaluation enable a comprehensible, verifiable and transparent account of what results and effects have been achieved with what means.

These aims are closely related and play a certain role in all evaluations. Conflicts of aims may arise owing to insecurity and supposed weaknesses among staff and partners. They ought to be eliminated. The aims of legitimisation and transparency may also clash with the aim of learning. If the evaluation findings are predominantly negative, there will be reluctance to publicise them. This is of particular importance for an organisation like GAA that has to rely on donations. What above all counts here is the credibility and the quality of the evaluation findings as well as actively handling mistakes made in order to avoid them in future.

2.3 Addressees of impact-oriented evaluation

In the activities of GAA, impact-oriented evaluation above all addresses the following groups of persons:

- Staff of GAA partners;
- GAA staff;
- GAA committees;
- co-financiers of GAA and partner projects;
- the public interested in the issues concerned. They include people working in DC and HA, scientists dealing with the effects of DC and HA and multipliers such as the press who examine whether DC and HA make sense.

These very different target groups of impact-oriented evaluation have different information needs. Whereas those directly involved in the implementation of projects or programmes, the bodies responsible for the quality assurance of evaluations and science are interested in detailed methodical and content aspects of evaluations, it is, as a rule, above all more concise and well-compiled summaries of the most important findings of evaluations that are of importance to the committees, co-financiers and the press.

The target groups of the GAA in the partner countries, i.e. above all poor people and families exposed to food insecurity, are the end-beneficiaries of an impact-oriented evaluation, which also means that they are indirect addressees of the measure. For they are going to benefit from an evaluation focusing more on the impacts of projects, programmes and instruments and the improved use of lessons learnt.

2.4 Types of evaluation

Internal and external evaluation

Depending on whom an evaluation is conducted by, one distinguishes between internal and external evaluations, which are characterised by different respective degrees of independence. An **internal evaluation** or **self-evaluation** is an evaluation of a development intervention carried out by the entities and/or persons who are entrusted with the design and delivery of the project and report to the management of the implementing organisation, the partner or the donor organisation. **External evaluations** are carried out by entities and/or persons belonging neither to the implementing nor to the donor organisation of the project. **Independent evaluations** are conducted by entities and/or persons free of any control of those responsible for the design and implementation of development interventions. Independence implies freedom from political influence, organisational pressure and economic dependence. An independent evaluation is characterised by full access to information and full autonomy in carrying out investigations and reporting findings.

Evaluation in the project or programme cycle

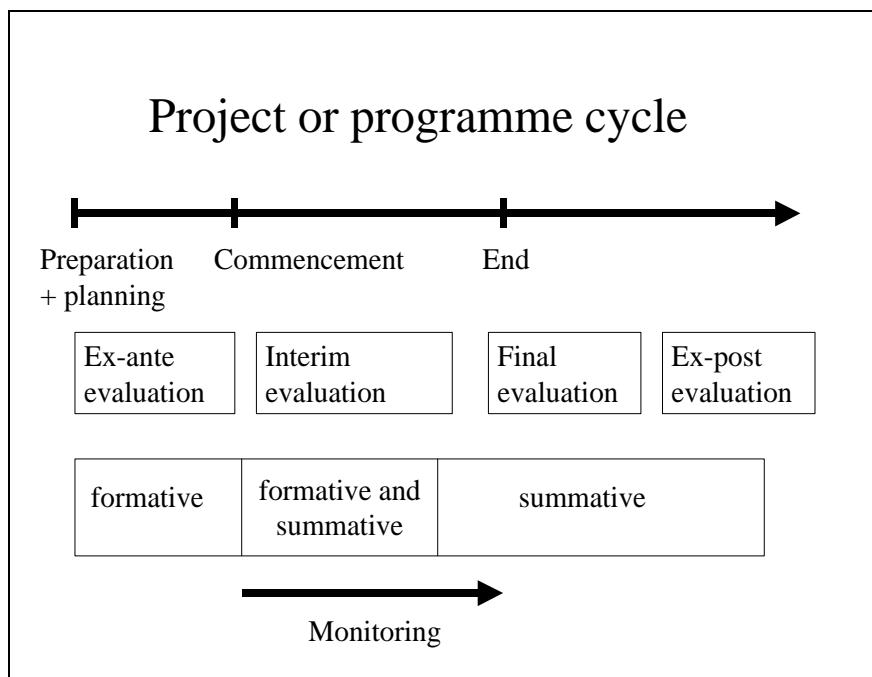
Depending on the use of the evaluation in the course of the project or programme, a distinction is made between ex-ante evaluations, interim evaluations, final evaluations and ex-post evaluations (Figure 1). Each of these types addresses a specific task and has a special focus. **Ex-ante evaluations** are conducted in the phase of project design and analysis. They focus on a situation analysis (including an analysis of the executing agency) and the feasibility of the project. In this sense, project assessments and feasibility studies can also be regarded as ex-ante evaluations. **Interim evaluations** are conducted in the course of the project – often roughly in the middle of implementation – and focus on a comparison of the actual situation with targets, the prospects of attaining the desired outcomes and short-term effects. **Final evaluations**, which are carried out at the end of a project phase or a project, focus on a project's outcomes and effects

in the short and medium term. **Ex-post evaluations** are conducted immediately or long after completion of a project. They concentrate on factors of success and failure as well as lasting impacts and a project's sustainability.

Thus evaluations may be **formative**, i.e. of an actively designing nature and process-oriented, or **summative**, i.e. of a more summary and stocktaking nature and focused on outcomes and effects.

In contrast with evaluation, which carries out an assessment at a certain point in time, the term **monitoring** refers to a continuing process of data collection and data analysis in the course of a project.

Figure 1: Evaluations in the project or programme cycle



Distinction according to object of evaluation

Depending on the object to be evaluated, a distinction can be made between project, programme, instrument and process evaluations. **Project evaluations** are planned and designed to assess individual projects according to relevant criteria (see Chapter 2.5). **Programme evaluations** assess a series of individual projects run by an organisation according to a specific aspect. To this end, a sample of individual evaluations is taken matching this specific focus. Programme evaluations may relate to a country, a region,

a continent or an area of assistance and/or assistance priority or to specific topics such as gender and the relevance of projects to poverty. **Instrument evaluations** assessing individual instruments, such as country concepts, concept papers and monitoring & evaluation (M&E) systems, are also conceivable. A **process evaluation** is a systematic assessment of the internal dynamics of implementing organisations, their policy instruments, their service delivery mechanisms, their management practices and the linkages among these aspects. Process evaluation is often part of other types of evaluation. All these types of evaluation take the framework conditions and the context in which these interventions take place into consideration in addition to the project and programme measures.

Other types of evaluation

The term **meta-evaluation** is used for the evaluation of an evaluation, in which the quality of evaluation systems and/or the performance of the evaluators are assessed. In addition, in accordance with the DAC, the term also refers to evaluations designed to aggregate findings from a series of evaluations. In this sense, programme evaluations are meta-evaluations as well.

Joint evaluations are those in which different donor organisations and/or partners participate. The intensity of this participation may vary and relate to all types of evaluation mentioned above.

2.5 Evaluation criteria, methods and tools

Evaluation criteria: Evaluations assess individual projects, programmes, policies and/or instruments according to the following criteria:

- The term **relevance** applies when assessing whether and to what extent the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.
- **Effectiveness** refers to the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved. It also assesses the extent to which effects or changes result from a development intervention (also see Chapter 2.1 and the example in Chapter 4.2).
- The term **efficiency** is used in assessing how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to outputs and outcomes.

- Although the DAC uses the term **significance**, it is not defined in its glossary. In accordance with the definition used by GTZ (GTZ 1997), significance is applied in assessing whether a development intervention has a widespread impact at sector or regional level, bears a model character or can be repeated elsewhere. Another aspect that is assessed is whether and how it can contribute to the formation of structures and/or institution building.
- **Sustainability** is used to assess the extent to which the benefits a development measure has generated continue when external support has ended. Stockmann (1997) distinguishes between four dimensions of sustainability:
 - **project-oriented sustainability** assesses whether and to what degree target groups and/or executing agencies continue with changes in their own interest and for their own benefit,
 - **output/production-oriented sustainability** analyses whether and to what degree the target group and/or executing agency disposes of a structure enabling it to ensure a lasting benefit,
 - **innovation-oriented sustainability** evaluates whether and to what degree the target group or the executing agency disposes of an innovation potential provided by the development measures enabling an appropriate response to further changes and
 - **system-oriented sustainability** assesses whether and to what degree the innovation results in enhancing the performance of the system as a whole via diffusion processes (this concept of sustainability refers to the above-mentioned term of significance).

It is important for an evaluation to consider all these criteria. For an intervention may well be efficient without being effective. This will for instance be the case if an irrigation canal is well-constructed technically and has been built cost-effectively but the products grown in the irrigated area cannot be sold because they perish on the way to the market, which is very far away. What is equally conceivable is that a project is very effective but lacks relevance and efficiency. Or projects may be relevant and effective without being sustainable. The criteria of sustainability and significance or broad-based impact constitute a special area of tension (Messner 2001). Projects may well be sus-

tainable (in the sense of the three dimensions mentioned first above) without their making a significant contribution to solving crucial development problems (in the sense of the last of the dimensions of sustainability referred to). Evaluations on hand show that sustainability in projects focusing on significance is more difficult to attain than in less sophisticated, small, monocausal projects. For development policy reasons, the two criteria of sustainability and significance ought to be on a par and should be evaluated accordingly. Impact-oriented evaluation asks both whether we are doing the right things properly and whether these things have a lasting impact in terms of positive changes among the target groups.

The methodical problem of actually attributing identified impacts and their contribution to development to a specific intervention in a causal chain continues to remain unsolved, for possible impacts resulting from other interventions and environmental factors have to be taken into account.

Box 1: Attributing impacts – two examples

A project is aimed at raising the level of income of poor families in the area it is working in. It introduces training measures and credit facilities enabling the development of businesses. At roughly the same time, an entrepreneur sets up a factory in the region that creates employment for the local population. Impact-oriented evaluation seeks to establish whether income levels of the population in the project region have risen and to what extent these changes have occurred thanks to training and credit and to what extent because of the new factory.

Another project is aimed at enhancing awareness of HIV/Aids among the people in the area it is working in. To achieve this goal, a well-designed multi-media approach is applied involving street theatre performances, poster campaigns, discussions, training programmes and community information centres. At about the same time, the government repeatedly introduces radio and television ads on the same topic on a frequent basis. The challenge for impact-oriented evaluation is to find out how awareness among the population has changed and to what extent changes in awareness of HIV/Aids can be attributed to the project or the government measures.

Source: Schürmann (2002), p. 11

Often, if at all, this **attribution gap** can only be filled by demonstrating plausibility based on relevant impact hypotheses. Given these condition, laying claim to actually

measuring the impact of the intervention may have to be put in relative terms. Instead, it ought to be asked what impacts are contributed to.

Evaluation methods and tools: A wide range of methods and tools are used for collecting and analysing data in evaluations. They include:

- quantitative methods such as standardised interviews, efficiency measurements (cost-benefit comparison), scaling/rating, cross tables, regression analysis and
- qualitative methods such as introductory talks, partly structured interviews, focus group discussions, observations, ranking and mapping.

The use of these methods is supported by specially designed survey and analysis tools such as questionnaires, checklists, scales and computer programmes.

Often, a mix of methods and tools is used to optimise data collection and analysis. The choice of method depends on various factors such as the objective and the type of problem being dealt with, measurability and the availability of resources. The appropriate method has to be developed by the evaluators and co-ordinated with all those involved in the context of planning the evaluation, taking into account the respective advantages and disadvantages of the various methods.

Care should be taken that, as far as possible, the principle should be applied that **two pairs of eyes are better than one**, with the local perspective being incorporated, and that the method chosen enables **verifications** to be made in data collection and data analysis, e.g. via triangulation. A verification of the findings is essential to give the evaluation credibility. To achieve this, preliminary evaluation findings are submitted and discussed with various actors as a rule. Here, it is important to correct factual mistakes and develop a good common understanding of the evaluation findings, arrive at recommendations and document possible divergence in assessments.

Evaluation findings are summarised in an **evaluation report**. This report contains background information, methodology, findings, recommendations and lessons learnt in the evaluation. In programme and instrument evaluations, a **cross-section report** is compiled in addition to the individual reports that describes their analysis at aggregate level in a clear and comprehensible manner.

3 QUALITY STANDARDS FOR EVALUATION

Various organisations have developed criteria that ought to be considered in planning and executing evaluations in order to assure their quality. In the context of DC, the DAC principles are of particular importance. In addition, evaluation societies have drawn up standards in various countries that generally ought to be applied in evaluations in a wide range of policy fields. As far as the Federal Republic is concerned, the relevant standards are chiefly those of the DeGEval. The principles and standards have evolved from the respective mandate and working context of the two organisations. They are not directly comparable with each other but do have some aspects in common.

3.1 The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) principles

The DAC already publicised principles for the evaluation of development co-operation in 1991. Based on the then policies and programmes as well as experience with evaluations and feedback from findings, these principles formulate the most important requirements for the evaluation process. They are:

- Development co-operation is a co-operative partnership exercise between donors and recipients.
- The main purposes of evaluation are to improve future policies, programmes and projects through feedback of lessons learnt and the creation of a basis for accountability (including the provision of information to the public).
- The evaluation process should be impartial and independent from the process concerned with policy-making and the delivery and management of development assistance.
- The credibility of evaluation depends on the expertise and independence of the evaluators and the degree of transparency of the evaluation process. Credibility requires that evaluations should report successes as well as failures. Recipient countries should, as a rule, fully participate in evaluation in order to promote credibility and commitment.
- To have an impact on decision-making, evaluation findings must be perceived as relevant and useful and be presented in a clear and concise way. They must reflect the different interests and needs of the many parties involved in development co-operation.
- Consistent with the partnership principle stressed above, both donors and recipients should be involved in the evaluation process.
- Collaboration between donors is essential to learn from each other and to avoid duplication of effort.

- An overall plan must be developed by the agency for the evaluation of development co-operation.
- Each evaluation must be planned and terms of reference drawn up in order to define the purpose and scope of the evaluation, describe the methods to be used, identify standards and determine the resources and time required to complete the evaluation.
- Dissemination and feedback must form a continuous and dynamic part of the evaluation process.

These principles were evaluated and confirmed between 1995 and 1998 (OECD DAC 1998).

3.2 The standards of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Evaluation (DeGEval)

In October 2001, the DeGEval adopted “**Standards für Evaluation**” (standards for evaluation - DeGEval 2002) that provide the foundations for quality assurance in evaluations. According to these standards, evaluations are to bear the four basic characteristics of usefulness, practicability, fairness and accuracy.

The standards of **usefulness** are to ensure that the evaluation is oriented on its declared purpose and on the information requirements of its intended users. The standards of usefulness include identifying participants and stakeholders, explaining the purpose of the evaluation, credibility and the competence of the evaluator, choice and extent of information, transparency of values, completeness and clarity of reporting, timeliness of the evaluation, and the use of the evaluation and advantages gained by using it.

The **practicability standards** are to ensure that an evaluation is realistic, well-conceived, diplomatic and cost-efficiently planned and conducted. Appropriate methods, a diplomatic approach and the efficiency of an evaluation are among the practicability standards.

The **fairness standards** are to ensure that the persons and groups affected are treated in a respectful and fair manner. This includes formal agreements, the protection of the rights of individuals, complete and fair examinations, impartial execution and reporting as well as access to the findings.

The standards of **accuracy** are to ensure that an evaluation provides and disseminates valid information and findings on the respective object of evaluation. This includes describing the object of evaluation, a context analysis, the description of purposes and the approach used, stating sources of information, valid and reliable information, sys-

tematic checks for mistakes, analysing qualitative and quantitative information, sound conclusions and a meta-evaluation.

Lately, the DeGEval has also been discussing “**Standards für Selbstevaluation**” (standards for self-evaluation - Müller-Kohlenberg, H. und Beywl, W. 2003) taking into account the characteristics and peculiarities of self-evaluation. In addition to the areas of usefulness, practicability, fairness and accuracy, which are oriented on the general standards, framework conditions that are essential for a practical and meaningful process of self-evaluation are referred to. They include delegating responsibilities, determining who carries out the self-evaluation, scope for design, agreements with the management level, handling the dissemination of information and publications, responsibilities and competencies, communication between different levels of the hierarchy and resources.

3.3 The principles and standards in the work of German Agro Action

Both the DAC principles and the DeGEval standards are relevant to German Agro Action’s evaluation work. GAA recognises the principles and standards and applies them in its evaluations to a considerable degree. However, it has to be borne in mind that implementing the principles and standards comes up against limiting factors if they can only be attained with a prohibitively high effort. But it also follows from the standards of usefulness and practicability that not every individual project has to be evaluated.

In two analyses and assessments of monitoring of results in German development cooperation, it is stated that GAA “has already (been applying) a system for monitoring of results that meets the DAC criteria”. Deficits were identified in terms of a lack of ex-post analyses and in methodical aspects (HWWA 1998, p. 350). The system of evaluation was tailored to the special requirements of an assistance institution and an aid agency, largely performed the functions of controlling, steering, monitoring impacts and learning and by and large fulfilled the valid evaluation criteria (HWWA 2000, p. 167). GAA will continue to ensure that the DAC principles are observed in its evaluations, with the criterion of independence being omitted in the internal evaluations. Furthermore, it uses the DeGEval standards as a guideline and is participating in the discussions on developing them further.

4 THE ROLE OF EVALUATION IN THE WORK OF GERMAN AGRO ACTION

GAA has a differing and changing requirement for evaluations. This results both from external demands (“objective requirement”) and German Agro Action’s working context and the actors related to it in projects, programmes and lobbying (“subjective requirement”). The two types of need for evaluations may overlap.

So far, GAA has above all conducted evaluations of individual projects. In choosing the projects for evaluation, care has above all been taken to reflect GAA project portfolio as much as possible. Such evaluations have provided answers to specific questions from and for the work. Here, the emphasis has been on subject-related, guidance and control issues. Such issues and terms of reference for evaluations continue to be of particular importance in the context of interim and final evaluations. In addition, evaluations of individual projects may be useful if problems are highlighted in project implementation or if projects have a special model character or are working in particularly difficult conditions.

Nowadays, strategic and policy issues are also increasingly on the agenda for GAA that can only be answered to a certain extent by the evaluations of individual projects so far because they have not been tailored to these issues in terms of their methodology. Such issues include:

- What impacts – positive and negative – has GAA achieved with rural development projects among target groups and partners? Does GAA have to revise its concept paper for rural development on account of its experience in this field? Was the concept paper of any relevance in planning and designing the projects in the first place?
- How does GAA work in African countries? Is experience in Asia comparable to that in Africa? What are important success criteria and how can GAA promote such success factors?
- How is GAA positioned in the policy fields of emergency aid, rehabilitation and development co-operation in the national and international area? Where do GAA and its partners have comparative advantages in comparison to other organisations?

These are typical issues that can be addressed by programme and instrument evaluations specifically tailored to them.

4.1 Objectives and priorities in GAA evaluation

The aim of German Agro Action’s activities in its priority and partner countries is to contribute to positive changes in the living conditions of particularly disadvantaged groups,

i.e. the poor and the starving. Again and again, GAA and its partners have succeeded in accomplishing this well, but certainly not always optimally. GAA regards an evaluation focusing on such desired positive changes, i.e. concentrating on the impacts of its own activities, as a suitable tool to improve its contribution to successful development co-operation.

With its impact-oriented evaluation, GAA pursues the primary objectives of learning as well as control and transparency (cf. Chapter 2.2). In addition, it makes use of evaluations to participate in dialogue on successful development co-operation and legitimise its activities. The objectives of evaluations differ according to what they have been prompted by. In the planning phase of the evaluation, a description of its objective is compiled that is comprehensible for all actors.

For many GAA staff, the objective of learning is at the forefront of an evaluation. Without wishing to negate or do away with the objective of monitoring, the evaluation serves them not so much in terms of accountability and monitoring but with a view to improving ongoing and future activities according to the motto: "improving what is already good, taking the right steps when mistakes have been identified and learning to avoid these mistakes in ongoing and new projects". It is assumed that both the partners and the donors and co-financiers of GAA are similarly interested in these objectives.

In addition to the project evaluations carried out so far, programme and instrument evaluations are going to gain significance for GAA in the medium term.

GAA also intends to conduct joint evaluations with other organisations in the context of joint implementations of projects in order to relieve the partner and the target groups of multiple evaluations and the multiple workload they entail, combine resources and experience and promote mutual learning and dialogue via evaluations. Here, the experience of various organisations (including the DAC OECD – without reference to year, BMZ, IFAD) is taken into consideration.

Project and programme work as well as evaluation in GAA are going to be oriented more strongly than in the past on the impacts of interventions among the target groups and executing agencies, i.e. on the short, medium and long term changes caused by the development interventions. Additionally, all the other usual evaluation criteria (see Chapter 2.5) will be systematically established and analysed. Impact-oriented evaluation requires that the anticipated effects are at the centre of interest throughout the entire project or programme management cycle. Only then will the necessary conditions

be created to evaluate in a meaningful and good manner. GAA regards impact-oriented evaluation as part of an overall quality management system in the project or programme cycle. In the following, this will be demonstrated for the individual steps.

4.2 Considering evaluation findings in preparation and planning

The foundations for an evaluation are already laid in planning. The formulation of objectives (development goal and project purpose), outputs, activities and assumptions sets the reference frame for the evaluation at a later stage. Only if planning meets the specific requirements of a project and is impact-oriented can a respective evaluation be conducted. An appropriate consideration of framework conditions relevant to a project as well as an appropriately designed M&E system are of particular importance in this context. They are elements of good project planning and are documented in the planning document and the planning targets.

For its work, GAA has set itself the goal of achieving positive changes for the target group, i.e. impacts. This means that the formulation of the project purpose systematically reflects that it is impact-oriented and that it is subsequently evaluated accordingly. Thus the respective project also contributes to impacts at the level of the overall goal that cannot, however, be evaluated by GAA, or if so only in exceptional cases, owing to their complexity and the long, often indirect causal chains involved.

In collaboration with its partners, GAA will increasingly make use of the options offered by ex-ante evaluations, which it refers to as project preparation measures, in order to improve the planning of projects in general and their focus on impacts in particular. This will improve the foundations for impact-oriented evaluations.

Evaluation requires the formulation of specific indicators that can be objectively verified. The quality of the indicators has a crucial impact on the evaluability of outputs, objectives and effects. Good indicators state what indicates that an output or a target has been achieved. They refer to the type (what?), the quality (how good?), the quantity (how much?), the period of time (when?), the target group (who?) and the location (where?) of the project's outputs and effects.

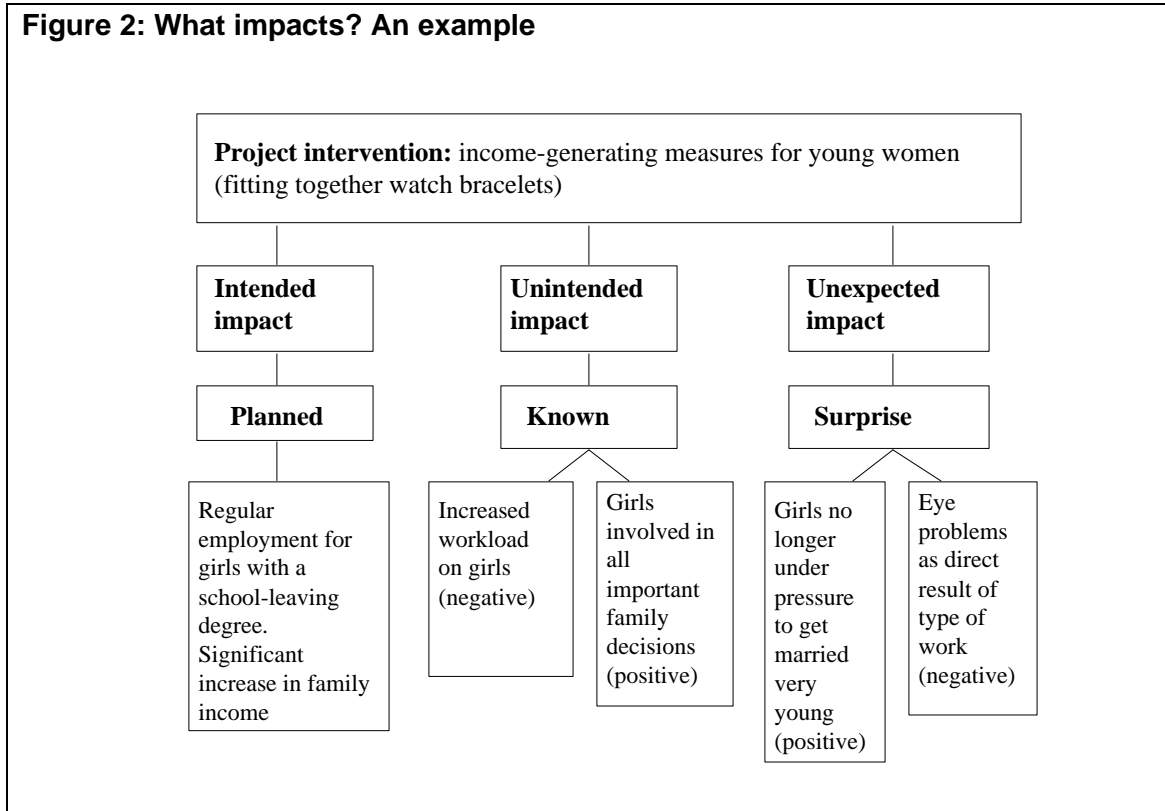
Evaluations of GAA projects so far have shown that, again and again, both in terms of formulating objectives and deducing appropriate indicators and designing an appropriate M&E system, project planning has borne weaknesses. Lately, this has improved largely thanks to the improved and systematic compilation of project planning matrixes

(PPMs) in accordance with the planning logic of objective-oriented project planning (OOPP / Logical Framework) and corresponding training measures among staff and partners. Thus the foundations for evaluation have also improved. GAA is continuing to work on improving planning and PPMs and attaining more focus on impacts in this context in collaboration with its partners.

So far, project planning and planning documents have not referred explicitly to impacts of projects. Although the logic of projects implicitly assumes that specific impacts will arise, the impact hypotheses planning is based on have not been explicitly formulated so far. Impact-oriented evaluation has to rely on explicit impact hypotheses. In future, these hypotheses will be incorporated in project planning and documented in the planning document.

Already formulating appropriate impact hypotheses in the preparatory phase of a project is a special challenge for the project planners. It requires a very good knowledge of the context as well as much experience with projects and certainly cannot be achieved in the short term. The example in Figure 2 shows that the difficulties in considering unintended and unexpected effects are greater still. While it may also be possible to identify and consider unintended effects in the planning phase and avoid them through corresponding project measures, the example demonstrates that unexpected impacts can only be recognised at a later stage of the project. This shows that formulating impact hypotheses is not a one-off measure but has to be reviewed in the course of project management and evaluation on an ongoing basis and, should the need arise, has to be adapted.

Figure 2: What impacts? An example



Source: adapted from Schürmann (2002), p. 7

Taking evaluation findings into account can help better predict and identify possible impacts of development interventions. In the planning document and the internal GAA project paper, GAA will systematically show that conclusions drawn from previous evaluations of its projects and programmes and those of other organisations have been taken into consideration in preparing the new project or in extending an ongoing project, at the same time naming the conclusions considered. First of all, the findings of individual project evaluations and reports of experience with projects will be incorporated, while findings of programme evaluations will play an increasing role at a later stage. Both sector and regional and instrument-related evaluations are relevant. This means that all persons involved in compiling the planning document and the internal GAA project paper must have access to the above mentioned documents and must make use of them.

4.3 Considering evaluation findings in project approval

Evaluation findings are also considered in project approval. Providing evaluation reports and the planned incorporation of evaluation findings in the internal GAA project paper (see above) enable the decision-makers to identify and assess in their final ap-

praisal whether the project proposed takes insights gained in previous evaluations into account. Here, it has to be ensured that the findings of relevant evaluations are presented to the Project Advisory Committee (standard procedure) or the other decision-makers (small projects and special procedure) in a concise and comprehensible form.

When approving a project, the decision-makers can stipulate special conditions for evaluations that may be conducted. These must be taken into account in the planning of the evaluation programme (see Chapter 6.1).

4.4 Considering evaluation findings in project implementation

Partners, foreign staff and the programme managers (PM) have been assigned the task and responsibility to ensure that the recommendations made by an evaluation are considered in implementing projects and programmes. In the course of standard GAA reporting practice, they report on implementation or, if implementation has failed, they give an account of the respective reasons for failure.

In order to enhance the aspect of learning from evaluations in ongoing projects as well, PMs will systematically examine evaluation findings, communicate relevant findings and recommendations to the local staff and systematically monitor their application or non-application in the framework of normal project management.

4.5 Considering evaluation findings in monitoring and evaluation

The findings of previous evaluations also have to be considered in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of projects and programmes. This relates to the design and development of the M&E system itself, which is subject to assessment in every evaluation and for which an initial experience report is on hand. It also relates to regular checking and, should the need arise, reformulating of impact indicators and impact hypotheses, which become an integral element of the M&E system. Thirdly, it relates to methods and tools of continuous M&E that become more impact-oriented and promote the transfer of recommendations from evaluations, e.g. more formalised and binding self-evaluations (see Chapter 5.1).

4.6 Considering evaluation findings in the development of strategies

Findings and recommendations of evaluations are also incorporated in the development of German Agro Action's strategies. This includes portfolio analysis and design, the development of country concepts and country programmes and the compilation of

concept papers. Meta-evaluations, such as programme and instrument evaluations are of particular relevance in this context. Thanks to the specialist know-how and the knowledge of countries they have acquired through evaluations, experts conducting such evaluations are important resource persons in the process of this development of strategies and its documentation in the context of concept papers.

4.7 Management of evaluation knowledge

In the context of impact-oriented evaluation, GAA attributes greater significance to the management of evaluation knowledge and feedback than it has done in the past. It is expected that this will improve the institutional impact of evaluations within GAA and promote common learning processes, also with other organisations.

Internal provision of evaluation knowledge

A systematic consideration of evaluation findings in the project or programme cycle of GAA necessitates that the findings of evaluations are provided in accordance with the needs of the target groups and users and are appropriately edited if necessary (see Chapter 2.3). This is accomplished with evaluation reports (see Chapter 6.4).

The comprehensive overall report of an evaluation is a key document for programme managers, project staff and partners and should regularly be consulted in the course of a project or programme. The overall reports are made available to GAA staff as well as the partners both in German and in the respective country's language.

However, owing to its level of detail and its extent, this document is of only limited use to further users and other target groups. This is why part of the evaluators' mission will be to compile summary reports of the overall reports of the evaluation (project and cross-section reports) that present the most important findings and recommendations to GAA committees in a clear and concise manner. Of course the members of the committees also have access to the overall reports of the evaluations.

Based on the summary reports, an annual report on impact-oriented evaluation of German Agro Action's overseas activities is compiled in the shape of a meta-evaluation. It contains a concise and comprehensible account of the findings of an analysis of all the individual project, programme and instrument evaluations conducted in the course of a year.

The summary reports on evaluations are also provided to Department 2 (Communication and Marketing), where they are made further use of according to the unit's needs and requirements (fundraising, press, policies).

External provision of evaluation knowledge

In future, GAA will provide to the public the summary versions of the evaluation report compiled by the evaluators, the cross-section report of programme and instrument evaluations, the annual report on impact-oriented evaluations, and if required further GAA evaluation papers via the Internet. This has to be considered in compiling the above-mentioned documents. Apart from justified exceptions, the overall report of an evaluation can be provided on request.

5 IMPACT-ORIENTED EVALUATION IN GERMAN AGRO ACTION

GAA conducts project, programme and instrument evaluations which may have a different institutional and organisational basis and which put special demands on the evaluators.

5.1 Project evaluation

GAA conducts project evaluations both in the form of ex-ante and as interim and final evaluations.

Project preparation measures (ex-ante evaluations) can be executed as internal or external evaluations or as a combination of both types and are initiated by the PM. It is recommendable to consult external expertise.

In the course of project implementation, GAA supports impact-oriented project evaluation in collaboration with the partner and the target groups. Such interim evaluations are made via self-evaluations and, should the need arise, via external evaluations. They become a regular element of an overall M&E system on the basis of a PPM. Good planning and an appropriate structure of the M&E system as well as a systematic approach are necessary requirements for this. Both aspects are already considered in the planning phase and documented in the planning document and the internal GAA project paper. This results in a strengthening of the M&E system and the findings being made accessible to possible later external evaluations. Corresponding activities also have to be taken into account in the project budget.

Adequate methods for the self-evaluation of projects are being developed by GAA, such as workshops run at regular intervals that can be moderated should the need arise. Such workshops can be co-ordinated with the PM's official journeys in order to achieve as wide a range of participators as possible and promote institutional learning. Participatory impact monitoring (PIM) methods, the data and information of which is systematically analysed at a certain point in time, are particularly suitable for such self-evaluations. They provide for an intensive involvement of target groups and relevant actors, are process-oriented, enable common reflection and serve the purpose of decision-making and direct and relevant steering of the project. External evaluators can be consulted should the need arise. Such a need may be expressed both by the PM and by the staff of the external structure and the partner.

The findings of self-evaluations are documented in a systematic and structured manner so that they are available to GAA as an organisation and to possible external evaluators. External evaluations should not be conducted without a previous self-evaluation in temporal proximity to them so that the corresponding information base is provided and costs are thus limited.

It remains to be assessed whether such tools and methods will be a suitable replacement for external interim evaluations in future.

GAA will continue to conduct external evaluations of individual projects if

- internal expertise and methodical competence is not sufficient for a comprehensive evaluation of a given project;
- the planning foundations bear weaknesses so that impact-oriented evaluation will encounter special methodical difficulties;
- independence is to be assured in accordance with DAC criteria;
- exceptional importance is attributed to individual projects by GAA, the partner and/or the co-financier that is to be identified and assessed as independently as possible.

5.2 Programme and instrument evaluation

Unlike the evaluation of individual projects, programme and instrument evaluations above all have objectives of overriding importance and attempt to provide answers to strategic questions. In this sense, programme and instrument evaluations are of increasing interest to GAA. However, they are not a substitute for the conventional individual evaluation of projects, which continue to remain of relevance to the above-mentioned specific objectives.

Programme and instrument evaluations address cross-project issues and thus primarily serve the institutional learning of GAA and its partners. They relate to **geographic entities** (country, region, continent), various **sectors** (which GAA refers to as assistance priorities and fields of assistance), various **topics** of development co-operation, such as gender, poverty orientation and sustainability of GAA support, or certain **instruments** applied in GAA development co-operation, such as country concepts, M&E systems and the implementation of partners' and the organisation's own projects.

GAA has taken initial steps in this direction with an evaluation of the Country Concepts (Kohnert 2002), an ex-post sustainability evaluation (Benad and Berg 2003) and the commencement of country programme evaluations (Weingärtner and Nill 2003). The

Programme and Projects Department is in charge of these exercises. These steps are being intensified, and the implementation of the evaluation findings thus gained is being systematically established.

Since programme and instrument evaluations are initiated for specific issues and objectives, such evaluations cannot be standardised. For this reason, they ought to be provided with a design phase (see Chapter 6.1) in which, in addition to the usual planning and preparation of evaluations, in particular, the methodological problems of selecting individual projects (samples) for the respective issues are clarified.

In future, the cross-section reports of programme and instrument evaluations will replace the experience reports that have so far been compiled for a number of issues arising from evaluations of individual projects.

The evaluation of emergency aid and rehabilitation measures represents a special challenge for GAA. While the evaluation of projects in the area of longer term development co-operation is relatively advanced in methodical terms and can draw upon tried and tested concepts and methods, the evaluation of emergency and humanitarian aid as well as rehabilitation measures at the interface of emergency aid and development co-operation is still in its infancy. This applies both to GAA and the entire national and international area. GAA is developing an evaluation system for its emergency aid and rehabilitation projects, establishing a regular evaluation of such measures and identifying suitable evaluators for this area of assignment. Experience and recommendations from the international context are being taken into consideration (Roche 1999, OECD 1999, ALNAP 2001 and 2002).

GAA regularly identifies and prioritises its requirements for programme and instrument evaluation in a participatory manner involving all possible target groups of the evaluation.

5.3 Organisational and institutional execution

In principle, evaluations can be conducted both by the central Evaluation Unit, i.e. Unit 01, and by decentralised units (sections, focus groups, external structure). This concept paper will be used for all these evaluations to ensure that recognised quality standards are met.

GAA decides on the allocation of responsibilities and on who is in charge of the evaluation according to its objective and the issue addressed. The Evaluation Unit performs a

quality assurance role for all external evaluations of GAA. GAA sets the roles, the division of labour and the delimitation of the various organisational units. In all cases, care should be taken that external evaluations remain independent of the operative area and the DAC principles as well as the DeGEval standards are observed. The principles of impartiality, independence and credibility are of particular importance in this context, which is why the assignment of independent, external evaluators plays a crucial role (see Chapter 5.5).

The Evaluation Unit co-operates with the Auditing Unit. The responsibilities of the Auditing Unit are laid down in the GAA Auditing Rules of the 22nd June 1990. They include securing GAA funds, protection against loss of assets, monitoring compliance with the rules and guidelines regarding the use of funds and support and advice for the Secretary General and all departments in finance, business management and organisational issues. Thus the role of auditing is clearly distinct and delimited from that of evaluation. However, there are also points of contact with evaluation. They above all occur when business management issues, for example in the case of income-generating measures and micro-credits, are analysed in detail in auditing as well as in an evaluation. The working relations between the Auditing Unit and the Evaluation Unit, which have so far been informal, are to be formalised.

Changes in the terms of reference brought about by impact oriented evaluation result in special demands on the staff at the Headquarters and in the external structure of GAA as well as the staff of partners. They are above all:

- readiness to change previous monitoring and evaluation practices;
- detailed analysis of the new Concept Paper on impact-oriented evaluation and the implications for one's own activities;
- methodical competence in the field of impact-oriented planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation;
- implementing the Concept Paper and, should the need arise, requesting advice and/or upgrading to enable an implementation of the concept.

Already at the stage of compiling the Concept Paper, some of these requests can be met. In the framework of capacity building and the possible setting up of a GAA quality management system, further steps are being taken to implement the Concept Paper. This also includes informing staff at the Headquarters, in the external structure and the partner staff about the new Concept Paper and its implications for their work and, should the need arise, providing training and/or advice.

5.4 The budget for evaluations

GAA allocates one percent of the funds earmarked annually for overseas projects, i.e. the sum provided annually for the implementation of overseas projects, for evaluations. This sum is used for the forms of external evaluation described in Chapters 5.1 and 5.2 – with an increasing tendency towards programme and instrument evaluations.

Funds for the execution of self-evaluations are part of the project budget.

5.5 Demands on evaluators

Impact-oriented evaluation and the execution of programme and instrument evaluations put corresponding demands on the qualifications and experience of the evaluators assigned with these tasks. They reach beyond the usual know-how and skills that project evaluations require. To ensure that the evaluation yields credible and acceptable findings and recommendations, both the necessary specialist, methodical and socio-cultural competences and the personal integrity and independence of the persons chosen are of relevance. This applies both to evaluators working internationally and those active at local level.

Experience has shown that proficiency in evaluating still tends to be limited in German Agro Action's priority and partner countries, so that it is not always possible to assign international and local evaluators on a par. So assigning evaluators working at international level can always also be regarded and made use of as a contribution to capacity building in the area of local evaluation competence.

GAA will continue to maintain the existing data bank of evaluators who can conduct the evaluations that are relevant for the organisation. GAA takes care that women and men are assigned on a par for the evaluation of their work. Evaluators with know-how and experience in the field of evaluating emergency and humanitarian aid as well as programme and instrument evaluations are successively being integrated into the above-mentioned data bank. The data bank is maintained and updated by the Evaluation Unit on an ongoing basis. This also includes formulating demands on the specialist, methodical and socio-cultural competence of evaluators as well as the introduction of a regular appraisal system for evaluators.

6 GUIDELINES FOR THE EXECUTION OF EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS

In addition to intensifying self-evaluation in the project cycle, which has been described in Chapter 5.1, external evaluation continues to be the basic pillar of German Agro Action's evaluation system. Only via external evaluation can the necessary impartiality and independence of the evaluation and comprehensive learning "looking beyond the end of one's nose" be ensured.

6.1 Planning and preparing an evaluation

While self-evaluation is a systematic element of planning and project cycle management, external impact-oriented evaluation of GAA has to be planned separately for the medium and short term.

GAA plans, formulates and justifies its requirement for evaluation in the medium term in the framework of the Concept Paper on impact-oriented evaluation, consulting the various committees, organisational units and, if possible, partners. This requirement is defined in a two-year evaluation programme. Annual plans put this programme in concrete terms and fill in the details. These planning activities are co-ordinated by the Evaluation Unit.

In the planning phase of each individual evaluation, the following aspects have to be considered, formulated, documented and co-ordinated:

- actors and stakeholders of the evaluation and their interests;
- general and specific objectives of the evaluation;
- choice of evaluators;
- target groups and beneficiaries of the evaluation;
- timeframe, including enough time to verify the findings (see below);
- available resources;
- methodical approach, evaluation steps and sources of information;
- detailed terms of reference and contract details.

These steps in planning and preparing the evaluation are to be made by the unit in charge of the evaluation. The existing standardised terms of reference and German Agro Action's standardised contract for services are consulted for the description of the tasks and the contract details. They are to be adapted to the specific requirements of each evaluation.

In larger and more complex evaluations that cannot be standardised, a design phase is to be arranged at the interface between planning and execution of the evaluation. This is above all relevant in programme, instrument, meta and joint evaluations. In the design phase, the specific objective and the terms of reference as well as the methodical approach of the evaluation, including the necessary survey and analysis tools, are developed. Also, the selection sample of individual projects is defined in this phase. The result of the design phase is an inception report in which the decisions are documented. This enhances credibility and coincides with the DAC principle of appropriate planning of the evaluation. The contents of the inception report are adopted in the final report in an updated form. The inception report is to be compiled by the evaluators, submitted ahead of the field phase of the evaluation and co-ordinated with relevant actors.

6.2 Involving partners and target groups

Regardless of the type of evaluation, care always has to be taken that the involvement of the partners and target groups of co-operation with GAA is appropriately ensured. Particular attention is given to women participating on a par with men. An intensive dialogue between the local partners and the evaluators is desired. Depending on the objective and the terms of reference, participation in the evaluation may assume a wide range of forms. For instance, participation is conceivable in initiating the evaluation, as a member of the evaluation team, in selecting international and national evaluators, in designing the terms of reference and/or as a resource person. The type of involvement of partners and target groups is to be defined, co-ordinated and documented in the evaluation report in the course of preparing the evaluation.

In individual cases, depending on the issue involved and the objective of the evaluation, the decision can also be taken to narrowly limit the participation of partners and target groups in the evaluation. This will be of more relevance in evaluations concerning policy issues and in meta-evaluations than in evaluations of individual projects.

6.3 Executing the evaluation

Ahead of their stay in the partner countries, the international evaluators prepare themselves intensively for their mission. This includes: studying the relevant documents (project files, strategy, policy and concept papers), talks with desk officers and further relevant persons as well as compiling checklists or questionnaires for the field phase of

the evaluation. Additionally, the evaluators should have the latest project progress reports and the findings of the self-evaluation at their disposal.

At the beginning of the field phase, intensive preparations are carried out regarding the contents and methods as well as co-ordination with the local evaluators involved in the evaluation.

Only then does the evaluation proper at local level start in which the methods and tools selected in planning and preparation are employed.

At the end of the field phase, the evaluators present their preliminary findings and recommendations to the relevant actors, following the structure of the key findings and recommendations of the summary report, and request their feedback. The manner of this presentation already has to be planned and prepared at the beginning of the field phase. At the end of the field phase, the evaluators compile a protocol of findings. It is to be signed by the head of the evaluation team and a representative of GAA and the local partner.

6.4 The evaluation report

The comprehensive overall report and the summary report of the evaluation are submitted by the evaluators in accordance with two frameworks ensuring comparability. The possible contribution of local evaluators to these reports is to be arranged at an early stage and established in the agreement.

The existing framework remains valid for the overall report on individual project evaluations. A framework is compiled for the summary report. Both frameworks are handled flexibly and co-ordinated with the PM, the project staff and the partner in the context of preparing the evaluation. In the case of programme and instrument evaluations, depending on the objective and the terms of reference, such a framework has to be compiled both for the individual reports and for the cross-section report in the preparatory phase of the evaluation. Here, the existing framework is used as a checklist.

The evaluation report gives an account of the background, the objective, the methodical approach, the findings and the recommendations of the evaluation that is complete, concise and intelligible to all actors and those interested in it.

In addition to the overall report on the evaluation, the evaluators compile a summary report on the evaluation offering various addressees swift access to the course of the

evaluation and its most important findings. These summary reports replace the statements previously issued by the Evaluation Unit. Compiling the summary report becomes part of the terms of reference for the evaluators.

As a rule, these reports are written in German. The overall report is translated into the language of the respective country for the partner and further interested parties.

The evaluators initially submit drafts of the two reports that are subjected to a process of verification of the findings (see Chapter 6.5). Only then are the respective final reports written. After the final versions of the overall report and the summary report on the evaluation have been submitted, completion of task is accepted by the unit in charge.

6.5 Verifying findings

In order to check the findings of the evaluation, ensure that the strengths and weaknesses of the object of the evaluation are treated fairly and give due consideration to the interests of the actors involved in the evaluation, various verification steps are provided for.

The presentation and discussion of the preliminary findings at the end of the field phase in the priority or partner country and the signing of a protocol of findings at local level offer initial opportunities for a feedback. The same purpose is served by the presentation and discussion of the draft evaluation report and the summary report at GAA Headquarters. The external structures and partners give written statements on these draft reports.

In compiling the final versions of the reports, the evaluators consider the results of the discussion at local level and at GAA headquarters as well as written feedback. If no agreement is reached on assessment at the end of this process, possible diverging appraisals are documented in the final versions of the overall and summary reports.

7 OUTLOOK

Impact-oriented evaluation is a concept that addresses the challenges posed in development co-operation practice. Following the Millennium Development Goals, the ultimate aim of all measures is to improve the living conditions of poor sections of the population in the regions of assignment.

GAA has taken up this challenge and is examining the context in which it is working, its own activities and those of its partners in a critical but above all constructive manner in order to improve co-operation for the benefit of the target groups.

To achieve this, GAA aims to create a learning culture. This means that

- activities and experience are systematically documented and disseminated;
- conclusions are drawn from positive and negative experiences;
- the necessary steps are taken in the case of negative experiences;
- lessons learnt in the evaluation of projects are regularly and systematically made use of and
- staff as well as partners are encouraged and enabled to initiate improvements and are “rewarded” for positive results and evaluation-based learning.

Only then can evaluations have an impact on the organisation and trigger positive changes that ultimately benefit the target groups of activities. Mistakes and failures only become a problem if they occur twice. Impact-oriented evaluation seeks to avoid this.

The leitmotiv of impact-oriented evaluation:

Learning from success and failure, drawing conclusions from mistakes and constantly improving the effects of development co-operation with partners and target groups.

ANNEX 1 FURTHER READING AND SOURCES

- ALNAP (2001): Humanitarian Action: Learning from evaluation. ALNAP Annual Review Series 2001. London 2001
- ALNAP (2002): Humanitarian Action: Improving performance through improved learning. ALNAP Annual Review Series 2002. London 2002
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ANNEX 2 GLOSSARY

The Glossary below provides an overview of the terms used in the Concept Paper as well as a selection of further terms used in the context of evaluation. It is intended to form a common basis and a common understanding among all those involved in the evaluation of German Agro Action. Thus it contributes to a meaningful and good dialogue in this thematic field.

Effects = intended or unintended short and medium term changes due directly or indirectly to a development intervention.

Effectiveness = the extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved or are expected to be achieved. Effectiveness also refers to the extent to which effects or changes result from a development intervention.

Efficiency = the extent to which resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are economically converted to outputs and outcomes.

Evaluation = an appraisal that ought to be as systematic and objective as possible of a planned, ongoing or completed project, programme or policy and its design, implementation and results. In addition, evaluations may relate to certain instruments of development co-operation.

Ex-ante evaluations = evaluations carried out in the phase of project design and planning. They focus on a situation analysis (including an analysis of the project executing agency) and the project's feasibility. In this sense, project appraisals and feasibility studies can also be regarded as ex-ante evaluations.

Ex-post evaluation = an evaluation that is carried out immediately or long after completion of a project. It concentrates on factors of success and failure as well as lasting impacts and a project's sustainability.

External evaluation = an evaluation carried out by entities and/or persons belonging neither to the implementing nor to the donor organisation of the project.

Final evaluation = evaluation conducted at the end of a project phase or a project. It focuses on a project's outcomes and effects.

Formative evaluation = an evaluation that is carried out at an early stage of a project, programme or policy and is therefore above all oriented on actively designing the project and handling it as a process.

Impacts = intended or unintended, positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced either directly or indirectly by a development intervention.

Independent evaluations = evaluations conducted by entities and/or persons free of any control of those responsible for the design and implementation of development interventions. Independence implies freedom from political influence and organisational pressure. An independent evaluation is characterised by full access to information and full autonomy in carrying out investigations and reporting findings.

Instrument evaluations = evaluations assessing individual instruments such as GAA Country Concept Papers and Concept Papers and M&E systems of projects or programmes.

Interim evaluations = evaluations conducted in the course of the project – often roughly in the middle of implementation. They focus on a comparison of the actual situation with targets, the prospects of outcomes, and effects.

Internal evaluation = evaluation of a development intervention carried out by the entities and/or persons who are entrusted with the design and delivery of the project and report to the management of the implementing organisation, the partner or the donor organisation.

Joint evaluations = evaluations involving various donor organisations and or/partners. Their participation may be of varying intensity and relate to all types of evaluation.

Meta-evaluation = evaluation of the evaluation in which the quality of evaluation systems and/or the performance of evaluators are assessed. In addition, according to the DAC, the term also refers to evaluations designed to aggregate findings of a series of evaluations. In this sense, programme evaluations are also meta-evaluations.

Monitoring = a continuing process of data collection and data analysis in the course of a project.

Process evaluation = evaluation of the internal dynamics of implementing organisations, their policy instruments, their service delivery mechanisms, their management practices and the linkages among these aspects.

Programme evaluation = evaluation of a series of individual projects run by an organisation taking a specific issue into consideration. A sample of individual evaluations is used to this end that reflects this specific focus. Programme evaluations may relate to a country, a region, a continent or a field and/or priority area of assistance or specific topics such as gender and the relevance of projects to poverty.

Project evaluations = evaluations assessing individual projects according to relevant criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, significance, sustainability).

Relevance = extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities and partners' and donors' policies.

Self-evaluation: see internal evaluation.

Significance = extent to which a development measure has a widespread impact at sector or regional level, has a model character or can be repeated elsewhere. Another aspect that is assessed is whether and how it can contribute to the formation of structures and/or institution building.

Summary evaluation = evaluation that is carried out in a later phase of a project, policy or programme and therefore tends to be of a summary nature, focuses on outcomes and impacts and provides an overall assessment of the project.

Sustainability = the way and the extent to which the benefits a development measure has generated continue when external support has ended. Stockmann (1997) distinguishes between four dimensions of sustainability: **project-oriented sustainability** assesses whether and to what degree target groups and/or executing agencies continue with changes in their own interest, **output-/production-oriented sustainability** analyses whether and to what degree the target group and/or executing agency disposes of a structure enabling it to ensure a lasting benefit, **system-oriented sustainability** assesses whether and to what degree the innovation results in enhancing the performance of the system as a whole via diffusion processes, and **innovation-**

oriented sustainability evaluates whether and to what degree the target group or the executing agency disposes of an innovation potential provided by the development measures enabling an appropriate response to further changes.

ANNEX 3 PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORKING PAPERS

Concept Papers

- Orientierungsrahmen für die Förderung von Kleinkreditprojekten und Projekten mit Kleinkreditkomponenten, Bonn, September 1998 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Fachkonzept Förderungsprogramm für Kinder und Jugendliche (FKJ), Bonn, August 1999 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Fachkonzept Ländliche Entwicklung. Leitlinien für die Förderung von Projekten der Ländlichen Entwicklung, Bonn, Juli 2000 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Orientierungsrahmen für sozio-kulturelle Integration von marginalisierten Kindern und Jugendlichen, Bonn, Januar 2001 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Orientierungsrahmen für die Förderung von Kleinprojektefonds, Bonn, September 2001 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Orientierungsrahmen für Aktivitäten im Bereich HIV/AIDS in der Projektarbeit der Deutschen Welthungerhilfe, Bonn, September 2001 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Fachkonzept Wiederaufbau und Rehabilitierung, Bonn, Mai 2003 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)
- Fachkonzept Wirkungsorientierte Evaluation der Auslandsarbeit der Deutschen Welthungerhilfe, Bonn, Dezember 2003 (available in German, English, French and Spanish)

Country Concept Papers

- Landeskonzept Sudan. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2001, Bonn, November 1999 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Peru. 1999 - 2001, Bonn, Dezember 1999 (available in German and Spanish)
- Landeskonzept Haiti. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, Januar 2000 (available in German and French)
- Landeskonzept Kuba. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, April 2000 (available in German and Spanish)
- Landeskonzept Angola. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2001, Bonn, April 2000 (available in German and Portuguese)
- Landeskonzept Äthiopien. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, April 2000 (available in German and English)

- Landeskonzept Mali. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, Mai 2000 (available in German and French)
- Landeskonzept Indien. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, Mai 2000 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Ecuador. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, Juli 2000 (available in German and Spanish)
- Landeskonzept Bolivien. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, August 2000 (available in German and Spanish)
- Landeskonzept Burkina Faso. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, August 2000 (available in German and French)
- Landeskonzept Ruanda. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2000 - 2002, Bonn, Oktober 2000 (available in German, English and French)
- Landeskonzept Afghanistan. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2001 - 2003, Bonn, Mai 2001 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Benin. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2001 - 2003, Bonn, Juli 2001 (available in German and French)
- Landeskonzept Ghana. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2002 - 2003, Bonn, Dezember 2001 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Tadschikistan. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungsarbeit 2002 - 2004, Bonn, März 2002 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Philippinen. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungsarbeit 2002 - 2003, Bonn, März 2002 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Zimbabwe. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2002 - 2003, Bonn, März 2002 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Südafrika. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2002 - 2004, Bonn, Juli 2002 (available in German and English)
- Landeskonzept Madagaskar, Perspektiven für die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit 2003 – 2006, Bonn, November 2003
- Landeskonzept Mosambik. Perspektiven für die Entwicklungsarbeit 2003 – 2005, Bonn, Dezember 2003 (available in German and Portuguese)

Other working papers (as from 2003)

- Nachhaltigkeit von Projektwirkungen. Eine Auswertung von Wirkungsstudien DWHH-geförderter Projekte und Programme, Bonn, Mai 2003
- Prävention von sexuellem Missbrauch von Abhängigen in der Projektarbeit (includes English, French, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian version), Bonn, Juni 2003
- Livelihood System Analysis of Selected Villages in the Provinces Sar-e Pul and Jawzjan in North Afghanistan, Bonn, August 2003

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