



# Guidelines for Country and Regional Strategy Evaluations & Reviews of the Austrian Development Cooperation

## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for managing country and regional strategy evaluations/reviews for the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). Country and regional strategy evaluations/reviews are determined in the 2-Year Evaluation Plan of ADC.

The goal of country and regional strategy evaluations/reviews is to analyze the strategies which define the Austrian engagement in a particular country or region. Based on experience it has been noted that many evaluation/review questions for country and regional strategies can be standardized. But where perceived necessary questions can also be adapted. For the evaluation/review team it is also very helpful if the evaluation/review questions are formulated as precisely as possible and not too generic. This supports the team to have clarity what exactly the contractor actually wants to know.

A country and regional strategy evaluation/review can be conducted at mid-term and/or at end-term. This will depend on the purpose of the analysis.

## 2. Definitions

According to the OECD DAC, an evaluation is defined as:

*“The systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.”*

A review is defined by the OECD DAC as:

*“An assessment of the performance of an intervention, periodically or on an ad-hoc basis. Reviews are usually less comprehensive and/or in-depth than evaluations. They tend to emphasize operational aspects.”*

### 3. Objectives and Purpose

The **objectives** of country and regional strategy evaluations/reviews generally are:

- To assess the relevance and coherence of the Austrian development cooperation in regard to national or regional development priorities (including the sustainable development goals).
- To assess whether ADC and its partners reach the strategic objectives, effects and results in the country or region, as defined in the country or regional strategy and its related programs and projects. Also identify key factors which enhance or hinder performance, results and achievements.
- To appraise the efficiency of the strategic and operational steering mechanisms of the Cooperation Office and of ADC in general.
- To timely build the foundation for key elements of a new country or regional strategy or to provide an overview of the current status for the remaining period of the strategy.
- To identify good practices and innovative approaches in the relevant sectors/areas to support the priorities of the country.

The **purpose** of strategic evaluations/reviews is learning for better programming and implementation as well as for better accountability. Country or regional evaluations/reviews should support ADC's management, coordination offices, national and/or regional partners and relevant staff in their strategic and operational decision making as well as in coordination and implementation.

In the evaluation/review process itself a lot of **learning** takes place in form of reflections, exchange of information, sharing of different opinions & views and analyzing existing information and data.

Regarding **accountability**, country and regional strategy evaluations/reviews allow an account of the Austrian contribution, which is relevant for internal and external accountability.

### 4. Evaluation Criteria

All evaluations/reviews need to apply the OECD DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability).

The extent to which these criteria need to be considered will depend on the following aspects:

- What kind of information is required and what for? This will decide whether a review or a more complex evaluation is appropriate.
- Is it conducted at mid-term or at the end of the strategy?
- Are previous assessments/evaluations/reviews already available?

## 5. Evaluation/Review Questions

As stated above, the choice of questions will vary depending on the purpose of the review/evaluation, whether it is at mid-term or end-term and/or whether certain information is already available from previous assessments, evaluations and/or reviews.

Where a joint donor strategy exists it can be expected that evaluations/reviews are conducted jointly, evaluation and review questions will then need to be re-formulated accordingly.

**Evaluation/review questions as listed below can be complemented or deleted. Generally it is advisable to use the proposed wording.**

### Relevance

- How well does the country strategy or regional strategy and its strategic orientation, overall goal, thematic and geographical focus, cross-cutting issues, global challenges reflect the development priorities of the partner country/countries?
- How well does the country strategy or regional strategy already link to different SDGs as relevant for the partner country or region? If adaptations seem necessary, which ones are suggested?
- To which extent has the Austrian contribution enabled the partner government to achieve its goals and targets as outlined in the relevant National Plan or Regional Plan?
- If applicable: In view of the next National Development Plan and the priorities of other development partners: are the choices of sectors, themes and the geographical focus still relevant for the partner country?
- How do the Government, national counterparts and other development partners assess ADC's comparative strength? What is the value added of the Austrian contribution?
- Which important changes in the national or regional context haven't taken place within the implementation period that may have affected the implementation of the country or regional strategy? Which adaptations have already been made or might be needed in future?
- Are the ADC priorities as stated in the relevant Three Year Program on Austrian Development Policy (nexus approach, human rights based-approach, others) in line with those of the partner country? Are there any specific lessons learned?
- To what extent are the projects/program portfolio and its approaches relevant, coherent and appropriate for achieving the results of the country/regional strategy? If not, why not?

## **Effectiveness**

- To what extent has the country or regional strategy been implemented as planned?
- What were the major internal or external factors influencing aid performance and the achievement of the objectives and results?
- To what extent have the country or regional strategy and its projects/program portfolio already achieved its stated objectives and results, or are most likely to achieve them?
- How effective was the participation of ADC in the policy dialogue in achieving the strategy's objectives and results?
- Which contributions of the Austrian Cooperation are more visible than others and why?
- Are there any good practices and innovative approaches that should be shared with other sectors, other partners or could be potentially be scaled up? If so, which ones and why?
- How effective have the monitoring system of the country or regional strategy and the monitoring of its projects/program portfolio been? Is sufficient data/information available in order to account for results and take decisions? Are indicators perceived as being realistic, specific enough and gender sensitive?
- How effective and useful are the different ADC aid modalities and financial tools as stated in the country or regional strategy? How coherent are the different financial tools, were synergies created?
- To what extent have crosscutting issues (gender, environment) been considered and applied in the country or regional strategy and its project/program portfolio?
- How effective is the donor coordination at national and, where applicable, at local level? How is the Austrian role perceived by the donor community and by the partner government?

## **Efficiency**

- How efficiently has the portfolio of ADC been managed with regard to the financial and human resources available?

## **Sustainability**

- How sustainable are the Austrians interventions? What will happen if Austrian funding will cease? If applicable: to what extent is an exit strategy useful?

## **Impact**

- How many people (women, men, girls, boys) have already benefitted from the Austrian projects/program portfolio? How have their lives been improved already? To which extent are supported institutions already benefitting people?

## 6. Evaluation/Review Process

The management and implementation of evaluations and reviews require certain tasks and involvement. This is an overview of the most important steps:

| Evaluation Step   | Tasks   | Responsibility   | Duration   |
|---|---|--|--|
| See 2-year evaluation plan - Country or Regional Strategy | Select country or regional strategy to be evaluated/reviewed in the next year   | ADA/MFA Units of Evaluation and Dept. of Programmes & Projects International |  |
| Establishment of a Reference Group                        | Establish a reference group which manages the entire evaluation/ review process<br><br><u>Consist of:</u> ADA & MFA Units of Evaluation together with relevant staff from MFA, ADA, other ministries, and coordination office by choice, and others | ADA/MFA Units of Evaluation  |  |
| Terms of Reference (ToR),                                 | Develop draft ToR based on strategic documents, reports, etc. and identify questions based on this guidance note, where applicable  | Reference Group, ADA Unit of Evaluation                                      | Depending on clarity of assignment two or three meetings and 2-3 days for developing draft ToR |
| Finalization of ToR and                                   | Finalize ToR and develop a budget   | ADA Unit of Evaluation   | 2-3 days   |

|                                       |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| preparation of budget plan            | plan   |  |  |
| External tender or direct procurement | Prepare documents for tender   | ADA Unit of Evaluation                   | Depending on scope and type of procurement 3 days or more  |
| Selection of consultants              | Analyze and assess concept notes or technical officers, CVs & costs                        | Reference Group                          | Depending on number of proposals and scope of offers, 1-2 days or more for each member. Compilation of assessments 1 day |
| Contract Management                   | Administer contract  | ADA Unit of Evaluation                   | Up to 10 days  |
| Kick-off workshop                     | Organize and participate in kick-off workshop. Organize first interviews                   | ADA Unit of Evaluation, Reference Group  | Including preparation of meeting(s) 2-3 days   |
| Data and information Collection       | Identify necessary documents, reports, data etc. for the consultants                       | Reference Group and others, if necessary | Depending on structure of filing system up to 3 days for each member   |
| Draft Inception Report (IR)           | Participation in IR workshop, organize, conduct interviews, provide feedback               | Reference Group, ADA Unit of Evaluation  | Organization and participation 2-3 days, reading and feedback 1-2 days for each member, compilation 1 day                |
| Final Inception Report                | Conduct quality control whether or not feedback was included and officially approve report | ADA Unit of Evaluation                   | Half a day   |
| Field Missions                        | Conduct field mission and de-briefing session in coordination office                       | Consultants, Coordination Offices        | Depending on the assignment 7 to 14 days, preparation time extra   |
| Final Draft Report                    | Submit final draft report to ADA Unit  | Consultants,                             | 1-2 days to read report & provide  |

|  | of Evaluation  | Reference Group  | feedback - for each member   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Final Draft Report Presentation            | Organize presentation, present final draft report  | ADA/MFA Units of Evaluation, Consultants, Reference Group, relevant stakeholders | 1-2 days   |
| Feedback                                   | Collect feedback for final draft report from stakeholders and send to consultants  | ADA Unit of Evaluation   | Depending on scope 1-2 days  |
| Final Report publication and dissemination | Conduct quality control whether or not feedback was included, approve final report, disseminate final report accordingly | ADA/MFA Units of Evaluation, ADA Unit Public Relations                           | Depending on scope 1 -2 days   |
| Management Response                        | Elaborate management response matrix. Follow-up once a year  | ADA Unit of Evaluation, Reference Group, relevant stakeholders                   | Several meetings until first draft is available and follow-up meetings |

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