UK Independent Commission for Aid Impact â?? Work Plan

Description

Tweet

Independent Commission for Aid Impact â?? Work Plan, and the associated Press Release (12 May 2011)

1. This document introduces the Independent Commission for Aid Impactâ??s first work plan, setting out the reports we envisage initiating over the next three years, from May 2011 to May 2014.

2. Our mandate permits us to examine all UK Government programmes funded by Official Development Assistance expenditure. In 20091, this represented Â£7.4bn, which was spent through bilateral, joint and multilateral processes by the Department for International Development (DFID) and at least eight other branches of Government. Under the Governmentâ??s current plans and guided by its recent reviews of bilateral, multilateral and humanitarian work, this expenditure is due to rise significantly and will change in focus. This range of projects and programmes gives us significant discretion in choosing where to focus the attention of our reports.â?• ..continues..

See also: FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID) AND THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION FOR AID IMPACT (ICAI) This document sets out the broad framework within which the ICAI will operate as a permanent body (12 May 2011 â?? 11 May 2015). The Agreement is signed by the Chief Commissioner of the ICAI and DFID. This document, and any future revisions, will be made public on the ICAI website.

[**RD Comments:** The workplan has three strands of work:

- Evaluations: are likely to focus on the sustainable development impact achieved by programmes against initial or updated objectives
- Value for money reviews: will consider whether objectives have been achieved with the optimal use of resources
- Investigations: could range from general fact-finding in response to external requests, to assessments of compliance with legal and policy responsibilities and examinations of alleged corruption cases.

Regarding the first strand, the OECD DAC definition of impact is â??Positive and negative, primary and secondary *long-term* effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.â?• One practical way of defining long term would be as any change observed after the completion of a project (typically 3 years). This would seem to be an appropriate focus for the ICAI because in the past DFID has undertaken very few ex-post evaluations. There is a gap here that needs to be addressed, as there is with quite a few other bilateral agencies.

A further justification lies in the useful connection with value for money reviews. Some organisations, like Global Environmental Facility, define impact as â??A fundamental and *durable* change in the condition of people and their environment brought about by the projectâ?• in other words, a *sustained*

change. The longer a change is sustained (all other things being equal) the more value for money would seem to have been realised. Assessing impact in the short term (i.e. during the project implementation period) risks understating impact and the associated value for money.

The question that then arises in my mind is to what extent will the ICAI program of evaluations be focused on projects that have been completed, versus those which are still being implemented. I will be asking the ICAI if they could provide an answer, for example in the form of the percentage of completed versus incompleted projects to be examined in each of the 8 evaluations to be undertaken in year 1]

PS 24 May 2011: See also Howard Whiteâ??s related question about the ICAIâ??s use of ex-post and ex-ante evaluations. There he seems to be arguing against ex-post evaluations: â??*There is a question as to whether the commission restricts itself to ex-post evaluations, done once the intervention is being implemented or completed. Or can it engage in ex-ante designs before the intervention has started? Designing the evaluation prior to the launch of a programme, and collecting baseline data, generally delivers more robust findings*.â?•

This seems like the method tail wagging the programme development dog. Or, looking for a lost wallet under a lamppost.The potential for rigour should not determine what gets evaluated. What gets evaluated should be decided by more strategic considerations. Like the fact that we know very little about the long term effects of most development projects (where long term = after the project interevention ceases).

Category

1. Uncategorized

Tags

1. DFID
2. ICAI

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