

Evaluation of EC Support for Statistics in Third Countries – ref. 1059

Abstract

The EC support for Statistics over the period 1996-2005 has contributed to improve the capacity of the statistical institutions in partner countries, in transferring of know-how and training of human resources. Nevertheless, few projects have addressed the legal, regulatory and organisational framework of partner's statistical systems and few explicitly addressed the awareness of the statistical importance for evidence-based decision-making; consequently outcomes remain limited. Moreover, the sustainability of the progress achieved remains very fragile.

Subject of the evaluation

This evaluation analyses and assesses the results of EC supported actions in the field of Statistical Projects and Programmes (SPP) during the period 1996-2005. It also covers those budgetary aid programmes in which a statistical component was included. The geographical areas concerned are the ACP, Mediterranean (MEDA), Asian and Latin American (ALA) and TACIS regions.

Purpose

The purpose of the evaluation is to analyse and assess the results delivered by the SPP. It is a forward-looking evaluation and a major objective is to provide guidance for improving current practice in programming, designing and implementing SPP. It is also intended to contribute to the accountability of the external cooperation programmes.

Methodology

The evaluation is based on nine evaluation questions, relating to four DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability), the coordination and complementarities to partners' strategies and other bilateral and multilateral interventions and, finally, cross-cutting issues (environment, gender and good governance). It was carried out in 3 phases: (i) desk, (ii) field and (iii) synthesis. Seven countries have been visited: Burkina Faso, Egypt, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Ukraine and Zambia. The assessment has been centred on an analysis of a sample of 29 SPP actions covering all the areas concerned.

Main conclusions

- (1) **Nearly all projects in Statistics were relevant.** Three kinds of weaknesses were however observed:
 - Insufficient account of the country's statistical situation;
 - Low linkages between the objectives of the statistical support and those of the cooperation and development strategies agreed with the Partner country;
 - Lack of activities addressing the complementarities and interdependence of statistical information and policy decision-making.

- (2) Regarding identification, programming and design of statistical interventions, **the approach used was adequate.** The reasons for selecting regional or bilateral channels were clear and justified in terms of economies of scale and good results in terms of harmonisation, comparability and exchange of methods and data.

- (3) The systematic recourse to the technical competence of **Eurostat was very beneficial in terms of quality**. Notwithstanding significant achievements, the outcomes remained limited in terms of the information used by decision-makers, while also the sustainability of progress made remains fragile.
- (4) The EC-supported SPP generated **substantial results** and contributed to **important improvements to the capacity of the statistical institutions and to the transfer of professional know-how and training of human resources**. Nevertheless, few of them have addressed the legal, regulatory and organisational framework of the Partner country's statistical systems; similarly, only a few explicitly addressed the awareness of their importance for evidence-based decision-making.

Main recommendations

- (1) It is necessary to include systematically, in the design and implementation of SPP, **activities promoting the emergence of a culture of evidence-based decision-making**.
- (2) Identification of statistical support actions should be based on a **triple assessment** of :
 - The country's statistical situation;
 - Information needs linked to the cooperation objectives;
 - The components of the institutional statistical system in need of strengthening, with a view to improving “evidence-based policy” in the various areas of cooperation.
- (3) To assist the Commission Services in the dialogue they engage in with partners on preparation of statistical interventions, it is useful to produce **guidelines and checklists** on how to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the statistical system of the partner country in relation to the information needs of the priority policies.
- (4) In the design and implementation of SPP, it is important to **commit sufficient financial, technical and human resources** to ensure **a smooth transition after project completion** as well as to **maximise sustainability of the expected results**.

Donor: European Commission	Region: ACP	DAC sectors: various
Evaluation type: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Sustainability.	Date of report: February 2007	Subject of evaluation: support for Statistics in Third Countries - thematic
Language: English	N° vol. /pages: 2 volumes (or 1 vol. +1 disk.).	Author: ADE