

INFORMATION DOCUMENT

Evaluation in the Development Cooperation Activities of MISEREOR and its Partners

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Introduction: Why do we need new evaluation guidelines?

MISEREOR has long viewed evaluation as a subject of fundamental importance and has been conducting evaluations for many years. We commissioned an independent evaluation group to carry out our first evaluations in 1968. At the beginning of the 1990s, the working guide “Evaluations in the Churches’ Development Cooperation” (*Evaluierung in der kirchlichen Entwicklungsarbeit*) set out the position of Church-based aid agencies (MISEREOR, Bread for the World and the Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development). In 2006, MISEREOR set out its current approach to evaluations (and consultancy assignments) in its Evaluation and Consultancy Concept.

Throughout this extended period, MISEREOR has followed specific principles in its evaluation work, and these will continue to play a decisive role.

- MISEREOR works with independent partner organisations in the South and values these as equals. MISEREOR takes their interests and concerns seriously and endeavours to form partnerships that support the partners in their own development. This makes an important contribution to strengthening civil society in the South.
- At the centre of MISEREOR’s work are the poor with all aspects of their human existence. MISEREOR aims to foster complex and long-term development processes in individuals and communities. The short-term project and support logic adopted in our work on the ground is necessary for administrative reasons and often helpful in achieving objectives. However, wherever this hinders the development of more complex processes, responsible compromises must be sought. In all evaluations, it is important to examine these processes too, and not to focus solely on superficial project documentation tasks.
- MISEREOR endeavours to use the scarce resources provided by donors, the state and the Church as effectively as possible. The more money is spent on evaluations, the less is available for project implementation. Funding for evaluations must therefore be allocated such that it contributes to highly effective project implementation.

In recent years, the evaluation debate has taken on greater urgency at international level, in German development cooperation and at MISEREOR. The following factors have been influential in this respect:

- The formulation of the Millennium Development Goals focused attention on the effectiveness of international development cooperation.
- The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness ushered in a practice in which examination and verification of intended changes play a major role. This has become standard practice throughout the development cooperation field.
- Changes to the federal budget regulations have affected the specific performance assessment requirements under German law governing allocations of public funds, and this has a direct impact on the bodies that receive funding from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), one of which is MISEREOR.

- The **system analysis** *Evaluation in German Development Cooperation*¹ has set out clear quality standards for development cooperation evaluations.

What does this mean for MISEREOR?

Prompted in part by its **long-term interest in reflecting on impact**², in 2005 MISEREOR started taking a more effects-based approach to its own processes. The aim was to identify more systematically the changes that occurred in poor people's lives through the projects supported by MISEREOR. At the same time, BMZ expected evaluations to be applied more systematically as a performance-assessment instrument. These two factors have driven the development of MISEREOR's evaluation procedures.

This development is set out in the present guidelines. Our aim is that

- staff at MISEREOR have a common understanding of the role of evaluations as a project-support and performance-assessment instrument, and they are able to communicate this to our partner organisations in the South;
- we can communicate our expectations to the consultants we commission to conduct evaluations;
- we can clearly demonstrate to our donors (individual and institutional, especially BMZ) how we use evaluations to ensure the effective use of funds and how we maintain an appropriate balance between the costs and benefits of evaluations;
- we have a basis on which to discuss the role of evaluations in (Church-based) development cooperation with interested professionals and other development cooperation organisations.

Chapter 1: What is the purpose of evaluations at MISEREOR?

MISEREOR understands evaluations as comprehensive, systematic and intersubjectively verifiable assessments of ongoing or completed development projects, instruments or strategies. They examine the design, implementation and effects of development measures, assess them in terms of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and make concrete recommendations.

1.1 Evaluations as a learning instrument: focus on quality improvements

At MISEREOR, evaluations have long been used for the purposes of learning and quality development in international cooperation. They help us identify improvement potentials in the implementation of individual projects, in our strategic orientation and in the hands-on cooperation between MISEREOR and its partner organisations. It is intended that evaluations continue to fulfil this important function at MISEREOR.

¹ Axel Borrmann, Reinhard Stockmann, *Evaluation in German Development Cooperation*, Waxmann, Münster, 2009

² See for example Hermann Dolzer, Martin Dütting, Doris Galinski, Lutz R. Meyer, Peter Rottländer, *Wirkungen und Nebenwirkungen* (effects and side effects), MISEREOR Medienproduktion und Vertriebsgesellschaft, Aachen, 1998

In terms of the cost-effective use of funding, it is essential that this instrument (which on average costs as much as one of MISEREOR's many effective "small projects") helps generate positive effects itself and is not confined to examining and documenting them. MISEREOR will therefore continue to organise its evaluation work in order to generate maximum benefit for all participants (partner organisations³, target groups and MISEREOR itself) as learning organisations.

Other expectations, for example aiming for maximum comparability of evaluation results, broad-based cooperation between donors and maximum transparency, are also important, but pursued only in as far as they do not stand in the way of achieving quality improvements in our work.

In order to harness the potential of evaluations to initiate and foster learning processes, MISEREOR has found it especially helpful if the project stakeholders are actively involved. They then have the chance to find out for themselves what needs to be improved and how this could be done; this promotes effective learning. In other words, a good evaluation not only assesses development efforts but also makes a contribution to development.

1.2 Evaluations as an instrument in the performance assessment and accountability system

In addition to the quality considerations mentioned above, it is also appropriate that greater emphasis is now placed on accountability in development cooperation. In recent years, MISEREOR has developed its evaluation system so that it – along with several other instruments – is more geared towards performance assessment and accountability. For example:

- There are clear criteria for determining when project evaluations must be conducted (see chapter 3). These evaluations are then commissioned either by the partner organisations or directly by MISEREOR. In both cases, the evaluations are carried out by external consultants.
- Evaluations commissioned by the partner organisations are recorded in MISEREOR's evaluation system. Minimum implementation standards are set out in a guideline for partner organisations. We plan to conduct quality reviews of these evaluations at regular intervals.
- For several years, we have required that evaluations always examine the effects of project work.
- Regular sector evaluations examine the strategies and effects in a complete area of promotion. In these evaluations, the projects are randomly selected; ex-post evaluations are also carried out.
- Since 1995, MISEREOR has published its evaluation results in an annual evaluation report.

1.3 The individual purposes of evaluation

MISEREOR does not itself implement projects in the South, but supports the projects of independent and, in most cases, local partner organisations, generally within the framework of three-year project contracts. MISEREOR does, however, operate some individual projects in

³ The term 'partner organisations' in this paper refers to organisations in the South which, as independent legal entities, plan and implement projects self-reliantly and receive financial support from MISEREOR for this purpose.

the area of partner support and capacity building, for example in dialogue and liaison offices in a number of countries in the South, or as programmes for short-term consultants who advise partner organisations on various topics on a needs-driven basis. In addition, some of MISEREOR's Domestic Activities Departments also have their own projects.

For this reason, we have to distinguish between various evaluation levels and actors. In the following, we will outline the different types of evaluation and group these according to the four evaluation purposes defined by Stockmann – monitoring, accountability, steering and learning⁴. Evaluations do not generally have one single purpose, however, but pursue a mix of all four with different weightings attached to the individual elements.

- a) Partner organisations in the South commission consultants to evaluate the projects they are implementing with MISEREOR support.

Partner organisations in the South have always commissioned external evaluations. However, until today these were not considered part of MISEREOR's evaluation system. Since the beginning of 2010, partner organisations have been required to commission such evaluations as a matter of course; they are documented at MISEREOR and assessed at regular intervals. MISEREOR uses these evaluations primarily for the purposes of monitoring and accountability; for the partner organisations they are also intended wherever possible to support steering and learning processes.

- b) MISEREOR commissions consultants to evaluate projects implemented by independent partner organisations with MISEREOR support (individual projects or cross-section evaluations).

These evaluations form part of the ongoing flanking support provided by MISEREOR. They are conducted as and when required, for example to gather reliable and independent data as a basis for further flanking support or to examine and to further develop strategies at MISEREOR. In most cases, another essential aim is to encourage quality development at the project implementing organisation. In individual evaluations, the primary focus is on promoting steering capability and learning at the partner organisation; in cross-section evaluations, on learning at MISEREOR and on accountability, for example with regard to a particular promotional approach.

- c) MISEREOR commissions consultants to evaluate its own activities, which can include dialogue and liaison offices in the South or promotional programmes and procedures at head office.

These evaluations are a steering tool as well as an instrument for enhancing steering capability, for improving in-house quality and for fulfilling accountability obligations.

⁴ Stockmann, Reinhard (Hg.) (2007: 37): *Handbuch zur Evaluation. Eine praktische Handlungsanleitung* (handbook on evaluation – a practical guide), Waxmann, Münster

Chapter 2: Actors involved in evaluation in MISEREOR's international cooperation activities and the quality assurance function performed by EQM

2.1 MISEREOR's approach in international cooperation

Within the framework of its international cooperation activities, MISEREOR provides technical and financial support to independent and in most cases local partner organisations in implementing their projects⁵. Flanking support for these measures takes the form of regular correspondence and telephone calls, the examination of narrative and financial reports, and project visits. Moreover, when needed MISEREOR also offers intensive support through consultancy inputs and evaluations.

The flanking support for partners and projects is provided through MISEREOR's three continental divisions (Africa, Asia and Latin America) by staff with specific regional and sectoral expertise and officers responsible for financial cooperation.

The Evaluation and Quality Management Section (EQM) (1) sets the standards for MISEREOR's evaluation work, (2) ensures compliance with these standards, (3) commissions independent consultants to conduct evaluations and provide advisory inputs, and (4) helps MISEREOR maintain an effects-based approach in its international cooperation work.

2.2 Actors involved in evaluation in MISEREOR's international cooperation

The continental departments: The continental departments maintain direct contact with the partner organisations in the South. They call on the partner organisations to conduct their own evaluations, or they initiate joint evaluations. The departments inform EQM of the need for evaluation.

In the evaluation process, the continental departments are responsible for communication with the partner organisations in the South, ensuring in particular that the necessary steps are taken to implement evaluation recommendations. In-house learning is an important aspect of these evaluations.

Partner organisations in the South: The projects supported by MISEREOR are implemented by independent partner organisations. These are either regional or local legal entities of the Catholic Church (dioceses, orders, bishops' conferences etc.) or non-governmental organisations. As project implementation organisations, they are, among other elements, the object of evaluations and at the same time in many cases the party commissioning the evaluation.

The beneficiaries: The partner organisations work together with the project target groups or beneficiaries. These are either the poor themselves, i.e. those who are ultimately intended to benefit from the project, or intermediaries who are to acquire particular skills or attitudes and perspectives that will benefit the poor. The direct target groups of the project are important participants in evaluations, as they know a great deal about the effects of the project work, and their assessments are crucial to the success of the project.

It follows that there are two aspects to participation: It can mean that the *partner organisation* is specifically involved in the evaluation or that the *target groups* are especially closely integrated. Both forms of participation are encouraged by MISEREOR. In the first case, MISEREOR

⁵ Currently around 3,900 projects in 97 countries (as at March 2010)

hopes that the partner organisation gains particular insights into the opportunities and need for project improvement and develops the ideas and initiative that will help drive this forward. In the second case, the ideal scenario is that the evaluation itself serves as an awareness-raising measure: the poor reflect on what was supposed to change and what actually has changed, and who should contribute what in order to ensure that the intended change comes about. However, experience shows that a high level of target-group participation in the evaluation is only possible when the project has already embraced a highly participatory approach. If this is not the case, the role of the target group is often relegated to that of providing information.⁶

External consultants: Only those evaluations in which independent consultants are involved count as part of MISEREOR's evaluation framework. In most cases the consultants have an independent evaluation contract. In some cases these contracts are for advisory inputs within the framework of assisted self-evaluations, in which the partner organisation assumes the main responsibility for collecting and assessing data (see also p. 13).⁷

MISEREOR currently has almost 800 consultants and consulting firms in its database, more than 200 of whom live outside Europe (as at March 2010). To help find suitable consultants for each evaluation, the database entries include keywords relating to the consultants' training/education, regional and sectoral experience, language and methodological skills. Up to 50 new consultants are added to the database each year.

The Evaluation and Quality Management Section (EQM) at MISEREOR: EQM is part of MISEREOR's International Cooperation Division and reports directly to the Member of the Board of Directors in charge of International Cooperation. It has its own fund for financing consultancy assignments, for example evaluations, advisory inputs and studies.

Evaluation and Quality Management

- develops evaluation policies and guidelines
- draws up annual evaluation plans
- commissions external evaluators
- undertakes the overall steering and coordination of evaluation processes
- provides support for individual evaluations and designs and implements cross-section evaluations
- documents evaluations internally and for the public, and
- organises learning processes based on evaluation results as and when required.

2.3 Quality assurance tasks undertaken by EQM

EQM not only provides organisational support for the other participants but in particular guarantees the quality of the evaluation system. We will explain this using the DAC⁸ and DeGEval⁹ quality criteria.

⁶ See Annex 1 for information on minimum standards on participation, accuracy and credibility

⁷ Self-evaluations (conducted without any involvement of an external consultant) are also valued and supported by MISEREOR as a steering and learning instrument. As they are of only limited benefit in terms of accountability and monitoring, they are employed in the context of ongoing flanking support but are not included in MISEREOR's evaluation system

⁸ Development Assistance Committee of the OECD

⁹ *Gesellschaft für Evaluation e. V.* (Evaluation Society, www.degeval.de>DeGEval Standards)

The DAC evaluation principles are impartiality and independence, credibility, usefulness, and participation of donors and recipients. The DeGEval standards are organised into four groups: utility, feasibility, propriety and accuracy.

Impartiality and independence

- EQM operates independently of the groups/units at MISEREOR responsible for pre- and post-approval project processing. It reports directly to management and has its own budget for implementing independent evaluations.
- EQM ensures that independent consultants are commissioned to undertake evaluations. To this purpose, EQM maintains a consultant database. As a matter of principle, persons who have already worked as advisors in a project will not be given evaluation assignments in the same project. In order to avoid dependencies, MISEREOR does not commission external consultants to undertake more than 100 days of work per year. A set of guidelines produced by EQM explains how to ensure the independence of the consultants commissioned by the partner organisation to carry out evaluations.
- EQM coordinates the overall evaluation process and ensures, for example in the preparatory and debriefing discussions, that no influence is brought to bear on the evaluation results.

Credibility and accuracy

- EQM ensures that the consultants have the necessary technical and methodological know-how, country knowledge, and the requisite language and soft skills.
- EQM ensures that the DAC evaluation criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability) are taken into account in the terms of reference.
- EQM discusses the methodological approach with the consultants and examines the quality of the evaluation report. A set of guidelines informs consultants about minimum methodological and reporting standards.¹⁰
- EQM ensures the transparency of the evaluation processes through systematic documentation and the publication of its evaluation guidelines and the annual evaluation report.

Usefulness and feasibility

- EQM ensures that individual terms of reference are produced for each evaluation. These must take adequate account of the need for information on the part of the participants – especially of MISEREOR as donor and the partner organisations as project implementing organisations.
- In each individual case, EQM clarifies the methodological approach and the evaluation timeframe in order to ensure that the questions set out in the terms of reference can be adequately addressed and that the costs of the evaluation are commensurate with the development tasks under review.
- Evaluation reports are always produced in the partner's usual business language in order to enable the partner organisation to reap the full benefits of the report. EQM ensures that the evaluation reports are produced promptly and are accessible to all stakeholders.

¹⁰ See Annex 1

- EQM ensures that partner organisations are integrated into the evaluation, at least to an extent that enables them to understand and utilise the evaluation results. Introductory and debriefing workshops held with the partner organisation at the beginning and the end of the on-site evaluation work have proven useful in this respect.
- Evaluations are generally conducted during the project implementation phase so that the recommendations for improving project work can be immediately applied.

Participation and propriety

- EQM ensures that the partner organisations contribute to drawing up the terms of reference, that the consultants select a suitable participatory procedure, and that the evaluation report is in line with the propriety principle, i.e. that the strengths and weaknesses are presented in a balanced way and that various perspectives are considered.
- EQM ensures that the rights of individuals are protected and that the evaluation results are treated confidentially if the partner organisation so desires.
- After completion of the evaluation, EQM always asks the partner organisation to provide feedback on the evaluation process.

Chapter 3: The evaluation system in MISEREOR's work in the field of international cooperation

MISEREOR's international cooperation evaluation system includes all evaluations carried out in the field of international cooperation that are utilised to promote quality development and to meet accountability obligations. Evaluations of the Domestic Activities and Finance and Administration Divisions are not presented here as they are not part of EQM remit and to some extent employ different procedures (e.g. in internal auditing and quality management or in reviewing the effectiveness of PR work and fund-raising activities). In individual cases, EQM supports other MISEREOR departments in evaluating specific tasks or projects implemented in Germany.

The international cooperation evaluation system

	Individual evaluations	Overarching evaluations
Commissioned by MISEREOR / EQM	Individual project evaluations commissioned by EQM (incl. assisted self-evaluations) Bundled evaluations ¹¹	Cross-section evaluations Instrument evaluations Sector evaluations
Commissioned by other bodies	Locally commissioned external evaluations (incl. assisted self-evaluations)	Instrument evaluations by BMZ Inclusion of MISEREOR projects in

¹¹ At MISEREOR, we use the term bundled evaluations (as opposed to cross-section evaluations) when several evaluations, for organisational reasons, are conducted by the same evaluation team, possibly as part of the same mission without addressing overarching questions

	Evaluations of cofinanced projects commissioned by other donors	BMZ sectoral or regional evaluations
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Within the framework of this evaluation system, evaluations are carried out each year on at least 10% of the projects supported through public funding and of the projects in excess of EUR 100,000 funded through donations.

3.1 Individual project evaluations

3.1.1 Individual evaluations conducted as and when required: joint evaluations undertaken by the partner organisation and MISEREOR

Within the framework of ongoing project support, it is from time to time expedient to discuss the strategic orientation of the project work, the effectiveness of the selected approaches and the quality of the implementation activities. This applies, for example, after a lengthy and continuous period of support, if the underlying conditions have changed, or if there have been personnel changes. In these situations, evaluations provide a reliable and shared informational basis for realigning the partner's project work and the support provided by MISEREOR.

The initial impetus for such evaluations is mostly provided by MISEREOR, but ever more frequently by partner organisations that would like to have a joint assessment of the progress achieved to date. The continental departments report the need for such evaluations to EQM.

The terms of reference are drawn up for each specific case and agreed between MISEREOR and the partner organisation. This is intended to ensure that the need for information on both sides is adequately taken into account. EQM ensures that the DAC evaluation criteria are taken into account and in particular that the effects of previous project work are kept in view (see annex 2, specimen structure for evaluations).

As a rule, an evaluation team of two persons is assigned in such cases. EQM generally commissions a consultant who lives in Germany or Europe; the partner organisation generally commissions a consultant from the project country. The two work as a team and should complement each other in terms of areas of expertise and their individual perspectives. If possible, the team should comprise one woman and one man. The consultant commissioned by MISEREOR is responsible for reporting. For such evaluations, an inception report¹² is to be provided only if the methodology is especially sophisticated, e.g. in the field of effects assessments.

Joint evaluations generally begin with preliminary talks and a study of the files/documentation at head office by the consultant commissioned by MISEREOR. The local consultant may at the same time study the documentation kept by the partner organisation. The joint field phase, which generally takes between two and three weeks, commences with a kick-off workshop with the partner organisation. Data is sourced from the on-site documentation and also collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and on-site visits etc. In many cases, participatory methods and tools are employed. The consultant team undertakes

¹² Report on evaluation design and methodology

the initial data analysis and makes preliminary recommendations on site. In a concluding workshop, which is sometimes attended by MISEREOR staff, the results and recommendations are presented to and checked for plausibility with the partner organisation. In most cases, initial ideas on implementing the recommendations are also discussed at this stage. The consultant commissioned by MISEREOR generally draws up the evaluation report on completion of the field phase. The local consultant contributes individual chapters as agreed. The evaluation report is always produced in the usual business language of the partner organisation, so that it can use the findings to improve the quality of its own work.

The European consultant takes part in a final debriefing meeting at MISEREOR which serves to shed light on unresolved questions, to accept the report and to explore possible follow-up activities. This meeting is also attended by regional and possibly sectoral officers from the continental departments and the responsible officer from EQM.

EQM then records, examines and assesses the report and if appropriate records the lessons learned in MISEREOR's electronic project administration system. The responsible officers in the continental departments forward the final report to the partner organisation and then discuss with this organisation how to implement the recommendations. EQM asks the partner organisation for feedback on the evaluation process and requests approval to make the report available to externals.

These evaluations are financed out of the evaluation and consulting fund managed by EQM.

A joint evaluation can also be conducted in the form of an assisted self-evaluation. In this case, the consultants act as facilitators and advisors: they provide methodological support, ensure that critical reflection takes place and contribute their external perspective. Such self-evaluation processes are especially valuable in terms of quality improvement potential. Weaknesses in project implementation are often pinpointed with greater acuity by staff rather than through external evaluations. These self-evaluations are recognised as part of MISEREOR's evaluation system as long as they include an independent section drafted by the external consultant.

3.1.2 Individual evaluations conducted according to specific criteria – especially locally commissioned external evaluations

In order to ensure that projects are systematically selected for evaluation, special rules apply to projects financed out of public funds and to projects funded through donations with approved funding in excess of EUR 100,000. An evaluation is to be undertaken during the funding period if one of the following criteria applies:

- The approved funding period is five years or more.
- The project support remains essentially unchanged in the third funding period.
- A grant of more than EUR 500,000 is approved in the phase under review.
- The measure is an individual project of special significance, e.g.
 - an innovative project, a pilot or model project
 - a project with particularly broad impact (especially trans-continental projects)
 - a project being implemented in a clearly risk-prone environment

In these cases, at least a locally commissioned external evaluation must be conducted. This means that the partner organisation is required under the project contract to conduct an evaluation during the funding period and in so doing must observe the *Guide for MISEREOR Partner Organisations on Commissioning External Evaluations Locally* (<http://www.misereor.org/en/cooperation-and-service/evaluation.html>) which explains, for example, how to ensure the independence of the consultants under contract and what questions the evaluation is to address (in particular the DAC evaluation criteria relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability).

Here, it is the task of the continental departments at MISEREOR to check that the evaluation takes place and that MISEREOR receives the evaluation report. This is then recorded in the electronic programme administration system. The results of the evaluations are channelled into the routine project support activities.

Locally commissioned evaluations are financed out of the project funding made available to the partner organisation.

Joint evaluations can of course also be planned for projects that have to be evaluated in accordance with the stipulated criteria. In this case, the procedure described in section 3.1.1 applies.

3.1.3 Joint evaluations undertaken by several donors

In projects that are cofinanced by other aid organisations, evaluations are sometimes jointly organised. If MISEREOR is coordinating the evaluation, it adopts the procedure described in section 3.1.1 in consultation with the other donors. If one of the other aid organisations is responsible for coordination, MISEREOR participates in drawing up the terms of reference and in selecting the consultants; in most cases the cofinancing is also arranged through the EQM fund. These evaluations are also recorded in the electronic project administration system.

3.2 Overarching evaluations

3.2.1 Overarching evaluations conducted as and when required

Apart from individual evaluations, MISEREOR also organises cross-section evaluations on specific sectors and themes when there is a need for cross-cutting knowledge and information, for example as a basis for examining the strategic orientation of project work. In such cases, the terms of reference are often drawn up without the participation of the partner, as the need for information lies with MISEREOR¹³. Depending on the particular need for information, the projects can be hand-picked (projects with particular characteristics about which one would like to know more), selected randomly (possibly using stratified sampling techniques), or selected on the basis of a restricted population (e.g. vocational training projects in country x).

As a rule, cross-section evaluations are undertaken by a consultant team of two or more persons, at least one of whom should be from the country in which the evaluation is being conducted. Here, MISEREOR generally commissions the local consultants as well. In multi-country

¹³ Or the terms of reference contain a general section drawn up by MISEREOR and an individual section drawn up in consultation with the respective partner organisations

evaluations, local consultants are sometimes not included in the evaluation team for reasons of practicality.

EQM also organises, commissions and finances these evaluations. Since 2009 it has been standard practice in these cases to produce an inception report. As a rule, after the completion of cross-section evaluations, follow-up sessions are held at MISEREOR to promote the process of learning from the evaluation results; if requested, EQM will organise this.

3.2.2 Instrument evaluations

Examinations of the instruments of promotion¹⁴ used by MISEREOR are undertaken either to meet specific needs or when required in accordance with the criteria listed in section 3.1.2. EQM draws up the terms of reference in consultation with the other stakeholders, commissions the consultants and supports the data collection process at MISEREOR, for example by organising workshops and coordinating interview appointments. EQM is responsible for the acceptance of the report, generally in consultation with management staff at MISEREOR, and it organises follow-up discussions and change processes if needed.

Meta-evaluations play a specific role in the context of instrument evaluations. As MISEREOR has decided to include evaluations commissioned by the partner organisations in its evaluation system, it also intends to conduct regular meta-evaluations to examine the quality of these locally commissioned external evaluations. As the systematic recording of local evaluations did not commence until 2010, the first meta-evaluation is planned for 2012.

3.2.3 Sector evaluations

Sector evaluations constitute a special form of overarching evaluations. They are agreed between the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Church-based development agencies¹⁵ as part of the performance assessment of Church-based development cooperation. Here, the three participants involved agree on the sector to be evaluated and the terms of reference.

In contrast to all other evaluations, which are generally conducted during the project implementation phase, MISEREOR plans these sector evaluations mainly as ex-post evaluations. Inception reports are also standard practice in this case.

3.3 Evaluations initiated by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)

In addition to the types of evaluation described so far, BMZ – MISEREOR's most important donor – can at any time initiate evaluations of projects supported with public funding, or can include the KZE (German Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid) in overarching assess-

¹⁴ Such as the short-term consultants programme or the setting up of dialogue and liaison offices in individual developing countries

¹⁵ The Protestant Association for Cooperation in Development at the EED (Church Development Service of the Protestant Church) and the German Catholic Central Agency for Development Aid (KZE), which is based at MISEREOR

ments, for example in the examination of the evaluation system applied in German development cooperation. From time to time, BMZ also invites the Church-based development agencies to take part in its thematic or regional evaluations through the inclusion of individual projects supported by these organisations. In all these cases, EQM coordinates MISEREOR's contributions.

Chapter 4: Learning from evaluations

4.1 Learning at partner organisations

Provided they are integrated into the evaluation process, the partner organisations of the evaluated projects learn during the course of the evaluation itself. They will see the evaluation results and examine the consultants' recommendations at the latest during the obligatory on-site concluding workshop.

In the following period, it is also MISEREOR's task to ensure that this learning process translates into concrete improvements in project work. This happens in the follow-up process, in which implementation measures are discussed and agreed with the partner organisation and then monitored.

If required, a special form is available to help monitor the implementation steps. The officers responsible for the partner dialogue are required to ensure that the evaluation follow-up process is adequately documented in each case.

4.2 Learning at MISEREOR

Learning from individual projects: In individual evaluations, MISEREOR learns initially through the evaluation report and the debriefing meeting. Apart from the consultant commissioned by MISEREOR, the following are also required to attend these meetings: the officers in the continental departments responsible for the specific region and/or sector in which the project operates and one member of staff from EQM. The participants discuss the evaluation results and recommendations in detail; the consultants are welcome to add further observations.

Overarching learning from individual evaluations: MISEREOR employs two instruments here. The annual evaluation report contains (1) summaries of individual evaluations conducted in the respective year, and (2) a general overview, which is always drawn up by an independent consultant. The general overview summarises the information on effects and lessons learned contained in the individual summaries. This often serves to highlight trends in particular areas, which the Heads of Department of MISEREOR's International Cooperation Division can then discuss at their regular meeting and act on if required.

In addition, in the follow-up to the evaluation, the officer responsible in EQM records the content-related lessons learned that are important beyond the individual project setting. These are stored in the evaluation database.

Methodological learning: In addition, the responsible officer in EQM records the methodological lessons learned and circulates these to all other colleagues in EQM. These findings are also stored in the database together with an assessment of the evaluation process.

To promote learning on methodology, it has sometimes proven expedient to organise learning exchanges on particular issues with the evaluators commissioned by MISEREOR¹⁶.

Learning from cross-section evaluations: The results of cross-section evaluations and evaluations of MISEREOR's instruments and procedures are generally presented to many in-house stakeholders; the consequences are discussed jointly. These activities are often facilitated by EQM, and evaluators are frequently invited to attend.

In cross-section evaluations on specific themes it is important to set up learning loops with the partner organisations in order to improve the effectiveness of on-site work. As a rule, the first step is to hold a joint workshop on the evaluation results. This is frequently followed by an advisory process that supports the implementation of the recommendations, as is sometimes the case in individual evaluations.

4.3 Learning for externals

In the evaluation debate, we often hear calls for the reports to be published so that externals can also benefit. In aiming for concrete quality improvements in individual projects, MISEREOR's prime concern is to support learning processes for the participating organisations, and to ensure that these processes are as comprehensive and open as possible. Apart from their obvious data protection needs, organisations also need a protected space in which to reflect on strengths and weaknesses, i.e. they must be sure that the results of the process are not made available verbatim to the general public. For this reason, it is not standard practice at MISEREOR to publish evaluation reports of individual projects. Instead, in the annual evaluation report, MISEREOR includes short anonymised descriptions of the evaluations together with details of its own follow-up activities.

Furthermore, after each evaluation MISEREOR seeks the approval of the respective partner organisation before handing out the report to externals on request. If the partner organisation agrees, MISEREOR makes the evaluation report accessible to externals via its library and documentation section (MIDOC).

In future, we expect third parties to be more interested in cross-section evaluations than evaluations of individual projects. We therefore plan to make anonymised versions of these evaluations available to a broader public.

¹⁶ In recent years, workshops have been held with consultants on approaches to cross-section evaluations, assessing performance in development cooperation, and evaluation methods

Abbreviations and terms

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the OECD
DeGEval	Gesellschaft für Evaluation e.V. (Evaluation Society)
EED	Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (Church Development Service of the Protestant Church)
EQM	Evaluation and Quality Management Section at MISEREOR
Ex-post evaluation	An evaluation of a development project or programme after completion
Inception report	Report on evaluation design and methodology
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Annexes

Annex 1: Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology

Annex 2: Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference of Evaluations

Please refer to the following download documents on MISEREOR's foreign language webpages www.misereor.org:

- Policy Document: Assessing the Effects of Development Cooperation - MISEREOR's Conception and Approach
- A Glossary of "Effects" Terminology
- Information for MISEREOR Partner Organisations on Commissioning External Evaluations Locally

Annex 1:**Quality Criteria for an Appropriate Evaluation Methodology
Guidelines for Consultants****A. Participation***Minimum standards:*

- Partner organisations are involved in specifying the methodological approach (generally during the kick-off workshop). The consultant team ensures that the project areas to be evaluated (regions, groups etc.) and the key providers of information are selected impartially.
- The (monitoring) data collected by the partner organisation are used wherever expedient; if necessary comments are added to the data.
- The (preliminary) evaluation results are presented to and discussed with the partner organisation at the end of the on-site mission.
- Any clearly divergent assessments on the part of the partner organisation are documented in the report.
- The target-group perspective is firmly integrated into the evaluation through information collected in interviews and/or participatory surveys. The heterogeneity of the target groups is to be taken into account (ethnicity, sex, age, social groups etc.).
- The presence of project staff during the target-group interviews can engender confidence among the target groups and trigger important learning processes among the project staff taking part. However, it may also encourage interviewees to provide answers that are in line with (their perception of) the expectations of those present, and it may also inhibit criticism. Here the consultant team must be particularly careful not only to ensure the participation of project staff, but also to provide a suitable framework in which the target groups can participate without being subject to external influence. Part of the discussions should therefore be conducted without project staff (except in the case of assisted self-evaluations).

(If there are language barriers, it is important to consider what role the local consultant can play in target-group interviews, or whether someone should be recruited for a limited role as interpreter).

Good practice:

- Whenever expedient, the partner organisation is to be involved in the learning process in the course of the evaluation.

B. Accuracy and credibility*Minimum standards:*

- Information and observations are always verified through triangulation techniques, for example by using a mix of methods. Unsubstantiated statements are labelled as such in the report.
- Interview partners are selected so as to ensure a diversity of perspectives.
- Samples are selected so as to minimise bias, e.g. by ensuring that random samples are sufficiently large, or by consciously selecting stronger, average and

weaker elements in a statistical population (in relation to the achievement of objectives). The selection criteria and processes are set out clearly in the evaluation report.

- Whenever possible statements are quantified (not “The women say...”, but “Three out of five of the groups interviewed...” or “60% of interviewees...”).
- The methods applied, the interviewee numbers and selection criteria, and the sample size and selection criteria are clearly described in a chapter on methodology or in the annex.

Good practice:

- Both quantitative and qualitative data are collected.

C. Effects assessment

Minimum standards:

- It is important to look not only at the achievement of objectives/intended effects, but also at unintended effects (positive and negative).
- The consultant must examine (and document in the report) whether the observed changes can be plausibly attributed to the project by considering the contrafactual case - what would have happened without the project? (What changes can be attributed to the project?)

Possible methods include an influence matrix, interviews with key players, comparisons/interviews with (non-participant) reference groups in a similar situation.

Good practice:

- After analysing the documentation, hypotheses on effects are developed and then discussed on site (e.g. at the kick-off workshop).
- Effects are presented in differentiated form corresponding to the heterogeneous nature of the target groups.
- In order to record unexpected effects, it is necessary to examine aspects of the lives of the target groups that are not directly addressed by the project (e.g. changes in school attendance in a water project, or income generation effects in a human rights project). Such additional fields of observation may emerge from the joint development of cause-and-effect correlations, or through the cross-cutting themes addressed by the organisation/MISEREOR.
- It is important to examine whether further indirect effects can be observed (e.g. copy-cat effects/broad-scale impact).

Recommended Structure for the Terms of Reference of Evaluations

The Terms of Reference (ToRs) set out the evaluation objectives and are agreed between all parties involved in the task to be performed by the evaluation team. In order to ensure that an evaluation fulfils the expectations of all stakeholders, it is necessary that the ToRs are formulated as clearly and precisely as possible. The following information and explanations may be of help in this task.

*The Terms of Reference **should be formulated individually** for each evaluation in order to ensure that they are appropriate to the individual project setting and the evaluation objectives.*

1. Introduction

This section should describe the project/programme to be evaluated and outline the history of the evaluation (Who initiated the evaluation? Why was it initiated?). If relevant, some general background information on the region and sector can be included.

2. Objectives of the evaluation

This section should state as precisely as possible the proposed objectives of the evaluation. This is especially important for the evaluation team, as the evaluation objectives critically affect exactly what information is to be collected and the collection methods to be applied.

3. Key issues

We recommend that the key issues to be addressed in the evaluation are formulated as concrete questions that are expected to be answered by the evaluation.

When drawing up the list of questions, the DAC criteria¹⁷ for evaluations have to be taken into account: relevance, impact (*for MISEREOR "effects" or "outcomes and impacts"*), effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The following table includes a description/explanation of each criterion complete with example questions. These key questions should be tailored to the requirements of the individual evaluation (i.e. they can be modified, formulated more precisely, or omitted).

¹⁷ See: http://www.oecd.org/document/22/0,2340,en_2649_34435_2086550_1_1_1_1,00.html

Relevance: The extent to which the project is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, the organisation responsible for the project and the donor organisation. It is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent is the intervention important for the target group (for example, does it focus on an important problem/bottleneck)?
- To what extent are the initial objectives of the project still appropriate?
- Are the activities and outputs of the project consistent with the project goals and objectives (coherence of the planned chain of causality)?

Outcomes and impacts: The positive and negative changes produced by a project, directly or indirectly. This involves the main outcomes and impacts resulting from the project. The evaluation should be concerned with both intended and unintended outcomes and impacts.

It is useful to consider the following questions:

- What real difference has the project made to the beneficiaries in terms of social, economic, political, cultural, and ecological changes, taking into account the gender dimension?
- How many people have been affected?
- Which other factors contributed to the changes that were generated, and to what extent can the changes be attributed to the project activities (plausibility)?
- has the real chain of causality been consistent with the chain of causality established at the planning stage? If not, what were the differences?

Effectiveness: A measure of the extent to which a project achieves its objectives, i.e. a comparison of the intended outcome with the observed outcome (see 'Outcomes and impacts' above). It is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent were the objectives achieved or are likely to be achieved?
- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?
- Were the initial objectives realistic?

Efficiency: Efficiency measures the qualitative and quantitative outputs in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the project uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired outcomes and impacts.

There is general agreement about the difficulty of making such comparisons. It is useful to consider the following questions:

- Were the effects achieved at reasonable costs?
- Was the project implemented in an economically justifiable way under the given circumstances? Are there benchmarks to support the answers?
- Were the objectives achieved on time?
- Have effective management and administration systems been in place and was there a suitable PME system?

Sustainability: is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of a project are likely to continue after funding has been withdrawn. Benefits need to be environmentally as well as economically, technically and socially sustainable. It is useful

to consider the following questions:

- To what extent are the benefits of the project likely to continue once donor funding has ceased?
- What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the (programme or) project?

If relevant to the context and the project, we recommend that questions on cross-sectoral issues to be answered by the evaluation should also be included, for example relating to gender, human rights, stakeholder participation, peace-building and civic conflict transformation, good governance, civil society involvement, HIV/Aids, health and the environment.

4. Methodology

It is important to bear in mind that a project not only affects a single homogeneous target group, but different groups with different interests and perspectives. Generally, a set of varied and adapted methods is adopted (usually applying a gender-sensitive approach) that focuses on quantitative and qualitative aspects in the following steps in the evaluation:

- Prior to the field visit: a review of the documents, preparation of interview guidelines, quantitative survey, ...
- During the field visit: start-up workshop, document review, participant observation, quantitative survey, in-depth interviews, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, contextual analysis, key informant interviews, debriefing workshop, ...

5. Organisation of the mission

This section includes details of:

- The expertise required, the members of the evaluation team and their roles
- The schedule: duration of preparatory activities, dates of the mission, deadline for the (draft) report, debriefing date etc.

6. Report

This section sets out the proposed structure of the report. The following outline, based on past experience, has proven useful for this purpose:

- A first part should describe the project and the project context as a basis for the analytical and evaluative sections that follow. Aspects to be considered:
 - Project context and framework conditions
 - Project goals and objectives
 - Project strategy/approach
 - Description of project activities. Was there a difference between the planned activities and those actually implemented? Were there any lobbying or networking activities?
 - Description of target groups. How many were reached through the activities?
 - Organisational structure; how does project administration work?
 - Description of the cooperation with MISEREOR

- The next section focuses on the findings related to the questions listed above under 'Key issues'. This is the main section for data presentation and analysis.
- The conclusions follow logically from the findings but are clearly distinguishable from these. The conclusions should provide answers to the main evaluation questions.
- The recommendations follow logically from the conclusions. They should be actor oriented (Who should do what?) and prioritised (What is most important?, What could be improved?).

The report documents the evaluation activities and results and serves as a reference for follow-on activities. It must therefore have a clear structure and be complete. The following questions should be addressed in the Terms of Reference:

- Who will write the report? Who will have overall responsibility?
- How long is the report expected to be?
- What should be included in the report (for example, an executive summary)?
- What are requirements with respect to the reporting format?