

## **GUIDELINES FOR THE EVALUATION OF PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE STANDARDS AND TRADE DEVELOPMENT FACILITY (STDF)**

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

As described in the STDF Medium Term Strategy (2015-2019), the STDF provides a limited number of project grants to strengthen SPS capacity in developing countries, in line with beneficiary's priorities. Both public and private sector stakeholders benefit from projects that address key SPS challenges or opportunities, which influence their ability to gain and/or maintain market access. Projects also have a key role to play in enhancing the effectiveness of SPS capacity building through the identification and dissemination of good practice, and promotion of synergies and collaboration among different stakeholders including government authorities, the private sector, and international, regional and bilateral organizations.<sup>1</sup>

The STDF's Operational Rules require at least 50% of STDF projects completed every year to undergo an independent ex-post evaluation.<sup>2</sup> Projects to be subjected to an external evaluation are selected by the Working Group chairperson, during the first meeting of the Working Group in the year after project completion, using the method of ordinary random selection, unless the Working Group decides otherwise.

These Guidelines set out the overall framework for independent ex-post evaluations of STDF projects, based on the STDF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.<sup>3</sup> They draw heavily on the OECD-DAC Principles for the Evaluation of Development Assistance.<sup>4</sup>

### **2 OBJECTIVE**

The objective of an independent ex-post evaluation of an STDF project is to:

- verify whether the project achieved the objectives set out in the project document;
- identify if the project contributed to any of the higher level objectives of the STDF (e.g. measurable impact on market access, improved domestic (and where applicable) regional SPS situation, poverty reduction) identified in the logical framework attached to the STDF Medium Term Strategy for 2015-2019, including the linkage and contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) ;
- identify key experiences, good practice and lessons of interest to the beneficiaries of the evaluated project, as well as to STDF Working Group members and development partners more broadly (including for future STDF programme development).

### **3 STRUCTURE**

Projects funded by the STDF include a logical framework (logframe) matrix, which identifies the overall project goal, as well as the expected lower-level results (outcomes and outputs) of the project. Indicators to measure progress at different results-levels should be included in the logframe, as well as key risks and assumptions. This project logframe – and indicators – should be used as the basis for the project evaluation.

Evaluations should typically be organized around the standard evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability and lessons learnt. In this regard, the evaluation questions identified below provide the overall framework for the evaluation process and a basis to

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<sup>1</sup> STDF Medium Term Strategy (2015-2019). Available at: [www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Mid\\_term\\_Strategy\\_2015\\_2019\\_EN.pdf](http://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/Mid_term_Strategy_2015_2019_EN.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> STDF Operational Rules (STDF 139 rev.4 – FINAL). Available at: [www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF\\_139rev4\\_EN\\_0516.pdf](http://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/STDF_139rev4_EN_0516.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> STDF Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (STDF 509 Final). Available at: [www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/ME\\_Framework\\_EN.pdf](http://www.standardsfacility.org/sites/default/files/ME_Framework_EN.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> DAC Principles for Effective Aid. Available at: [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/12/2755284.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/31/12/2755284.pdf).

reach a clear set of conclusions and recommendations. Additional, more specific evaluation questions related to the individual project to be evaluated should be elaborated by the project evaluator, in cooperation with the STDF Secretariat.

Evaluations may be conducted as desk studies or may require travel to collect and review information in the beneficiary country or region. The evaluator will review project progress and final reports, as well as any other relevant documents, against the project document approved by the STDF Workshop Group. This literature review will normally be supplemented by survey questionnaires and/or interviews with relevant project stakeholders (e.g. beneficiaries, implementing organization(s), other collaborating or relevant organizations). Other methods such as case studies or cost-effectiveness analyses may also be applied, depending *inter alia* on the size and complexity of the project.

#### **4 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS**

##### Relevance

1. Was the project the right answer to the SPS related needs of the beneficiary?
2. What was the value added of this project, compared to other support programmes?
3. Were local contexts, ownership, processes and stakeholders adequately taken into account in the design and implementation of the project?

##### Effectiveness

4. To what extent were the project objectives achieved or are likely to be achieved (based on the indicators for expected outputs and outcomes identified in the project's logframe)?
5. What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the project objectives, outcomes and outputs?
6. To what extent were horizontal issues (particularly related to gender and environment) adequately addressed in the project?

##### Efficiency

7. Were the activities and outputs delivered according to the project document (i.e. on time and within the budget)?
8. What changes and risks, if any, occurred during project implementation, and how was the project able to adapt to these changes and manage risks?
9. Was the project a cost-effective contribution to addressing the needs of the beneficiary?

##### Impact

10. To what extent did the project contribute to higher level objectives of the STDF programme such as a measurable impact on market access, improved domestic, and where applicable regional, SPS situations, and/or poverty reduction?
11. What real difference (expected and/or unexpected) has the project made or is likely to have on the final beneficiaries?
12. What was the role of the project, if any, in raising awareness on SPS challenges and/or mobilizing additional resources for SPS capacity?

##### Sustainability

13. To what extent will the benefits of the project continue after the end of STDF funding?
14. Do the recipients of the project have the necessary capacity to sustain the results?
15. What follow-up activities, if any, are planned and/or required to sustain these results over time?
16. What are the major factors which influenced sustainability of the project?
17. Was sustainability (including follow-up activities, scaling up and dissemination of results) adequately considered at the project design phase and throughout the project?

#### Lessons learned

18. What lessons can be learned from the project regarding the process of project design and implementation?
19. What lessons can be learned from the project, which may be of importance to the broader donor community and which should be disseminated more widely?
20. What actions have been taken by the beneficiary, STDF partnership or others to disseminate, learn and follow-up on the outcomes of the project? How could STDF increase the sharing of good practice on SPS capacity building coming out of this project?

## **5 REPORTING**

The evaluation report shall be clear, as free as possible of technical language, and normally no longer than 15 pages. It shall be written in the same language as the project documents. Additional information shall be confined to annexes. The report shall take account of the draft OECD-DAC Evaluation Quality Standards<sup>5</sup> and shall follow the outline below:

1. Executive summary (1 page)
  - Overview of the report, which highlights the main conclusions, recommendations and key lessons learned.
2. Introduction (2 pages)
  - Description of the policy context and institutional environment within which the project was implemented, including the role of the STDF, implementing organization(s), other donors and project partners as well as the private sector, consumer organizations and NGOs, as relevant.
  - Summary of the project including its objectives, activities, inputs (budget), outputs and outcomes.
  - Objective of the evaluation.
  - Indication of the evaluator's independence to carry out the project evaluation, addressing previous collaboration (if any) with the STDF, project partners and/or beneficiaries, including a description of conflicts of interest, if any.
3. Methodology (2 pages)

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<sup>5</sup> See [www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/21/37854171.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/34/21/37854171.pdf)

- Explanation of the evaluation method used, its validity, reliability and limitations, including an explanation of the methods and techniques used for data and information collection and processing.
- Description of the sources of information used (documents, respondents, literature, etc.).
- Description of the stakeholders consulted, their relevance, and the criteria for their selection.

#### 4. Findings and analysis (8 pages)

- Answers to each evaluation question, including clear references to evidence and an analysis for each.
- Overall judgement, which shall cover:
  - relevance to needs and overall context, including the extent to which the project suited the priorities and policies of the target groups and the objectives of the STDF (SPS capacity to facilitate market access);
  - effectiveness in terms of the extent to which the objectives and outputs were achieved (or are likely to be achieved in the near future);
  - efficiency in terms of the extent to which funding, staff, regulatory, administrative, time and other resource considerations contributed or hindered the achievement of results;
  - impact in terms of the established and unforeseen impacts of the project, particularly how the project contributed to the higher-level objectives of the STDF (market access, domestic/regional SPS situation, poverty reduction, etc.), as well as any other unintended positive or negative consequences (spillovers) of the project;
  - sustainability related to whether the results of the project can be maintained over time without STDF funding or other donor support;
  - cross-cutting issues in terms of how the project contributed to cross-cutting objectives, including related to gender equality and the environment (whether planned or not);
  - risk management in terms of the risks that were faced during project implementation and the extent to which they were approximately managed.

#### 5. Conclusions and recommendations (2 pages)

- Main conclusions following from the findings and analysis.<sup>6</sup>
- Recommendations including actionable proposals for concerned stakeholders in the project country/region (e.g. government authorities, private sector, regional economic communities), the STDF, and/or the wider community of donors and development partners.

#### 6. Lessons learnt

- Key lessons learned which are of relevance for wider use and future programme development, both on process and substance.

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<sup>6</sup> Please note that any conclusions and recommendations should be based on the findings and analysis included in the previous section of the report.

## **6 QUALITY**

The quality of the evaluation report will be assessed on the basis of the criteria in Appendix 1.

## **7 DISSEMINATION**

The evaluation report shall be discussed by the STDF Working Group and further disseminated through the STDF website and other fora, as appropriate.

## Appendix 1: Quality criteria for STDF evaluation reports

Theme	Criteria
<b>Context</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The context and object of the evaluation are adequately described in the evaluation report</li> <li>• The context of the project is adequately described (context, stakeholders)</li> <li>• There is a clear description of the project to be evaluated (object of the evaluation)</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report clearly describes the evaluation's objective, purpose and scope</li> </ul>
<b>Methodology</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report adequately describes and explains the evaluation methodology and its application</li> <li>• The report clearly explains what approaches/methods/tools that were used and why they were selected</li> <li>• The logic and consistency of the project results framework and/or theory of change is assessed</li> <li>• The validity and reliability of information sources are adequately addressed</li> <li>• The report adequately addresses limitations to the methodology</li> <li>• The report clearly lists the evaluation questions (e.g. in an appendix)</li> <li>• The STDF evaluation guidelines are mentioned</li> <li>• Surveys used (if any) are attached as an appendix</li> <li>• The response rate to any surveys is clear</li> <li>• The report explains whether field visits were carried out, with details on the timing, stakeholders met, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Cross-cutting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gender, the environment and any other relevant crosscutting issues are adequately addressed</li> </ul>
<b>Findings, recommendations and lessons learned</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The report presents findings, conclusions, recommendations and lessons separately, clearly and logically</li> <li>• The report adequately addresses all the evaluation criteria and questions</li> <li>• Findings are clearly presented and based on the objective use of the reported evidence</li> <li>• The report analyses the main external factors facilitating or hindering implementation of the project, and assesses whether risks were appropriately managed</li> <li>• Conclusions are clearly substantiated by findings and analysis</li> <li>• Recommendations are well-grounded in the evidence and conclusions reported, clearly stated and realistic</li> <li>• Lessons learned are correctly identified and relevant</li> <li>• The report can be used reliably to extract good practices and</li> </ul>

	lessons learned for STDF
<b>Structure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The report is well structured, logical and clear</li></ul>