PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

EVALUATION POLICY

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Av. da Liberdade, 270, 1250-149 Lisboa

Tel. (351) 21 310 91 00

Website: www.instituto-camoes.pt/

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1. Introduction

1. The present document defines the Portuguese cooperation evaluation policy. It lays down its guiding principles, clarifying not only the concepts, purposes, planning process and selection criteria but also the roles and responsibilities of the Portuguese cooperation actors, in line with the internationally defined evaluation principles and guidelines[1].

2. The *Strategic Concept for Portuguese Development Cooperation 2014-2020*, approved by the Council of Ministers Resolution Nº 17/2014 of 3 March, states that "evaluation, being an important accountability and learning mechanism, must be a central concern of the Portuguese cooperation and provide effective support for planning and management activities".

3. Evaluation is a key public management tool. As part of a results-based management, it supports policies, promotes accountability and contributes directly to the continuous improvement of performance and to the achievement of results. The evaluation is a tool that provides decision-makers with evidence based on performance and practices, allowing them a more informed decision-making.

4. Recognising the importance of the effective use of evaluation results and lessons learnt, the Evaluation Policy also comprises dissemination, use and follow-up of lessons learnt and recommendations, as well as knowledge sharing and organisational learning issues.

5. In recent years, new dynamics actors and donors have emerged with significant impacts in the external arena, particularly on international cooperation and consequent repercussions in the Portuguese development cooperation policy.

2. Portugal and the development cooperation

6. Portugal is a small donor, with a strong geographical concentration of its aid. Around 80% of its ODA targets six countries, the five African Portuguese-speaking countries (PALOP) and Timor-Leste. Portugal plays an important role in some of its partner countries, at times prominent as development partner.

7. The new international cooperation framework includes, among others, development issues increasingly global and interdependent such as climate change, resilience, security, global governance, international trade, migrations, and food and nutrition security. The emergence of new approaches and aid modalities, such as delegated cooperation,

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1 *Principles for evaluation of development assistance, Development Assistance Committee, Paris, 1991;*
Quality Standards for the Evaluation of the Development, DAC, 2010.

triangular cooperation, clusters and public-private partnerships requires reflection and the identification of lessons learnt.

8.   The international development framework has changed significantly following the approval of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005. The aid effectiveness agenda was further developed in Accra (2008) and Busan (2011), both of which endorsed by Portugal. The five aid effectiveness principles agreed in Paris have largely contributed to change the way development cooperation policies are designed and implemented. Similarly, the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", endorsed by the United Nations in September 2015, is in line with this changing environment with the definition of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be achieved in the next 15 years. This is an incentive for renewed approaches on the eradication of poverty and global international aid areas, with implications in the field of evaluation of development.[2]

9.   Moreover, the Portuguese development cooperation faces challenges that go beyond aid determinant in the development cooperation policy options. The forthcoming programming cycle is particularly sensitive given the decline in aid funding and uncertainty on support continuity. In this context, evaluation might play an important role as a learning and mutual accountability tool. At the same time, it may help as a means to disseminate information and to promote a deeper involvement of the Portuguese society in and with development issues and with international development cooperation and solidarity dynamics. Understanding the latter and progress and impact in partner countries attributable to Portuguese support, is instrumental to overcome the above mentioned challenges.

3. Evaluation policy objectives

10.   The recognition of the multi-dimensionality of development, the relevance of ownership and the focus on results entails the need to evaluate cooperation policies while assessing the coherence of policies with impacts on development processes, as well as the need to further support partner countries own evaluation capacity development (ECD).

11.   Given the increasing complexity and continuous change in the institutional cooperation arena, evaluation should ensure robust analytics with a view to match useful findings and recommendations with actual information needs. To that end, the evaluation challenges include the adoption of multidisciplinary approaches and innovative methodologies and techniques that comprise cross-cutting issues allowing for the identification of causal links between cooperation interventions and respective outputs and outcomes.

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2 Transforming our world: *The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development", United Nations, 2015.*
    https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld/publication

12.   Thus, this Evaluation Policy is aimed at:

- Informing the Portuguese development cooperation actors, partners and other stakeholders on the evaluation objectives, guiding principles and approach;
- Defining the role of the various Portuguese development cooperation actors and partners in the evaluation processes, improving the coherence and complementarity of the evaluation function;
- Defining guidelines on planning, implementation and use of evaluations findings into projects financed, co-financed or be implemented directly by Camões, I.P.

4. Evaluation concept, objectives and principles

4.1 Concept

13.   As established by the OECD/DAC, evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, 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.

14.   The evaluation is an important source of evidence on results and institutional performance, contributing to the organisation's knowledge, learning and operational. Therefore it provides useful information, analyses and recommendations to managers and the in-house development practitioners as well as to partner organisations, allowing for a more informed decision-making capacity on resources, planning, programming and implementation of interventions.

4.2 Objectives

15.   The evaluation is a support tool for the Portuguese development cooperation. It works in articulation and complementarity with planning, programming, monitoring and, also, with auditing, ensuring a clear division of work, avoiding duplications and promoting synergies.

16.   In accordance with the *Strategic Concept for Portuguese Development Cooperation 2014-2020*, the evaluation purposes are:

- *To show results and a more objective and coherent resources allocation, either in decision-making process and on the prioritisation of projects;*
- *The timely incorporation of recommendations and lessons learnt in ongoing projects;*
- *The detailed analysis and study of exit strategies, ensuring ownership of results and processes in a planned way.*

17.   To achieve these objectives, the evaluation must allow:

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- *Lessons Learning* — understand why certain activities are more or less successful, in order to improve its future performance, allowing to learn with the experience and to incorporate these lessons in forthcoming interventions;
- Accountability — provide an objective basis for the transparency of accountability to the main stakeholders: governments and parliaments (national and in partners countries), civil society, taxpayers, direct beneficiaries;
- *Showing of results* — the evaluation results can be a major contribution to the allocation of resources both at the planning and policy-making and choice of priorities phases, in particular in the project, programme or policy budget definition;
- *Knowledge enhancement* — evaluation helps to increase knowledge on a given area (policies and their operationalisation), its possibilities and limitations as a tool for economic and social change.

18. In this regard, the evaluation contributes to a results-based management and decision-making, assessing the degree to which the processes, products and services effectively contribute to effective and sustainable development cooperation.

4.3 Principles

19. The evaluation function is guided by the principles set out in Camões Evaluation Code of Ethics as well as by internationally recognised best practices:
- *Ethics* — evaluations shall be conducted with integrity, respecting the personal and professional well-being of all those involved in the evaluation process, including those affected by its results.
- *Transparency* — evaluation activities will be conducted in an openly fashion ensuring the involvement of main stakeholders in all evaluation phases. The tendering procedure for external evaluations should follow the existing legislation. The evaluation's final reports will never be made public without being subject to a prior consultation process of the involved stakeholders.
- *Credibility and quality* — the evaluation must be credible and be based on reliable data, evidence and observations. It should demonstrate consistency and confidence in the data, findings, assessments and lessons learnt, with a reference to the quality of instruments, procedures and analysis used to collect and interpret the data.
- *Independence and impartiality* — the evaluation team should be independent, both from the decision-making process and the intervention's implementation. Impartiality implies the absence of interference in the evaluation process and the existence of methodological rigour in the gathering, analysis and findings presentation. This implies that stakeholder's points of view are taken into account, that the evaluators are free to lead the evaluation work with impartiality and that they may express their points of views freely.

- *Competence and capacity* — depending on the subject, evaluation activities require a wide range of expertise from various relevant areas of knowledge, beyond evaluation knowledge. The selection of evaluators should be made taking in consideration the experience and the use of rigorous methods in results and performance assessment.
- *Timeliness and usefulness* — the decision and implementation of evaluations should be made in a timely way to allow them to contribute to its specific objectives. The evaluation must also fulfill the stakeholders' information needs. Partners, evaluators and evaluation unit shall ensure that the work is relevant, timely, well informed and is presented in a clear and concise way in order to be most useful for the stakeholders. The evaluation reports shall contain, in a comprehensive and balanced way, the results, findings, conclusions and recommendations, which should be practical and realistic and focused on the evaluation subject.

5. Institutional framework, roles and responsibilities

5.1. Institutional framework

20.   Development cooperation evaluation is one of the responsibilities of the Camões — Instituto da Cooperação e da Língua, I.P. (Camões, I.P.). However, given the decentralised model of the Portuguese development cooperation, there are other actors and forums that must be taken into account in this Evaluation Policy. This requires a continuous partnership work.

5.1.1 Camões, I.P.

21.   Camões, I.P. is responsible for monitoring and evaluation of Portuguese development cooperation interventions results in order to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of those interventions and the efficiency of resource allocation.

22.   In accordance with Article 6 of Order 194/2012, the Evaluation and Audit Office (GAA) is the organisational unit responsible for the management of the whole evaluation process, e.g.:

> *"(...) a) Promote programmes, plans and projects implementation evaluations according to the defined objectives, directly or through external evaluation;*
> *b) Propose the terms of reference and select the teams responsible for internal or external evaluation of programmes, projects and actions; (...)*
> *c) Collaborate in joint evaluations with other partners such as international organizations and counterparts from other states;*
> *d) Produce technical information in the evaluation field, disseminating evaluations results information and proposing mechanisms for the incorporation of the acquired experience in forthcoming programming and in new programmes, projects and actions; (...).''*

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5.1.2 Line ministries

23. Line ministries, with development cooperation competencies, are responsible for self-evaluation or periodic internal evaluation of their own projects, information to and clearance by Camões, I.P. about this work. All departments should share information and lessons learnt, and incorporate them in their activities. Evaluation activities of the several Portuguese cooperation actors must be consistent with the principles and procedures set out in this Evaluation Policy. Given the need for transparency, it is crucial that line ministries and other Portuguese development cooperation actors make public their own evaluations.

5.1.3 Cooperation field offices in Portuguese diplomatic missions

24. Cooperation field offices in Portuguese embassies in partner countries have a key role in monitoring and promotion of partner's involvement in the evaluation process. This role includes the incorporation of the recommendations and lessons learned in the field. They must also ensure that local stakeholders are kept informed and involved on the evaluation processes and on the dissemination and use of its findings.

25. A presentation of the main evaluations findings shall be made during the Cooperation Attachés, Councilor's and sectoral cooperation experts annual meeting as well as sharing of information, experience, best practices and lessons learned between headquarters and field offices.

5.1.4   Civil society organisations

26. Civil society organisations, and in particular NGDOs, are responsible for self-evaluating their own development cooperation activities. In the case of Portuguese development cooperation co-financed activities the evaluation reports must be submitted to Camões, I.P. and shared with the broad public. Notwithstanding they can be also externally evaluated. Evaluations must follow internationally agreed principles, criteria and procedures for development evaluation.

5.1.5 Coordination Forum

27. According to the Strategic Concept, the Inter-ministerial Commission for Cooperation (CIC) is responsible for the approval of annual development cooperation plans drafted by line ministries, within the scope of its mandate of political coordination of the Portuguese development cooperation. CIC must also be involved in the evaluation process considering that evaluation is part of the intervention cycle.

28. The Development Cooperation Forum aims to promote Portuguese development cooperation coherence and complementarity, allowing for the reflection and dialogue

between the state, local governments and civil society, in order to foster the emergence of common projects, partnership activities, proposals and opinions on development cooperation. It may deliver opinions and make recommendations on development cooperation policy and on the activities of private actors. Therefore it should also be involved in the implementation of the Evaluation Policy.

5.1.6 Partner countries

29. Portugal is committed to the principles of ownership and mutual accountability as well to results as defined in the aid effectiveness agenda (Paris Declaration, 2005). These principles imply that development evaluation does not aim at donors or aid alone. Developing countries role in evaluation has been strengthened in recent years, with a particular focus on the 2030 Agenda, which gives them a central role on evaluation processes and SDGs follow-up (paragraph 74 g) and h)). Camões, I.P. acknowledges the importance of abiding to these principles, as well as of local evaluation capacity building. Those commitments include the maximization of the use of monitoring and evaluation national systems, the reduction of fragmentation and the increasing transparency of information on aid as well as the increasing use of independent verifications and public scrutiny on aid performance at national and international levels.

30. The Portuguese development cooperation partner countries are directly involved in the different evaluation phases, since the elaboration of ToRs to the dissemination of results. When possible, the use of national evaluators will take place to ensure that the evaluation planning takes into account the local context and can help to build/strengthen local evaluation capacity.

5.1.7 Other stakeholders

31. There are many local and international stakeholders involved in the evaluation processes. Their level of involvement depends on the intervention at hand and their role in them. The transparency in the process of planning, implementation and presentation of findings is a key issue in the evaluation function. It aims to ensure the dissemination of all non-confidential information and the consultation of all relevant stakeholders during the evaluation process. The evaluation must involve them, both as users and as beneficiaries. Stakeholders' participation and the use of participatory approaches in the evaluation process are particularly relevant in evaluations involving specific audiences, such as deprived groups.

5.2. Roles and responsibilities of Camões, I.P.

5.2.1 The Board of Camões, I.P.

32. The Board of Camões, I.P. will ensure the adoption of the necessary measures to implement the Portuguese development cooperation Evaluation Policy, ensuring that evaluation function is developed effectively and independently. The Board of Camões, I.P. approves the three-year evaluation rolling plan, annually reviewed, as well as the evaluation indicative budget. Taking into account its competencies, the Board further ensures the incorporation of the lessons learnt and recommendations from evaluations into the policies, programmes and procedures and that evaluation findings and lessons learned are adequately disseminated to the wider public.

5.2.2 The Evaluation and Audit Office (GAA)

33. GAA's main mission is the promotion of an independent evaluation function, ensuring the supervision of the quality of the system and the sharing of the evidence of the evaluation in Portuguese development cooperation.

34. In order to promote the emergence of innovative methodologies and to draw maximum benefits from evaluation, GAA works in close partnership with other organisational units from Camões, I.P. and from other Portuguese development cooperation actors.

35. The international commitments made by Portugal, including the harmonisation with other donors, implies, where possible, joint evaluations. This means that joint evaluations will be promoted with other partners either international organisations, counterparts in other donor countries or partner countries.

36. GAA may provide technical assistance on evaluation to the other Portuguese development cooperation actors and contribute to the improvement of their own methodologies.

37. GAA contributes to the international evaluation processes of the Portuguese development cooperation, including the DAC peer reviews, and participates in working groups and international meetings that contribute to the reflection, deepening and coordination in the evaluation landscape.

5.2.3 The Cooperation Directorate

38. The organisational units of Camões, I.P. responsible for planning, programming and monitoring of development cooperation programmes, projects and actions are the immediate users of evaluation findings and are involved in all phases of the evaluation process.

5.2.4 Inter-ministerial Commission for Cooperation

39. The Inter-ministerial Committee for Cooperation (CIC), as the responsible body for inter-ministerial coordination, must be heard in the various evaluation phases, particularly in the definition of the three-year evaluation plan and in the reflection on the evaluation findings.

5.2.5 The Development Cooperation Forum

40. The Development Cooperation Forum, being a space of dialogue with civil society, must be included in the debate about evaluation and its findings.

6. The evaluation process

6.1. Planning, design and implementation

41. Evaluation activities planning in Camões, I.P. is made in the Three-year Evaluation Plan. This document identifies the evaluations foreseen in a three years period, the most adequate evaluation type and the annually required financial resources for its implementation.

42. This planning process involves all Camões, I.P. organisational units that are responsible for development cooperation interventions, subject to validation and approval by the Board. This process is defined in the normative document Evaluation Planning Process.

43. The Three-year Evaluation Plan must seek to answer specific requests made either by Camões, I.P. organisational units or by other development cooperation actors, including line ministries, Portuguese, embassies, civil society and development partners.

44. The Three-year Evaluation Plan shall abide by the principles of cost-effectiveness always considering the public interest to which it is related and the needs of the Portuguese development cooperation evaluation. It is reviewed annually.

45. The implementation of this Policy presumes the existence of adequate financial and human resources, including specific technical-scientific training. In accordance with the Strategic Concept, "*appropriate resources will be made available enabling the Camões, I.P. to regularly perform the evaluation of Portuguese cooperation projects* (...)".

46. For the effective implementation of the Evaluation Policy the necessary financial resources must be estimated (as a rule, between 1% and 5% of overall expenditure with programmes, projects and actions).

47. The criteria for identifying evaluation subjects are:

    1. Strategic relevance: the evaluations must focus on interventions or groups of interventions which fall within the strategic priorities of the Portuguese development cooperation. Notwithstanding, evaluations can be made in the scope of other relevant entities to the Portuguese development cooperation.

2. Relevance for the partner country's development strategy: interventions or groups of interventions that match to the development priorities and strategic goals of Portuguese development cooperation partner countries.

3. Financial envelope: all interventions involving a budget exceeding EUR 500.000 are all subject to evaluation.

4. Innovation: interventions or groups of interventions considered as pilot schemes, innovative implementation models and tools or those have potentialities that can be replicated to other interventions.

5. Intervention duration: interventions or groups of interventions with extended implementation periods (over 5 years).

6. Timing of the evaluation: interventions that are opportune for decision-making, planning and implementation and that need evidence from evaluation to decision-making.

7. Thematic and geographical diversity: the Evaluation Plan must comprise thematic and geographic balance and address cross-cutting issues.

6.2. Evaluation approach

48.   The choice of approach is determined regarding the following factors: the context in which the intervention is implemented; the characteristics of the programme/project, the evaluation questions and the criteria and methodological approached.

6.3. Main types of evaluation

49.   The different types of evaluation carried out by the Camões, I.P. are part of the Portuguese development cooperation management cycle. The main types of evaluation include formative evaluations and summative evaluations. Formative, particularly the mid-term evaluation, are used to guide or correct ongoing interventions (project, sector, theme or country programme). Summative evaluations, with an ex-post character, will be used to determine what has been achieved and how. GAA also carries out evaluability studies and synthesis of the evaluations carried out, with a more formative nature, aimed to disseminate the lessons learnt in Camões, I.P.

6.4. Quality assurance

50.   To ensure the quality of the evaluation reports, Camões, I.P. has created a quality assessment framework. It is based on the DAC quality standards and is applied to all evaluations with a view to decide whether a report shall or shall not be approved.

7. Dissemination and use of evaluations findings

51. Evaluations can be important catalysts for change if they are undertaken in a timely way and if stakeholders accept recommendations. It should, therefore, be given special attention to the dissemination of evaluation findings and to the follow-up of its recommendations. To this end, Guidelines for the Dissemination and Utilisation of the Evaluations Findings have been defined.

52. Camões, I.P. must enhance the impact of the evaluation function, through an "utilization focused" approach. Other activities should be promoted to maximize the potential of evaluation findings and recommendations beyond the workshops held during the several evaluation phases and the dissemination of the final report.

53. Dissemination is a part of the evaluation process which requires increased links between GAA and the several actors involved in the evaluation.

54. Camões, I.P. publishes the evaluations results and ensures its effective dissemination. All evaluation reports are published in the website and sent to the DAC DEReC, ensuring due transparency. The Tree-year Evaluation Plan, the executive summaries and follow-up matrixes are also disseminated contributing to a greater transparency and dissemination of evaluation findings.

8. Knowledge management and organisational learning

55. Evaluation is critical to the production of knowledge and organisational learning. Camões, I.P. works with all other development actors and partners to increase transparency and knowledge sharing through:

- Publishing all evaluation reports on the Camões, I.P. website;
- Exchanging evaluation experiences and sharing lessons learnt in the cooperation attachés, councilors and cooperation experts' during the annual meeting of Camões, I.P.;
- Producing an Annual Evaluation Report that comprises the work developed and providing the evidence and lessons learnt from evaluations;
- Researching issues related to the development cooperation evaluation;
- Participating in evaluation associations and networks and promoting knowledge sharing, namely, the DAC evaluation network (EVALNET), the Group of EU Heads of Evaluation, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) and the European Evaluation Society (EES);
- Promoting training, seminars, presentations and other activities that foster capacity development and reflection on evaluation.

9. Supporting the evaluation capacity development in partner countries

56. The new development agenda —2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development — underlines the importance of partner countries leadership in the evaluation processes. Portugal supports the evaluation capacity development (ECD) in partner countries, by:

- Involving them in the evaluation processes;
- Undertaking joint evaluations;
- Supporting the creation of local evaluation units;
- Supporting training and institutional evaluation capacity development.

10. Evaluation guidance documents

57. Portuguese development cooperation evaluation is framed by a set of documents that establish evaluation standards as well as procedural, technical and methodological guidelines, all of which are available on the website of the Camões, I.P.:

- Evaluation Management Standards;
- Evaluation Terms of Reference Template;
- DAC Quality Standards for Development Evaluation;
- Evaluation Code of Ethics;
- Guidelines to Avoid Conflicts of Interest in the Evaluation Process;
- Evaluation Guide;
- Guidelines for the Dissemination and Feedback of Evaluations.

11. Review of Evaluation Policy

58. In order to assess the level of implementation of this Policy and its contribution to the creation of an evaluation culture in Portuguese development cooperation, a mid-term review will be undertaken.