

Side Event

How can Multilateral Assessments contribute to enhancing Development Effectiveness in the context of Agenda 2030?

30 November 2016, 13:30

Objective:

The goal of this side event, co-organised by MOPAN and UNEG, was to

- present several initiatives that aim to contribute to improving the effectiveness of multilateral organisations;
- discuss and better understand what value we can gain from them;
- generate ideas on how the various actors can work together, and complement one another, to make multilateral organisations more effective.

Participants:

- **Tone Skogen**, State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway
- **Martine Schommer**, Director-General for Development cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Luxembourg
- **Michael Spilsbury**, UNEG co-chair of the UNEG working group on peer reviews, Director of UNEP Evaluation Office, Nairobi
- **Jos Verbeek**, Manager and Special Representative to the UN and WTO / Adviser in the office of the World Bank Group's President's Special Envoy on Post-2015 development issues
- **Jennifer Mutua**, Chair and Founder, Evaluation Society of Kenya (ESK)

Key issues discussed:

State Secretary Tone Skogen from Norway, chairing the event, pointed out that her country, with its high level of development co-operation (1% of GNI), was committed to ensuring that these resources were put to the best possible use. As 41% of development co-operation is delivered by Multilateral Organisations, it is vital that they perform well if the SDGs are to be achieved. This is why assessing their performance matters.

In this session, the goal was to get to know several initiatives that have made it their goal to assess multilateral organisations – MOPAN, UNEG, and COMPAS; discuss how they complement each other and to what extent closer cooperation is possible.

Martine Schommer, speaking on behalf of Luxembourg, described MOPAN's assessments as a key contribution to transparency and mutual accountability, and as powerful tools to push for reform. One of MOPAN's strengths is that donors work together in assessing multilateral organisations, rather than each undertaking separate assessments. She pointed at MOPAN's recent progress in putting more emphasis on the results multilaterals achieved, and the impact

they had. Yet MOPAN's messages can only be powerful if stakeholders use these reports (which are publically available) more consistently and more widely.

Michael Spilsbury from UNEP spoke on behalf of the UN Evaluation Group (UNEG), a professional network of evaluators across 46 different parts of the UN. He said that the focus of evaluations was to improve accountability and performance, and promote learning so that organisations constantly improve. UNEG emerged from a Working Group in the UN in 2005, which set Norms and Standards of Evaluation, built on work done in OECD/DAC/EVALNET. These norms - updated in 2016 in for the Agenda 2030 context - helped standardize evaluation practice across the UN and served many institutions well. UNEG's peer reviews of evaluation functions across UN agencies assess the extent to which evaluation function is pitched to feeding strategic issues back to management, with the aim of improving their function, accountability and performance. He noted a strong link between MOPAN and Peer Reviews - Peer Reviews could be viewed as a sub-set of the larger assessment context.

Jos Verbeek from the World Bank added COMPAS to these two initiatives. COMPAS was set up in 2005, with the purpose to look at internal efficiency of multilateral development banks. As it focuses less on results, it only has minimal overlap with MOPAN.

He noted that the Bank had undergone several assessments lately, including the UK's MAR/MDR, Australian bilateral assessments, and MOPAN – in addition to the its reporting against the SDG monitoring framework. Though all of them track progress, it is important to use each of them for the purpose it serves best, i.e. in a complementary way. The World Bank was using the information from such assessments to feed into its internal three-tier scorecards, which record:

- (1) **High-Level (outcomes)**: what outcomes can be attributed to the World Bank with reference to the SDGs, or to “ending poverty by 2030 and boosting prosperity” – the World Bank's own declared goals?
- (2) **Intermediate (outputs)**: How is the Bank supporting client results? What results are reported by clients who implement operations supported by the Bank?
- (3) **Internal operational and organisational effectiveness** (similar to COMPAS measures): how efficiently and effectively is the Bank delivering cooperation?

Jennifer Mutua from the Evaluation Society of Kenya highlighted that development partners appreciate that Multilateral Organisations subject themselves to multilateral assessments. For countries with a weak culture of using evidence, in particular, this sets a positive signal of transparency and openness. She said that such assessments could go a long way in identifying gaps to national partners that they could also learn from. Asked to what extent Kenya, as a “client” of multilaterals, was using MOPAN evaluations, she said neither government nor the evaluation society was particularly aware of them. But to use these documents as “accountability tools” for Kenya, and learn from them, a good first step would be to create more awareness around them.

Following the panel, **Gwen Hines**, Director, International Relations from **DfID**, announced that the UK's Multilateral Development Review was about to be published, and explained why, despite being “a fan of MOPAN”, the UK was conducting its own reviews. DfID had been asked by the Government to review all MOs that received more than £1 million, while MOPAN did not offer the same breath (it assesses 12-14 organisations at once). Secondly, the review assessed UK spending against its manifesto targets. While 40% of British ODA currently flows through multilateral agencies (in addition to funds to/through civil society and bilateral delivery), this balance can shift. The UK intends to fund MOs for priority areas in which DfID itself cannot deliver. In addition to organisational effectiveness, the report assessed risk management and audit, and

put the bar high on transparency, requiring agencies to use IATI standards (e.g. publish everything > GBP 500) and to report against SDG targets.

In the subsequent discussion, **Susan Fine** from **USAID** described MOPAN as “good value for money”, and pointed out that US, one of the most generous donors to multilateral organisations, had found the quality of MOPAN assessments very good, and was pleased that it assessed more MOs at once, and thus saw no need to conduct its own bilateral review. She called on all partners to reduce the number of bilateral assessments, and take as much as possible advantage of the MOPAN product.

Suzanne Muller from Switzerland echoed the USA by pointing out that MOPAN was her country’s key performance evaluation instrument with respect to its multilateral engagement. Switzerland was making great use of MOPAN assessments in its policy dialogue with MOs and for its domestic accountability on the use of public funding. MOPAN had a great added value for MOs, member states, partner countries, and ultimately beneficiaries, as it fostered learning and assessed whether interventions contributed to changes at national level.

ILO’s Director for cooperation stressed that undergoing several assessments at once – such as MOPAN, the UK MAR, and other bilateral reviews – represented a significant burden for an MO. He pointed out, however, that MOPAN was a positive experience. The assessments were useful, allowed the organisation to reflect on its ways of working, and to consult within the organisation and with partners. But he urged those undertaking assessments to coordinate better on the indicators they use, and explore synergies between the assessments, albeit this would not suffice the demands of a “political assessment”.

Global Partnership for Education asked whether evidence confirmed that MOPAN members were undertaking fewer bilateral assessments today than a few years back. MOs were competing over resources, and assessments were necessary, yet better cooperation was needed. Ms Schommer replied that reducing and replacing bilateral assessments was indeed one of the key “reasons d’être” of MOPAN and that several members had stopped their bilateral assessments. She stated MOPAN needed to convince by quality and good communication, and encouraged MOPAN members and their Secretariat to invest in the communication aspect – at home and in partner countries.

Main conclusions and next steps:

The State Secretary closed the event reiterating that participants shared the ambition for Development Cooperation to contribute to results. Assessments were useful tools in that regard. But there seemed to be scope to make assessments more relevant, less burdensome, more coordinated, and making better use of the findings. The relevant findings merit being taken into the relevant fora, where we engage in Multilateral Organisations and their governing structures, and where the findings of these assessments should be discussed and translated into action.