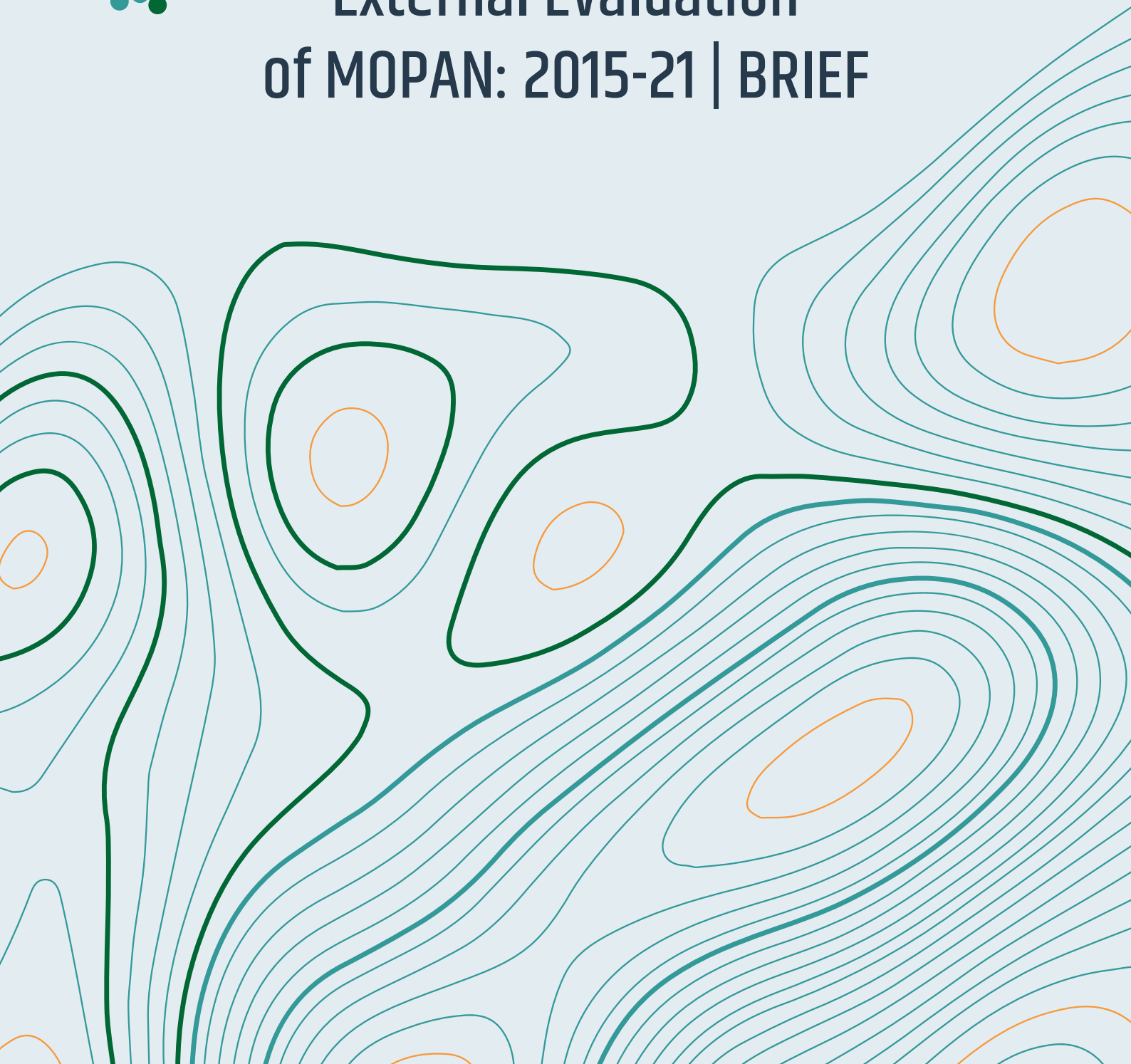# QUADRANT
CONSEIL

External Evaluation
of MOPAN: 2015-21 | BRIEF

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conducted by QUADRANT CONSEIL

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About this Evaluation

The external evaluation of the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) was conducted by and prepared under the responsibility of *Quadrant Conseil*.

This brief presents the conclusions and recommendations from the external evaluation of MOPAN (2015-21), including overarching answers to the main evaluation questions.

The evaluation report contains more detailed information about the evaluation findings and lessons, approach, and suggested actions for addressing the recommendations.

The evaluation was led by Thomas Delahais of *Quadrant Conseil*, in Paris, France, assisted by evaluation experts Kevin Williams and Tony Tyrrell. Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, Hélène Faure, Adrien Flichy, Jade Joviado, Noémie Lequet, Marc Tevini, Antonin Thyrard-Durocher and Alexandra Williams, of *Quadrant Conseil* were involved in the data collection.

The evaluation was overseen by the MOPAN bureau and benefitted from the advice of a reference group composed of three representatives of MOPAN members: Kevin Andrews, Nea-Mari Heinonen, Lennart Peck, and three external experts: Bastiaan de Laat, Richard Manning, Deborah Rugg. Erika MacLaughlin was the evaluation focal point at MOPAN.

Contents

Acronyms & Abbreviatons

AfDB	African Development Bank Group
AM	Assessment Manager (MOPAN)
CA	Contribution Analysis
CAA	Central Assurance Assessments
CC	Contribution Claim
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIFOR	Centre for International Forestry Research
CIRAD	French agricultural research and international co-operation organisation for the sustainable development of tropical and Mediterranean regions
COP26	UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DCD	Development Co-operation Directorate
DCO	Development Co-ordination Office
ECOSOC	ECOnomic and SOCial Council (UN)
EU	European Union
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FTE	Full-time Equivalent
FWC	Framework Contract
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GPEDC	Global Deal partnership and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
GSF	Global Science Forum
HoS	Head of Secretariat (MOPAN)
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IL	Institutional Lead
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organisation for Migrations
ITF	International Transport Forum

JIU	Joint Inspection Unit of the United Nations System
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MAR	Market Abuse Regulation
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOFP	Multilateral Organisation Focal Point
MOs	Multilateral Organisations
MOPAN	Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NPM	New Public Management
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PMO	Project Management Office
PoC	Proof of Concept
PSEAH	Protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment
PWB	Programme of Work and Budget
QuODA	Quality of Official Development Assistance
RBM	Results Based Management
RC	Resident Co-ordinator
RG	Reference Group
SC	Steering Committee
SDD	Statistics and Data Directorate
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SA	Sexual abuse
SH	Sexual harassment
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

SWAC	Sahel and West Africa Club
SWG	Secretariat Working Group
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDS	United Nations Development System
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSG	Secretary-General of the United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WBG	World Bank Group
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

Overview

Overview

The Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN) is a network of 21 countries (19 members, two observers) that assesses the performance of multilateral organisations (MOs) and provides a range of insights to promote a more effective multilateral system.

In 2020, MOPAN commissioned an independent external evaluation for the 2015-21 period to inform the decisions of its members about their future support and about the negotiation of a new memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the OECD in 2023.

The evaluation addresses three main questions related to MOPAN's efficiency, effectiveness, and relevance. The evaluation used a mixed methods approach which included:

- interviews with 41 MOPAN member representatives, 13 MOPAN Secretariat staff and 20 multilateral stakeholders and OECD officials;

- 12 case studies of the use of MOPAN assessments and analytical studies for which 140 individuals were interviewed; and

- a survey conducted with MOPAN members, past Institutional leads (ILs) and organisational focal points (137 respondents).

Periodic workshops were conducted to consult MOPAN members and MOPAN Secretariat staff on the evaluation approach, the Theory of Change (ToC) and emerging findings. Contribution analysis was used to assess MOPAN's effectiveness and impact and to provide a rigorous appraisal of the use of MOPAN products, especially by MOs.

To what extent is MOPAN organised and working efficiently?

Over the past six years, the MOPAN Secretariat has grown and expanded the range of skills among its staff. It has largely delivered on its agenda for reform, centred on reinforcing the credibility and coverage of MOPAN assessments, promoting learning and uptake of theme. These activities have led to a rise in the number of assessments delivered annually and better coverage among MOs, and have also improved stakeholders' perceptions of the assessments' credibility.

The changes have also challenged the efficiency and fitness for purpose of the Secretariat's current structure. The gains in assessment quality, credibility, and coverage have come at a cost; Secretariat staff must now devote significantly more time to assessments. Furthermore, to support the implementation of MOPAN's mission in the most optimal manner, the current governance and hosting arrangements require further attention.

Specific findings:

In 2013, a permanent MOPAN Secretariat was established and hosted within the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD). This arrangement has been beneficial in many regards. The network has enjoyed substantive independence and the Secretariat operates with autonomy. However, this situation depends overly on informal rules and tacit codes of behaviour rather than codified procedures or safeguards.

In the mid-2010s, the MOPAN Secretariat was entrusted with an agenda for reform. It focused on reinforcing MOPAN's credibility and coverage on the one hand, and on learning and improving uptake of MOPAN products on the other. The Secretariat has largely delivered on this agenda. In the last six years, the number of assessments produced annually has doubled and new MOs have come under MOPAN's remit. At the same time, the delivery process has been largely professionalised and includes new forms of engagement with MOs and members. The timeliness of assessments has come into focus as has improving the presentation and dissemination of results.

These efforts, together with an ongoing investment in the assessment methodology, have clearly increased the quality of MOPAN's products and their credibility in the eyes of stakeholders across the multilateral system. MOs give more mixed feedback; however, this feedback is no longer about the overall credibility of the approach, but rather about issues such as the time burden of the assessment process, the relevance to their context of some assessment elements and other technical aspects.

These gains in quality, credibility, and coverage have come at a cost. The planned budget increased by 59% between 2015 and 2020, a rise covering the higher number and greater diversity of MOs being assessed and the methodology that has expanded progressively to cover new areas while being adapted to different MOs. This rise also includes the development of new products.

In ramping up to deliver on its agenda, the MOPAN Secretariat is undertaking too many activities relative to its budget. This poses a risk to future delivery and quality. In particular, the impact on staff time of the efforts to increase assessment credibility and utility has been underestimated these last few years.

Finally, MOPAN has found it difficult in recent years to achieve the appropriate balance between its governance and operations. There have been many efforts to identify processes that are fit for their intended purpose. New governance arrangements were issued in 2019 to formalise some key processes and roles. Notwithstanding these changes, the current situation remains less than satisfactory from the perspectives of both MOPAN members and the Secretariat. Generally speaking, a professional secretariat dedicated exclusively to MOPAN contrasts with member country representatives for whom MOPAN is but one of many areas of responsibility.

To what extent is MOPAN fulfilling members' needs for accountability information and supporting the performance of the multilateral system?

Members and MOs use MOPAN assessments in different ways. Most members use MOPAN assessments in their accountability processes for multilateral aid; some rely heavily on MOPAN reports rather than on bilateral review processes for factual information about MOs' organisational performance arrangements. However, assessments are not used systematically for monitoring or dialogue with MOs. In most cases, in most countries, their use depends largely on individuals and contexts. Finally, MOPAN assessments are rarely used in budgetary allocation processes or to inform multilateral policy.

Some MOs do use MOPAN assessments, even though they are not geared to their needs. Generally, the assessments are used in conjunction with other lines of evidence to address specific organisational and management issues of which management is already aware. Some MOs are eager to use MOPAN assessments to open a dialogue, but MOPAN members have rarely reacted to such an opportunity. MOPAN's new analytical products have proven that it can produce credible learning products using an approach that is often more collaborative which are then used by both members and MOs.

Specific findings:

Most members use MOPAN assessments as part of their accountability processes for multilateral aid, typically as part of due diligence processes or for reporting to governments or parliaments. The assessments, which would be otherwise unaffordable or impossible to obtain for some countries, provide a unique source of factual information on MOs' organisational performance arrangements. Even larger countries, such as the UK, have put their own bilateral review processes on hold in recent years and have relied instead on MOPAN assessments. This has reduced transaction costs for MOs, but only on performance arrangements, whereas the majority of the reporting burden is now linked to earmarking and thematic issues.

MOPAN assessments are rarely used in budgetary allocation processes. The role of evidence-based assessments is usually marginal with respect to providing voluntary core funding, which is a strategic process and a political statement in which MOPAN serves as a safeguard. However, a few member countries use MOPAN assessments when allocating earmarked funding to compare MO performance. This use raises validity issues as assessment ratings are not intended to be comparable across MOs.

MOPAN assessments are also used to steer and monitor the relationship between a country and an MO. This use is established in countries that have systematic processes to engage with MOs and a strong culture of performance. Elsewhere, this kind of use is contingent on individuals, the context, or the availability of other sources of information. Only a few member countries use the MOPAN assessment process and the opportunity provided by serving as an institutional lead (IL) to actively support their partnerships with MOs. In general, it is the rare multilateral desk officer who is familiar with MOPAN. More often, desk officers are likely to prioritise substantive or thematic issues over organisational performance in their analysis of and engagement with MOs. Finally, in most countries, MOPAN is usually perceived as responding to operational concerns and is not used for strategic decision-making.

At the beginning of the evaluation, the possibility that MOs could use MOPAN assessments was considered questionable. It was generally assumed that most MOs either do not use MOPAN assessments at all or use them only in very limited ways. But in fact, some MOs use MOPAN assessments along with other studies to support ongoing reforms that address very specific operational and management issues, especially those related to evaluation and results frameworks. That MOPAN assessments are external makes them useful for bringing issues to the attention of MO executive boards and governing bodies. Organisations "under pressure" – that are losing members or have issues around reputation or growth – use MOPAN assessments even more intensively. First and second assessments are also more likely than subsequent ones to generate useful information.

A few MOs also use MOPAN assessments to support their fundraising activities pointing to reforms that have been implemented and to demonstrate that they are responsive to demands. However, MOPAN members do not take advantage of these opportunities sufficiently to support the reforms or to help MOs address fundraising challenges, which results in missed opportunities for supporting MO performance and reduced impact.

Finally, MOPAN's recent analytical products on climate change, the UNDS reform, and sexual exploitation and harassment (SEAH) offer an alternative pathway for supporting the performance of the multilateral system. These products are proof that MOPAN can produce credible learning products that members and MOs use. The studies have addressed critical issues in a timely manner and have been well received by members and MOs. MOPAN's work on SEAH is particularly noteworthy. Thanks to a collaborative process, the work was broadly taken up on the multilateral scene. However, MOPAN is not currently organised to deliver such products. (See MOPAN's continued relevance.)

To what extent is MOPAN's work relevant in an evolving multilateral context and for supporting the coherence of efforts to improve the multilateral system?

MOPAN's current methodology does not reflect some contemporary challenges faced by MOs since the assessment framework was not designed to meet their needs, but rather those of members. More broadly, MOPAN's methodology is rooted in a view of multilateral effectiveness focused on policies, frameworks, and guidelines to support the direct delivery of aid, whereas MOs increasingly face more intangible issues, including working in partnership, co-ordination, and catalysing complex development outcomes.

MOPAN's new analytical products could bridge this divide and support the evolution of its framework in a transparent way. However, MOPAN would need to address emerging challenges when delivering these studies, including adapting ways of working that emphasise knowledge-brokering and allow for responding to opportunities to promote their use when they arise.

Specific findings:

MOPAN assessments are designed to meet the needs of MOPAN members rather than those of MOs. To expect MOs to use them assumes that the information that MOPAN provides to members is also relevant to the MOs, whereas this is largely unlikely: MOPAN uses non-specific indicators speaking to aspects of accountability and management processes for which the assessed organisations are likely to already be aware of existing challenges. What is less obvious is how to develop and systematically implement processes and ways of working in very complex, decentralised environments, and how to gain traction internally and externally to promote the needed behaviour changes.

Furthermore, MOPAN's methodology reflects the fact that MOs deliver interventions directly, and assumes that effective organisational performance systems begin with policies, frameworks, and guidelines. Yet the work and effectiveness of MOs are linked increasingly to more intangible activities involving partnerships, co-ordination, and catalysing complex development outcomes. Consequently, MOPAN's criteria and indicators no longer adequately reflect the current challenges or performance standards of MOs.

MOPAN's new analytical products offer an avenue for addressing these challenges – by providing a basis for adapting the methodology and helping actors in the multilateral system deal with intractable problems. But they carry their own challenges. In particular, providing policy insights cannot be dissociated from adopting a policy perspective whereas MOPAN members may not agree on the way forward for certain multilateral issues. Moreover, MOPAN is not organised to deliver learning products. "Pushing" information towards decision makers means developing processes to broker the knowledge, and being reactive and opportunistic. This requires a degree of organisational flexibility that neither the MOPAN Secretariat nor member representatives today possess.

Evaluation recommendations

Recommendations

These recommendations reflect the following assumptions:

- Members' and multilateral organisations (MOs) use will continue to be an important criterion for judging MOPAN's success.

- Members will continue to assume that MOPAN should be an instrument for accountability and learning.

- MOPAN will remain dedicated to issues of organisational performance.

- Some changes will be acceptable, especially in the Secretariat's role and methodology.

Recommendations R1 to R4 relate to the governance of and rationale for MOPAN; R5 and R6 to the assessment methodology and process, and R7 to R9 to strategies to promoting the use of MOPAN products.

R1: MOPAN should clarify how its activities are expected to support organisational performance of MOs in addition to addressing members' accountability needs.

Context — Today's MOPAN prioritises the accountability needs of donors and expects that the information produced will be useful to MOs. But this arrangement is only one of many possibilities. Another approach would be to identify ways to help MOs improve their organisational effectiveness more directly and thereby contribute to the effectiveness of the multilateral system, while still satisfying members' accountability needs.

Action — Clarify MOPAN's mission and strategic priorities, especially how MOPAN activities are expected to support organisational performance in MOs and the nature of the performance relationship that MOPAN wants with MOs - one of accounter/accountee, or one of partnership?

R2: MOPAN members should adopt a medium-term strategic vision and specific accountability processes to support it.

Context — MOPAN governance has remained a concern, despite several attempts to strike an appropriate balance between operational and strategic issues. New arrangements were adopted in 2019 but still face implementation challenges that may have been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the inability to hold in-person meetings and dialogue. The capacity of MOPAN members to provide strategic direction and define the Secretariat's room for manoeuvre to implement it is one of the major issues.

Action — Members should agree on a medium-term mandate reflecting a shared strategic vision (e.g. MOPAN 2030) and request that the Head of Secretariat (HoS) present a programme and budget in support of it. Accountability arrangements should be established to support steering by the members, in addition to reviewing the programme of work and budget. The HoS would be accountable for realising his/her programme and strategic priorities and thus free to decide on how to implement it.

R3: MOPAN members should more clearly define their non-financial contributions and make a clear commitment to provide them.

Context — The equilibrium has shifted between members and the Secretariat over recent years about their respective share of MOPAN work. Even members who want to play a more active role in MOPAN's work face time and resource constraints.

Action — A commitment to spend a defined amount of time on MOPAN on specific tasks would help increase members' involvement and use. In particular, the role of MOPAN members in some aspects of the assessments and other products, particularly in promoting their dissemination and uptake, should be clarified.

R4: MOPAN should establish its secretariat as a stand-alone entity within the OECD and secure greater certainty of funding.

Context — Hosting MOPAN and its secretariat at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD) has helped put the network on a solid footing and supported the establishment of a fully-fledged Secretariat. However, steps are now needed to consolidate these gains and support their ongoing relevance and longevity.

Action — The MOPAN Secretariat should become a stand-alone entity within the OECD with a set of rules to guide its relationship with the organisation and clarify the respective roles and functions of the Steering Committee (SC) and the Secretariat (e.g. for the appointment/retention of the HoS). This arrangement should seek to ensure MOPAN's independence and alignment to other priorities that will emerge from the upcoming MoU and mid-term vision.

R5: MOPAN members should decide on the basic set of indicators they need for their reporting purposes to help identify possible opportunities for change.

Context — The methodology has become more complex and burdensome in recent years, with more indicators to cover issues deemed important by members. This has implications in terms of complexity, workload for MOs, and assessment costs. Reducing the scope of MOPAN assessments is one possible pathway to more modular approaches, and especially for supporting organisational performance (R1). However, several members have integrated MOPAN into their own accountability systems and now depend on the publication of MOPAN assessments, which could block any change in the methodology in particular areas.

Action — MOPAN members should agree on a smaller set of indicators that they need for their own processes. These indicators will ensure continuity of accountability systems.

R6: MOPAN should review its methodology with a view to increasing the use-to-cost ratio.

Context — Most recently, MOPAN's goal has been first and foremost to ensure the reliability of the methodology, and then to improve its relevance. If the current methodology were to be kept as such, the financial envelope needed for each assessment might need to be reconsidered to reflect the current costs of adaptation and engagement (probably +20%). If the assessments are to provide insights that are useful for both members and MOs, the budget allocated to service provision will probably need to be increased as well. In particular, it will be necessary to ensure that the cost of retrieving information from MOs does not prevent the consultants from spending adequate resources on analysing the observed situation and providing expert insights.

Action — The MOPAN methodology should be reconsidered with a view to increasing the extent to which members and MOs alike use assessments without increasing the cost. To do so, the methodology should undergo a cycle of iterative improvement to develop relevant, useful standards for both members and MOs.

R7: The Secretariat should help members use the assessments more, and more effectively.

Context — The impact of MOPAN depends largely on what its members do with the assessments and products. In recent years, MOPAN's engagement function has been active in helping members make the best use of MOPAN and its products (e.g. with learning events and the recent IL guidelines).

Action — The Secretariat should help those member countries willing to make better use of assessments. We suggest as a general rule that content and initiatives led by members be the primary means of addressing this recommendation (R3), and that the Secretariat act more as a facilitator, taking the lead only when members cannot provide the needed time and resources.

R8: MOPAN should explore new strategies to trigger sought after changes in MOs.

Context — The narrow and specific nature of MOs' use today primarily reflects the design of MOPAN assessments. Alternatives to the current methodology are provided above (R6). Different mechanisms to trigger uptake and use by MOs to improve performance could also be developed, but only if members expect this (R1).

Action — Opportunities to engage with MO representatives and staff more systematically before, during, and after assessments should be explored. In particular, a follow-up to assessments should be organised through a meeting of MOPAN members, especially those who have expressed a specific interest in an MO, including ILs.

R9: MOPAN should use learning products in support of clearly stated policy goals.

Context — MOPAN has the potential to produce relevant knowledge for both current and future multilateral debates. Its value added from the members' perspective is to provide access to and a good understanding of a large share of the current MOs. However, it is important that this knowledge be channelled into policy debates. Learning products need to have an opportunity to be used. Members have an important role here to "read the room" and identify situations in which additional knowledge can be used and by whom.

Action — Any learning products should contain clearly-stated policy goals consistent with those of sponsoring members and relevant MOs.