

TOOL SHEET 6

VALUATION PRINCIPLES

AND CAPITALIZATION OF OSC

Evaluating and capitalizing on the interventions of CSOs co-financed by AFD is of great importance.

The aim of this note is to present the main principles that should guide the evaluation and capitalization practices of CSO Initiatives. These principles are not set in stone, and can be adjusted, clarified and enriched to take account of the diversity of CSO interventions and evolving practices, particularly in order to identify the most appropriate evaluation methods and tools, or to support new experiments in this field. In addition to the methods defined by AFD in the methodological guide and detailed below, there is ongoing dialogue with CSOs on this subject.

The principles concerning CSO Initiatives projects are in line with AFD's general guidelines for project evaluation, which are set out in the AFD Group's monitoring and evaluation ^{policy}³⁰. In this policy, AFD promotes evaluations that are influential, i.e. useful and used. To achieve this, evaluations must involve the stakeholders and, above all, the counterparts (in the case of I-OSCs, the supporting CSO) and be as close as possible to the others; joint evaluations (co-directed by AFD and the organization receiving AFD funding) are therefore promoted. In addition, evaluations must be tailor-made in terms of questioning, method and timing.

To enhance the transparency of its actions and facilitate the exchange of best practices with other sustainable development players, AFD intends to systematize the publication of the results of its own evaluations and encourage the publication of evaluations carried out by its partners. In addition to this evaluative approach, AFD encourages capitalization exercises, cross-disciplinary studies, exchanges of experience that can be widely disseminated, as well as any process of research into evaluation methods and tools adapted to the interventions of development players.

The evaluation of CSO Initiatives projects is an integral part of the assessment of development aid actions and practices. This evaluation is motivated by the diversity of actors, strategies, objectives and actions, and by the granting of public funds. However, it raises particular challenges in terms of measuring results, due to their often complex aims to bring about social change (capacity-building, seeking influence through advocacy, partnerships, etc.), their size and their modus operandi.

Over the past 20 years, encouraged by donors, CSOs have fully embraced the culture of evaluation, and almost systematically include evaluations in their projects. The dissemination of completed evaluations has also greatly improved, becoming a real support for exchange, learning, improved practices and shared capitalization.

³⁰ The evaluation policy is currently being drawn up and should be validated before the end of 2022.

AFD is pursuing its dialogue with CSOs on issues relating to the evaluation of the projects it co-finances. AFD continues to believe that monitoring, evaluation and capitalization practices should be pragmatic, innovative and open. Reflection and research on evaluation methods and tools adapted to the diversity of interventions must be supported. Over and above the need for accountability, CSOs are themselves concerned by these issues, and are often the bearers of innovations in this field.

Evaluations of CSO Initiatives projects are of two types: individual project evaluations (cf. § 1) and transversal assessments (see § 2).

1. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE EVALUATION OF OSC PROJECTS CO-FINANCED BY AFD

a) Methodology

CSO Initiatives project evaluations are in line with good practice in development project evaluation. They are based on the principles proposed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) for the evaluation of development projects (impartiality and independence, credibility, usefulness, participation and coordination). They are generally carried out with reference to the six criteria defined by the DAC (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability). This normative framework serves as a guideline, but it should not prevent evaluations from being tailored to the specific characteristics of the projects or project portfolios being evaluated. AFD promotes evaluations that are influential and therefore designed to meet the objectives and uses of evaluation as defined with stakeholders. In addition to the DAC criteria and/or by referring to them, it is important to identify the evaluation questions that the evaluation will seek to answer.

The evaluation must be useful to the CSO in clarifying questions relating to the project, assessing its implementation and results, and drawing lessons from it. It is therefore not a question of using all the DAC criteria in each evaluation, at the risk of having an evaluation that skims over the project and provides few lessons.

Evaluation of the first project cycle (phase 1), for example, will focus more on the criteria of relevance and coherence, but will not necessarily look at effects/impacts. On the other hand, in phase 3 of a project, the evaluation will go into greater depth on the question of effects, changes, impact, sustainability, etc. Evaluation must be "tailor-made".

Other, more cross-functional criteria often need to be taken into account, depending on the nature of the project: measuring the changes to which the project has contributed, the effects produced in terms of capacity-building, governance, empowerment, the quality of partnerships, the contribution/influence of public policies, are more complex notions that require a more elaborate approach, but which must now be more fully integrated into the evaluations carried out.

The evaluation of CSO projects should also consider whether or not cross-cutting themes (gender, biodiversity/climate, youth) are taken into account. The ToRs that guide the evaluator's work can include the corresponding MPN/CSO guide tool sheets (tool sheets 2, 3 and 4).

AFD is open to a variety of evaluation methodologies. Most project evaluations are based on project objectives. Objective-free approaches (*outcome harvesting*, *most significant change*) can also be useful, depending on the evaluation issues at stake. The use of change-oriented approaches (COAs) is encouraged³¹. AFD also encourages impact assessments, which focus on a specific question of impact at project level and aim to

³¹ <https://f3e.asso.fr/boite-a-outils/>. See also the guides [Facilitating a "vision and pathways to change" workshop](#) and [How to monitor and evaluate change](#).

to attribute this impact to the project itself. These evaluations concern projects that are relevant both in terms of research questions (they respond to a knowledge deficit) and in operational terms (their results will be useful to CSOs, AFD and even the development community). They are based on specific methodologies, often experimental or quasi-experimental with ^{counterfactual}³², but there are also other mixed methodologies, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (contribution analysis, qualitative comparative analysis, realistic evaluation, etc.), which AFD also seeks to promote. I-OSC projects can benefit from the PAIRES partnership between AFD and IRD, which finances this type of evaluation for interventions co-financed by AFD.

b) Evaluation methods

The final individual project evaluation must be planned from the outset of the project, and human, technical and financial resources must be mobilized for this task. The evaluation schedule must also be anticipated. Particular care needs to be taken here in the case of multi-phase initiatives. The evaluation must be planned into the project implementation/design schedule, so that it can feed into the development of the next phase.

In these cases, the lessons learned from the evaluation of one phase should be used to develop the next phase, and should be incorporated into the NIONG (dedicated appendix). The evaluation report should accompany the NIONG.

In addition, the evaluation must be designed as a participatory process (co-elaboration with the main partners involved in the project); it must therefore mobilize as many of the project's stakeholders as possible: local associations, beneficiaries, institutional and financial partners.

AFD encourages the use of external expertise. However, the CSO may propose that the project evaluation be carried out internally. In cases where the final evaluation is mandatory (cf. below), MPN/CSO will assess the relevance of this solution, particularly with regard to the degree of independence of the internal evaluators, MPN/CSO is also open to peer evaluations (evaluation piloted by or involving an-e evaluator-trice from an NGO working on the same themes but who has not been involved-e in the project being evaluated).

Most evaluations of CSO Initiatives projects are final evaluations, i.e. evaluations carried out in the last year or half-year of project implementation. CSOs can, however, plan to carry out an *in itinere* evaluation, i.e. an evaluation carried out over the course of the project, an exercise distinguished from reinforced monitoring by the fact that it involves an external evaluative analysis. This can be a fruitful learning exercise.

The cost of evaluations is eligible in the financing plan submitted to MPN/CSO. In the case of external final evaluations, CSOs are invited to select the service provider following an open invitation to tender or, at the very least, a restricted consultation. In practice, except in special cases and depending on the size and number of countries involved in the project, a minimum budget of 25K is recommended.

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In all cases, the terms of reference will be submitted to AFD for a no-objection opinion (NNO) before the evaluation is launched, and at least 6 months before the end of the project.

The selected evaluation team is invited to contact the person in charge of the project at MPN/OSC for a discussion.

c) AFD's individual assessment requirements

³² Rigorous evaluation aimed at identifying the effects strictly attributable to an intervention by means of a counterfactual, i.e. by comparing the evolution of a treated population with the situation that would have prevailed in the absence of intervention.

AFD therefore encourages CSOs to integrate a voluntary evaluation process into projects of a certain size, without making it a systematic obligation, except within the framework of certain specific instruments detailed below.

- A final external evaluation is required as part of program agreements: it must be carried out at the end of each phase and precede any new application for funding. At the end of the last phase of the agreement, a study of the effects and impact will be required.
- A final external evaluation is required as part of multi-year partnership agreements (CPP): it must be carried out at the end of each 4-year phase and precede any new funding application. It should focus on measuring effects and impact.
- A final external evaluation is required as part of multi-stakeholder collaborative programs (PCPA): this must be carried out at the end of each phase, and precede any new application for funding. During the last phase of the PCPA, a study of effects and impact is strongly encouraged.
- A final external evaluation is required for multi-phase projects and programs. If a CSO plans to implement its project over several phases, it must carry out an external evaluation at the end of each phase before a new funding application can be considered.
- For large-scale field programs implemented over a long period (more than 6 years), effect and impact studies will be strongly encouraged, and will give rise to in-depth discussions between MPC/MPN/CSO and the CSO prior to the exercise, and at the latest during the mid-term meeting.
- For projects of general interest, an external evaluation is required at the end of each phase, and an evaluation of the effects and impact of the change processes induced is required every nine years (every three phases). This effects and impact study must be planned from the start of the project in year 1.
- Ideally, the evaluation report should be attached to the NIONG (project document) for the next phase; failing this, the interim report will be accepted, provided that the final report is submitted no later than the start of project appraisal.
- Evaluation reports or summaries are published on the CSO website. In line with AFD's policy of transparency, and subject to the CSO's agreement, evaluation reports and/or summaries may be published on the AFD website (a publication format may be proposed to the CSO).

d) Monitoring and evaluation

AFD encourages the implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems right from the start of a project, particularly in the case of large-scale, complex projects. Monitoring the context, changes and results of interventions is an essential element of project management and quality. It also reinforces the effectiveness of the final external evaluation (without replacing it). The cost of this monitoring and evaluation is eligible in the financing plan submitted to AFD.

e) Capitalization terms and conditions

Capitalizing on experience is a collective process that enables players to strengthen their capacities and share their knowledge with others. It is a process that leads to individual and collective learning and progress. Capitalization can be carried out over the course of an intervention, and is based on the participation of stakeholders in the intervention, just as in an evaluation. If external expertise is used, it is positioned more as a companion, facilitator and animator than in the role of "objectifying" expert, as in an evaluation.

Capitalization exercises are strongly encouraged by AFD (they are required as part of program agreements, multi-year partnership agreements and multi-stakeholder concerted programs); they enable lessons to be drawn from actions carried out and widely disseminated for the benefit of the CSO community and international solidarity in general, as well as enhancing the contribution of non-governmental action to development and international solidarity.

CSOs are free to choose the most relevant and useful areas and methods of capitalization; they are encouraged to explore all possible means of capitalization (media, web, etc.). AFD has no particular requirements regarding the content and form of these capitalizations, but we do want them to demonstrate their usefulness and be justified in terms of the project they are part of, and lastly, that they be disseminated as widely as possible.

All these steps can be supported. CSOs can consult the F3E website (www.f3e.fr), which offers a number of specific methodological tools and very useful training courses. The F3E also supports and co-finances studies commissioned by its member organizations. To select the studies to be supported, the F3E issues a call for expressions of intent to its members every autumn. The studies supported can be upstream studies (preliminary studies, support for participatory planning, support for capitalization, collective studies) or evaluation-related exercises (evaluations, post-evaluation support, support for setting up or improving monitoring-evaluation systems, effects and impact studies). To join F3E: <https://f3e.asso.fr/devenir-membre/>

2. Transversal studies/evaluations managed by AFD

In addition to project evaluations, AFD may itself commission and manage evaluations that are broader in scope than a single project, and more strategic in scope.

Broad-scope evaluations are conducted with a view to learning for CSOs, AFD and the development community. They are part of an examination of the relevance, coherence and effectiveness of non-governmental actions at the level of an instrument, a sector or sub-sector, a country or a region, in relation to the objectives of the CSO Initiatives mechanism, or even more broadly with regard to a development issue. MPN/OSC carries out these studies in close collaboration with AFD's evaluation department, and some may also be conducted jointly with the MEAE or the Commission d'évaluation de l'aide publique au développement³³. AFD is also likely to launch transversal studies, capitalizations and meta-evaluations on the non-governmental action it supports.

The main aim of these transversal evaluations is to provide input for reflection and strategic dialogue on substantive issues of interest to CSOs and AFD. They concern financing instruments and the practices of actors. For example, they may concern issues such as support for the structuring of associations, capacity-building support, partnership quality, links with public policies, multi-actor intervention, the contribution of advocacy activities, local development and human rights.

Documentary resources

- To consult F3E publications and methodological resources: <https://f3e.asso.fr/eclairer/publications/>
- To consult the studies supported by the F3E: <https://f3e.asso.fr/recherche-croisee/>

³³ Decree no. 2022-787 of May 6, 2022 on the operating procedures of the official development assistance evaluation commission.

- Evaluation of microprojects: <https://f3e.asso.fr/comment-suivre-et-evaluer-un-microprojet-de-solidarite-internationale/>
- Evaluation of ECSI projects: <https://f3e.asso.fr/evaluer-les-effets-de-ses-actions-decsi/>
- AFD: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/analyser-suivre-et-evaluer-sa-contribution-au-changement-social-giving-meaning-to-the-practices-of-international-solidarity-and-decentralized-cooperation>
- AFD: <https://www.afd.fr/fr/les-evaluations>
 - [Evaluation of the FISONG instrument](#)
 - [Assessment and capitalization of multi-stakeholder concerted programs](#)
 - [Evaluation of human rights projects: https://www.afd.fr/fr/comment-contribuer-au-strengthening-human-rights](https://www.afd.fr/fr/comment-contribuer-au-strengthening-human-rights)
 - [Responding to crises: AFD, Fondation de France and NGO financing in Haiti following the earthquake](#)