

Chapter 2 Results of Field Studies Conducted by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation

2-1 Outline of Evaluation Study

(1) Background and Objectives

For the purpose of increasing transparency and objectivity of evaluation results, the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, as part of its activities since fiscal 2003, has evaluated terminal evaluations conducted by JICA (secondary evaluation) to review evaluation quality and improvements.

Secondary evaluation is a scheme in which external experts review the validity of JICA's project evaluation using terminal evaluation reports (evaluation conducted by JICA: internal evaluation) that are open to the public from the same viewpoints and information as the public have. Since its introduction of a secondary evaluation method in fiscal 2003, the committee has kept improving the method through various efforts such as revising the check sheet and discussing differences in evaluation tendencies between internal and external evaluators. Until now, however, it has not been reviewed whether various results of secondary evaluation properly reflect actual situations.

In response to the growing awareness of these issues, discussions within the committee in view of secondary evaluation reached the conclusion that they assess the effectiveness of the secondary evaluation method and provide recommendations based more on actual situations. Finally, it was decided that its members should actually visit project sites to check the facts described in the terminal evaluations, the feedback status of the evaluation results, and the subsequent emergence of outcomes after the evaluation, and then make comparisons with the results of the secondary evaluation in order to examine the appropriateness and effectiveness of secondary evaluation and the status of use of evaluation results.

(2) Evaluation Study Members

For this evaluation study, the sub-working group was set up under the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, consisting of a chairperson and three Committee members, the secretariat of the Japan Evaluation Society, and the Office of Evaluation of JICA. The sub-working group discussed the study methods (framework, viewpoints, and study items) for field studies and analyzed the results of the field studies.

[Kenya] October 29 to November 4, 2006

Hiromitsu Muta: Chairperson of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation (Dean, Graduate School of Decision Science and Technology, Tokyo Institute of Technology)



Field study conducted by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation

Hiddenori Nakamura: Secretariat of Japan Evaluation Society

Masahiro Ueki: Office of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Department, JICA

[Philippines] October 22 to 25, 2006

Atsuko Aoyama: Member of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation (Professor, Department of International Health, School of Medicine, Nagoya University)

Kaoru Hayashi: Member of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation (Professor, Faculty of International Studies, Bunkyo University)

Hiddenori Nakamura: Secretariat of Japan Evaluation Society

Masashi Yamamoto: Office of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Department, JICA

[Laos] October 22 to 27, 2006

Atsuko Isoda: Member of the Advisory Committee on Evaluation (Professor, Kagawa Nutrition University/Vice-President, Japan International Volunteer Center)

Michiko Yamashita: Secretariat of Japan Evaluation Society

Yuichi Ichikawa: Office of Evaluation, Planning and Coordination Department, JICA

* The field study in Laos received the partial participation of committee member Tsuneo Sugishita (Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Ibaraki University), who was visiting the country for other purposes.

(3) Study Items

Based on the background and objectives mentioned in section (1), the following study items were set up to conduct field studies. Prior to the field studies, the evaluation study team conducted secondary evaluation on the evaluation reports of the target projects based on the check sheet of secondary evaluation (fiscal 2006 version). Using these results and the past secondary evaluation results, the evaluation study team made a comparative examination of the findings from the field studies.

(Comparative examination with secondary evaluation results)

- Compare the secondary evaluation results of the target projects with actual situations observed through the field studies, and examine the reason for any discrepancy in evaluation results.

(Check the current situations of the target projects)

- Check how the counterparts have responded to the evaluation results, recommendations, and lessons learned obtained from the terminal evaluation.
- Check whether possible impacts described in the terminal evaluation have been generated and whether sustainability has been maintained.

(Examine improvements in JICA's project evaluation)

- Examine JICA's project evaluation and management based on the actual conditions identified in the field studies.

(4) Target Projects

Seven projects were selected for field studies from among projects on which secondary evaluation was conducted in fiscal 2004 and 2005. The selection was made with the following conditions: a project-level ex-post evaluation was not performed in fiscal 2006 for the purpose of avoiding overlapped evaluation; a subsequent or similar project has been implemented, allowing the interview about the situations during and after the project from relevant stakeholders. In addition, the scores of the past secondary evaluations of the target projects were also considered to be dispersed.

(Two projects in Kenya) Strengthening of Mathematics and Science in Secondary Education Project / Promotion of Sustainable Community Based Small-holder Irrigation

(Two projects in the Philippines) Research and Development Project on High Productivity Rice Technology / The Project for Upgrading Human Resource Development for Air Navigation Systems Specialist at the Civil Aviation Training Center Manila

(Three projects in Laos) Aquaculture Improvement and Extension Project / The Project on Electric Power Technical Standard Establishment / The Forest Conservation and Afforestation Project (Phase 2)

2-2 Study Results

(1) Comparison with the Results of Secondary Evaluation

Since fiscal 2004, the quality of projects based on the reports has been assessed together with the quality of primary evaluation in the secondary evaluation. Accordingly, the field studies also assessed based on these two viewpoints whether the results of secondary evaluation are different from actual situations, and if so what the reasons are for such differences.

The results of the field studies are outlined as follows.

[Study Results]

With regard to the quality of primary evaluation, both comparison of the results of primary and secondary evaluation before the field studies and findings from the field studies identified no major factors that may cause changes in the value judgments in the secondary evaluation conducted preliminarily. Therefore, it can be concluded that the secondary check on the contents of evaluation reports will enable us to grasp the general tendency of quality of JICA's project evaluation. It should be noted, however, that information available for this study was somehow limited compared to the terminal evaluations as information was collected only one day or so for each project, whereas a field study is usually conducted over a few weeks in terminal evaluation.

With regard to the quality of projects based on the reports, an analysis was made to see whether the secondary ratings on projects based on the terminal evaluation reports in terms of the DAC five evaluation criteria, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability were appropriate compared to the actual conditions. As a result, five out of seven projects were found to be appropriate while the scores for two were considered slightly higher or lower compared with the description of the respective evaluation reports. This indicates that secondary evaluation on the quality of projects based on evaluation reports is also appropriate and the project evaluation through secondary evaluation is also effective.

As mentioned above, the effectiveness of secondary evaluation was confirmed overall, but some problems that need to be improved were observed in individual projects; for example, no reference was made to points that were assessed in past evaluations such as ex-ante and mid-term evaluation; information sources in the evaluation were not identified; information sources were limited to immediate stakeholders of the project and no interviews were conducted with related organizations and beneficiaries; collected data was not appropriately processed; and descriptions in the PDMs are not consistent between Japanese and English. The field studies also revealed that counterparts' opinions were not reflected appropriately in some evaluation results although JICA's project evaluation, including terminal evaluation, shall be conducted jointly with the partner country in principle. For these reasons, the quality of some projects based on the reports was rated lower or higher than the actual situations.

One of the reasons for the discrepancy between the results of secondary evaluation and findings from a field study is that a terminal evaluation report, which will be used for secondary evaluation, is based on the information available a few months prior to the end of the projects. JICA's terminal evaluation, which provides recommendations for project improvements based on the evaluation results, is conducted in this way to set time to respond to the recommendations. At the time of terminal evaluation, naturally a prospective evaluation is performed on effectiveness, impact, and sustainability, which are the degrees of achievement of the project purpose, the relations between the project purpose

and overall goal, and continuity of the activities after the termination of the project, respectively. From the field studies, it was recognized that one project did not actually meet the prospective level of the achievement at the time of the terminal evaluation, though the terminal evaluation concluded it was effective or most likely to generate outcomes.

(2) Current Situations of the Target Projects

Though the primary objective of this study is to examine the effectiveness of secondary evaluation as part of the mission assigned to the Advisory Committee on Evaluation, for the purpose of checking the situations of JICA's project evaluation, this study extends its scope to evaluating how the evaluation results have been utilized, particularly recommendations/lessons obtained from the terminal evaluation, and whether estimates at the time of terminal evaluation was appropriate. It also includes an analysis of impacts that would be achieved within several years after the end of the project and an assessment of the subsequent status of sustainability.

[Study Results]

The field studies found that six projects generally responded with recommendations/lessons obtained from the terminal evaluations and one project failed to do so with many of them. Impacts and sustainability estimated in the terminal evaluations have been mostly realized in two out of seven projects, indicating that the estimates at the time of terminal evaluation was appropriate, whereas impacts and sustainability have not been achieved at the satisfactory level in two projects. For the remaining three projects, which are succeeded by a subsequent project, it is difficult to determine whether the achievement of impacts and sustainability is directly attributed to the target project or to the subsequent one.

The study also looked into the situations of contributing and inhibiting factors that had been analyzed in the terminal evaluations. As a result, contributing or inhibiting factors that were described in the terminal evaluation reports were found to still exist in three projects. Though one of the target projects had received negative evaluation on its sustainability in the terminal evaluation, it experienced drastic positive change in the social environment, such as increasing social demands for the project outputs after the end of the project, thus the counterpart department in charge was upgraded to a ministry with a larger budget allocation. On the other hand, the field studies identified inhibiting factors in three projects, which had not been observed in the terminal evaluations.

(3) Recommendations

1) Improvement of Secondary Evaluation

As for secondary evaluation, effectiveness of the evaluation method has been confirmed in terms of both evaluation of the quality of primary evaluation and project evaluation by secondary evaluators based on primary evaluation reports. Although serious

improvements will not be required in this regard, continuous efforts for improvements are preferable in order to draw out more accurate evaluation results.

a. Improvement of Secondary Evaluation Check Sheet

—In order to conduct more accurate secondary evaluation, variance in viewpoints among evaluators should be minimized in the evaluation based on the secondary evaluation check sheet. For example, with regard to “evaluation team composition—impartiality and specialty” under the evaluation criterion of evaluation framework, evaluation depends on the perspectives of the evaluator on project evaluation (internal/external, impartiality/neutrality). To resolve such an issue, terminal evaluation should be clearly defined within JICA and the viewpoints in the check sheet should be defined more clearly in order to avoid the variance of value judgments of second evaluators.

—The environment surrounding JICA's project evaluation has been changing due to the introduction of ex-ante evaluation, concepts about PDM developed for evaluation (PDMe), and projects managed by overseas offices. As more projects are now subject to secondary evaluation with mixed framework before and after the introduction, the check sheet of secondary evaluation needs to be revised appropriately to respond to those situations.

b. Additional Case Analysis for Extracting Good/Bad Practices

—Since the effectiveness of secondary evaluation has been confirmed through the field studies, implementation of field studies in the same way that the study in fiscal 2006 was conducted should not be necessary. However, as a result of secondary evaluation, good or bad practices provide elements that can be utilized to improve future project evaluation and management, such as the writing of evaluation reports and the project management method. Therefore, lessons applicable to other projects can be extracted from additional analysis of several projects picked up from the results of secondary evaluation on what causes the difference in evaluation. This can be realized by referring to additional information on individual projects (implementation study report, mid-term evaluation report, and project completion report prepared by the project at its end) as circumstances demand. Efforts should not be limited to the project in question; by comparing the evaluation of one project with the evaluation reports of other projects in a similar sector and referring to the ex-ante evaluation sheet of its subsequent project, the quality of secondary evaluation can be improved.

2) Improvement of Terminal Evaluation (Primary Evaluation)

a. Standardization of Reporting Items of Terminal Evaluation

—The items and amount of information described and the depth of analysis in the terminal evaluation reports vary from report to report. Though the Revised JICA Evaluation Handbook (March 2004) provides a table of contents, from looking at the actual

reports, it seems that the way the background of PDM revisions and monitoring conditions were described is not uniform across the reports. In order to overcome this problem, the evaluation system requires further improvements; for example, the standardization of reporting items, their contents, and quantity should all be properly known to the project implementation department, and the evaluation and monitoring division should further commit itself to equalizing the overall quality of project evaluation. Moreover, the quality management of evaluation by the project implementation departments themselves can be enhanced, for example, by making a check list of items that should be described in an evaluation report while referring to the efforts on secondary evaluation made by the Advisory Committee on Evaluation to see whether necessary information is included, and, if it is not, whether a reasonable explanation is provided as to why it is not included can be checked before releasing the report.

—JICA's evaluation consists of ex-ante, mid-term, terminal, and ex-post evaluation and the report for each evaluation is made independently in each project. The focus on reporting is different depending on the type of evaluation. Within JICA, these reports are utilized as basic information in the subsequent evaluations, but the general public is less likely to review a series of evaluation reports from ex-ante to ex-post. Therefore, brief descriptions of the past evaluation results are needed.

b. Description of Follow-ups

—Terminal evaluation is conducted a few months prior to the end

of a project so that the project can be improved based on the evaluation results before it ends. Accordingly, effectiveness, which represents the degree of achievement of the project purpose, and impact and sustainability after the project, are usually estimated, leading to unclear status of eventual achievements at the end of the project in many cases. Therefore, additional descriptions should be provided on the degree of achievement of each item and follow-ups, such as measures for areas yet to be achieved, items concerned, and problems based on the situation when the terminal evaluation reports are being compiled.

—Contributing and inhibiting factors, which may change from the time of terminal evaluation due to changes in the situations of the partner country, need to be reviewed in ex-post evaluation.

3) Improvement of Project Management

a. Adopting Program Approach

—When assistance is provided continuously over phases for one implementation agency, it is difficult to determine the effects of each phase after the project is terminated. Also, many projects are implemented in combination with grant aid and yen loans, not independently, and in that case it is difficult to evaluate the effects of technical cooperation alone. In formulating a project plan, therefore, the overall goal should be set first with consideration given to the impact on the overall sector in the partner country, and then the impacts should be considered as a program, including other projects (yen loans, etc.) in the same or related sector in addition to the effects of the precedent and subsequent projects.