

## **Feedback der Arbeitsgruppe „Entwicklungszusammenarbeit“ auf das Statement der Europäischen Evaluationsgesellschaft vom 21.12.2007 bezüglich Evaluationsmethoden**

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Dear Mr. Perrin

our SEVAL working group on "evaluation in development cooperation" fully supports the views expressed in your statement (dated 21.12.2007). Albeit improvements in impact analysis is necessary to improve aid effectiveness, an exclusive focus on randomised control trials as the methodological approach does not reflect adequately the methodological lessons learnt of the past decades.

The EES statement rightly pinpoints to the factors that limit the application of randomised control trials in reality (non-linear relationships of cause effects, differing contexts, ethical reasons). We would especially like to emphasise the following points:

- only a limited amount of today's development cooperation interventions can become subject for such an evaluation method. Most of the relevant aid delivery methods applied (budget support, sector support and other programme based approaches) have complicated and multi-faceted set-ups and complex cause-effect chains
- most benefits of these programmes cannot be allocated randomly to beneficiaries (e.g. policy reforms, infrastructure investments, sector programme, disaster preparedness, etc.) thus a random selection of beneficiaries and control group is rather the exception than the norm
- the randomised control trials tend to put too much emphasis on anticipated changes and therefore neglect unintended impacts and side-effects, and can certainly not explain why they occurred

It is interesting to note that the decade-old paradigm debate between quantitative/experimental designs and qualitative/naturalistic evaluation designs re-emerges. There are no new arguments that would question the need to balance such methods in order to achieve a valid approach. We therefore fully support your plea to apply a multi-method approach in results evaluation and impact assessment. This is not a very new recommendation but needs emphasis given the emerging impression that randomized control trials can scientifically prove why and how aid works by itself. That is a too mechanistic view about the development of diverse societies in the globalisation process.

To conclude, we also believe that the quality and rigour of many evaluations can be improved by more cautiously addressing the issue of constructing and using counterfactuals to interpret the changes. We also support any effort to more seriously analyse cost-effectiveness of project interventions, though the monetisation of many benefits remains a formidable methodological challenge in core areas of development cooperation (e.g. capacity development). Our working group will more closely scrutinise the methodological experiences of Swiss development cooperation agencies in assessing outcomes and impacts of their aid modalities in the coming months.

With best regards

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