UNODC

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNODC Independent Evaluation Section:
Guidelines for Cluster Evaluations

A. Strategy

Projects can undergo a cluster evaluation, if there is a clear substantive rationale that links up projects and if evaluation findings at a cluster level are deemed particularly useful for further strategic planning and programming at an "upstream level". A cluster evaluation entails synthesis, in which tracing of the results of a single project is not per se pursued.

A cluster evaluation might be justified if projects are - or should be - closely related in terms of pursuing similar or complementary objectives. A cluster evaluation should shed light to areas where, e.g. synergies, cooperation, information exchange and joint efforts exist or should exist. Apart from the relevant common thematic area(s), the regional location of projects may further need to be considered for a cluster evaluation to be relevant and feasible. An example would be a cluster evaluation of projects related to trafficking along the opiate route.

B. Funding

Clustering of evaluations means that the scope of an evaluation is increasing. This does not necessarily mean that less funding needs to be reserved, as these evaluations are equally time and resource consuming, often requiring a larger evaluation team composition. Cluster evaluations are typically not "cheaper" or "faster". In some circumstances, however, a cluster evaluation may be more efficient, saving resources as just one evaluation team is hired.

C. Timing

Clustering of projects for evaluation purposes may make particular sense in light of an upcoming country, regional or global programme evaluation, as these assess the outcomes of the cluster evaluations previously conducted and the implementation of the follow-up on evaluation recommendations.

Please note that as a "thumb rule", programme evaluations can only take place if at least half of the therein contained projects (half of the funding of the programme) has been previously evaluated. The findings of independent project evaluations or cluster evaluations both feed into the analysis of the programme evaluation.

For further information please visit the IES website: http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/evaluation/index.html

D. Donor Requirements

If a major donor insists on the respective project to be evaluated separately, clustering should not take place. It is therefore important that clustering of projects for evaluation purposes is discussed at the initial planning stage of a project with the respective donors and agreed upon.

E. IES Involvement

A cluster evaluation may qualify as an In-depth Evaluation. This decision however rests with IES, to be in line with its established and approved biennial work plan.

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