

The 2nd KOICA Development Evaluation Seminar: “How to design and implement field studies in evaluation” (June 14th, 2011)

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1. Objectives of the Seminar

I was honorably invited by the Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) for the 2nd KOICA Development Evaluation Seminar as a speaker. Here I describe the contents of my presentation at the seminar. There are two objectives of the seminar intended by KOICA:

- ✓ To share an overview of process and methodologies of field studies for ex-post evaluation, To exchange views and insights of evaluators in ODA projects.
- ✓ The views expressed in my presentation and described in this article reflect my personal views based on my experiences through the evaluation works for Japan's ODA projects, and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

2. Contents of the Presentation

As requested by the Evaluation Department of KOICA, the presentation was composed of the following contents:

- ✓ Process of ex-post evaluation,
- ✓ How to design field study for ex-post evaluation
- ✓ How to implement field study

- ✓ How to analyze data and information collected by field study for ex-post evaluation
- ✓ How to compile evaluation report

In this article, I explain key issues of field study for ex-post evaluation based on a case of ex-post evaluation on the JICA's project in Morocco which I am engaged in now.

3. Process of Ex-post Evaluation and Implementation Arrangement

The on-going evaluation work targets the projects shown in the table below. These projects were implemented in Morocco under the cooperation by JICA in order to improve maternal health care in rural areas.

Table 1. The Projects Evaluated by JICA

Name of Project	Period	Cooperation Scheme	Project Purpose
The Project for Improvement of Maternal Health Care in Rural Areas	Nov. 2004 – Nov. 2007	Technical Cooperation	To improve maternal health care in rural areas by enhancing capacity of medical staff in rural areas
The Project for Improvement of Maternal Health Care in Rural Areas (Phase II)	Aug. 2006 – May 2008	Grant Aid	To improve maternal health care in rural areas by providing medical equipment and facilities

The schedule for the ex-post evaluation in Morocco is as follows:

- ✓ Selection of external evaluator: Nov. 2010
- ✓ Starting evaluation work: Nov. 2010
- ✓ Development of evaluation framework/ preparation of field study: Dec. 2010– Jan. 2011
Field Study in Morocco: Mar. 2011
- ✓ Evaluation analysis: Apr. – May. 2011
- ✓ Feedback seminar in Morocco: June. 2011
- ✓ Drafting final report: Jul. –Aug. 2011
- ✓ Finalizing evaluation report: Sep. 2011

The implementation arrangement for this evaluation work is as follows:

External Evaluators (Japanese) :	2 experts with 90 man-days in total
Field Study by the Japanese Evaluators	39 man-days in total
Country Assistants (Moroccans):	3 persons with 90 man-days in total

4. Design of Field Study

For design of field study, it is necessary to take the following steps.

a. Confirmation of evaluation purpose and utilization

At the beginning of design of field study, it is inevitable for external evaluators to confirm what the purposes of ex-post evaluation is for the client and how they will utilize evaluation results because the priorities and focuses of evaluation can be differed by the evaluation purpose and utilization. The Table 2 shows examples of evaluation purpose and focus of evaluation.

Table 2.

Evaluation Purpose	Focus of Evaluation
Accountability to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relevance - Achievement of outputs and project purpose (outcome) - Use of proceeds - Sustainability (situation after the project)
Feedback to operation of donor agency/ implementation agency in recipient country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning, - Implementation arrangement, including inputs - Driving forces and constraints - Lessons learned
Improvement of project management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts - Efficiency - Implementation arrangement and process - Sustainability - Recommendations
Identification of new project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lessons learned

b. Elaboration of major evaluation questions according to evaluation criteria

After the confirmation of evaluation purpose and focus, the external evaluators need to define evaluation criteria and elaborate main evaluation questions for each evaluation criteria. Table 3 shows examples of evaluation questions.

Table 3. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

Evaluation Criteria	Examples of Main Evaluation Questions
Relevance	– Is the project consistent with the national development plan of the recipient country/ the needs of beneficiaries/ the ODA policies?
Effectiveness	– Have the project purpose achieved by the outputs of the project?
Efficiency	– Were the outputs achieved by efficiently using the inputs?
Impact	– Are there intended/unintended positive/negative impacts by the project?
Sustainability	– Are the outcomes of the project sustained after the completion of the project?

C. Development of Evaluation Framework

According to the evaluation criteria and the main evaluation questions, the external evaluators conduct literature reviews and develop an evaluation framework. The literature reviews should include all the existing reports and documents related to the project. In the case of the JICA's ex-post evaluation, the external evaluators prepare "the evaluation skeleton" which shows an evaluation framework and strategy based on the 5 evaluation criteria and enables analysis between the plan and the actual of the project.

The results of literature survey can indicate data and information to be collected by a field study as well as constraints on the field study. Table 4 gives examples of constraints and possible countermeasures.

Table 4. Constraints and Possible Countermeasures

Constraints	Examples	Possible Countermeasures
Accessibility to the key stakeholders	Medical staff: very busy to participate in a focus group discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Conducting only simple questionnaire survey – Making interviews with them by change
	Organizational changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identifying the current responsible organization/department/unit
	Changes in personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identifying persons who can be substituted – Contacting the persons who were involved in the project
	Physical distances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Identifying accessible sites – Reviewing existing data and information about target areas
	Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Preparing questionnaires in accessible manners
Reliability & Availability of data and information	Inappropriate data collection methodology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Comparing similar data form different source, ex, statistical data from international organizations – Conducting data collection surveys, if time and budget are available
	Changes in definition and coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Estimating data based on the data from inappropriate methodology with acceptable adjustment manners
	No relevant data available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Using substitute data & information – Complementing similar data & information
Budget & Timing	Limited Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Combining multiple survey methodologies with cheaper costs instead of a large-scale data collection survey, ex, case study, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, etc.
	Political events Religious or cultural events Farming seasons, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Avoiding the timings listed in the left column in order to conduct a field study

In the case that there are constraints without any countermeasures to eliminate them, the external evaluators need to explain those constraints and to clarify that your evaluation findings have some reservations.

d. Selection of methodologies for field study

The next step is selection of survey methodologies. The external evaluators need to identify survey objects and groups which can ensure objectivity, credibility and reliability of data and information for ex-post evaluation, and to select appropriate and functional survey methodologies for each object or group. For the selection of survey methodologies, “triangulation” is essential. “Triangulation” is cross examination to verify a specific fact from three points of view at least.

Table 5 shows a matrix composed of survey objects, methodologies and data/information to be collected, which shows a scope of field study for the ex-post evaluation in Morocco.

Table 5. Scope of Field Study for the case in Morocco

Target Stakeholder	Relation with the Project	Position	Survey Method	Data/Information to be collected
Ministry of Health and Provincial Delegation	Member of Counterpart	Current persons in charge	Questionnaire survey, Key informant interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inputs• Capacity Development• Benefits and impacts• Policy, budget, institutional, and technical arrangement for sustainability
Ex-trainee in Japan	Member of Counterpart	Persons involved in the project	Questionnaire survey, Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity Development• Benefits and impacts• Current activities
Medical staff involved in the project	Involved in the project activities	Persons involved in the project	Questionnaire survey, Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Capacity Development• Benefits and impacts• Current activities
Pregnant and parturient women in the pilot provinces	Beneficiary	-	Questionnaire survey, Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benefits and impacts• Services related to maternal health care before and after the Project

5. Implementation of Field Study

a. Utilization of national experts

For effective and efficient implementation of field study, in particular, within limited budget and time, it is crucial for external evaluators to utilize national experts as local assistants in a country where a field study will be conducted. There are following merits to utilize qualified national experts:

- ✓ Increasing in accessibility to key informants and information
- ✓ Effective arrangements for field study
- ✓ Giving external evaluators practical advices on not only implementation of field study but also evaluation analysis
- ✓ Reducing language and cultural barriers and making better understanding backgrounds and situations.

b. Preparation of effective questionnaires

The external evaluators should prepare effective and functional questionnaires or interview sheets before going to field study. The questionnaires should be carefully designed and be checked by the five key aspects listed in Table 6. Simple but well-structured questionnaire can effectively collect data and information necessary for the external evaluators. Questionnaires with too many questions may make respondents not to answer or/and quality of answers inferior.

Table 6. Checkpoints for Effective Questionnaires

Availability	Are the data or information really available now?
Accessibility	– Are the informants or the information accessible now?
Reliability	– Are the data and information to be collected reliable?
Credibility	– Are the sources of information or data credible?
Sufficiency	– Are the data or information to be collected sufficient qualitatively and quantitatively?

c. Issues to be considered for field visits

Field visit is one of effective methodology to confirm situations, but the external evaluators should remind that the things they see are not all the facts.

In the case of Morocco, the external evaluators visited a rural health center in order to verify conditions of medical equipment provided by the grant aid project as well as activities of maternal health care at the center. At that time, they saw the well-organized and well-maintained equipment in the center, but the usual situation is not like that according to the Japanese volunteer whose activities cover that health center. Therefore, the external evaluators need to gather information from various sources as many as possible.

The following points should always in mind of external evaluator during field visit in order to ensure objectivity, reliability and credibility.

- ✓ Stick to triangulation (cross examination),
- ✓ Be objective and avoid bias,
- ✓ Communicate with different groups which have different interests and views, including which are not directly involved in the project to be evaluated.

However, the external evaluator should not forget that they are the evaluator not but the auditor even though they need to conduct somehow inspection type activities on site.

d. Follow-up of field study

In general, it is difficult to collect all the data and information necessary for ex-post evaluation during the limited time of field study by external evaluators. Therefore, follow-up by local assistants is very important to collect the followings:

- ✓ The data and information which were not collected during the field visits
- ✓ The additional data and information needed for evaluation analysis after assessing the data and information collected.

6. Analysis of Data and Information Collected by Field Study

For evaluation analysis, the external evaluators need to consider points listed in Table 7 in order to extract convincing evaluation findings for their clients and users.

Table 7.

Objectivity	– Are the data and information collected not biased by specific interest group, political pressure, self-aware as possible about personal assumptions of values?
Reliability	– Were the data and information across the full range of appropriate settings, time and respondents? (Coverage) – Are the data or information collected comparable by group or over time? (Comparability)
Validity	– Do the data and information from the different sources verify evaluation findings without any inconsistency/ discrepancy/ contradiction?
Utilization/application	– Are findings based on the data and information collected necessary or meaningful in view of the evaluation objective? – Can those findings lead useful and practical recommendations or lessons learned?

The external evaluators should not use the data and information with any bias and distortion for as evidence of evaluation findings because such bias and distortion harms objectivity of evaluation.

In the case that the external evaluator finds any inconsistency/ discrepancy/ contradiction among evaluation findings, it is necessary to take one of following actions:

- ✓ To collect data or information from other sources in order to which findings can be reasonably trustworthy,
- ✓ To give up using the data and information and throw out the findings, too.

7. How to Compile Evaluation Report

It is expected that the external evaluators make “a good evaluation report”. What is a good evaluation report? There are four key components to make a good evaluation report.

- ✓ Responsiveness to evaluation purpose
- ✓ Readability
- ✓ Logical explanation of evaluation findings

✓ Rational conclusions, including recommendations and lessons learned.

In addition, the external evaluators need to check their report from the following aspects in order to ensure quality and usefulness of their evaluation report.

Table 8. Check Points of Evaluation Report

Aspects	Key Questions	Key Points
Confirmability (Objectivity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the conclusion drawn from the available evidence? – Is the evaluation study relatively free of evaluator' s bias? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Adequacy of study' s method and procedures – Availability of data for reanalysis – Supportiveness of data for the conclusion
Reliability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Is the process of the study consistent, coherent, and reasonably stable over time and across methods? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trustworthiness, consistency and replicability of findings across data source and over time – Adequacy of data/ information and analysis for the conclusion – Explicitness of rules used for confirmation of propositions, hypotheses, etc.
Internal Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are the findings credible to the people studied and to readers? – Do the evaluators have an authentic portrait of what they are studying? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Richness and meaningfulness of descriptions – Sufficiency of information for credible and valid description – Rationality and convincingness – Converging conclusions based on triangulation
External Validity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Do the conclusions fit other contexts? – How widely can they be generalized? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The scope and boundaries of reasonable generalization from the study – Findings with enough thick description for readers to assess the potential transferability – Theoretical generalization for sample survey
Utilization/Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How useful were the findings to clients, the recipient country/ counterpart/ implementing agency, the communities studied,? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Findings with guidance for future actions – Findings catalyzing effect leading to specific actions Value-based concerns

8. A Key Issue on Ex-post Evaluation of ODA Project

Through the open discussion session in the seminar, many issues on ex-post evaluation of ODA project were raised by the participants.

The external evaluators, who are currently engaged in ex-post evaluation assignments by KOICA, raised an issue of how to meet with users' needs or requirement under the difficult conditions to conduct scientific surveys. In both Japan and Korea, the government and policy makers tend to seek quantified outcomes for ODA projects. Such tendency increases in an importance of ex-post evaluation of ODA projects. At the same time, findings of ex-post evaluation are required to be more evidence-based by meaningful field study in the project sites.

However, there are various limitations and constraints on field study which can bring about objective, reliable and credible data and information, in particular statistically or scientifically meaningful ones.

The external evaluators are required to make efforts to conduct ingenious attempts for field study in order to obtain significant evidences for meaningful evaluation findings. For example, in the case with difficulty to conduct a sample questionnaire survey in scientific and statistically significant manner, the external evaluators need to conduct not only a sample survey but also conduct alternative or complementary survey methodologies, such as focus group discussion, key informant interviews, and so on, in order to do cross examination or "triangulation".

Also, the external evaluators need to clearly explain limitations and constraints on the specific ex-post evaluation and to elaborate logical explanations and convincing conclusions to show usefulness of their evaluation findings.

On the other hand, the clients of donor agencies need to understand difficulty and constraints for the external evaluators to conduct "theoretically beautiful survey methodologies" in developing countries. It is necessary for them to clarify what evaluation purpose should be the most prioritized and to compromise level of objectivity, reliability and credibility of evaluation results according to the prioritized evaluation results.

The key issue is that the both side of donor agencies and the external evaluators have common understanding what the prioritized purpose is for ex-post evaluation of ODA project as well as how the evaluation findings are utilized effectively.

I hope that ex-post evaluation of ODA project will be improved through deepen exchanges

between JICA and KOICA as well as Japanese and Korean evaluators.

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