

AFD GROUP MONITORING AND EVALUATION POLICY



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SUMMARY

Monitoring and evaluation systems play an increasingly crucial role in the culture, practices, and instruments developed by AFD Group. They are seen as valuable compasses to guide the action and decision-making of AFD Group and its partners on the projects, programs, and public policies that are supported. They are also a means of providing the best possible account of our actions, against a backdrop of growth in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and increased demand for accountability in the use of this assistance.

In 2013, AFD adopted its first evaluation policy, which confirmed the practices and achievements of previous years. Since then, AFD has seen a surge in activity and now forms a Group that includes two subsidiaries, Proparco and Expertise France. AFD's strategy is also renewed regularly to keep up with France's development and international solidarity orientations. The AFD Group 2024-2029 strategy (POS 5) is now designed at the Group level. In addition, France's Programming Act of 2021 on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities has led to an increase in resources allocated to ODA. At the same time, it has enhanced the management, transparency, and accountability of ODA, in particular thanks to the creation of an ODA Evaluation Commission. The monitoring and evaluation policy presented in this document reflects the progress of the culture of evaluation within AFD Group. It aims to better understand the complexity and diversity of different contexts, the emergence of new types of interventions and the increased demand for information on the outcomes and impacts of our interventions.

This policy covers the entire continuum from monitoring to evaluation. It applies to AFD Group by establishing common principles and a base of shared values and ambitions that each of its three entities will implement via road maps adapted to their specificities. The road maps of AFD, Proparco, and Expertise France will thus set out the general framework of this policy and will clarify the targets, resources, and tools that will be used to achieve the desired objectives. Through this common policy, AFD Group affirms the close links between monitoring and evaluation and that those links are essential if we are to learn fully from experience and improve development outcomes.

AFD Group's monitoring and evaluation policy was developed using a participatory process through which the different entities of the Group and the government bodies

concerned came together to determine its key commitments. This collective reflection was informed by (i) evaluation of the previous policy, which made it possible to identify four areas of transformation that will guide monitoring and evaluation within AFD Group for the coming years and (ii) the recommendations made by the French Court of Auditors following its review of the evaluation system within AFD over the 2014-2021 period.

These four following areas of transformation, and the transformations they seek to promote, will strengthen the culture of monitoring and evaluation, which is fully embedded in AFD Group's strategic guidelines:

1. Influential evaluations: directly useful to guide decision-making, via a more strategic programming of evaluations, monitoring of the core recommendations with the governance body, and more systematic highlighting of the findings of the evaluation.
2. "By our partners' side" evaluations: AFD-supported projects are above all those of the project owners, who must be as much in charge of monitoring and evaluation as possible.
3. A continuum between monitoring and evaluation: bolstering the procedures for monitoring results is an essential prerequisite for project management and the ability to report on them.
4. Tailor-made evaluations: Evaluations are most useful when they are conducted at the right time, by the right people, and using the most appropriate methods. The idea is thus to ensure the diversity of types and formats of evaluations.

In addition to these areas of transformation, the governance and resources put into action for monitoring and evaluation must enable the implementation of this policy. Opportunities for discussion will be created to monitor and support these various commitments. The policy will be adjusted as much as necessary when the ODA Evaluation Commission comes into force. Furthermore, this policy also recalls a series of internationally recognized principles and criteria that shape evaluations.

INTRODUCTION: monitoring and evaluation at AFD Group

Key actors of the evaluation of French Official Development Assistance (ODA)

AFD contributes to the implementation of France's development and international solidarity policy. It carries out activities to finance the public sector and NGOs, studies and research publications, training on sustainable development, and awareness-raising actions in France. In these ways, AFD finances, supports, and accelerates the transitions toward a more resilient and equitable world. Expertise France became part of AFD on January 1, 2022. Along with Proparco, AFD's subsidiary dedicated to the private sector, the three entities now form Group Agence Française de Développement.

The Programming Act on Inclusive Development and Combating Global Inequalities was promulgated on August 4, 2021. This legislation reinforces the mission given to AFD Group and its partners to combat the underlying causes of crises by supporting the most vulnerable countries, particularly in Africa, in moving toward more resilient, inclusive and sustainable growth models. This Act enshrines an increase in resources allocated to ODA policy. It also imposes a strict requirement on the transparency of the monitoring and evaluation of AFD Group activities and the results of AFD Group and more broadly of ODA actors.

Evaluation of French ODA is thus carried out by several public entities, which design and conduct their action in a complementary way:

- › Within AFD Group, each entity has units in charge more specifically of monitoring and evaluation:
 - AFD: Evaluation and Learning (EVA) Department, located within the Innovation, Strategy and Research (ISR) Executive Division; and the Development Results and Impacts Unit (RID), located within the Sustainable Development Solutions (SDD) Executive Division.
 - Proparco: Impact Measurement Division (IMP), located within the Sustainability Department (A2D).
 - Expertise France: Monitoring, Evaluation, Relevance and Learning (MERL) Unit, located within the Operations executive Division.
- › Within government administrative bodies
 - Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs: Evaluation and Performance Unit, located within the Directorate General for Globalisation, Culture, Education and International Development (DGM).
 - Directorate General for the Treasury: Development Activities Evaluation Unit (DAEU), located within the Multilateral Affairs and Development Policies Department.
 - Directorate General for Overseas Territories (DGOM): Office of Public Policy Evaluation and Foresight, located within the Sub-Directorate of Evaluation, Foresight and Government Expenditure.
- › The French ODA Evaluation Commission, established by the 2021 Act on Inclusive Development and the Fight Against Global Inequalities, was not implemented at the time of the finalization of this AFD Group monitoring and evaluation policy. The policy will therefore be adjusted as much as necessary when this commission comes into force.

Objectives of evaluation in AFD Group

Evaluation is intended to support decision-making support, learning, and accountability. It seeks to improve strategies, programs and projects and ultimately development outcomes through lessons learned. It contributes to the production of knowledge to inform decision-making within AFD Group and also contributes to external knowledge capital. In this way, it informs discussions on development and international solidarity issues. Evaluation plays a key role in AFD Group's accountability to the French government for the operations it finances, and in particular to the ministries, partners, the various players in development and international solidarity in France and abroad, and to the citizens of France and of the countries where we operate.

This policy seeks to set the principles shared by the different AFD Group entities in terms of monitoring and evaluation. While they now have a common base for the first time, Expertise France, Proparco, and AFD each remain responsible for implementing this policy according to their respective mandates and to the specificities of their interventions and practices. This approach allows AFD Group to build a common foundation in terms of monitoring and evaluation while allowing each entity to set its own systems based on shared far-reaching goals.

Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Evaluation is one of the tools that meets the obligation for accountability¹ as defined by the OECD as “responsibility to provide accurate, fair and credible monitoring reports and performance assessments” of interventions. The first aspect of accountability is the monitoring of implementation and refers to the ability to provide output, outcome, or impact indicators and to aggregate them where possible and relevant. The second dimension is evaluation.

The intervention monitoring system informs about the resources implemented, the outputs obtained, and the outcomes achieved. It is a core instrument of accountability, as it can answer the questions that the various stakeholders have concerning the development outcomes obtained.

Evaluation provides a judgment on key questions concerning the validity, the implementation, and the effects of an intervention. Its primary aim is not to provide objective data on the outcomes obtained, but to explain and assess them. Evaluation is expected to provide a broader assessment of performance than a simple quantitative analysis of the extent to which the objectives have been achieved, and, in some cases, to provide an in-depth analysis of the outcomes that can be “attributed” to AFD.

Evaluation principles and criteria

Evaluation is governed by the principles set out in AFD Group’s Professional Ethics Charter and in the charter of the French Evaluation Society (SFE) for the evaluation of public policies and public programs.

Like the French government departments contributing to ODA and other multilateral and bilateral donors, AFD Group adheres to the OECD DAC principles and quality standards for development evaluation. The evaluation work we carry out is consistent with the six criteria defined by the DAC – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, and impact – and their principles of use (application of the criteria is not systematic and depends on the context and purpose of the evaluation).

Types of evaluation carried out within AFD Group

The different types of evaluation carried out by AFD Group are part of a continuum between monitoring, evaluation and research:

- › Project evaluations cover the evaluation of one or more projects (multiple projects evaluated are referred to as a cluster). They inform discussions with the stakeholders on the results and thus promote mutual learning.
- › Broad-scope evaluations cover a theme, sector, geographic area, strategy, or financial instrument. These evaluations usually cover a much broader scope and a longer period of time than project evaluations. Their purpose is to help decision-making and strategic and operational reflection to improve the quality of AFD-funded interventions and the achievement of development results.
- › Capitalization and review studies: rather than meeting the evaluation criteria and methods, these studies answer questions identified as useful for learning as well as for decision-making support. They include cross-analysis of

evaluations, analytical reviews and capitalizations of experiences. These activities cover several projects.

- › The purpose of impact evaluations is to measure the effects of an intervention on people or ecosystems, to explain the mechanisms that enabled those impacts, and to rigorously analyze the causal link between the intervention and those effects. Because of the specific nature of the methods used, these evaluations generally focus on a single aspect of a project rather than on all the results associated with it.

Evaluation time frame

Evaluative work can follow different time frames depending on the objective sought. We can make a distinction between the following:

- › Ex-post evaluations carried out after the production of the project completion report, to make available precise information on the resources implemented and to get an idea of all the outputs and outcomes to which the project was able to contribute.
- › Real-time evaluations take place throughout the implementation of the project. They may be used to anticipate the need for information and data essential for monitoring the effects of the intervention, from an initial baseline situation to its completion (such as some counterfactual impact evaluations). They may also be used to continuously adjust the intervention.
- › Mid-term evaluations carried out during project implementation or final evaluations carried out during the last year of the project, before appraisal of a subsequent phase. This type of evaluation responds to a strong demand for usefulness at the level of the operational teams by linking the evaluation to the key decision-making moments related to the interventions.

¹ AFD Group has its own accountability policy.

Who carries out the evaluation?

A distinction between evaluations can also be made according to the persons or entities in charge of implementing them:

- › External evaluations are carried out by consultants recruited by AFD Group according to a clearly established selection process. This method ensures a high level of independence in carrying out the evaluation and judging the interventions analyzed. The majority of evaluations carried out by AFD Group use this method.
- › Internal evaluations are carried out either by AFD Group evaluation officers, or by project team managers

or project officers (at headquarters or in the network) who have never been involved in the project, its appraisal, or its monitoring. These evaluations are very highly appreciated by the operational teams. They make it possible to expand the culture of evaluation internally and also sometimes to go deeper into the evaluative analysis, thanks to a good understanding of the projects and issues specific to AFD Group. Their recommendations are often better calibrated for more direct operationalization.

- › “Mixed” approaches whereby evaluations conducted internally also call more on external experts, who can provide a complementary perspective.

The example of decentralized project evaluations at AFD

Decentralized project evaluations are led by AFD’s country offices and geographical departments, with support from the Evaluation and Learning Department. This system has several advantages:

- The proximity to the project owners who are involved in the evaluative process. In this case, evaluation contributes to the development aid process in the same way as the implementation of operations. One of the core objectives of decentralized evaluations is to gradually organize discussion on the results with the stakeholders of the funded operations.
- The possibility to make use of local expertise. AFD mobilizes local expertise whenever possible in order to benefit from its sound knowledge of the context and to be able to support the development of local evaluation skills.
- Dissemination of the culture of evaluation in AFD operational departments and among AFD’s partners.

Project monitoring during implementation: a stated priority for the three AFD Group entities

The implementation of reliable project monitoring systems should improve project management and make projects “evaluable”. The appraisal of projects and their monitoring during implementation are essential links in the chain of accountability. They are based on an intervention logic that i) identifies, along with the stakeholders in the places where the intervention occurs, the key elements that will meet the needs; ii) determines the expected results; and iii) plans the actions to achieve the objectives. AFD Group wants to bolster this approach and work more toward a results-based approach, which will improve the management and quality of operations.

Moreover, at the institutional level, analysis of aggregated development results (not just outputs, outcomes, and impacts, but also transformations and trajectories) that are based on reliable data and robust narratives, plays a key role in enabling AFD Group to undergo a process of transformation and progress. In terms of accountability, the new “100% SDG” strategic guidelines also open up space for greater visibility of the development outcomes and impacts generated by AFD-Group-financed operations.

This production of analysis and development data informs country/region- or sector-based dialogue. It is a learning tool that also helps support strategic and operational decision-making.

From project level to consolidation, AFD Group regularly reports on its interventions. Through this monitoring and evaluation policy in particular, we undertake to deepen and make more reliable the structuring and analysis of our results, accountability, and transparency to which we have been committed for many years.

How the new monitoring and evaluation policy came into being

AFD’s first evaluation policy, adopted in 2013, made it possible to make clear and confirm the scope and practices of AFD’s evaluations. Seven years later, AFD decided to draw up a new evaluation policy for AFD Group, based on an analysis of the usefulness and quality of existing evaluations.

To ensure the independence of the evaluation of the existing 2013 evaluation policy, it was overseen by the COMEVA, an evaluations committee made up of French government administration representatives and qualified evaluation experts from outside AFD, and it was carried out by external

consultants. This evaluation was an excellent opportunity for discussions not only within AFD, but also with French government administration, Members of Parliament, local stakeholders, project owners and all those who participate in the evaluations – civil society organizations, researchers, and evaluation professionals from the Global North and South.

The conclusions of this evaluation (the full evaluation report can be consulted online), together with the reviews of the evaluations conducted by Expertise France and Proparco, identified four major challenges for improving the usefulness and quality of evaluations in AFD Group:

- › The objective of informing strategic and/or operational decision-making has always been central to AFD's evaluations, and significant progress was identified. However, despite the growing interest in evaluation by the senior management and the Board of Directors, evaluation remains seldom consulted and has little influence on strategic decision-making. In this regard, the statement "potentially useful but too little used" sums up the current situation. The **1st challenge** is therefore to give evaluations more influence and make them more strategic and capable of guiding action and decision-making.
- › The level of involvement in evaluations by local partners (especially project owners) in the countries where we work remains rather low, despite some developments in recent years, especially in crisis areas. Ownership of evaluation is very weak. Evaluation is often perceived as a "procedure requested by donors, for donors". The **2nd challenge** that ensues from this is to design and conduct monitoring and evaluation systems with more of a "by our partners' side" approach. AFD-supported projects are above all those of the project owners, who must be as deeply involved in monitoring and evaluation as possible.
- › The expectations of accountability vis-à-vis AFD Group are partially met. Evaluation responds to this expectation by taking a critical and transparent look at some of the interventions, but it is only one link in the chain of accountability. When it comes to monitoring the implementation of AFD projects, there is a need to better meet the demand for systematic information on project outputs and outcomes (Proparco and Expertise France have made this a priority in recent years). The project appraisal phase, another link in the chain, is also crucial when building a reliable intervention logic. In the long run, this **3rd challenge**, which is related to the challenge of the "evaluability" of projects and was one of the challenges of the 2013 evaluation policy, remains to be met at the Group level. In the coming years, it is therefore necessary to strengthen the monitoring system and to make them real project management tools, which is a prerequisite for being able to be accountable for them.

- › Finally, the quality of the evaluations carried out is observed to be rather positive. AFD's Evaluation and Learning Department, which acts as leader for the Group's evaluation activities, has a wide range of skills enabling it to implement different evaluation methodologies. It is important to bolster the complementarity among these methodologies so that we can respond to the complexity of development contexts. To go even further, it would be very advantageous for these evaluations to adapt their timing and implementation methods in order to maximize their usefulness for action and decision-making. The **4th challenge** is to ensure the diversity of types and formats of evaluations, by offering "tailor-made" evaluations while still ensuring the quantitative progression of the evaluation.

The monitoring and evaluation policy outlined in this document was developed following this evaluation, based on these four key challenges as well as that of the governance system to be put in place to support, implement, and monitor the commitments of this policy. Each challenge was the subject of a collective reflection workshop that included representatives of AFD Group and the public administration bodies concerned, in order to collectively develop the responses to be provided to those challenges. The monitoring of interventions and the evaluations of AFD Group must make it possible to better report on the Group's contributions to the political priorities defined by the French Government. This policy also seeks to meet most of the recommendations made by the French Court of Auditors following its review of the evaluation system within AFD over the 2014-2021 period.

As stated above, this strategic framework will be broken down into road maps for each entity (AFD-Proparco-EF) to facilitate its operational implementation. The monitoring of these road maps (with an analysis of the potential strengths and obstacles encountered in implementing the policy) will be the subject of frequent reporting to the AFD Board of Directors.

Specific features of Proparco

Proparco is the subsidiary of AFD Group dedicated to the private sector. Proparco helps finance and support companies and financial institutions. Its operations aim to strengthen the contribution of private players to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consistent with the principles of accountability, Proparco evaluates and reports on the impact of its action through a process of estimating and monitoring the impacts of its financing.

The expected impacts of each project are assessed ex-ante at the time of appraisal, according to indicators determined in the strategy, and then monitored annually.

In addition to this significant monitoring work, Proparco participates in the ex-post evaluation activities carried out by AFD and coordinates an evaluation each year on a specific theme and/or sector. These evaluations are carried out for learning purposes, in order to better understand the impact of the projects financed, identify the most effective ways to support the impact objectives, and respond to the growing concern from our partners about accountability. These monitoring and evaluation activities are in line with this AFD Group policy.

Specific features of Expertise France

Expertise France is France's public agency in charge of international technical cooperation. It develops and implements projects that have a positive and lasting impact on public policy in developing and emerging countries, in the key areas of sustainable development. Alongside its partners, Expertise France contributes to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

Monitoring and evaluation are a key process for Expertise France because its action as a public financing operator makes it possible to measure the effectiveness of its interventions and to ensure that the resources entrusted to it are used effectively. With this issue in mind, Expertise France developed a monitoring and evaluation policy that was validated in 2020 by its Board of Directors for a minimum period of five years.

This policy seeks to make the culture of monitoring and evaluation deep-rooted within the agency and allow for "results-based management" for better accountability of its action and continuous improvement of the quality of its interventions. It sets out a minimum base for the monitoring and evaluation of Expertise France interventions, which will be enhanced as part of the new policy outlined in this document, and it will help respond in a harmonized way and in a Group format to the four major challenges identified.





1

INFLUENTIAL EVALUATIONS CAPABLE OF GUIDING ACTION AND DECISION-MAKING

Evaluation responds to concrete questions raised by the validity, implementation, and results of the interventions that are financed. Subject to the quality and methodological rigor with which the monitoring and evaluation were carried out, the responses provided by the evaluative analyses are potentially rich in terms of supporting strategic decision-making, learning, and generating knowledge from experience. They also represent an essential link in the chain of accountability to inform citizens about results of projects and programs implemented.

AFD Group intends to make the most of this potential, by making the usefulness of evaluations one of the major priorities of its monitoring and evaluation policy. This will be done in a process of continuous improvement of projects and adjustment of its strategic guidelines.

Evaluation is all the more useful when the stakeholders are involved in it. Giving evaluation more influence therefore consists of working more on mobilizing all the stakeholders who can benefit from it: operational teams, decision-making bodies, Members of Parliament, clients and partners, end-beneficiaries, etc. They should be involved throughout the evaluation process, from its planning to the making and follow-up on the recommendations:

- › Upstream of the evaluations, the challenge is to develop strategic and concerted planning of what needs to be evaluated so that the evaluation best meets the needs of the commissioning party.
- › During the evaluations, the aim is to ensure collective management of the evaluations and co-design of the recommendations that emerge from them.
- › Downstream of the evaluations, AFD Group wants to further enhance discussions on the key recommendations as well as on the dissemination of the findings.

1.1 Build strategic and concerted evaluation plannings

The planning of AFD Group evaluations constitutes a coherent and understandable whole, made up of evaluations that are useful for project management and strategic decision-making. Planning is established by identifying as precisely as possible the requests of the various stakeholders as well as the commissioning party.

If we base our planning on the uses of evaluations, then from the outset we can design them according to their usefulness for management and decision-making. In this way, evaluations become powerful tools for discussion and sharing with AFD Group partners.

This type of planning also makes it possible to better design the evaluations that are structured around the same strategic questioning, and more generally to strengthen the overall coherence of AFD Group's evaluation planning.

In this regard, the evaluation planning process seeks to ensure optimal accountability for AFD Group interventions. It is organized as follows:

- › First there is a stage for gathering internal needs, both operational and strategic, and at a Group level whenever possible. AFD's operational staff at headquarters, as well as its network of regional and country offices are asked annually to express their specific evaluation needs and to identify project owners likely to be interested in a co-piloting approach to evaluations or capacity building in this area (see Chapter 2, Evaluating "by our partners' side"). Given AFD's commitment to making its activities align 100% with the SDGs, specific ex-post evaluation work is provided for to consolidate existing ex-ante sustainable development analyses and opinions. The

other executive management bodies are also approached (in particular those in charge of mobilization and partnerships and those in charge of risk management involved in project financing cycles) as well as dedicated fund teams (such as the FFEM). Proparco and Expertise France are also consulted during this request feedback process, with a view to optimizing the possible synergies between the three AFD Group entities.

- › Next comes an external consultation stage with ministries and board members, intended to take into account needs for clarifications for future strategic decisions.

As part of regular institutional discussions between AFD's evaluation services and the evaluation services of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Directorate General of the Treasury (see 5.2), coordination sessions make it possible to share and regularly monitor evaluation planning. Cross-participation in the different reference groups is also explored during these coordination sessions.

Planning is also carried out in as close coordination as possible with AFD Group's partners. At the French level, synergies are sought in particular with research institutes and Caisse des Dépôts et Consignation. At the international level, planning will be discussed with other bilateral donors, including European partners within JEFIC, and multilateral and international organizations such as the OECD via the EvalNet network.

The goal of this evaluation planning process is to produce planning that is coherent, realistic, and that meets the expectations of accountability. It seeks to maintain an approach of gathering operational needs and a more strategic approach of supporting decision-making. Another one of its goals is to identify potential parties that will commission evaluations

and participate in their scoping. AFD's Evaluation and Learning Department coordinates this process for AFD Group, in collaboration with Proparco's Impact Measurement Division and the Expertise France MERL unit.

The programming resulting from these consultations is organized on a rolling basis over a three-year period and presented annually to the AFD Board of Directors.

1.2 Increase stakeholder involvement in the evaluations and highlight their findings and recommendations better

Stakeholder involvement is a guarantee of usefulness as well as of quality and influence throughout the evaluation process. In this way, it is a priority of AFD Group's evaluation policy.

1.2.1. Increased effort to include stakeholders throughout the evaluation process

AFD Group has adopted a tailor-made approach, which adapts to the demands and capacities of the stakeholders involved.

For example, project owners are systematically called upon in the development of evaluation questions and terms of reference for evaluations. Where possible and relevant, stakeholder involvement is also sought, through the establishment of reference groups whose role is to oversee the evaluative process. For broad-scope evaluations, reference groups are systematically set up, and requests can be made for them to include a representative of the French administration bodies concerned.

To ensure that recommendations are targeted and useful, AFD Group's sectoral and geographic experts as well as the project stakeholders are also called upon to develop the recommendations together. This principle of jointly developing the recommendations applies flexibly in all cases, as closely as possible to the expectations and the strategic level of the evaluation. The higher the level of strategic implications the evaluations have for AFD Group, the more this joint development involves representatives of high decision-making levels. When evaluations are more specific, priority is put on promoting the participation of stakeholders in the country of intervention, including the end-beneficiaries when conditions allow.

These principles constitute an obligation of means for AFD Group. However, given the specificities of the evaluations and the various levels of involvement of the various actors, in the event that they do not wish or cannot become involved, the work will still be completed without their participation, so as to ensure that the evaluations are carried out as planned.

1.2.2. Increased effort to include the conclusions and lessons learned from evaluations into project appraisal as well as into the development of geographic and sectoral strategies

The post-evaluation phase is a key period for ensuring that evaluations are as useful as possible. We must be able to highlight, discuss, disseminate and – as far as possible – cross-analyze the evaluations so that they can reach their full potential in providing knowledge and improving action.

To this end, evaluation work is therefore included as a specific part of evaluation planning when a sufficiently large amount of information is available on a given subject and likely to support both our operational services in identifying new interventions and AFD Group's decision-making bodies in its strategic decisions.

These evaluative analyses can take on various forms, ranging from the strategic evaluation of the portfolio developed in a country or on a sector, to cross-analysis of the evaluations carried out on this same scope. Their findings will be used as part of the appraisal of new projects and of the development of country strategies and sectoral road maps.

Pilot evaluations and analyses will be carried out in order to integrate portfolio analyses into this work as much as possible (including projects that have not been evaluated). The idea is to highlight, more comprehensively and decisively, the results of projects implemented in previous years, the pitfalls to avoid, and the levers that can be used to make progress. Testing will also be done on new and complementary methodological tools, making it possible to aggregate the findings of evaluations or reviews at the completion of projects, by sector, location, or theme.

1.2.3. Bolster efforts to follow up on recommendations

The conclusions (the findings and lessons learned) and the recommendations made for broad-scope evaluations usually represent the final stage of most evaluations. It is important here to make a distinction between i) the findings and lessons learned from evaluations that do not lead to the development of specific actions requiring follow-up and ii) recommendations that indicate a series of actions or developments that will need to be implemented. Indeed, while all evaluations establish findings and formulate lessons learned at the end of the evaluation process, they are not all intended to issue recommendations whose responses (from the commissioning party, the operational departments concerned or the project owner) need to be followed up.

In this matter, AFD Group would like to improve its practice of responding to and following up on recommendations at several levels:

- › At the evaluation level itself, for which evaluators will need to pay attention to the quality of the recommendations

they make. These must be realistic, achievable, and explicit (what needs to be done, by whom, and how).

- › The operational staff, who for broad-scope evaluations will be systematically asked to respond to the recommendations by proposing the concrete methods of improvement for implementation. These responses will be published in AFD's "Ex-post" collection, following the summaries of broad-scope evaluations.
- › AFD Group decision-making bodies, which must discuss the findings and recommendations from the most strategic evaluations. This will enable AFD's Board of Directors to identify the most "engaging" recommendations and request to be regularly informed of the action taken by the departments concerned.
- › Project owners, with discussion and follow-up of recommendations that help develop the partnership relationship. In countries where AFD Group has a long-term commitment to certain sectors, the recommendations of the evaluations make a useful contribution to the exchange and sharing of experience. This monitoring provides quality support in informing discussions on public policy between AFD Group and its partner countries.

When the subject represents a particularly important strategic priority for AFD Group, there may be monitoring of how the recommendations have been implemented.

1.3 Better disseminate and communicate evaluation findings

While the culture of evaluation is making headway and becoming more integrated into practices, its ownership and dissemination are still a major issue against a backdrop of increased demand for public policy evaluation, in response to the growing need for accountability to the general public.

Nevertheless, these new expectations also represent an opportunity to give a more strategic role to evaluation within AFD Group, in the institutional ecosystem, and among donors and people with an affinity for and interest in development issues.

AFD Group publishes all its broad-scope evaluations, as well as summaries of all project evaluations, unless otherwise requested by the project owners concerned. From 2024, the full publication (instead of a summary) of project evaluations will be included in the financing agreements unless otherwise requested by the project owner concerned. Implementation will be gradual as the new AFD agreements are put in place. This work is available on the AFD Group website.

To go further, AFD Group also organizes and develops its communication approach based on the findings of evaluations to illustrate action impact and efficiency. The target audience is made up of opinion leaders, the general public interested in development and evaluation and Members of

Parliament. Special attention is paid to the editorialization of the lessons learned from the evaluations, to make them accessible to a non-expert audience. AFD also carries out filmed evaluations, which are more accessible to the public. They are illustrative and act as an effective information and training tool.

AFD Group is also strengthening its efforts to communicate on impact evaluations. The findings of impact evaluations are published systematically, particularly in academic journals, to inform research on ODA. These evaluations contribute to the production of knowledge. They require a rigorous, in-depth examination of the impacts produced by an intervention. The examination must be likely to encourage critical reflection on the effectiveness of this intervention and thus contribute to decision-making by the government or administration. The evaluations provide a well-balanced alternative to the media debates on the effectiveness of ODA and make it possible, where appropriate, to test different intervention protocols. When linked with other forms of evaluation, they consolidate the culture of evaluation that is essential for good governance. Special effort is made to better disseminate the lessons of these evaluations throughout the evaluation process, which can span several years, without being limited to communication on the final findings.

Finally, AFD Group wishes to continue the effort made over the past four years to publish a biennial evaluation report (up to now limited to AFD evaluations), the publication of which is a key communication event. This report traces over the previous two years the main analyses and findings of evaluations. It is published in paper or digital format, using articles, interviews, and graphics. It is available to the general public interested in development and evaluation. Social networks are used to reach a large audience with messages whose form is adapted to these media.

Specific features of Expertise France

Expertise France, in its capacity as operator, manages a number of final and mid-term project evaluations that it implements with specific financing included in the budget of these projects and according to discussions and trade-offs with donors, in particular with the EU, the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, and AFD. In most cases, these evaluations are external evaluations and are conducted for the purpose of accountability and learning. Unlike AFD and Proparco, Expertise France (excluding L'Initiative) does not currently plan or conduct ex-post evaluations, cluster evaluations, or broad-scope evaluations, as it does not have a specific budget dedicated to evaluation at its organizational level.

Nevertheless, as part of L'Initiative (France's indirect contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which Expertise France manages under the supervision of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs), Expertise France does plan and conduct evaluations of projects it finances, as well as strategic cross-cutting evaluations.

In addition, in line with this policy, Expertise France can participate in the evaluations planned by AFD when their scope includes projects that concern it. Likewise, it will participate in AFD Group's effort to follow up on evaluation recommendations.

Regarding the dissemination of findings, a summary is written on all project evaluations carried out by Expertise France. The summary is one of the deliverables expected as part of the services to which the evaluation team has committed. It is at least shared internally and is submitted to the donor, which decides on the external dissemination policy. A sum-up sheet is systematically prepared for the evaluations of AFD-financed projects. Feedback workshops are also organized internally and if possible, externally, depending on the topics, the strategic scope of the evaluation, and the interest the various stakeholders have in such workshops.

Specific features of Proparco

Proparco has enhanced its monitoring system considerably. The progress made in its annual monitoring of impact indicators should help make this practice an influential one, by contributing to:

- **Supporting the implementation of our highly impact-oriented strategy**

Analysis of the impacts observed makes it possible to identify levers and opportunities for additional impacts, as well as ways of allocating resources to maximize impacts (e.g. by prioritizing actions to be carried out internally and with clients).

- **Improve our knowledge of impacts**

The feedback from the monitoring and the reliability of the ex-ante estimates make it possible to review and refine our processes and methods relating to the measurement of impacts. The data collected and their analysis help to improve collective knowledge about impacts.

In addition, Proparco coordinates an evaluation each year on a specific theme and/or sector. These evaluations are carried out for learning purposes, in order to better understand the impact of the projects financed and to help guide the action by identifying the most effective ways to support the impact objectives.





2

DESIGN AND CONDUCT “BY OUR PARTNERS’ SIDE” MONITORING AND EVALUATION

One of the key ambitions of AFD Group's monitoring and evaluation policy is the stress on local involvement – the "by our partners" side aspect, especially by the project owners who carry out the supported projects.

AFD Group financing favors local project management, subject to any conditions of Expertise France and Proparco. Project owners therefore play a key role in managing, reporting, and drawing lessons from projects. Their involvement in monitoring and evaluation is essential for guaranteeing the usefulness and effectiveness of these systems. However, the assessment of AFD's previous evaluation policy highlighted the fact that monitoring and evaluation are often perceived as "donor exercises", even though these activities fall within the core responsibility of project owners. It is therefore important to fully recognize their role within these systems, and to support their growing involvement in the management of the projects and public policies that they implement. Achieving this goal requires dialogue to overcome the tensions inherent in monitoring and evaluation. Indeed, the following two different needs must be met:

- › It is necessary to adapt to the context and to adopt an attitude of detachment from the normative framework. This will make it possible to i) change course from the systems and priorities of these partner project owners, ii) engage in discussions with them on monitoring and evaluation, and iii) contribute to building their capacities in this area.
- › At the same time, AFD must meet its own requirements for accountability vis-à-vis its commitments on the SDGs in particular, and vis-à-vis government administrations, Members of Parliament, and the French general public, through these monitoring and evaluation systems.

AFD Group interventions cover a wide range of contexts, project types and partner project owner profiles. The idea is not to impose a type of relationship, but to put forward several challenges that can guide the relationship with these partners. There are four types of such challenges:

1. Monitoring and evaluation systems designed and conducted with the project owners.
2. The promotion of co-management or direct management of evaluations by project owners.
3. A support role for AFD in capacity building in monitoring and evaluation for project owners.
4. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks that are harmonized between donors and aligned with project owners' priorities.

2.1 Monitoring and evaluation systems designed and conducted with the project owners

2.1.1. In terms of monitoring interventions

For local stakeholders to be able to assume ownership of the project monitoring system, this latter must be of direct and explicit use to them. It must also be sufficiently realistic and serve their interests (e.g., be light or match their capacities) so as not to discourage them. Its design must involve the possibility of engaging in in-depth discussions at the beginning of the appraisal stage on the key issues and priorities given to financing:

- › In this respect, precise knowledge of the monitoring frameworks used by project owners (or managers in the country of operation) is necessary, in order to base the work on those frameworks, enrich them, and ensure their consistency with AFD Group's accountability framework.
- › It is also essential to carry out an analysis of the monitoring capacities of these project owners (collection and analysis capacities, etc.) during the project appraisal phase. This analysis can, if necessary, ask whether it is relevant to call on support from suitable local partners such as statistical institutes or specific divisions within a ministry, etc.

2.1.2. In terms of evaluation interventions

When they do not manage the evaluations themselves, the project owners are involved in all stages of the process, according to their availability:

- › Prior to the evaluation, the various parties together design the objectives of the evaluation, the evaluation questions, and the methodology likely to meet them.
- › During the evaluation process, the project owners are involved as much as possible both in the work management and in the consultation spaces created for the evaluations.
- › Following the evaluations, the monitoring of certain recommendations can help inform discussions between the partners.

2.2 Promotion of co-management or direct management of evaluations by project owners

When the context, capacities, and type of evaluation carried out allow it, AFD Group seeks to promote co-management or direct management of evaluations by the project owners. This is not just a way to increase the usefulness of these evaluations by making the project owners responsible for them and by enhancing discussions between partners: it is also a way to strengthen their governance capacities, promote shared learning and more generally to make the partnership relationship grow:

- › This may involve including the project owners in the management of certain broad-scope evaluations that are of direct political interest to the partner countries. Or it may involve promoting co-management within the framework of certain project evaluations, by establishing a common reference group that gives approval to the different stages of the evaluation.
- › Direct management of evaluations by project owners is also encouraged, particularly when the evaluation in question is used directly to develop the project owner's orientations or when it is a mid-term evaluation, for example. With appropriate support, these forms of direct management of evaluations ensure that the project owner initiates and leads the evaluation – in other words, that it is fully useful to them. This is already the case for evaluations of funding for civil society organizations, which are directly led by them, following discussions on what is expected from the evaluation.

For these evaluations, AFD Group plays a support role whose goal is to guarantee the quality of the evaluations. It also ensures that they feed into the corpus of evaluations carried out and that they continue to act as opportunities for exchanges. To achieve this, these directly-managed evaluations may result in a no-objection notice being asked from AFD on the terms of reference and the presence of an AFD Group evaluator in the reference group.

2.3 A support role for AFD in capacity building in monitoring and evaluation for project owners

Monitoring and evaluation are key aspects of institution building and citizen participation, which AFD Group seeks to strengthen. Enhancing project owners' monitoring and evaluation capacities is part of a broader objective of supporting State governance, transparency, and modernization. It is therefore an integral part of the project support and can in some cases even be considered as a specific component.

Most of the impact evaluations that AFD has launched over the past 10 years have made it possible to obtain positive externalities, thanks to the use of existing systems. These include positive externalities on the intervention evaluated (e.g., the information system of the Ministry of National Education and Literacy for the evaluation of lower secondary schools in Côte d'Ivoire) and on the country's monitoring and evaluation capacities (e.g., its national statistical institute) and research situation (e.g. universities and local research centers).

With this in mind, a component to promote and strengthen monitoring and evaluation is included into certain types of financing instruments that require long-term policy dialogues with project owners. This is the case, for example, with the C2D (Debt Reduction-Development Contract) instrument in Côte d'Ivoire. At a more global level, AFD Group is actively developing its partnerships with organizations that provide initial and continuing training or expertise in this field (master's degree programs, professional training, network of experts, and associations of evaluators).

Monitoring and evaluation make it possible to establish dialogue with project owners on the basis of reliable and quality data, and to promote the notion of shared accountability not only toward the French, but also toward people of the Global South who are the end-beneficiaries of AFD Group funding.

Toward shared accountability and collaborative learning

The four challenges that make up this component of the policy make it ultimately possible to converge toward a process of collaborative learning and shared accountability.

Shared accountability is understood as the principle that “donors and partners are accountable for development results” (Paris Declaration). From this perspective, each partner understands the accountability challenges of the other: together they seek to define how and on what to report to their respective citizens.

The dialogue space generated by the monitoring system and the evaluation process is a learning space that brings together the project owner, the donor, and the stakeholders. Collaborative learning is our ability to look at interventions and their results together.

2.4 Monitoring and evaluation frameworks harmonized between donors and aligned with project owners’ priorities as much as possible

Coordination with other donors on monitoring and evaluation can guarantee the complementarity of systems, simplify the systems for project owners, and help shift toward systems that are better aligned. This objective involves pooling monitoring and evaluation frameworks for co-financed projects and more generally for the support of public policies.

This is also more and more of a necessity for European partnerships. AFD Group participates fully in European cooperation through discussions with its bilateral and multilateral counterparts. This enhanced coordination is all the more important with the development of the European cooperation architecture promoting the establishment of common frameworks for the monitoring and evaluation of co-financed projects.

This coordination effort between donors is also part of a key requirement of the Paris Declaration: donor countries align themselves with the objectives of developing countries and rely on local systems. It is therefore important to think about harmonization by starting as much as possible from the frameworks of the project owners, and then to build together

the system best suited to the interests and needs of each of the actors.

In the monitoring and evaluation systems established by AFD Group, close coordination is sought with i) the tools put in place by the various organizations that make up the French development aid ecosystem and with ii) the monitoring and evaluation capacity-building initiatives carried out by other donors. In some cases, systems for mutual recognition of evaluation systems allow only one of the co-funders to carry out the evaluation for all donors, such as between AFD, Germany’s KfW and the European Investment Bank (EIB). In addition, the Joint European Financiers for International Cooperation platform (JEFIC) reflects the desire of European public development banks (PDBs) to cooperate, including in evaluation topics. The various PDBs that make up JEFIC (KfW, AECID, CDP, AFD) will share their evaluation operations in order to pool our work and develop synergies.

Specific features of Proparco

Proparco has a resolutely “by our partners’ side” impact monitoring system. It is based on the active participation of clients in monitoring campaigns. The 2022 campaign focused on the impacts declared by our clients for 281 projects signed between 2016 and 2020. Thanks to their involvement, the average collection rate on impact indicators was 87%, a marked increase over 2021 (+12 points) and 2020 (+28 points).

In order to modernize the involvement of our clients in the monitoring process, as well as to improve data collection and quality effectiveness, Proparco has developed a new impact data management tool in collaboration with AFD Group’s IT Systems Department. This tool has an open portal for clients to enter tracking data.

Specific features of Expertise France

Evaluations conducted by Expertise France comply with the principles set out in Expertise France's ethical charter, in particular with regard to its commitments to aid effectiveness and in accordance with the principles of ownership, alignment, harmonization, results-based management, mutual accountability, and capacity building.

Expertise France policy is thus consistent with the evaluation policy set out in this document and with AFD Group's desire to position project owners at the heart of the evaluation process. As an operator, and at donor request, Expertise France has the capacity to conduct activities to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation capacities of a project owner, subject to funding allocated specifically for this purpose. This capacity building can take the form of technical support, training sessions on the collection tools and methods that have been developed, as well as monitoring missions aimed at the supervision and quality control of the data collected as part of the monitoring and evaluation of the project.





3

A MONITORING SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY REQUIREMENTS OF OPERATIONS

The operation monitoring system supported by AFD Group includes several complementary and interconnected dimensions. It covers i) the technical, financial and contractual monitoring of interventions; ii) the monitoring of the “results”² of these interventions; and, in some cases, iii) the monitoring of intervention contexts.

Operational, contractual and financial monitoring has been gradually expanded in recent years and is a strong point of AFD Group. However, these forms of monitoring must be strengthened to ensure optimal project management and ensure smooth reporting of accountability indicators. The goal of this policy is therefore to specify the progress to be aimed for at these levels of monitoring.

The link between monitoring and evaluation essentially concerns the level of results monitoring and context monitoring. Monitoring makes it possible to collect, on a regular basis, data that will especially be used within the framework of evaluations, in order to inform analyses and evaluative judgment. These same data form the basis for the management of the project,³ the existence and quality of which closely influence that of the evaluations. Monitoring and evaluation are therefore part of a continuum that should be made more solid via two complementary methods:

- › The first is to consolidate the existing basis for feedback common to all projects, in order to use it more effectively for management and accountability, in particular through enhanced dialogue with project stakeholders.
- › The second consists of identifying projects with strong monitoring challenges, for which this base could be usefully supplemented by specific “tailor-made” systems.

The monitoring and evaluation capacities of the project owners are relatively mixed depending on the regions/countries. Thus, as mentioned in the second method, it is important not only to target the type of information necessary for monitoring the projects, as well as the system to set up to put this monitoring into motion, but also to determine the level of capacities available to carry out this monitoring and the more or less crucial need for capacity building of the partners in this area.

3.1 Solid background information on the outputs and outcomes of all projects

The monitoring of results plays a key role in meeting the growing expectations of accountability vis-à-vis AFD Group. These expectations, which come from government administration bodies, Members of Parliament, and the general public, require access to systematic information on the outputs and outcomes of projects financed by AFD Group. At the same time, monitoring also helps back up the accountability of project owners toward the people of their own country.

Within the context of a monitoring and evaluation policy, it is therefore important to have a system that guarantees the quality and smoothness of the appraisal-to-completion continuum, including monitoring, management, and evaluation of projects.

3.1.1. Ensure that monitoring systems are robust and operational

Based on discussions with stakeholders, the project team will identify the key issues and questions that will guide the future monitoring system. This will be done as early as possible during the appraisal stage. An initial set of target indicators will then be determined. These will be limited in number and will illustrate the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the projects. Next, agreement will be made on an outline of the most suitable information-collection tools. The roles and responsibilities for data collection and monitoring as well as as possible support needs will also be clarified collectively. It is the discussions on these matters that make it possible to agree on the means needed to implement this monitoring.

The objective is therefore to calibrate, at the end of the appraisal, a realistic and suitable monitoring system that matches the means and capacities of the partner project owner. Part of the project budget can be earmarked for it, in particular for projects implemented by Expertise France. Finalization of the monitoring system will require special attention at the start of the project (after it has been granted) to greater clarification of the key issues and questions of monitoring as well as the indicators and markers of progress that will inform its management. These indicators are

² By “result” monitoring, we mean the monitoring of the outputs, outcomes, and impacts of the interventions, as well as the monitoring of certain particularly important conditions for the success of the project (which in the logical framework must translate into intermediate outcomes and/or hypotheses).

³ The data collected for project management are analyzed as part of monitoring and are used to inform project management. This analysis is generally carried out internally and is more summary than in the case of an evaluation.

determined by and for the project, in agreement with the client and the stakeholders. They make it possible to target the key issues to be monitored in order to better manage the operations and, ultimately, improve the sustainability of the changes obtained.

Solid baselines will also be established at the start of projects. The reliability of these baselines is an essential building block to ensure the feasibility of monitoring the outputs, outcomes, and the measurement of the impacts from the projects.

3.1.2. Ensure feedback specific to each project

It should be noted that this feedback on each project is also intended to inform the monitoring of sectoral strategies as well as the accountability of AFD Group. It does so in several ways:

- › By amplifying existing efforts to provide information on the outputs and direct outcomes of the projects. It should also be noted that AFD has already made progress in recent years in identifying project outputs, for example through the establishment of databases dedicated to outputs in several regions (e.g., the Sahel and Middle East). However, collection of data on the outcomes and impacts of projects should be stepped up.
- › By increasing the proportion of projects that inform AFD Group's accountability indicators. For this it is important to systematize the feedback on all AFD interventions as much as possible. However, it must be kept in mind that a small number of them will have trouble corresponding to the accountability indicators, unless the number of indicators is increased disproportionately.
- › By further harmonizing and streamlining accountability indicators so that they reflect AFD Group's major commitments while aligning as closely as possible with i) the project monitoring system and ii) international indicator frameworks such as the SDGs. Efficiency should also be a goal, to avoid collecting information that has little or no use – hence the idea of streamlining the number of indicators.

3.2 More in-depth monitoring of certain strategic interventions

In addition to the basic monitoring and management requirements, there are a number of **strategic or operational issues that, for some projects, encourage the implementation of enhanced support**. These include the following:

- › Quickly shift activities during the project (e.g. interventions in crisis areas).
- › Foster dialogue on the results of public policies throughout the implementation of operations (e.g. budget support and public policy loans).
- › Prepare the scaling up of innovative projects.
- › Closely monitor the gradual change in qualitative processes that determine the success and sustainability of a project (e.g., interventions focusing on stakeholder dynamics or capacity building), particularly in the context of projects implemented by Expertise France.
- › Respond to a request for in-depth accountability for projects with strong political challenges (e.g., grant projects or projects with high visibility).

Each of these issues can lead to specific systems, whose point in common is to go beyond the simple monitoring of the outputs and direct outcomes of the projects and provide a more detailed analysis of processes, social changes, public policy trajectories, and specific impacts.

These strategic issues therefore bring up additional requirements for the monitoring systems. This may involve i) conducting more in-depth analysis of the baseline, ii) setting up specific systems to monitor the context, iii) developing specific collection tools, iv) establishing more frequent times for discussions on monitoring data, v) facilitating occasions for broad participatory reflection times, and vi) providing outside opinions to challenge reflection.

These additional requirements involve human and financial resources as well as additional support. They will be identified as far as possible prior to project approval, in order to secure a specific budget heading in the project's overall budget. This will help provide support for this monitoring, strengthen the partner's capacities if necessary, facilitate regular occasions for dialogue, and set up specific collection tools, etc.

Specific features of Proparco

Proparco has enhanced its impact monitoring systems considerably over the past three years. In addition to meeting our commitments to transparency and accountability, the annual monitoring of impact indicators enables Proparco to compare the impact estimates made ex-ante with the impacts observed during project implementation. Proparco is one of the few development finance institutions dedicated to the private sector to carry out and make good use of annual impact monitoring.

In line with the policy outlined in this document, strengthening monitoring would make it possible to carry out more detailed analyses and in particular to compare ex-ante estimates and observed impacts, as well as contributions to impact indicators by Proparco's sector of activity.

Specific features of Expertise France

Expertise France's monitoring policy promotes the principle of results-based management, which defines "optimal monitoring" as continuous monitoring involving partners and focusing on the progress made in the pursuit of effects.

To this end, it recommends including monitoring and evaluation activities as an integral part of all projects implemented by Expertise France. These must be organized, planned and endowed with specific financial and human resources.

Expertise France's monitoring and evaluation policy recommends that all projects implemented by Expertise France be subject to an initial baseline study for the main indicators, the development of a logical framework (ideally based on a theory of change), a monitoring and evaluation plan, and a dashboard to monitor project results indicators. The data collected as part of project monitoring and evaluation must also make it possible to inform the agency's thematic accountability indicators through a data-aggregation and reporting system put into place by the Operations executive Division.









“TAILOR-MADE” EVALUATIONS

The various components of AFD Group's monitoring and evaluation policy tend toward the idea of promoting a variety of evaluation types and methods. The goal is to provide tailor-made evaluations that are as useful as possible to the various actors and stakeholders involved in the interventions.

The focus of this ambition is **the ability of evaluations to provide real support for decision-making**, which means paying the closest attention to:

- › the questions asked by operational teams as well as by our clients and partners;
- › the levels of planning and design useful for decision-making (i.e. by project, sector, geography, etc.);
- › the very moment of decision-making (which is not necessarily after the end of the projects).

The range of evaluations carried out within AFD Group has already greatly diversified in recent years, combining the traditional format of project evaluation with a series of other practices, each with its own usefulness. The monitoring and evaluation policy must remain clear concerning the intervention method – both in terms of type of evaluation and how it is carried out – and it must seek to promote this diversity in several complementary directions.

- › In terms of evaluation methods, mainly for projects, it should:
 - adopt an evaluative perspective that draws on AFD's in-house technical expertise;
 - conduct evaluations during the project;
 - take a participatory approach within evaluations.
- › In terms of the types of studies carried out, it should:
 - adopt a strategic and cross-cutting perspective on the actions carried out, thanks to broad-scope evaluations;
 - conduct evaluations of the impact of the actions carried out, using a variety of methodologies;
 - examine the "how" aspect, thanks to capitalizations on projects and instruments; and
 - pay increased attention to making good use of conclusions and recommendations, in particular through cross-analysis and follow-up work.

This approach of "tailor-made" evaluations allows us to respond as closely as possible to the great number of team and partner needs for managing their projects and strategies. It also contributes to the wide variety of requests for accountability that are addressed to AFD Group and its partners. In this respect it enhances the meaning and usefulness of the evaluations carried out.

4.1 Evaluations designed to meet expectations

4.1.1. An evaluative perspective that draws on AFD's in-house technical expertise

AFD Group carries out the vast majority of its evaluations from an external and independent perspective. However, it would be worthwhile to further promote "in-house" evaluations. These can be carried out by evaluators from AFD Group's evaluation units or by sector or geographical experts who have never been involved in the project under evaluation, or they may involve both an in-house evaluator and a consultant. These make it possible to involve AFD Group's teams at the heart of the evaluation process and to disseminate its culture of evaluation more widely.

Note that these "in-house" exercises are often considered to be more critical than external evaluations. The independence of in-house evaluators is also preserved by two aspects:
i) they have never been involved in the design or execution

of the evaluated project, and ii) they are provided with a clear mandate through the setting up of an active and diversified reference group for each of them. These safeguards make it possible to preserve the independence and impartiality of their analyses and conclusions.

4.1.2. Evaluations at different stages of the project's progress

A key issue in terms of the usefulness of evaluations and their ability to provide decision-making support is the timing of when they are carried out. Some of the AFD Group evaluations are carried out ex-post, after project closure, to gain an understanding of all the results to which the projects may have contributed. However, it can be useful to have evaluation with other time frames:

- › Mid-term or final (in the last months of the project) evaluations make it possible to create rapid learning loops and better connect the evaluation to decision-making moments related to interventions and possible project sequences.

- › They can also be evaluations carried out intermittently throughout the project. These “real-time” evaluations, which are distinguished from a monitoring approach by the intervention of an evaluative analysis outside the project. This type of exercise allows the evaluators to gradually immerse themselves in the project, and to closely follow its evolution. It is particularly useful on projects with a focus on experimentation and innovation, as well as on projects in crisis areas that need frequent and rapid readjustments. This is also the case for impact evaluations with counterfactuals that start prior to the project.

These in-project evaluations are useful for enhancing the ongoing learning process of teams and partners. They also enable rapid redirection of action according to the findings and changing contexts. This type of evaluation is, if possible, included in the project financing budget and has two advantages: direct management by the project owners and flexibility for carrying out the evaluation at the right time, according to the needs.

4.1.3. A participatory approach within evaluations

AFD Group is attentive to increasing citizen participation in its interventions.

This orientation is even a core aspect of the evaluations. It ensures that the people targeted by the interventions (the end-beneficiaries) can give their assessment of the interventions and the impacts they have had on their quality of life.

The level of participation and the methods used vary according to the issues involved in the evaluations and to what the context and type of project make it possible to consider. Based on this observation, the monitoring and evaluation policy focuses on two main areas:

- › Data collection targeting the project’s end-beneficiaries, to be carried out whenever possible and with a monitoring and evaluation approach. In this area, AFD Group continuously explores new tools to tap into the feedback of these beneficiaries flexibly and in real time (e.g. via mobile data collection), especially in the context of impact assessments.
- › Promotion, in certain targeted evaluations, of the direct participation of beneficiaries in the design of the evaluations, their analysis, and the drawing up of recommendations. This type of approach is facilitated when the projects concerned are themselves designed in a largely participatory way and when participation is a core objective. In addition, the ability to develop participatory evaluation is also linked to the culture of evaluation of the service providers involved and to their ability to mainstream this type of approach into their work.

4.2 A strategic and cross-cutting perspective on the actions carried out

4.2.1. AFD Group seeks to promote “strategic” evaluations

These evaluations make it possible to analyze AFD Group’s action in the light of a specific theme, geographical area, or commitment in order to give an overall account of it.

These evaluations contribute to AFD Group’s accountability, but are also a powerful decision-making tool at several levels: for senior management; the Board of Directors; Members of Parliament; as well as for sectoral, geographical, and cross-cutting departments. They also act as privileged occasions for dialogue on AFD Group strategies with other donors.

As far as possible, they will include within their scope the projects of the various entities of AFD Group.

The effective use of these evaluations to guide strategic decisions is directly linked to the need for their concerted programming and to the existence of a well-identified commissioning party, thereby guaranteeing their influential nature (see section 1. “Influential Evaluations”).

4.2.2. Evaluations of the impact of the actions carried out, using a variety of methodologies

AFD Group seeks to better evaluate the impact of its actions, in order to meet the expectations for more in-depth information on certain strategic interventions (because of their scale, innovative dimension, or emblematic nature).

AFD Group is one of the rare bilateral institutions to carry out impact evaluations with counterfactuals, close to the research world and of a nature to inform the international discussions on development aid. One of AFD Group’s ambitions is to continue to develop this work and to systematically include at least one researcher from the Global South into the scientific team in new evaluations, with the three objectives of i) taking into account local contexts better, ii) capacity building in this area, and iii) sustainability of the approach. This type of evaluation has strong potential for learning and for demonstrating impacts on specific projects.

By answering the question of attribution, counterfactual impact evaluations are powerful tools for accountability.

AFD Group is also interested in the diversity of impacts associated with the interventions, including unanticipated impacts and impacts related to the different targets of the intervention. We also and above all seek to explore the entire diversity of approaches related to impact evaluation and in particular to develop the links between the quantitative and

qualitative dimensions within these evaluations.

This is because a diversity of approaches makes it possible to inform differently about the changes that have occurred in connection with an action taken. These approaches include contribution analysis, qualitative comparative analysis, realist evaluation, outcome harvesting, ethnographic approach, and most significant change. We are therefore continuing our exploration of these mixed approaches and their integration into evaluations, particularly in certain project evaluations.

Impact evaluation requires resources, but it also requires time, upstream and downstream of the interventions to be evaluated. It must be considered most often at the time of project appraisal and be based on a solid baseline. It therefore poses the challenge of a fairly precise prior targeting of the most suitable projects for this type of evaluation. On the other hand, the goal of revealing the impacts of an action may require a certain time delay, which may end several years after the end of the project. This requirement must therefore be taken into account in the timetable associated with the programming of evaluations and their reporting.

4.2.3. An extra perspective on the “how” aspect, thanks to capitalization

All evaluations have learning as an ambition. Capitalization adds something extra, as it **directly questions the practices and experiences resulting from the interventions in order to make them useful knowledge for all** (in other words, by working on the question of “how” the projects were carried out). It provides real added value in terms of ownership of the analyses and above all an in-depth understanding of the changes linked to these projects, by identifying their potential levers and blockages.

Capitalization represents a major tool for ongoing improvement for AFD Group. Whether it involves capitalizing on projects, themes or instruments, capitalization is of significant interest for the operational teams and partners, who perceive it as a way to enhance the know-how derived from projects and to build common benchmarks for action. This practice is also characterized by in-depth involvement by stakeholders (operational teams, project owners, project partners) in the process, thus helping to ensure an approach that is “influential” while having a “by our partners’ side” approach.

Provided that a relevant scope is defined, capitalization can usefully be based on the cross-analysis of evaluations from the same sector, the same geographical area, or the same type of financing, and it is likely to shed more light on the main conditions for the success of a project. Carried out iteratively and in consultation with operational staff, and with partners and project owners when relevant, this exercise contributes to improved ownership of the lessons and recommendations resulting from the evaluations, as well as to their enrichment and operationalization for appraisal of future projects.

4.2.4. Reviews and cross-analyses

Cross-analyzing the conclusions and lessons learned from evaluations with similar evaluation questions gives them more weight and makes it possible to maximize the lessons that result from them.

Facilitating exchanges on this work involves mainly AFD Group operational staff. However, depending on the subject, it can also involve the French administrations concerned and, in some cases, the project owners and local partners. This process uses a variety of tools to facilitate iterative exchanges such as presentations, workshops, publications, and others.

More specifically, the findings of impact evaluations inform research on public development aid. These evaluations document the effects of an intervention on the people or ecosystems concerned, whether they are intentional or not. In particular, they seek to better measure the final effects on people or ecosystems. They make it possible to analyze the mechanisms that enabled the change or impact that was measured, as well as the degree to which the evaluated project contributed to it. Cross-analyzing the results of these evaluations makes it possible to obtain a body of evidence on the impacts of an intervention in various contexts and to inform decision-making between different intervention protocols.

4.2.5. The challenge of balancing different practices

AFD Group’s monitoring and evaluation policy thus seeks to promote a diversity of types and methods of evaluation with the goal of meeting the needs of the Group and its partners. This diversity implies finding the right balance in the planning of evaluations:

- › By ensuring that project evaluations cover the different geographical areas, the different sectors, and the different instruments based on which AFD Group supports the action of its partners.
- › By guaranteeing a central role for the model of ex-post project evaluations that meets AFD Group’s requirement for transparency and accountability.
- › By ensuring at the same time a role for other types and methods of evaluation in the overall balance of planning, in order to guarantee the ambition of providing “tailor-made” evaluations and to be as useful as possible to teams and partners.

Under these conditions, far from representing a lack of focus, the diversification of the types and methods of evaluation allows us on the contrary to refocus on the major objectives assigned to the evaluation and on the best way to respond to them.

Specific features of Expertise France

In addition to the planning and monitoring of project results, Expertise France's monitoring and evaluation policy recommends occasions for review, evaluation, and capitalization that promote learning at the project and Agency level, with a goal of improving the management, accountability, and quality the projects it implements.

To this end, and in full coherence with AFD Group's evaluation policy, it carries out a variety of tasks at different stages during project implementation. These supplement and enrich the quantitative data from the dashboards with qualitative analyses.

It should be noted that this type of cross-functional exercise remains dependent on the existence of dedicated resources.

Specific features of Proparco

Proparco gives priority to monitoring and has limited resources allocated to ex-post evaluations. For these reasons, it cannot cover the range of evaluations available to AFD Group.

Proparco is nevertheless committed to promoting a variety of types and methods of evaluation. The goal is to provide tailor-made evaluations that are as useful as possible to the various actors and stakeholders involved. To this end, Proparco would like to systematize the coverage of its projects through cluster and in-depth evaluations that are conducted by AFD and relevant to the private sector.





5

FOSTER DIALOGUE TO SUPPORT, IMPLEMENT, AND MONITOR OUR COMMITMENTS IN A COORDINATED MANNER

It should be noted that this part of the monitoring and evaluation policy dedicated to governance will be reviewed during the effective establishment of the ODA Evaluation Commission.

The implementation of AFD Group's monitoring and evaluation policy commitments implies enhanced dialogue at three levels:

- › At the level of AFD Group's governance body, namely its Board of Directors (dialogue with the Board);
- › Between AFD, the administrations concerned, and, ultimately, the future ODA Evaluation Commission (institutional dialogue);
- › And within AFD Group itself (internal dialogue).

5.1 Dialogue with AFD's Board of Directors

AFD's Board of Directors would like to have regular feedback on the monitoring of the results and impacts of current or finalized projects it has financed.

Regarding the implementation of the policy outlined in this document, the Board of Directors will be regularly informed of the progress of the AFD, Proparco, and Expertise France road maps, which operationally set out the main principles put forward in the policy, the tools implemented, and the qualitative and quantitative targets. An outsourced and independent monitoring and evaluation system for this policy will be set up immediately after adoption of the policy and will help to nurture discussions at the Board on the levers, possible obstacles, and possible avenues for improvement.

Regarding the monitoring of project results, the challenge is to better qualify the portfolio under implementation, to gain better understanding of the expected development results and those ultimately obtained (ex-ante and ex-post), and to contribute to their analysis with regard to the operational and strategic goals of AFD Group and the French Government. Among other goals, this includes making the most of information on and analyses of the contributions the financed projects make to the various SDGs, by presenting the actual results of ongoing projects and through a comparison at project level between the expected results and those obtained at the end of the project.

Discussions at the Board of Directors level will help provide guidance so that the findings obtained can be taken into account when planning future generations of financed projects. For example, they can help prioritize the types of projects with the most results or shift toward methods and types of financing that maximize impacts within the context (alignment of actors, technical cooperation component in grants accompanying large-scale investment programs, etc.).

Regarding evaluations, the challenge is also to better identify and bring out strategic topics, to ensure high-level support for this work, and to deepen the feedback loop of evaluations

by monitoring their recommendations. Here it is important to promote the evaluation at the Board level, in order to make it a real decision-making tool.

Discussions at the Board of Directors level will help i) enrich the planning of strategic evaluation topics that have not been identified during the planning process; ii) identify the evaluations whose results will be presented to the Board; and iii) identify the high-stakes recommendations of broad-scope evaluations, which should be monitored by the Board.

5.2 Institutional dialogue

The close coordination between the various evaluation units of French ODA actors⁴ is a strength that should be bolstered by the creation of the French ODA Evaluation Commission. Close exchange is also necessary with the evaluation service of the Directorate General for Overseas France.

More specifically, this institutional dialogue makes it possible to:

- › Ensure synergies in the field of evaluation, especially for planning strategic evaluations in line with policy priorities, but also to encourage reflection on each other's methods and practices;
- › Strengthen the dissemination of and communication on the work carried out by the various evaluation units;
- › Facilitate institutional dialogue on evaluation with international bodies or public bodies in partner countries (ministries, national evaluation entities, national statistical institutes, court of auditors, etc.).

The ongoing process of dialogue that has already started will be deepened thanks to the establishment of a more formalized time for dialogue between the evaluation units, especially before the meetings of the ODA Evaluation Commission⁵, thus offering this body a consolidated basis for discussions. AFD's Evaluation Department represents the Group's other evaluation departments in these various areas of exchange.

⁴ Evaluation services of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the Directorate General of the Treasury.

⁵ When it comes into force.

These occasions for institutional coordination times will help to:

- › Share and regularly monitor evaluation planning;
- › Organize a coordinated and partnership-based approach to France's presence in the bodies following evaluation at a European and international level (OECD/Evalnet, EU/ INTPA, etc.);
- › Organize, according to needs, specific working groups between the evaluation units, or joint training sessions to exchange on specific practices and produce joint reflection;
- › Ultimately, prepare the meetings of the French ODA Evaluation Commission.

In monitoring, institutional coordination is being organized between the operational services of the Directorate General for Globalisation, Culture, Education and International Development; the Directorate General of the Treasury; and the Directorate General for Overseas Territories. This is being done at different speeds and mostly with a thematic approach, generally in direct connection with AFD's technical and cross-cutting divisions. This coordination and "discussion" on the results obtained in the context of the projects under implementation takes on concrete form, for example, when the sectoral reports are produced each year by these divisions, which present these results for the past year. However, the mixed quality of data from the monitoring of projects under implementation and their integration into information systems remains a work in progress at AFD. Restructuring the result frameworks and simplifying the monitoring systems – and therefore the ambitions associated with them – is the priority in 2023 and 2024, so that quantitative data to support the results achieved through financial mobilization can be collected as systematically as possible.

5.3 Internal dialogue

Stimulating appropriate monitoring systems by project owners and carrying out "tailor-made" evaluations, connected to the needs on the ground, imply creating the conditions for smooth and regular dialogue within AFD Group on monitoring and evaluation. The challenge is to create a real network approach that connects AFD Group's entities both at headquarters and in the field. The link with AFD's decentralized structures, such as the regional offices, country offices, and Proparco and Expertise France offices, is essential to mobilize project owners, local partners, and project stakeholders.

In terms of monitoring, dialogue is traditionally carried out on a case-by-case and project-by-project basis, as described in the appraisal procedures in force, between the "technical" operational staff of the Sustainable Development Solutions (SDD) Division, and the "Geographies" executive Division

(GEO). However, as mentioned above, it is also important to lead ongoing in-house reflection on the quality and relevance of the result frameworks (i.e. the major ambitions, indicators and targets of the results pursued by each operational entity, in its sector, its theme, and in a consolidated way for the SDD executive Division), so that the standardization of quantitative information on development results are the best possible "proxies" of the reality of AFD's action to support sustainable development transitions, for the benefit of beneficiaries.

This field of reflection and progress on the structuring of result frameworks is also essential for improving the "evaluability" of projects: the clarification, standardization, and simplification of result indicators and targets are likely to give impetus to a pragmatic project-by-project approach, for determining realistic and measurable ambitions and the monitoring tools to do so. In return, projects with better-structured goals make it possible to conduct evaluations that will improve the quality of the results frameworks of operational entities. This is thanks to their continuous feedback on the development result measured when the project is in progress or completed.

In terms of evaluation, the challenge of this internal dialogue is more precisely to make it possible to:

- › Establish concerted planning that gives a better view of the interventions of the entire Group, by collectively targeting the different types of evaluations to be carried out and guaranteeing the "tailor-made" nature of these evaluations;
- › Target the evaluation management or co-management roles best suited to the contexts and the project owners, in order to make headway in the dynamics of shared accountability;
- › Collectively target the key recommendations and enhance the monitoring and ownership of evaluations at all levels of AFD Group.

Among other things, the planning and development process involves regular exchanges on the proposals collected (by ISR/EVA for AFD, by IMP for Proparco and by MERL for Expertise France) with the operational executive divisions (technical and geographical) as well as with the operational managers of Expertise France and Proparco. The aim is to discuss and finalize the programming before it is submitted to the AFD Board of Directors. The planning is then endorsed by the different entities and departments for effective implementation.

These internal discussions within the Group are also essential before presentations to the Board of Directors on the findings of certain strategic or emblematic evaluations or prior to reviews on the implementation of the policy.

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Towards a world in common

AFD Group contributes to the implementation of France's policies for sustainable development and international solidarity. The Group includes Agence Française de Développement (AFD), which finances the public sector, NGOs, research and training; its subsidiary Proparco, which is dedicated to the private sector; and Expertise France, a technical cooperation agency. The Group finances, supports and accelerates the transitions needed for a fairer, more resilient world.

With our partners, we are building shared solutions with and for the people in more than 150 countries, as well as in 11 French Overseas Departments and Territories. As part of the commitment of France and the French people to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, our teams are at work on 4,200 projects in the field. Our objective is to reconcile economic development with the preservation of common goods, from peace, the climate and biodiversity to health, education and gender equality. Towards a world in common.



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