



Introduction

Parliaments play a key role in development through their mandate to enact laws, represent the people, and hold the government to account. But how can Parliamentarians be assured that the policies and programs they have endorsed are strong, implemented correctly by the government, and improve the lives of the people? Could policies and programmes be improved?

Evidence from evaluation and the critical thinking it fosters can help Parliamentarians play more active roles in the design and implementation of policies and programmes that bring about better, fairer, and more sustainable development results.

The *OECD/DAC evaluation criteria*, combined with a sound understanding of development interventions, can help parliamentarians to ask the relevant questions during parliamentary debates and portfolio committee meetings to ultimately ensure the maximum benefits for citizens.

Impact

OECD/DAC defines Impact as the degree to which *the intervention actually makes a difference*.

The extent to which the intervention has generated or is expected to generate significant positive or negative, intended, or unintended, higher-level effects.

Key terms

Impact addresses the ultimate significance and potentially transformative effects of the intervention. It seeks to identify the social, environmental, and economic effects of the intervention that are longer term or broader in scope than those already captured under the effectiveness criterion. Beyond the immediate results, this criterion seeks to capture the indirect, secondary, and potential consequences of the intervention. It does so by examining the holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms, and potential effects on people's wellbeing, human rights, gender equality, and the environment.

Parliamentarians, are you interested in becoming more effective representatives for citizens?

Are you interested in maximising the country's development by raising the relevant questions in parliamentary debates on behalf of your constituents?

Read this series of short brochures on the OECD DAC Criteria

RELEVANCE

is the intervention doing the right things?

EFFECTIVENESS

is the intervention achieving its objectives?

IMPACT

what difference does the intervention make?



COHERENCE

how well does the intervention fit?

EFFICIENCY

how well are resources being used?

SUSTAINABILITY

will the benefits last?

How parliamentarians can use the impact criteria

In almost all countries, governments invest considerable amounts of public funds in policies or programmes that are designed to improve the lives of citizens. This includes policies and programmes to alleviate poverty, improve health and education, protect the environment and more. Measuring *impact* allows us to determine the *long-term* change that can be attributed to such an intervention.

National budgets containing allocations for these interventions are approved by Parliament. As part of their oversight of the executive branch of government, it's important that Parliamentarians can not only assess the likely long-term benefits of such programmes but also understand the impact of similar policies or programmes in the past.

Examples of *impact* might include, an increase in the number of families who have been lifted out of poverty and remain there for a period of 5 years or more as a result of a poverty alleviation programme, a decrease in the number of children in every 1,000 who die before the age of 5 years (child mortality rate) a result of a health intervention, an increase in the percentage of students finding gainful employment as a result of improved exam performance after an education programme.

An understanding of the *impact* criteria allows Parliamentarians to ask pertinent questions both in the debating chamber and in Parliamentary committees about the long-term benefits to citizens of government spending. Keeping the spotlight on impact helps to ensure that government programmes and policies accomplish their goals not only in the short-term, but make a real and lasting difference to people's lives.

Possible questions parliamentarians can ask to ensure impact

The following are examples of questions that Parliamentarians might ask about the *impact* of a public intervention, program, or policy. It's important however, to be creative when asking questions and to take into account the country context, the nature of the intervention or policy, and the needs of the debate and policy decision-making process.

A: To what extent has the intervention achieved the planned higher-level results of a transformative nature?

B: To what extent has the intervention produced secondary and indirect positive results likely to affect gender equality, human rights, environmental quality, and people's wellbeing?

C: Are there long-lasting holistic changes in norms and institutions produced by the intervention? If so, what are they?

D: Were there any unexpected changes (positive or negative) that emerged over time as a result of the intervention?

E: What are the factors that facilitated the achievement of significant impacts and what factors were inhibiting?

F: What lessons can be learned from the realisation of the intervention's impact?

Source: De Silva, S. (2021). Theory of Change For Development Success: Workbook. Colombo, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka Evaluation Association

Resources to learn more about impact

OECD evaluation criteria, retrieved from
<https://tinyurl.com/2p9835a6>



OECD (2022) Understanding the six criteria: Definitions, elements for analysis and key challenges. retrieved from
<https://tinyurl.com/bddefx8>



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