



**DAC
EVALUATION
CRITERIA**
—
SUSTAINABILITY

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

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.

Sustainability

The key question that is generated by the OECD/DAC definition of Sustainability is "Will the benefits last?"

Sustainability is the extent to which the net benefits of the intervention continue or are likely to continue beyond the lifetime of the intervention itself.

An appraisal of the sustainability of a policy or project includes an examination of the financial, economic, social, environmental, and institutional capacities of the systems needed to sustain the net benefits over time. It involves analyses of resilience, risks, and potential trade-offs. Depending on the timing of the evaluation, this may involve analysing the actual flow of net benefits or estimating the likelihood of net benefits continuing over the medium and long term.

RELEVANCE

is the intervention doing the right things?

EFFECTIVENESS

is the intervention achieving its objectives?

IMPACT

what difference does the intervention make?



**EVALUATION
CRITERIA**

COHERENCE

how well does the intervention fit?

EFFICIENCY

how well are resources being used?

SUSTAINABILITY

will the benefits last?

How parliamentarians can use the sustainability criteria

Parliaments approve budgets that allocate resources for development interventions with the aim of securing long lasting benefits for citizens. Resources may be allocated for infrastructure development, poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, education, and health amongst others.

With infrastructure, which is capital intensive, it is important that the problems the infrastructure addresses are solved for the long term, not just the short term. For example, a new road system should provide sufficient capacity for transport not just today, but for years to come. For the benefits to be truly sustainable, we also need a mechanism to cover the maintenance costs over the lifetime of the road itself.

Within a health programme that improves citizens' life outcomes through supporting changes in their behaviour, it is important that these behavioural shifts are permanent and not temporary. For example, in a campaign to improve how mothers feed their infants, it is important that mothers continue to choose nutritious foodstuffs for infants in future, and not just for the period of the campaign.

To achieve sustainability, we often need to ensure that there are permanent changes in attitude and behaviour amongst those involved, as well as ongoing capacity within key institutions and systems that support the developmental change we are trying to achieve. By its very nature, sustainability is difficult to assess during the lifetime of an intervention itself. To truly assess sustainability we may need to appraise the intervention long after the programme or policy has been instigated.

An understanding of the sustainability criteria allows Parliamentarians to ask pertinent questions, both in the debating chamber and in parliamentary committees, about the extent to which the benefits to citizens of government spending will continue over time, not just for the current parliamentary cycle.

Interventions that are not sustainable are wasteful of public resources and may require interventions in future to solve the same problem. Effective oversight of these projects however may provide valuable lessons for future programming.

Possible questions parliamentarians can ask to ensure sustainability

The following are examples of questions that parliamentarians might ask about the sustainability 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: What are the financial, social, economic, and environmental net benefits of the intervention?

B: What are the capacities of the institutions and systems needed to sustain these net-benefits over time?

C: Are there important changes in attitude and behaviour that are needed for benefits to become permanent? Which stakeholders should be seen to exhibit these?

D: What other factors facilitate or mitigate the continuity of the benefits over the medium and long term?

E: How resilient are the key capacities and systems to changes in the environment?

F: What trade-offs have the intervention made and what are their implications on the net benefits?

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

Resources to learn more about sustainability

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>



Published by



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