

EX-POST EVALUATION

Less than 1% of development projects are evaluated after funding ends²



What is Ex-post Evaluation?

Ex-post evaluation takes place after (or long after) project completion. Unlike final project evaluations, which are completed at the time of a project's conclusion, an ex-post evaluation is conducted in the years after a project's official end date.



Ex-post evaluations are conducted to assess

- Whether a specific intervention was justified
- If it worked (or is working) as expected in achieving project objectives
- Why it did (or did not) work
- Unintended effects (i.e., effects not anticipated prior to or during the projects)
- Evidence of causality



Why ex-post evaluation?

An ex-post evaluation is a highly valuable tool for determining not only how successful a development project may have been after resources and international funding were withdrawn, but also the long-term sustainability of the outcomes of projects.

While it is considered an important activity for project sustainability, it remains a rare event in the project cycle.

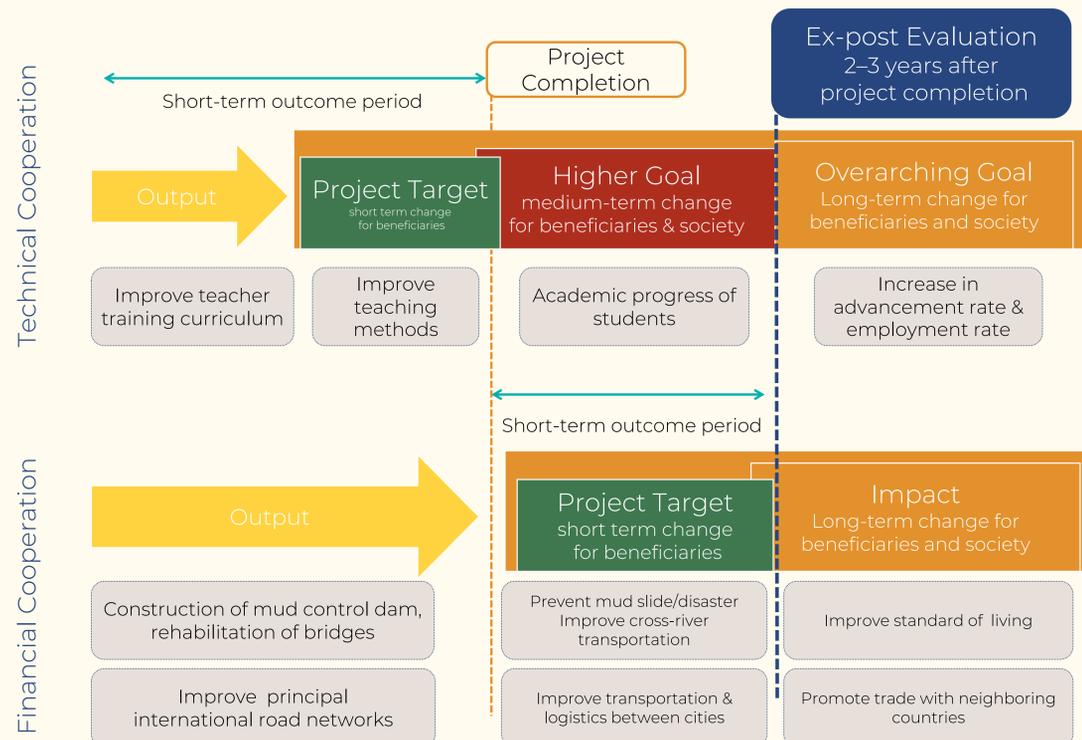


While most international development projects aim for and claim sustainability of their interventions, fewer than 1% of development projects are evaluated after funding ends.^{1,2}

¹ Zivetz, L. and Cekan, J. with Robins, K. (2017). Building the evidence base for post project evaluations: Case study review and evaluability checklists.

² Zivetz, L., Cekan, J., & Robbins, K. (2017, May). Building the Evidence Base for Post-Project Evaluation: Case Study Review and Evaluability Checklists

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Project Outcomes Timeline



Ex-Post Evaluation at JICA

With decades of experience conducting ex-post evaluations, JICA is a world leader in conducting and refining the ex-post evaluation process. This includes mid-term reviews during projects and monitoring results at the end of the project to summarize overall achievements. Over the last 10 years, JICA's focus shifted from end-of project monitoring toward more ex-post evaluations:

1970s—aware that it can take several years for the results of some projects to take root or for outcomes related to sustainability to emerge, JICA begins exploring ex-post evaluations

2000s JICA modified its methods and procedures to align with the OECD-DAC criteria

1,800+ ex-post evaluations completed by JICA between 2003–2019

100% of JICA's ODA loan projects and more than 80% of Technical & Financial cooperation projects receive ex-post evaluations

JICA's system and dedicated budget for ex-post evaluation serves 2 main purposes; **Accountability**, ensures objectivity & provides evaluation results that contribute to development effectiveness; **Learning for Further Improvement**, captures lessons for improving subsequent projects, formulating new projects, and assessing fundamental cooperation strategies

USAID's use of ex-post evaluation

USAID ties the utility of ex-post evaluations to their Journey to Self-Reliance Strategy (JSR), as an opportunity to take a longer term look at sustainability and at how well an activity design and theory of change has held over time. This speaks to a partner's country's willingness to maintain anticipated outcomes and sustain longer-term development goals.

USAID assisted the government of Egypt with both water and wastewater infrastructure construction, as well as job creation through training and service delivery in the water sector. They commissioned an ex-post evaluation 5 years after the project to learn how they might apply effective and sustainable approaches to future utility sector activities. The evaluation focused on 12 water treatment facilities and evaluators traveled to 10 villages receiving water connections through program efforts.

Lessons Learned

1. **Ex-post evaluation can be more feasible for infrastructure activity.** Although access to some key stakeholders was limited due to availability, infrastructure and regular water quality test results can be inspected and interpreted by technical experts, and standard operating procedure documents were accessible to evaluate how well they were being used.
2. **Where physical security during field work can be an issue, ex post evaluations may be even less feasible,** because the project management team can no longer support external evaluators with important security needs. The evaluation team was not permitted to conduct a beneficiary survey, some site inspections, and some interviews due to security concerns and/or lack of access that could have been facilitated by former activity personnel.
3. **Sustained progress is now fully in the hands of beneficiaries, who stand to more directly learn from the evaluation results.** Many of the recommendations were directed at the Egyptian Water Holding Companies and their subsidiaries, as opposed to USAID and its implementing partner. This speaks to the ex-post focus on sustainability after USAID's investments have ended. USAID was provided guidance for future investments as well.

Ex-Post Evaluation 2020

Lessons Learned

- **Realistic goals** (achievable with the available resources and institutional capacity)—crucial for project sustainability
- **Degree of project sustainability varied**—ex-post evaluations could not always capture all aspects and factors contributing to a project's success
- **Coupling ex-post evaluation**—with end of project monitoring, end of project evaluations, and sector-wide analysis—yields more robust findings
- **Financial data analysis**—necessary for assessing success of project implementation & sustainment
- **Continuous effort to improve the rating system**—necessary to keep it relevant
- **Ongoing training of staff**—necessary to maintain the quality of ex-post evaluation implementation

Challenges

- **High turn-over and relocation of project staff**—can result in the loss of contextual knowledge & relationships, making ex-post evaluations more challenging.
- **Recency bias**—can make it more difficult to capture the overall effectiveness, impact, & results of a target project
- **Unforeseen circumstances & the political environment**—can significantly impact project sustainability

COVID-19 Impact

- **Travel restrictions** currently prohibit evaluator travel to project sites for ex-post evaluations.
- **Ex-post evaluations have shifted to online-data collection and interviews**—need to monitor how the changes in data collection methods influence the overall quality of ex-post evaluations
- **No significant changes to how we think about development effects due to COVID-19**—there is concern over possible adverse effects on vulnerable groups due to the pandemic



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