



DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION TIPS TOOLS INSIGHTS PRACTICES

In practice

DEVELOPING A POOL OF EXTERNAL EVALUATORS FOR KOREA'S LOAN OPERATIONS

Key messages

The quality and impact of [Korea's Economic Development Cooperation Fund \(EDCF\)](#) programmes rely on a strong culture of evaluation and results. A long-standing challenge for the EDCF has been to engage external evaluators qualified to evaluate loan operations. A pilot to develop a curriculum and course at an established university is working to resolve this deficit.

Keywords

[Evaluation systems](#) | [Managing for Sustainable Development Results](#) | [Human resources](#)

Key partner

[Korea](#)

Challenge

Quality evaluation requires the right mix of technical skills and sector-specific knowledge. Compared to other government agencies that manage grants, the [Export-Import Bank of Korea \(KEXIM\)](#) has historically had more difficulty finding qualified external evaluators for EDCF loan operations. The major bottleneck has been evaluators' lack of knowledge about loan operations and their potential development outcomes.

Approach

To address this challenge sustainably, in 2023, KEXIM decided to improve the evaluation ecosystem through a training programme for evaluators. KEXIM had an idea of what the content should look like but did not have specific experience in developing such a curriculum, so it collaborated with the Graduate School of International Studies at Ewha Women's University to develop a pilot, with courses in evaluation design and management offered by faculty members who had knowledge and experience conducting EDCF evaluations.

- The curriculum drew on experience from KOICA's association with the Korea Society for International Development and Cooperation. Integrating the programme into a course at the graduate school allowed for more in-depth training as well as practical experience conducting an evaluation at a project site as part of the coursework. An evaluation of the pilot course is currently under way.

Results

- **Applying coursework to conduct evaluations.** In 2023, 17 students finished the coursework for this course and three students participated in a study trip to Viet Nam to do an actual ex post evaluation of a loan-financed road project. An added benefit is that the pilot course allowed foreign students – some of whom are government officials from partner countries – to gain greater awareness of Korea's ODA projects internationally.
- **Collaboration with academia boosted evaluation capacities.** KEXIM benefited from the graduate school's holistic approach to development and its focus on cross-cutting issues (environment, gender, targeting vulnerable groups, etc.). Together with more technical infrastructure expertise of KEXIM, these courses will continue to add depth to the evaluation of ODA and improve evaluation quality over time.
- **Focused development of a pool of experts can expand the development co-operation ecosystem in Korea.** A growing corps of independent external evaluators increases the pool of development co-operation experts working outside of government, which is important for accountability and learning, especially as ODA scales-up.
- **Programme expansion.** Other universities and research institutes have expressed interest in establishing similar evaluation courses and KEXIM is considering gradually expanding the number of participating schools in the future.

Lessons learnt

- **Strong partnerships are key.** For KEXIM, developing the training was feasible but time intensive and required firm commitment from both KEXIM and the graduate school.
- **Practical work encourages students' involvement.** The fact that the course was a project linked to an actual evaluation motivated many students to select the course. Since not all students participate in the fieldwork, which ideally involves four to five students and three to four researchers, the forthcoming evaluation recommended that students who do not take part in the on-site evaluation should be involved in stakeholder interviews in Korea. The focus of the second phase of the programme in 2024 will be on strengthening activities in Korea such as special lectures by technical experts and visits to KEXIM and other centres.
- **Formal recognition can increase participation and employment opportunities.** Granting an academic credit to students conducting the field work could attract greater participation. Similarly, recognising students' successful participation in the course, for example by awarding a certificate of completion, would increase student interest and future employment opportunities, including as external evaluators with KEXIM.
- **Ex post evaluation for future improvements.** An ex-post evaluation of the programme is underway and will help inform future efforts to expand the programme.

Further information

Export-Import Bank of Korea, EDCF M&E 전문가 양성 프로그램: 이화여자대학교 [EDCF M&E Specialist Training Program: Ewha Woman's University], forthcoming.

OECD resources

OECD (2024), *OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews: Korea 2024*, OECD Development Co-operation Peer Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, [forthcoming].

OECD (2023), *Evaluation Systems in Development Co-operation 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a255365e-en>.

To learn more about the Korea's development co-operation, see:

OECD, "Korea", in *Development Co-operation Profiles*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d919ff1a-en>.

See more *In Practice* examples from Korea here: <https://www.oecd.org/development-cooperation-learning?tag-key+partner=korea#search>.

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