



# Note: AusAID Discussion Paper on Impact Evaluation

**By Robert Cannon**

AusAID's Office of Development Effectiveness has [released](#) a Paper on impact evaluation providing staff with guidance and standards around impact evaluations to support their use. There is increasing attention now being given to impact evaluations in development and so this new Paper is very timely.

This Discussion Paper is excellent. It is sensible, well-grounded in current good practice, succinct, helpfully referenced and practical. The broad approach adopted in the Paper, and acknowledgement of methodological flexibility, is a breath of fresh air in a field so dominated by constrained and limited discussions of single methods such 'Randomised Control Trials' to the exclusion of other methods. The key to the value of this Paper is the statement: "Impact evaluation in AusAID should not be methods-driven".

The quality of the Paper stands in marked contrast to many other donor documents in the field, for example, those currently available from USAID. These

documents are for the most part confusing, narrow, and unhelpful when discussing impact evaluation.

One area that might be addressed to strengthen the Paper is that impact evaluations can also serve an additional purpose of contributing to our body of knowledge about development. The case for advocating this additional purpose rests on the paucity of quality research and publicly available evidence for many donor-supported interventions.

AusAID has invited comments and observations on the Paper, which is available [here](#).

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## About the author/s

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