

KEY TAKEAWAYS: EVALUATING THE COHERENCE OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

SCOPING STUDY FOR THE COVID-19 GLOBAL EVALUATION COALITION | December 2021

In recognition of the growing importance of coherence, the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition commissioned a scoping study on the coherence of the international response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was intended to inform the development of thoughtful, insightful and useful evaluations and provide strategic and practical advice that can be applied in different contexts. Below is a summary of some of the key findings and recommendations from the report, drafted by the OECD/DAC EvalNet Secretariat. We invite you to consult the [full report](#) for further information.

Based on the OECD DAC evaluation criterion of coherence, this study defined coherence as “the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution”

KEY FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

- The newly-adopted evaluation criterion coherence – as defined by the OECD DAC – provides a good basis for evaluations wishing to assess the coherence of responses to COVID-19. The criterion is helpful as it emphasises the importance of evaluating an intervention’s fit. The delineation of internal and external coherence is particularly useful for evaluations of well-defined entities. However, the distinction may be less useful where the entity being evaluated is complex or amorphous, e.g. a United Nations agency, or where an evaluation is not of a specific entity, e.g. a thematic evaluation.
- Evaluations wishing to include the coherence criterion should first identify the subject of the evaluation and what elements of coherence will be evaluated in the specific context under consideration. This will involve understanding the entity or entities being evaluated and identifying other relevant actors. It will also involve being clear as to “*coherence with what*” is being evaluated. Is the evaluation interested in fit with other interventions in the same sector or another sector? Or is the main focus on how the intervention fits with what other parts of the entity are doing? Or is the main focus on fit with broader themes and topics, such as the SDGs, the humanitarian-peace-development triple nexus, human rights, or equity and inclusion?
- The study proposed a series of key evaluation questions, sub-questions and considerations for evaluations assessing the coherence of responses to COVID-19. In particular, it was proposed that evaluations assess the extent to which responses are aligning to ensure coherent approaches at various different levels, including: in a county, within a sector and across sectors, within an institution, internally and externally, at the regional level, at the global level, and on a broader level (i.e. the extent to which responses are coherent with support for the achievement of the SDGs).
- While generic questions on coherence may be a helpful starting point, and it may also be possible to learn from questions others have used, each evaluation will need to carefully develop evaluation questions that are relevant to the intervention(s) being evaluated and their context.

- Where possible, evaluations should seek to go beyond simple analytical narratives as a way of describing and communicating findings concerning coherence. The use of tools, such as red amber green (RAG) ratings to present findings from rubric-based evaluative approaches may be useful to aid communication but they have to date been used by relatively few evaluations relating to coherence.
- Evaluators should consider equity and inclusion when designing and implementing evaluations focused on the coherence of responses to the pandemic. This may involve reflecting on the relevance of the leave no one behind agenda within responses to the pandemic, if and how marginalised groups have benefited from the coherence of responses and whether their needs and perspectives are being taken into consideration as plans develop.
- The study proposes ways of working to support the development of meaningful, feasible and manageable evaluations of coherence. Where possible, joint evaluations may have particular advantages in answering questions related to coherence. Where these are not possible, different synthesis approaches may be useful in summarising evaluative evidence from evaluations conducted by different actors.
- Practical steps can be taken to support the development of evaluation portfolios that can be synthesised. These include developing and applying a shared analytical framework to inform the design of evaluations, working in ways that support complementarity rather than duplication of evaluations, development of a comprehensive evidence base, and development of work plans that include sufficient time for participatory reflection and collaboration across different agencies.



Comments on this paper are welcome and may be sent to the DAC EvalNet Secretariat: COVID19evaluation@oecd.org, Development Cooperation Directorate, OECD, 2 rue André Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex 16, France.

This paper should be cited as: Drew, Roger (2021) COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition, Evaluating the Coherence of the International Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic Scoping Study for the COVID-19 Global Evaluation Coalition.” OECD, Paris, <https://www.covid19-evaluation-coalition.org>.

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