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Evaluation Methodologies in Complex Development Projects: A Scoping Review

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Abstract

Evaluation plays a crucial role in determining the outcomes and impact of international development projects. By applying strict evaluation criteria, it becomes clear whether the project was effective and what specific change it contributed to. Existing studies emphasized the importance of project evaluation, however there are limited systematic review studies, which would allow to understand the most widely applied evaluation methods as well as linking specific evaluation approaches to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which the development projects contribute to. In order to fill this gap, a systematic review was carried out using Covidence, a Cochrane adopted systematic review management software. Studies included in the review were selected from the Thomson Reuters Web of Science, SCOPUS, ProQuest, Science Direct and Google Scholar databases. The results of the review were classified based on existing evaluation approaches typologies and SDG contributions were mapped at the SDG target level. Finally, the UKRI GCRF Trade Hub, a 5-year multi-country research consortium investigating the impacts of trade on livelihoods and biodiversity, was also used as a case study to examine best evaluation methods in the context of SDG progress monitoring.

Keywords: evaluation, evaluation methods, development projects, sustainable development, sustainable development goals; systematic review