

Formative Evaluation Using OECD-DAC Framework: Sustainable Coffee Agriculture and Value-Added Creation (SAVA)

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ABSTRACT

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs targeting community empowerment are commonly evaluated only at program completion, limiting opportunities for timely program adjustment. This study presents a formative evaluation of the Sustainable Coffee Agriculture and Value-Added Creation (SAVA) program a CSR initiative by PT Supreme Energy Rantau Dedap (SERD) implemented in collaboration with Anwar Muhammad Foundation (AMF) in Segamit, South Sumatra, Indonesia conducted at month six of a twelve-month implementation period. Using the OECD-DAC evaluation framework (relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability), data were collected through structured interviews, surveys, and program document reviews involving 13 respondents comprising 10 coffee farmers from Kelompok Tani Gunung Patah (KTGP) and 3 program organizers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis. While program Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) showed near-complete achievement across all objectives, the OECD-DAC evaluation detected two critical hidden barriers: schedule misalignment with farmers' socio-religious activities (affecting 30% of respondents) and literacy gaps in training module language (reported by 30% of respondents). These findings prompted two evidence-based program adjustments schedule restructuring and training material simplification prior to program completion. This study demonstrates that early-stage formative evaluation using the OECD-DAC framework can reveal implementation barriers not visible through KPI monitoring alone and supports its systematic integration into CSR program management cycles.

INTRODUCTION

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a strategic instrument for companies to contribute to sustainable community development, particularly in regions affected by resource extraction or industrial operations (Hakiki & Firdausi, 2023). In Indonesia, the legal mandate for CSR especially for natural resource companies has accelerated the proliferation of community empowerment programs targeting agriculture, livelihoods, and local capacity building (Fajri et al., 2025). However, a persistent challenge in CSR program design is the tendency to assess program performance solely through predefined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which measure output achievement but often fail to capture the quality, relevance, and contextual fit of program delivery. Comprehensive evaluation is therefore needed to inform the design and delivery of policies and programs that lead to better development outcomes more equitable, and more sustainable (OECD, 2021).

Comprehensive evaluation does not merely assess whether a program achieves its intended outputs, but also examines how the program is implemented, how beneficiaries respond to the intervention, and what contextual factors influence program performance throughout the implementation process. In community development and CSR initiatives, understanding these implementation dynamics is essential because program success is strongly influenced by stakeholder participation, local relevance, and the adaptability of program implementation (Prayogo, 2011). However, evaluations conducted during program implementation remain relatively limited in CSR and community development practices, where assessment often focuses primarily on post-program achievements and indicator fulfillment rather than ongoing implementation processes (Fatima & Elbanna, 2022). This condition may cause important implementation barriers including participation constraints, contextual mismatches, and community responses to remain undetected until the intervention has ended. Continuous and participatory evaluation during implementation is therefore important to provide timely feedback, support adaptive program management, and strengthen the sustainability of community empowerment interventions (Jacobs et al., 2010). Despite the availability of established evaluation frameworks, their application in formative and midterm evaluation contexts particularly within CSR and community development programs remains limited. Most existing studies employ the OECD-DAC criteria retrospectively at program completion, rather than as a real-time adaptive management tool during implementation (Chianca, 2008). This gap is particularly pronounced in CSR programs operating in local community settings, where contextual barriers and participation dynamics may remain invisible to KPI-based monitoring systems until it is too late for corrective action.

The OECD-DAC evaluation framework offers a comprehensive and internationally recognized structure for assessing development interventions beyond simple output measurement (OECD, 2019). Originally developed for international development assistance in 1991 and expanded from five to six criteria in 2019 adding coherence to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability the framework has been progressively applied across public and private sector interventions, including CSR and community development programs (Lavey et al., 2023; OECD, 2021). Studies applying the OECD-DAC criteria in development and social programs demonstrate its value in surfacing implementation-level dynamics that output-focused evaluations tend to overlook (Chianca, 2008). Its 2021 guidance document explicitly encourages contextual and thoughtful application of the criteria adapted to the nature of the intervention and the needs of stakeholders rather than mechanistic compliance with each criterion (OECD, 2021). The OECD-DAC framework interrogates *why* and *how* a program works or does not work, making

it particularly suited for formative evaluation purposes. However, empirical studies demonstrating its application in formative, midterm evaluations of CSR programs remain scarce, particularly in the context of developing countries such as Indonesia. This study addresses that gap by applying the OECD-DAC framework at the midpoint of a CSR community empowerment program, contributing practical evidence on its utility as an adaptive management tool

The SAVA program *Sustainable Coffee Agriculture and Value-Added Creation* is a CSR initiative by PT Supreme Energy Rantau Dedap (SERD), a geothermal energy company operating in South Sumatra, implemented in partnership with Anwar Muhammad Foundation (AMF). Targeting coffee farmers of Kelompok Tani Gunung Patah (KTGP) in Segamit, South Sumatra, the twelve-month program (September 2024 – August 2025). During the first six months of implementation, the program delivered a structured series of capacity-building activities covering: institutional management training, coffee plant maintenance (pruning techniques and organic fertilizer production), agroforestry-based coffee cultivation, organic fertilizer utilization, financial literacy strengthening, post-harvest facility optimization, land mapping and traceability systems, and intensive field mentoring by a dedicated Field Officer (FO). At the six-month mark of implementation, an OECD-DAC formative evaluation was conducted to assess early program responses and identify potential implementation barriers while there was still sufficient time for program adjustment.

This study presents the findings of that evaluation and examines how the OECD-DAC framework, applied at the midpoint of a CSR program, contributed to evidence-based adjustments that could not have been captured through KPI monitoring alone. The objective of this study is to examine how early-stage formative evaluation using the OECD-DAC framework can identify hidden implementation barriers and support timely program improvement in CSR community empowerment contexts.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a mixed-method formative evaluation approach to assess the implementation of the SAVA program using the OECD-DAC evaluation framework, which consists of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability criteria. The mixed-method design was adopted to enable methodological triangulation, whereby quantitative data from Likert-scale questionnaires provided a structured overview of program performance across each OECD-DAC dimension, while qualitative data from semi-structured interviews and open-ended responses offered contextual depth to explain patterns and nuances that quantitative measures alone could not capture (Creswell, 2022). The integration of both data types followed a concurrent triangulation strategy, in which quantitative and qualitative findings were collected simultaneously and then merged during analysis to produce a more complete picture of program implementation dynamics. The study was conducted in Segamit Village, Semende Darat Ulu Sub-district, Muara Enim District, South Sumatra, Indonesia, during the sixth month of the twelve-month SAVA program implementation period (September 2024 – August 2025).

The unit of analysis consisted of program beneficiaries and implementers involved in the SAVA program. The total membership of Kelompok Tani Gunung Patah (KTGP) comprises 18 coffee farmers; however, 10 members were selected for this study based on their active and consistent participation in program training activities. On the implementer side, 3 respondents were selected to represent key roles in program delivery: one staff member from PT SERD as the CSR program funder, one Project Officer from AMF, and one Field Officer from AMF

responsible for direct community facilitation. This yielded a total of 13 respondents. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives regarding program implementation, including differences in participation intensity, institutional roles, and involvement in program activities. This approach is appropriate for formative evaluation studies where the objective is to obtain information-rich cases rather than statistically representative samples (Patton, 2015). Although the sample size is modest, studies in the mixed-method evaluation literature indicate that samples of 10–20 participants are generally sufficient to reach thematic saturation when the study population is homogenous and the research objectives are narrowly defined (Guest et al., 2006; Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The findings should therefore be interpreted as contextually bound formative insights rather than generalizable conclusions.

Data was collected through structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and program document review. The questionnaire and interview guidelines were developed based on the OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Prior to field implementation, the instruments were reviewed and adapted to the local context to ensure clarity and relevance for participants. Quantitative data were collected using Likert-scale questions, while qualitative data were obtained from interviews and open-ended responses. Field data collection was conducted by the PMEAL (Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning) team of AMF, independently from the SAVA program implementation team. Before data collection, respondents were informed about the purpose of the evaluation and their voluntary participation.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages and frequency distributions. Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic interpretation to identify key implementation issues and participant responses. The findings were then categorized according to the OECD-DAC evaluation dimensions to assess program performance and implementation dynamics. This study has several limitations. The relatively small number of respondents limits the generalizability of findings beyond the evaluated context. Since the evaluation was conducted at the program midpoint, the findings primarily reflect early implementation dynamics rather than long-term program outcomes. Therefore, the results should be interpreted as formative insights intended to support adaptive program improvement during implementation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Evaluation Findings

The midpoint formative evaluation of the SAVA program was conducted at the sixth month of a twelve-month implementation period, drawing on data from structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and program document review (SAVA Evaluation Report, 2025). The evaluation assessed program performance across five of the six OECD-DAC criteria relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Overall findings indicate that the program progressed well across most dimensions, with several indicators achieving full or near-full positive responses from respondents. However, the evaluation also identified two critical implementation barriers participation inconsistency and training material accessibility that were not captured through routine KPI monitoring alone. These findings are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of Formative Evaluation Findings

OECD-DAC Criteria	Key Findings	Key Data	Identified Issues	Program Adjustment
Relevance	Program aligned with farmer needs	90% prior experience relevant; 100% material fit	-	-
Coherence	High alignment between theory and field practice; FO mentoring rated highly effective	100% theory-practice alignment; 70% high mentoring participation	30% of farmers had low mentoring participation due to scheduling mismatch between farmers and FO availability	More coordinated scheduling between FO and farmer availability
Effectiveness	Training achieved objectives in institutional management and agroforestry	100% found institutional training beneficial; 100% understood agroforestry	-	-
Efficiency	Program delivered within timeline; cost and human resource efficiency high	80% schedule fit (training); 100% cost savings; 100% satisfied with delivery	20–40% schedule mismatch for practice and mentoring activities	More adaptive and participatory scheduling
Impact	Increased knowledge and behavioral change toward sustainable practices coffee practices	100% reported knowledge improvement across all training topics	Learning absorption varied; 30% low pocketbook suitability	Simplified training materials and communication
Sustainability	Strong willingness to continue;	100% willing to continue; 70% confident in	30% doubt KTGP readiness; 100% still need	Institutional strengthening and

OECD-DAC Criteria	Key Findings	Key Data	Identified Issues	Program Adjustment
	informal knowledge sharing active	KTGP independence	continued support	post-program mentoring

Relevance

The relevance dimension assessed the extent to which the SAVA program's design and content responded to the real needs and existing practices of target beneficiaries. Findings indicate a high degree of relevance across all indicators. As many as 90% of respondents reported that their prior farming experience was already relevant to the training content, with most having previously attempted agroforestry practices or organic fertilizer production independently before joining the program. Furthermore, 100% of respondents confirmed that the training materials aligned with their farming tendencies and met their needs as coffee farmers, and all respondents reported having applied the training content in their daily farming activities (AMF, 2025).

These findings reflect that the SAVA program was designed with a strong needs-based orientation, grounding its content in the existing knowledge and livelihood context of farmers rather than imposing externally derived technical frameworks. This approach aligns with established principles in community development evaluation, which emphasize that program relevance is a precondition for effective participation and knowledge absorption (Prayogo, 2011). The 10% of respondents who had not previously practiced agroforestry independently cited limited access to information as the main constraint a finding that underscores the importance of accessible extension services in rural agricultural communities and reinforces the program's role in filling an information gap that market mechanisms had failed to address (Fajri et al., 2025).

Coherence

The coherence dimension examined the internal alignment between the SAVA program's components and activities. Given the bounded scope of this formative evaluation focused on a single program at its midpoint and the limited availability of cross-program data, external coherence assessment (examining compatibility with other interventions or policies in Segamit Village) was beyond the feasible scope of this evaluation. This is consistent with the OECD-DAC guidance, which explicitly states that not all criteria need to be applied in every evaluation, and that selection should be guided by the purpose of the evaluation and stakeholder needs (OECD, 2021). Assessment was therefore focused on internal coherence between program components.

Findings indicate a high degree of internal coherence. All respondents (100%) confirmed strong alignment between theoretical training content and practical field implementation, indicating that the program's design effectively bridged the gap between knowledge transfer and its practical application. In terms of field practice participation, 70% of respondents reported high involvement, while 30% had low participation (attending 0–1 sessions), primarily because farming is a secondary livelihood activity for most respondents whose main income comes from outside the agricultural sector (AMF, 2025).

Regarding FO mentoring, 70% of respondents reported high participation, and all respondents (100%) rated the FO mentoring as highly effective in strengthening farmers' practical understanding. However, a structural coherence barrier was identified: 30% of respondents reported low mentoring participation due to a scheduling mismatch when the FO was available for mentoring, farmers were occupied with other work, and conversely, when farmers had free time, the FO was engaged in other program activities. This finding reveals an operational coordination gap that is invisible to output-based monitoring, as overall mentoring completion rates may still appear satisfactory while a significant minority of participants are systematically underserved. Such coordination failures between program staff and beneficiary schedules have been identified in the broader literature as a recurring structural challenge in community-based program delivery, particularly where beneficiaries hold multiple livelihood roles (Habibullah et al., 2022).

Effectiveness

The effectiveness dimension assessed the extent to which the SAVA program achieved its stated objectives at the midpoint of implementation. Two of the five program objectives were measurable at this stage: strengthening farmer group management in institutional, financial aspects and promoting sustainable agroforestry coffee farming practices.

Regarding the first objective, all respondents (100%) reported that institutional training was highly beneficial in supporting the management of the group's organizational structure. All respondents also agreed that KTGP had become more structured and that financial management had improved as a result of the training (AMF, 2025). Regarding the second objective, all respondents (100%) demonstrated a high level of understanding of agroforestry systems and the prohibition of GMO use in farming practices. Qualitative interview data revealed that prior to the SAVA program, most respondents understood agroforestry only in the limited sense of shade trees; following training, their understanding deepened to encompass the full ecological and productive functions of the agroforestry system, with several respondents beginning to plant economically valuable shade trees such as avocado and durian (AMF, 2025).

These findings indicate that the program's near-term effectiveness in knowledge and institutional capacity building was strong. This aligns with evidence from CSR community development literature in Indonesia, which highlights that structured, facilitated training programs can generate rapid gains in institutional awareness and technical knowledge when content is contextually appropriate and delivery is participatory (Fatima & Elbanna, 2022; Prayogo, 2011). However, it is important to note that effectiveness at this midpoint primarily reflects knowledge and attitudinal change rather than sustained behavioral change or measurable productivity outcomes, which would require assessment at program completion or beyond.

Efficiency

The efficiency dimension was assessed across three sub-dimensions: time utilization, cost utilization, and human resource utilization. Regarding time utilization, 80% of respondents reported that training schedules were suitable with their available time, while this figure declined to 70% for practice sessions and 60% for mentoring activities the latter recording the lowest schedule suitability of all program components (AMF, 2025). Qualitative data revealed that the declined schedule suitability across training, practice, and mentoring activities reflects a progressive constraint: as program activities shift from structured group training toward more individualized field practice and mentoring, the scheduling demands increasingly

conflict with respondents' other livelihood commitments. Eighty percent of respondents felt the training duration was adequate, while 20% desired longer sessions, citing the quality and accessibility of the facilitators' delivery style as motivation for wanting more time.

Regarding cost efficiency, all respondents (100%) reported cost savings from both the free training provision and the availability of shared post-harvest processing facilities, whose equipment rental costs were lower than external providers. These findings indicate that the SAVA program delivered not only capacity-building value but also tangible economic benefits to participants a dimension of efficiency that goes beyond time management to encompass the economic opportunity costs borne by low-income farming communities when accessing training and production support (OECD, 2021).

Human resource efficiency was uniformly high: all respondents (100%) expressed high satisfaction with facilitators' delivery style, communication quality with program organizers (both AMF and PT SERD), and the quality of FO mentoring interactions. The training venue consistently held at the KTGP supervisor's house was rated as highly accessible by all respondents. These results suggest that the program's human resource deployment was well-suited to the community context, with interpersonal communication and geographic accessibility functioning as enabling conditions for program engagement (Pera & Ridwansyah, 2020).

Impact

The impact dimension assessed changes in farmers' knowledge, skills, and behaviors resulting from the SAVA program's training, practice, and mentoring activities. All respondents (100%) reported improvements in understanding across all three core training topics: coffee plant pruning, agroforestry systems, and organic fertilizer production from coffee husk waste (AMF, 2025). Qualitative findings further revealed that prior to the program, most respondents had acquired farming knowledge informally through social media, peer observation, or trial and error leaving gaps in their understanding of correct agricultural techniques. Following the program, respondents reported heightened awareness of previous errors in their farming practices and demonstrated early behavioral change, with several beginning to integrate economically valuable shade trees into their agroforestry systems.

However, the impact dimension also surfaced an important limitation: 30% of respondents reported low suitability of the training pocketbook, citing the use of technical agricultural terminology that was difficult to understand and practices that did not fully match their individual land conditions. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that language complexity, literacy limitations, and low readability of training materials can reduce participants' engagement and learning effectiveness, particularly among agricultural communities and adult learners with limited formal education. The implication is that while aggregate knowledge improvement indicators reached 100%, the quality and depth of learning absorption likely varied across participants a dimension of impact that percentage-based indicators alone cannot fully capture. These findings reinforce the importance of simplifying training language, improving material readability, and adapting learning resources to participants' literacy levels and local contexts (Arcury et al., 2010).

Sustainability

The sustainability dimension assessed the likelihood that the SAVA program's benefits would continue beyond the formal program period. Findings were mixed, combining strong indicators of individual commitment with notable concerns about institutional readiness. All respondents (100%) expressed willingness to continue applying the practices taught in the

program after its conclusion, and all had already engaged in informal knowledge sharing with farmers outside KTGP typically during farm work or casual encounters using the program's pocketbook as a reference tool (AMF, 2025). This spontaneous peer-to-peer knowledge diffusion represents an important organic sustainability mechanism that extends the program's reach beyond its direct beneficiaries.

However, sustainability at the institutional level was less certain. While 70% of respondents believed KTGP was ready to continue program activities independently after SAVA concludes, 30% expressed doubt, citing low internal initiative among group members in the absence of FO facilitation and direct encouragement from group leadership. All respondents (100%) stated they still require continued support including additional mentoring or follow-up training and all expressed willingness to participate in such activities if offered (AMF, 2025). Qualitative data further highlighted that the most significant sustainability challenge lies not in farmers' willingness but in the unresolved marketing chain constraints: respondents identified dependency on middlemen (*tengkulak*) and lack of market access as the primary barriers to long-term economic sustainability of their coffee farming practices.

These findings resonate with the wider literature on CSR community development sustainability, which consistently identifies that technical capacity gains are necessary but insufficient for long-term program impact when institutional, market, and financial sustainability conditions remain unaddressed (Fatima & Elbanna, 2022; Prayogo, 2011). The OECD-DAC sustainability criterion, by directing evaluation attention toward post-program conditions rather than only current outputs, proved particularly valuable in surfacing these structural vulnerabilities at a stage when corrective action such as accelerating the cooperative contract facilitation already underway remains feasible.

Adaptive Program Adjustment and the Role of OECD-DAC

The midpoint evaluation enabled the program team to identify implementation barriers while the program was still running. Based on the findings, two evidence-based adjustments were introduced: more flexible and participatory scheduling that accommodates farmers' social, religious, and livelihood calendars; and simplified training delivery methods using more accessible language and visual communication approaches. These adjustments demonstrate the practical value of formative evaluation as an adaptive management mechanism a function that retrospective end-of-program evaluation cannot serve (Patton, 2015). In CSR and community development practice, the ability to correct courses during implementation is particularly important because program beneficiaries are often resource-constrained communities whose participation cannot simply be rescheduled or recovered after a missed opportunity (Fatima & Elbanna, 2022).

The OECD-DAC framework was instrumental in enabling these adjustments because its multi-dimensional structure prompted evaluators to examine not only output completion but also participation equity, learning accessibility, coordination coherence, and sustainability conditions dimensions that KPI-based monitoring systems are typically not designed to capture. Critically, the near-complete KPI achievement observed across most program activities created a misleading picture of program health: it was only through the OECD-DAC lens that the 30% participation inconsistency and the 30% training material accessibility gap became visible as actionable implementation barriers rather than acceptable statistical variance. This finding supports the argument advanced in the evaluation literature that formative evaluation and KPI monitoring serve fundamentally different informational

functions, and that both are necessary for sound program management in complex community settings (Chianca, 2008; Lavey et al., 2023).

Implications for CSR and Community Development

This study demonstrates that formative evaluation during implementation can reveal contextual and participation-related barriers that are often overlooked by KPI-based monitoring systems. The SAVA program case illustrates that even when headline performance indicators appear satisfactory, structural implementation barriers including socio-religious scheduling conflicts, livelihood-driven participation constraints, and training material literacy gaps can undermine program quality and equity in ways that only become apparent through multi-dimensional evaluation frameworks.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the growing body of evidence on the applicability of the OECD-DAC framework beyond its original international development assistance context. Consistent with Chianca (2008) and Lavey et al. (2023), the findings demonstrate that the OECD-DAC criteria retain their analytical value when applied to single-organization CSR programs in community development settings, provided they are applied thoughtfully and adapted to the evaluation's scope and purpose rather than mechanically (OECD, 2021). The coherence criterion, in particular, proved valuable in identifying an operational coordination gap between FO deployment and farmer availability a finding that would have remained invisible under a purely output-oriented framework.

Practically, the findings suggest that CSR program managers should consider integrating structured formative evaluation mechanisms at program midpoints, rather than relying exclusively on end-of-program summative assessment and KPI achievement reporting. Such integration would support more adaptive program management, improve participant responsiveness, and strengthen the conditions for long-term sustainability of community empowerment interventions. For programs operating in rural agricultural communities in Indonesia where socio-religious calendars, multiple livelihood roles, and variable literacy levels create complex participation dynamics context-sensitive evaluation is not a methodological luxury but an operational necessity.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that midpoint formative evaluation using the OECD-DAC framework can identify implementation barriers that are not fully captured through KPI based monitoring in CSR community empowerment programs. Although the SAVA program generally showed positive progress in terms of activity implementation and participant engagement, the evaluation revealed important contextual challenges related to participation schedules and accessibility of training materials. These findings enabled evidence-based program adjustments while the program was still ongoing. Theoretically, this study contributes to the discussion on CSR and community development evaluation by showing the relevance of the OECD-DAC framework for formative evaluation purposes, particularly in understanding implementation dynamics beyond output achievement. Practically, the findings suggest that integrating formative evaluation during implementation can support more adaptive program management, improve participant responsiveness, and strengthen the sustainability of community empowerment interventions. Therefore, CSR programs are encouraged to incorporate continuous and context-sensitive evaluation mechanisms throughout the implementation process rather than relying solely on end-of-program assessment and KPI achievement.

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