



## **ROOM DOCUMENT**

### **Agenda Item IV**

**“Getting to results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development”**

**Johannesburg 17-20 March 2009**

This note has been prepared by Ray Rist, President of IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Association), for information at the 9<sup>th</sup> meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 15-16 June 2009.

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**9th meeting**  
**15 – 16 June 2009**

# INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION ASSOCIATION (IDEAS)

## GLOBAL ASSEMBLY

### “GETTING TO RESULTS: EVALUATION CAPACITY BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT”

JOHANNESBURG, 17-20 MARCH 2009

## SYNTHESIS

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1. IDEAS' Global Assembly 2009 was held on March 17 to 20<sup>th</sup> in Johannesburg on the theme “Getting to Results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development” with the objective to discuss and exchange on analytical frameworks, lessons learnt, best practices, and propose strategies to achieve greater results of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB)<sup>1</sup>. The Assembly gathered more than 220 evaluation professionals from all continents, representing public institutions, NGOs, the private sector, programs and projects, and multilateral and bilateral donors. Each day started with a keynote address presented in plenary session. Keynote speakers were: Mrs. Dhara Wijayatilake, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Plan Implementation in Sri Lanka, Mrs. Caroline Heider, Head of the Evaluation Unit, World Food Program, Rome, and Mr. Robert Picciotto, Kings College, London. A number of workshops, including pre-assembly training workshops, 27 Local Action Groups, and presentation sessions were organized during the Assembly during which more than 110 speakers presented papers related to ECB. Major highlights are presented below.

2. In terms of scope, ECB involves strengthening or building M&E systems, especially country-based systems. ECB should be addressed at three levels: an enabling environment, institutional capacities, and individual knowledge and skills. Training is an important component of ECB, but clearly ECB involves an array of other mechanisms, including (i) improving M&E information systems and knowledge management; (ii) sensitization and policy dialogue forums; and (iii) institutional development of M&E units.

3. ECB must be considered in the new context of development evaluation. The systemic world financial crisis in an increasingly interconnected world, with aid flows to developing countries and private investment declining in emerging countries, calls for global action. Furthermore, new challenges such as climate change constitute a threatening obstacle to development. This new context requires rethinking the role of evaluation. Development evaluation has been asymmetrical. It has given disproportionate

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<sup>1</sup> The Assembly, as well as the participation of nearly 100 participants, was sponsored by various donors, including the Belgian, Danish, English and Swedish Cooperation, and ADB/ADF.

attention to assessing the performance of one side of the global partnership – the poor countries. For instance, the MDGs demand more of developing countries than they do of developed countries. Vast resources have been mobilized to monitor progress in developing countries’ policies and programs whereas little efforts have been implemented to monitor policies implemented by developed countries. Shift in aid modalities towards program-based approaches and SWAPs also calls for behavioral changes of both recipients and donors. National M&E systems need to be strengthened and the role of donors in M&E needs to be recast. Donor’s harmonization and alignment has been discussed at high level forums (Paris, Accra, etc.), but too little has been done in the field.

4. Systematic assessments of government policies and of global initiatives are of primary importance. Development evaluation must reconsider its strategies, instruments and emphases. Development evaluation needs to move from an individual project or country program perspective to a higher level. As Mr. Picciotto said “development evaluation must move to a higher plane”. Development evaluators will have to focus less on aid operations and more on the efficacy of transmission belts of globalization (finance, migration, trade, etc.).

5. Depending on the country, Governments face more or less significant constraints in human, technical, and financial resources for M&E. The lack of properly trained human resources (in number and/or capacity) in national institutions not only affects directly their capacity to monitor and evaluate policies, strategies and programs, but also increases the chances of poor decision-making and wrong resource allocation when letting non experts decide on the kind of M&E system, training, and technical assistance needed by national institutions. M&E units, along with many public service units, face a major issue of staff turnover. In fragile states, the situation is further complicated by donors who develop a number of Project Implementation Units (PIUs) outside the public sector.

6. The design of ECB may be faulty. In some cases, M&E was not part of program/project design, but was added later on, creating all kinds of gaps, e.g. the lack of a systematic baseline at the start of the program or project. Insufficient attention may have been paid to the organizational context and institutional constraints, leading to unrealistic and overambitious objectives.

7. Capacity building activities through training programs often tend to have a short term perspective (1 to 4 weeks at most) with very limited follow up to ensure the application of new knowledge and techniques in participants’ day-to-day work. Without proper follow up, adequate incentives and resources for implementation of learning, the daily grind and old habits quickly win over the desire for change and the temporary capacity gains just disappear over time. Training results are also rarely monitored and evaluated.

8. There is often a limited supply of quality in-country training. In many countries, the availability of institutions and/or experts with adequate training capacity coupled with regional or international experience is insufficient to enable relevant and practical transfer of know-how to participants. The lack

of in-country training capacity also translates in higher training costs for governments with already limited resources. The situation is often worse in non Anglophone countries. Non-English speaking professionals enjoy a very limited access to quality M&E trainings and information sources.

9. ECB should be put in the context of the push for Managing for Development Results (MfDR), based on RBM principles. Enhancing capacity in M&E also requires looking at capacity in the other pillars of RBM. Desired ECB results should be clearly identified. Capacity building plans should include an M&E component to monitor and evaluate not only outputs (number of trainees, number of trainings), but also outcomes. Key results should also be accessible to other stakeholders for accountability.

10. Kusek and Rist (2004) rightly insist that the starting point for the design and implementation of a results-based M&E system should be a readiness assessment, including among others the validation of the commitment of the organization leaders to the RBM approach. The diagnostic should try to evaluate M&E capacity within the organization and lead to an M&E capacity building plan as a central component of the M&E system. It is important to understand clearly the needs of all stakeholders. Experience shows that demand-driven capacity building activities are usually more sustainable and effective and that evaluation results need to be internalized to trigger and promote change within an organization.

11. The process of designing and implementing an M&E system should be progressive as different components of the M&E system are implemented gradually. There is no ready-made, off-the-shelf solution and the approach must be adapted to the needs and the situation regarding the existing M&E systems. However, the roadmap is provided by the now standard reference in the field, i.e. the “10 steps to designing, building and sustaining a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation system” by Kusek and Rist (2004).

12. The process of diagnostic, design, implementation, and M&E of the M&E system should be highly participatory. Close implication of the organization’s personal in the M&E system’s implementation reinforces the know-how within the organization and contributes to the system’s sustainability.

13. Strong leadership and a firm commitment for ECB on the part of governments are required and make ECB possible as exemplified by the Sri Lanka case. Political will and the contribution of champions of change are prerequisites for successful ECB.

14. A critical mass of civil servants at central and local level as well as other stakeholders should be trained in M&E by multi-disciplinary teams, using a pedagogical strategy adapted to the context, the participants and intended objectives, and a variety of pedagogical methods. The choice of trainers is another key factor for effective training, combining a high level of education and a large field experience. Participants should also be carefully elected. An ECB plan should consider a combination of (i) properly sequenced training activities that fit with various categories of participants, objectives and

constraints, and (ii) technical support activities to help trainees actually use their improved competencies to enhance the M&E capacity in their organization.

15. Improved M&E information systems can contribute significantly to ECB by improving the accessibility, quality, and ownership of information used for decision-making and accountability. Such systems must be functional, robust and cost-effective.

16. Sensitization and policy dialogue forums professional exchange platforms such as knowledge management and learning units, communities of practices, professional evaluation associations, joint progress reviews at program and sector level, can also help M&E systems make a lot of progress toward effectiveness and sustainability and help professionalize the evaluator's job.

17. Anchoring ECB in the actual implementation and improvement of a RBM M&E system through learning-by-doing activities also enables to keep a sense of the ultimate purpose of ECB, i.e., contributing to better public policies and programs. Building strong M&E units is the only sustainable way to develop ECB, which requires establishing their legal existence and mandatory powers, boosting their human, material and financial resources, improving their organizational and management skills and practices, and setting up a reasonable set of motivating incentives for professional M&E work.

18. Finally, ECB could greatly benefit from new practical partnerships between public institutions, development partners, private sector, universities, professional networks and associations. As the international association in this area, IDEAS can and should make a difference. This Global Assembly is one of its early steps forward in this direction.

Signed/ Ray C. Rist, President

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