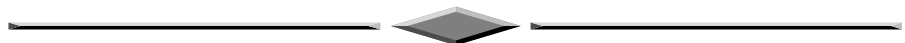


ROOM DOCUMENT 3

DAC Network on Development Evaluation

EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

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6th meeting
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EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

Experiences and lessons learned

This note presents recent experience of evaluation capacity development (ECD) in Vietnam and some of the lessons learned. Some principles for ECD are developed from these lessons. Based on this experience, six practical ideas are proposed to accelerate ECD implementation in the context of the Paris Declaration.

Context

Vietnam invested almost US\$1.8 billion of ODA resources in 2006, which although less than 4% of GDP, represents more than 25% of the public capital investment budget¹.

As part of its commitment to aid effectiveness, articulated through the Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness², the Government of Vietnam institutionalised ODA evaluation through legal and organisational changes. Developing the capacity of Vietnamese evaluators, in both the private and public sectors is implemented in parallel with institutional development. The Government adopted an adult learning, competency-based approach to evaluation capacity development (ECD). With support from AusAID through VAMESP II³, the Government focussed on mapping the competencies and skills required to perform evaluation functions at national, line agency and local levels. The Government uses learning-by-doing to address identified gaps in targeted government staff and national consultants. Quantitative competency testing is used to measure competency changes and evaluate the effectiveness of ECD programs.

The Fact Finding Survey on ECD in partner countries⁴ identified that VAMESP II is one of the examples of how best to extend ECD support at the national level through a capacity development project that targets key ministries in a partner country (p10). This suggests that lessons learned from the Vietnam experience are relevant to the ongoing discussion on how to best approach ECD in the context of the Paris Declaration.

What Vietnam has achieved so far

The Vietnam Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI) used support from VAMESP II to develop evaluation capacity by implementing evaluations through a partnership of donors, national consultants and government evaluation staff from 6 Ministries and 7 Provinces. Since early 2004, 15 evaluations have been implemented, covering projects (baseline, mid-term, terminal and impact), portfolios (regional and sectoral) and national ODA effectiveness. The evaluations completed are listed in Chart 1.

¹ Source: Foreign Economic Relations Department of Ministry of Planning and Investment and Statistical Annexes of Joint Donor Report to the Vietnam Consultative Group Meeting, December 2006

² Hanoi Core Statement on Aid Effectiveness, of September 2005, developed by Government of Vietnam and its donor partners in response to the Paris Declaration.

³ Vietnam Australia Monitoring and Evaluation Strengthening Project II (2004-2007)

⁴ OECD-DAC (2006) Fact-finding study on evaluation capacity development in partner countries. Survey conducted for DAC Network on Development Evaluation by ECD Task Team.

Each evaluation was implemented by a core team of government staff and national consultants. Resources available to each core team included: (i) institutional arrangements to support ODA evaluation, (ii) a national Evaluation Manual, (iii) training resources for ECD developed by MPI with support from VAMESP. Case studies were produced for each evaluation and are available on the Government M&E website (www.mpi.gov.vn/tddg).

Chart 1 : Evaluations conducted for on-the-job ECD in Vietnam

Ministry of Planning and Investment – Developing a methodology and framework for the National Evaluation of Aid Effectiveness
Ministry of Finance - Portfolio Evaluation of 10 Years of ODA Capacity Building
Ministry of Finance - Mid-term Evaluation of Multi-donor Trust Fund for Public Finance Management Reform
Ministry of Finance - Baseline Evaluation of World Bank Customs Modernisation Project
Ministry of Transport - Vietnam-Japan Joint Portfolio Impact Evaluation of Road Transport Project Portfolio in Northern Vietnam
Ministry of Transport – Mid-term Evaluation of Road Network Improvement Project
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development – Impact Evaluation of World Bank Central Regional Irrigation Rehabilitation Project
Ministry of Health - Joint Impact Evaluation with AusAID for Primary Health Care Project
Nghe An Province - Mid-term Evaluation of Program 661 (Afforestation)
Quang Nam Province - Impact Evaluation of OECD Rural Electrification Project
Quang Ngai Province - Baseline Evaluation of ADB Central Region Urban Environment Improvement Project
Quang Ngai Province - Mid-term Evaluation of AusAID Rural Development Program
HCM City – Terminal Evaluation of JBIC East-West Highway and Environment Management Project
Can Tho Province - Baseline Evaluation of World Bank Urban Upgrading Project
Can Tho Province - Mid-term Evaluation of KfW Waste Water Treatment Project

For each evaluation, capacity was developed on-the-job using a learning-by-doing framework that was adapted to the needs of each evaluation and core team. The framework included:

- **Initial practitioner training** – during which an evaluation logframe was constructed; an evaluation plan was prepared; and an evaluation framework of questions, indicators, methods and tools was developed – all for the evaluation to be implemented.
 - **Field work for data collection** – during which evaluators applied skills and knowledge developed with initial training to build confidence in using practical evaluation methods and tools. This experience was supported by national consultant evaluators and sometimes international practitioners.
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- **Team work for analysis and reporting** – during which evaluators applied skills and knowledge to develop competence in analysis of data and reporting of lessons learned. This experience was supported by national consultant evaluators.
- **Review of competencies and their application in the workplace** – at the conclusion of each evaluation core team members reflected on new competencies and how these could be applied to fulfil their evaluation functions.

Examples of on-the-job ECD in practice are presented in Chart 2.

Chart 2 : Examples of on-the-job ECD in practice

Officers from a Provincial Department of Planning and Investment (DPI) revise the logical framework and prepared the evaluation framework for a KfW-funded Waste Water Treatment Project. This formed the foundation for a mid-term evaluation.



Learning-by-doing in the field is an important part of training. Here, officers from Can Tho DPI and Can Tho Urban Upgrading Project (CUUP) learn how to use Global Positioning System tools to establish photo-points in the field whilst implementing an evaluation for CUUP. These will be used for before and after comparisons.

A project officer of the Quang Nam Rural Electrification Project (Phase 2) practices semi-structured interview techniques whilst participating in the impact evaluation of the first phase of the project.



Exercises and games related to training topics are useful to create a friendly and creative thinking environment. Here participants in a practice-level monitoring program learn about team work.

In each case, the purpose of the evaluations was to:

- develop capacity of public and private sector evaluation practitioners in Vietnam;
- identify lessons learned from implementation of selected projects to support management for development results;
- provide lessons learned to inform project formulation; and
- provide case studies of leading evaluation practice to guide Vietnamese evaluation practitioners in their work (available at www.mpi.gov.vn/tddg).

Champions enhanced ECD effectiveness and sustainability

To support implementation of the four parts of the learning-by-doing framework for ECD, and to prepare the foundation for sustainability, MPI introduced the concept of Evaluation Champions – experienced evaluation practitioners in government agencies who can act as change agents and mentors.

MPI established a network of Evaluation Champions in 5 Ministries and 7 Provinces. Champions add considerable value to the M&E work of the Government of Vietnam, are cost effective and increase the outputs of evaluations by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of evaluations, whilst also providing a group of advocates for evaluation as a source of information to support management for development results.

The function of the 34 Champions is to promote and actively support the adoption of leading practice evaluation practices adopted by MPI with support from VAMESP II. Each Champion has clear terms of reference, upper limits to their inputs (typically 4 days per month), defined outputs expected each month, a quarterly work plan and clear accountability requirements.

Competency testing strengthened ECD effectiveness and impact

Competency testing was conducted for agency staff participating in ECD. The approach built on the Kirkpatrick methodology⁵. Separate competency testing tools were used for elementary, practice and advanced levels of competence. The tools were designed to test knowledge, skills, and attitude relating to monitoring and evaluation. In addition, for assessment of advanced levels of competence, a body of evidence resulting from participation in a completed evaluation was examined from Champions and other selected individuals.

Competency testing was first conducted in 2005 and repeated in 2006. The 212 participants tested come from stakeholder Ministries and Provinces. The 2006 competency testing results suggest that there are two groups of government and PMU staff with functions requiring elementary M&E understanding – one group with expected attitude and lower than expected skills, and another one with the best possible attitude and higher than expected skills. These data also suggest that knowledge, attitude and skills of evaluation practitioners (that is intermediate-level staff) are as expected, with a small

⁵ In 1975, Donald Kirkpatrick published a four-level model of learning evaluation that has become a classic method for evaluation of training and capacity building. It evaluates (1) Reaction; (2) Learning; (3) Behaviour and (4) Results.

group of practitioners emerging as better than expected – people who could be appointed as the next group of Champions.

The 2006 competency results for advanced-level stakeholders suggest that knowledge and skills of Champions are as expected, but that attitudes are better than expected. This is encouraging as it suggests a sound foundation for the transition from a pilot evaluation system to an official system as the institutionalised evaluation processes are extended to all Ministries and Provinces and beyond just ODA to all public investment.

Principles for successful ECD

After 3 years implementing ECD in Vietnam through learning-by-doing, a number of practical principles for effective ECD have been identified. Practical principles for successful ECD include:

- **National demand is built by doing** – As Vietnam saw evaluation in practice and the lessons learned from each evaluation were used to support management for development results (MfDR), demand for evaluation results began to grow.
 - **Institutional arrangements provide an enabling environment** – Civil service functions are institutionalised in Vietnam and without some institutional framework for evaluation it is difficult to sustain evaluation capacity or a culture of MfDR. The Decree on ODA management, issued by the Prime Minister in November 2006, has a specific chapter on monitoring and evaluation, and sets out clear functions for evaluation at national, sectoral and regional levels. In Vietnam institutional arrangements provide a basis for sustaining evaluation capacity and making the crucial link between evaluation results and investment decisions as well as MfDR.
 - **Adults learn by doing** – The Vietnam experience is that adults learn by doing, and that the evaluation results arising from this approach can be used to engage Leaders in ECD and development of an evaluation culture. In 3 years, more than 250 private and public sector evaluators participated in ECD activities supported by VAMESP II. The learning-by-doing focus of these activities was highly appreciated – participation rates were consistently high over the 3-4 month duration of each evaluation, feedback on the ECD activities was positive and competency testing results were sound.
 - **Practice should be country-led** – Investments to be evaluated as part of ECD activities in Vietnam are selected by the agency whose staff are to be involved. A formal, costed evaluation proposal is prepared and reviewed by the relevant donor(s) and MPI. Once approved, the evaluation has strong ownership by the sponsoring agency and this is reflected in commitment from those selected to be on the Core Team of evaluators who benefit from the ECD activities.
 - **Monitoring and evaluation practice should be linked** – Much of the data used for mid-term and terminal evaluations of projects/programs was sourced from monitoring systems where they existed. This reinforced one of the benefits of a project/program monitoring system and highlighted the relationship between monitoring and evaluation functions as well as the difference between them. “M&E” is rarely used as a term by Vietnamese practitioners – they talk of one or the other, depending on the context - because they understand and value the difference. In Vietnam institutional arrangements, capacity development and support tools are now in place to support monitoring practice and feed that data into evaluation and investment formulation activities. This provides a sound foundation to support evaluation and MfDR.
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- **Partnerships with donors strengthen experiential learning** – Evaluations used for ECD always had donor support in principle before they were approved for implementation by MPI. In addition, two evaluations were implemented as true partnership evaluations – with one evaluation team made up of government staff and national consultants (ECD participants) and donor staff and/or consultants. Experience in Vietnam is that joint evaluations are an important form of partnership for experiential learning. In the Vietnam Japan Road Transport Portfolio Impact Evaluation for the Red River Delta, a core team of MPI and Ministry of Transport staff worked with 4 Japanese evaluators as one team. The donor evaluators became capacity developers and mentors as well as fellow team members. In the Vietnam Australia Joint Evaluation of the Primary Health Care Project the team comprised staff from Ministry of Health and four provincial departments of health as well as national consultants and 3 international evaluators. Extensive field work proved to be a demanding but stimulating learning environment for all team members – and resulted in 4 provincial evaluation teams as well as capacity at a central level.
 - **Regional networks of evaluators add value** – Several of the evaluators who learned by doing in Vietnam went on to present papers at regional evaluation and MfDR gatherings. The 5th Tokyo Workshop on ODA Evaluation, the Malaysian Evaluation Society and the ADB-supported Asian Community of Practice on MfDR all provided added stimulation for people who had already developed sound evaluation capacity. The networks and shared experiences established by these gatherings added ideas about evaluation as a profession and reinforced lessons learned through ECD activities.
 - **Engage Leaders by presenting results to support MfDR** – in all evaluations conducted for ECD, the results and lessons learned were presented to Leaders with authority to make management decisions for development results. This was a very effective way of engaging Leaders and building demand for evaluation results. In most cases senior Leaders appreciated objective information that provided them with lessons learned to inform MfDR. In one case – an impact evaluation of a rural electrification investment in Quang Nam Province, the Chairman of the Provincial People’s Committee understood the evaluation results well and promptly initiated changes to the second phase of the investment.

Six practical ideas to accelerate ECD

Building on the Fact Finding Study and learning lessons from the ECD experience in Vietnam, here are 6 practical ideas to accelerate ECD:

- **Provide evaluation internships for emerging practitioners** – donors could provide 3-month evaluation internships in their country offices or on contracted evaluation teams for emerging evaluation practitioners that show particular promise. The interns, from either the public or the private sector, could work with a mentor from the donor staff and participate in planning and implementing evaluations or analysing evaluation results. Internships would be most cost effective in the country of the intern, but if building regional networks was a priority, regional internships would also make sense. A regular program of internships – say 2-3 per year for each country office would quickly develop a cohort of evaluators.
 - **Plan joint evaluations for ECD** – donors and government should share their plans for evaluations in the coming year around September each year. Collating a national plan of evaluations increases the incentive for, and likelihood of, joint evaluations between donors. This is consistent with the Paris Declaration and builds on the
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Vietnam experience that learning-by-doing is a very effective approach for ECD. Such joint evaluations provide an ideal opportunity for using emerging evaluation practitioners as members of the joint team. This approach requires a strong evaluation team leader and a formative evaluation approach, which includes activities that support learning-by-doing. Learning-by-doing is on-the-job capacity development. Emerging evaluation practitioners acquire the competencies required to do their job by actually learning and performing new tasks on-the-job. This method requires small group sizes, using their real jobs and their workplace for ECD. Lectures and long presentations are replaced by discussions, group work and practical assignments.

- **Establish a broker/clearing house for evaluations in-country** – having a national broker or clearing house for ODA evaluations in-country establishes a focal point to use the national plan of evaluations as a catalyst for joint evaluations and team building with emerging evaluation practitioners as members of the joint team.
 - **Strengthen regional communities of practice** – building on the model developed in Asia, donors could further support regional communities of practice (CoP). Regional CoP could be used to contribute team members to regional or national joint evaluations. The CoP networks could be used to respond to international opportunities on evaluation teams as well as a sharing evaluation results and lessons learned regionally.
 - **Encourage neighbourly cooperation** – there are opportunities for donors to encourage and support neighbourly cooperation through the design and implementation of evaluation activities by teams drawn from donor consultants or staff, country evaluators and neighbouring country practitioners. Inviting emerging evaluation practitioners from neighbouring countries to participate as team members in joint evaluations or regional/sectoral evaluations adds value to the evaluation (independence, lessons learned from the region) and is consistent with the principles of “south-south” cooperation.
 - **Strengthen national and regional evaluation societies** – as the experiences in Africa and ASEAN (eg Malaysia, Philippines) show, national evaluation societies can be an effective vehicle for ECD. The inherent sustainability of this approach is important. Donors could support the establishment and growth of national evaluation societies – particularly ones that grow out of practitioners as members of civil society rather than adjuncts to government agencies.
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