DAC NETWORK ON DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

DAC Network on Development Evaluation

"CURRENT CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION" WORKSHOP HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX, 2-3 OCTOBER 2006.

The attached note has been prepared by IDS for information at the 5th meeting of the DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 16 – 17 November 2006.

5th meeting
16 – 17 November 2006

University of Sussex
School of Social Sciences & Cultural Studies

"CURRENT CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION"
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NOTE FOR THE DAC EVALUATION NETWORK MEETING
16-17 NOVEMBER, 2006 [1]

Introduction

This workshop was concerned with the way changes in the policy environment in recent years have created a new context for development evaluation. The workshop was structured to show how evaluators had attempted to address these current challenges, with a particular emphasis on networks and partnerships, MDGs and poverty reduction, and at the country and global levels. A final question for the workshop was whether evaluation needed to do more to influence policy-making. (The final programme is attached for information.) We also asked participants to evaluate the workshop, and the results are overwhelmingly positive.

Discussions

Several debates emerged in the discussions, most notable were:
⇒ *Political context of evaluation.* Was evaluation empowering the poor in developing countries or still owned by donor agencies? How do we conceptualise evaluation processes to empower the poor?
⇒ *Level at which to evaluate.* Does evaluation still need to scale up to sector, country, programme and global levels? Should evaluation move beyond the confines of *aid* to the wider context of *development* and *development processes*?
⇒ *Professional conduct of evaluations.* Does capacity building in the South require professional evaluators or a better spread of professional standards for evaluation?
⇒ *Supply of and demand for evaluations.* Has enough attention been given to the demand for evaluative information in general or have evaluators become stuck in supply-driven thinking and behaviour?

Conclusions

The final session was intended to take the workshop beyond words and discussion and to indicate ways forward. The conclusions of the workshop were summarised as:
⇒ A mix of skills was still required for good evaluations – the professional evaluator and the subject matter specialist.
⇒ A basic knowledge of evaluation should be acquired by public officials who commission studies.
⇒ There is a need for more harmonisation of evaluation approaches, taking account of DAC work in development assistance operations. Country ownership of evaluations is necessary.

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[1]   This document was prepared by Sean Conlin

⇒ In sector approaches and in the context of budget support, there is a need for more investment in evaluation not just in monitoring. Do we have effective tools for evaluating such development interventions?

Participants and Speakers

The workshop was the initiative of the University of Sussex, and was attended by 70 people (about 50 on each day). The participants were drawn from overseas and the UK; from the public, private and non-profit sectors; from the communities of evaluators, of development policy and practice, and of academics. We endeavoured to achieve a reasonable balance in terms of gender and age, both among participants and speakers, and largely succeeded.

We planned to have six or more speakers from developing countries but, in the event, last minute withdrawals meant we had four such speakers – two policy makers and two evaluators. Indran Naidoo, from the Public Service Commission of South Africa, and Margaret Kakande, from the Ministry of Finance in Uganda are two policy makers concerned to make better use of evaluative information to promote a developmental state and reduce poverty. Zenda Ofir, from the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), and Sulley Gariba, from the Institute of Policy Alternatives in Ghana (and the former President of the International Development Evaluation Association - IDEAS) are two evaluators concerned to enhance the influence of evaluation in public policy and practice. These speakers made a significant contribution to the workshop, by their presentations and interventions in the discussions. (They also went on to make a significant contribution to the UKES/EES conference in London).

Dissemination

The workshop organisers intend to produce a synthesis of the discussions, which we hope to publish to reach a wider audience. We will also produce a short report to the sponsors of the workshop, analysing the evaluation forms. Papers from the workshop, mainly PowerPoint slides, will become available on the University of Sussex website. <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/development/1-4-8-2.html>
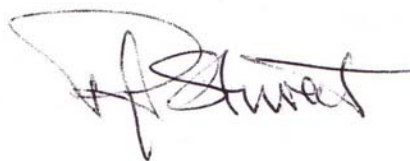
Acknowledgements

DFID, **Irish Aid**, and **SIDA** contributed funds to enable the organisers to bring developing country speakers to the workshop. **University of Sussex** funded local costs. We are very grateful for this financial support from these donors. We would also like to acknowledge that the DAC and the evaluation network gave support:
⇒ Final sessions of the workshop chaired by the DAC Chair and Network Secretariat.
⇒ Presentation by the Chair of the Evaluation Network of work being undertaken, including joint evaluations.
⇒ Information about the workshop disseminated to Network members, so that several members participated in the workshop.
⇒ Suggestions from the Secretariat for developing country speakers.

Sean Conlin   Roderick L. Stirrat

Current challenges for development evaluation
A Workshop for Policy Makers and Evaluators
Sussex University, 2-3 October 2006

In recent years within the international development community, there has been international agreement on the Millennium Development Goals, enhanced co-operation in reducing poverty, and work to increase development effectiveness. The MDGs, agreed in 2000, have set new standards for multilateral organisations, donors and partner countries. For at least a decade, the international community has been developing partnership approaches to development assistance, such as sector approaches and the poverty reduction strategies. Partnership approaches have increased the numbers of stakeholders and the complexity of operations. Some of these partnership approaches, such as general budget support, have been the subject of intense debate within the international community regarding their effectiveness. Aid effectiveness has also been a subject of increased attention among donors over the last few years, with agreements to work towards better harmonization, alignment, and results. At the same time, policy makers have tried to reach beyond development assistance to consider the impact of other policy measures and private sector activities.

These changes in approaches in development policy have posed new challenges for evaluation specialists. In the early period of development in the 1960s and 1970s, assistance was delivered through projects and evaluation was focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of individual projects. Evaluation was usually a requirement of the donor that was providing the majority of project funds. The 1980s, with greater attention to structural adjustment policies, signaled the need for development evaluation to go beyond the project level. Since 2000, the task for evaluation has become even more complex. Evaluations need to deal with all kinds of policy-based approaches. Evaluation reports are required for all participating stakeholders and for purposes of lesson learning as well as for accountability. Results, increasingly, encompass policy influence and impact on the MDGs.

The proposed workshop will consider the current challenges for development evaluation posed by these trends, especially since the agreement of the international community to work in partnership to achieve the MDGs. The workshop has been structured to enhance our common understanding of these challenges for development evaluation and to suggest ways forward. There will be three sessions over two days, allowing the workshop to discuss ways forward to achieve greater policy influence.

Participation in the workshop is by invitation only. Seventy-five people interested in improving the influence of development evaluation on policy have been invited. The invitees include policy makers concerned with improving the effectiveness of development and other policies on the MDGs, practitioners in development evaluation from the International Financial Institutions, donor countries, partner countries, OECD development evaluation network, academic institutions, NGOs and the private sector.

Workshop Programme

Monday 2nd October 2006.

10.00 *Registration and coffee*

10.30 **Welcome and workshop aims**
        Alasdair Smith, Vice Chancellor of Sussex University
        Sean Conlin, University of Sussex

11.00 – 12.30 Session 1: *New challenges for development evaluation*

This session will discuss the implications of the changing current environment of development assistance and evaluation. Change includes factors such as MDGs, enhanced country ownership of development activity, sector and budget support, policy coherence, policy campaigns of international NGOs, role of civil society organizations, the audit culture and enhanced focus on results and impact assessment. At the same time, many organizations seek to improve the use of knowledge, including evaluation results.

Chair: Roderick Stirrat, University of Sussex
Speakers: Ajay Chhibber, Operations Evaluation Dept, World Bank
             Indran Naidoo, Public Service Commission, South Africa
             Jim Rugh, CARE International, USA
             Camilla Toulmin, International Institute of Environment and Development

12.30 – 14.00 *Lunch*
14.00 – 15.15 Session 1 continued
15.15 – 15.45 *Break*

15.45 – 17.45 Session 2 *Changing evaluation approaches to meet challenges*

This session will discuss papers on the way that the changed environment has influenced evaluations. Discussions will include the capacity of a wide range of actors to address poverty issues, partnership approaches, joint evaluations, interdisciplinary approaches, participatory evaluations and the evaluation process in the development cycle. While these changed approaches respond to the diversity of development actors and demands, they also pose questions about rigour and credibility.

(1) Networks and partnerships
Chair: Stephen Biggs, University of East Anglia
Speakers: Rick Davies, Evaluation consultant
             Todor Dimitrov, IDEAS
             Sarah Earl, IDRC, Canada
             Eva Lithman, Swedish International Development Agency

20.00 – 22.30 *Dinner*

Tuesday, 3rd October 2006.

8.30 – 10.15 Session 2: ***Changing evaluation approaches to meet challenges***

(2) Capacity to evaluate MDGs and Poverty
Chair: Patrick Empey, Ireland Aid
Speakers: David Booth, Overseas Development Institute
                    Margaret Kakande, Ministry of Finance, Uganda
                    Zenda Ofir, Evalnet, South Africa

10.15 – 10.45 *Break*

10.45 – 12.30 Session 2 continues

(3) Country budgets and global policy
Chair: Alice Sindzingre, CNRS and SOAS
Speakers: Stephen Lister, Mokoro Ltd
                    Robert Picciotto, King's College, London
                    Lucien Back, UNICEF

12.30 – 14.00 *Lunch*

14.00 – 15.30 Session 3: ***Improving policy influence of evaluation***

This session will discuss how the results of evaluation studies might gain greater influence on policy. It is sometimes argued that evaluation results are mostly used to legitimate existing policies rather than to stimulate change. Discussion will include the institutional context of evaluation, selection of evaluation themes, building capacity for effective evaluation, how to improve lesson learning, results and accountability, and dissemination of results.

Chair: Hans Lundgren, DAC Evaluation Network
Speakers: Sue Owen, Dept for International Development, UK
                    Sulley Gariba, Institute for Policy Alternatives, Ghana
                    Indran Naidoo, Public Service Commission, South Africa

15.30 – 16.00 *Break*

16.00 – 17.30 Session 4: ***Conclusions and ways forward***
This session will bring together the main conclusions from the workshop.

Chair: Richard Manning, DAC Chair
Panel: Patrick Empey, Alice Sindzingre, and Hans Lundgren