

Evaluation - a partnership activity!



In July, participants from EU Accession countries met in Bratislava to learn about monitoring and evaluation in international development.

Niels Dabelstein (DANIDA) Anton Mair (Austrian MOFA) and Juliet Pierce (Director of the PARC) acted as tutors.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs in EU Accession countries are keen to use evaluation as a way of reporting to their own populations about the use of their international aid contributions. Participants at this event also wanted to explore ways of working together in partnership.

Evaluation in a world of results based management - is it still needed?

Time, effort and resources spent on developing results based management appear to have deflected effort from external independent evaluation.

International development partners have begun to concentrate more on designing monitoring processes to mark progress towards higher-level development outcomes. Bringing together a corporate picture of progress across organisations is costly in staff time and IT development. In this environment, the biggest challenge is to embed a reflective, self-righting, learning culture, rather than a reporting culture, across organisations. This is a valuable process but are these organisational changes leaving less space for external evaluation, and does this matter?

The arguments for evaluation have always been two-fold: accountability and lesson learning. If accountability is to be achieved by strengthening performance management and reporting against outcomes, and lessons are learned from more self-reflection about progress or lack of it - what would evaluation studies add?

We would argue that a strong performance culture and

the careful use of evaluation are both necessary. Although individual organisations may cultivate their own internal performance systems, evaluations should increasingly become partnership exercises.

At Country Programme level

The international development community has agreed a set of donor harmonisation principles at Monterrey to support the achievement of country-defined outcomes that contribute to internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals. Progress towards these outcomes will be measured through national monitoring systems. Donors will account for the effectiveness of their own contributions through their internal performance systems. What should individual donor country evaluations look at in this system? There is certainly a case for joint donor evaluations but who should be evaluating whom? It is time for country governments to evaluate the effects of donors' assistance in support of country led processes as well as joint approaches to evaluation.

At Project level

At the project level, sustainability involves greater ownership and more self-reflection by all the partners involved about what is going right or wrong. This type of monitoring should be embedded in a performance culture that is happy to make changes to ensure results are achieved. Development partners need to put more effort into joint planning and the mutual development of indicators and internal performance systems.

Independent external reviews will help those closely involved to reflect on the wider context in which they are operating. This process will also throw light on the methodology and the often unconscious assumptions that are being applied. A full evaluation at the end of the project gives an external overview of the whole process and explains what happened and why, unearthing both the positive and negative impacts.

(continued on page 3)

Also in this issue

- **ODAs and partnerships: USAID**
- **DFID's approach to evaluating partnerships**
- **Lessons learned from DFID's Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office: Experiences from PARC's M&E support**
- **PARC Training: M&E of partnerships**
- **Web updates**

Editors of this edition:

Juliet Pierce and Dr Achim Engelhardt

Overseas Development Agencies and Partnerships

In 2001, USAID and the Centre for Development Information and Evaluation published a manual called “Designing and managing partnerships between US and host country entities”.

This manual is not limited to a US context. From an evaluator’s point of view, the section on monitoring and measuring the effectiveness of the partnership is of special interest.

The detailed Catholic Relief Partnership reflection tools are a useful annex. They were designed to guide discussion and planning in monitoring partnership relationships. The process is designed to reflect the partner’s view of good partnerships locally, rather than a global standard of excellence to describe every partnership. Four levels of partnership are described, a partnership checklist is presented and illustrative sample indicators are listed.

“Defining performance indicators for intended results is a powerful way to begin clarifying results statements”

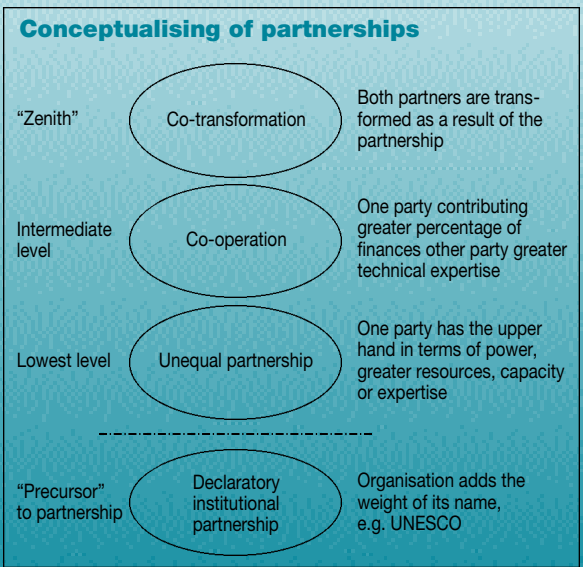
USAID manual on managing partnerships

Find this information under:
http://www.dec.org/pdf_docs/pnacg627.pdf

DFID’s Approach to the Evaluation of Partnerships

Gail Marzetti of DFID has sent the PARC the following information about conceptualising partnerships, as captured by colleagues in DFID Brazil.

The DFID team in Latin America have been exploring aid concepts and language and the effects of these on how different partners view each other, at a further workshop on partnership and influencing in May in Sao Paulo.



PARC Facilitation of DFID’s Economists’ Retreat



Experiences from working in Partnership

DFID’s Sustainable Livelihoods Support Office (SLSO) has been an advocate of working in partnerships in DFID and beyond. PARC has also learned from its evaluation of the SLSO experience.

The SLSO built successful partnerships with other donors, academics, consultants and other DFID departments through the exceptional personal style of staff and the continuity of its relationships with these groups. Secondments, consultants training, visits to overseas offices and financial programme inputs helped to spread the Sustainable Livelihoods (SL) message.

This human face was backed by the Livelihoods Connect website, which serves as an exceptionally accessible and selective platform of thematic information.

Building partnerships takes time

After a solid 5-year development, the SLSO has now been disbanded. The networks remain and the Livelihoods Connect site is still online. The key message has been that these kinds of viable partnerships take time to mature.

Go straight to the site www.livelihoods.org or use the link on the PARC website and explore other interesting links too. Go to www.parcinfo.org <Evaluation links> Donor Resource Centres.

DFID’s Evaluation Department and the PARC working together



PARC assignments 2002-3

Besides the usual requests for evaluation studies, the PARC has worked with a number of DFID Country Offices to assist with the new Country Assistance Planning and change forecasting exercises.

In collaboration with others, we have worked with the Finnish agency DIDC on forestry and with the World Bank on the Cities Alliance. Our Associates have also completed a major UNSSC evaluation.

The PARC has recently completed the joint donor evaluation of the Global Water Partnership (GWP) and a similar evaluation of the World Roads Association (PIARC). As an independent resource centre we anticipate that we may be in demand to manage joint-donor work of this kind in future, especially where global partnership organisations need to be evaluated.

We are also developing a portfolio of work connected with civil society and another collection of work around evaluations of conflict prevention and peace-building activities.

We are keen to develop more knowledge sharing products as a result of learning lessons from these evaluation assignments.

PARC training on the evaluation of partnerships

The PARC has designed 6 training modules to support monitoring and evaluation in international development. One module is aimed specifically at helping aid workers with the M&E of influencing and partnerships.

Development agencies have always sought to influence change and to work in partnerships with others involved in change. In recent years these ways of working have taken on a sharper focus, particularly as the funding agencies attempt to harmonise their efforts in relation to supporting country-led poverty reduction. In the UK's Department for International Development, particular effort has been made to recognise influencing activities and partnership building as significant forms of development activity alongside project and programme design and delivery.

PARC approach

The PARC can help teams of development workers to explore the concepts of influencing and partnerships explaining examples and exploring meaning in different contexts.

Once the ideas are well understood, the PARC can help groups to explore how these processes can be designed, managed, monitored and evaluated in practice. Although a relatively new area, the PARC can offer insights gathered from experience in this work so far, explaining some of the difficulties and how they are being overcome.

Contact Achim at the PARC by email at achim@parcinfo.org to discuss your personal training needs in order to offer you a tailor-made course.

PARC facilitation of DFID's Central Research Team's (CRT) retreat: members of CRT in action



Evaluation - is it still needed?

(Continued from page 1)

What does evaluation add?

The real value of evaluation is its independence and external-ity. This transparency is important in order to account to funders and beneficiaries. The evaluation can reveal the nuances of context which can test whether the same methodology is likely to be successful in a different situation.

Organisational managers need the chance to learn what went well and what went wrong in order to improve future performance. Evaluation reports stored on the system are providing the most useful form of institutional memory, especially when staff turn over is high.

In the PARC's experience, independent external reviews are proving very useful to resolve tensions between partners when misunderstandings arise during the implementation process. These are key supplements in a results-based management system.

Question of power and timing

Beneficiaries are often closest to the action and already see what is or is not happening. However, they tend to have least power in raising concerns, even though the voice of civil society is increasingly identified as a key aspect of monitoring pro-poor change. The beneficiaries of projects need to be able to contribute to remedial decisions to be taken at the time rather than be asked to contribute to an evaluation of what went wrong at the end.

Are lessons incorporated into future design?

If we assume that performance systems will account for progress towards results, that leaves lesson learning and challenging orthodoxy as the main purpose of evaluation. Traditionally, lessons from evaluation come too late to make changes, but high quality evaluation can and does challenge closed thinking. However, in spite of revealing these lessons, the international record of sharing lessons and incorporating lessons in future design has not been good. We can only hope to do better if we encourage interest in this enquiry from funders, including the public, and aid managers.

Evaluation of internal performance systems

Internal performance systems do matter, but they cannot tell the whole story. Careful use of evaluation studies is also important. Evaluation should answer three fundamental questions - has the internal judgement about performance been sound, what are the unintended positive and negative effects of the interventions, and what can we all learn from this in order to do better? More thought is needed on how to make evaluation more relevant and useful as performance systems improve.

Your ideas and observations are welcome!

Contact Juliet Pierce, director of the PARC: juliet@iod.uk.com

News from the world of Evaluation

Michael Quinn Patton's training on utilisation focused evaluation

Earlier this year PARC staff participated in a training course run by Michael Quinn Patton who wrote one of the most influential texts on evaluation (Utilisation focused evaluation, 1997).

Michael stressed the need for evaluators to focus on the ultimate use of their work if the aim of the exercise is to create a product that is subsequently used by the client.

After an elaboration of the differences between research (finding out how the world works) and evaluation (improving how the world works), Michael touched on evaluation standards. He referred to the Standards of the Joint Committee on Standards on Educational Evaluation as a sound example.

Most striking was Michael's approach to the real results of an evaluation, which for him was not the report, but the improvement of a programme or project. For this reason he offers clients an extra day of assistance between 6 weeks or 3 months after the end of the evaluation to help the client with the implementation of the results of an evaluation.

When asked by the PARC about the value of this approach, Michael replied, "This is often the pay-off of the whole evaluation".

Web updates on www.parcinfo.org

Among the donor community there is awareness about the need for statistics to fight against poverty. Statistics help us to understand who the poor people are and where they live so that governments can focus their efforts. They also provide valuable baselines, which are so important for the monitoring and evaluation of efforts to alleviate poverty.

The PARC recommends PovertyNet's website "Data on Poverty" where you will find a very comprehensive range of links.

To access this website go to: <http://www.world-bank.org/poverty/data/index.htm>

PARC services:

- Helpdesk and information service
- Consultancy services
- Training and seminars
- Website and Newsletter

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Course: Quantitative and Qualitative Methods in Evaluation

The Centre for Evaluation (CEval) is offering a two-day training course in quantitative and qualitative methods in evaluation in the context of international development. CEval, a scientific Institute of the University of Saarland has a representative of BMZ's Evaluation Department on its Management Board and is co-operating with the PARC in its training courses in 2004.

The training module is scheduled for June 4-5, 2004 in Seeheim-Jugenheim, near Frankfurt/Main, Germany. For bookings and further information regarding the training course, please contact Dr Stefanie Krapp at info@ceval.de.

Included in PARC's co-operation with CEval will be a PARC module about M&E in DFID, offered as part of the CEval's FEEZ course in 2004. Look out for further information about this training opportunity on the PARC website!

PARC contract managers in DFID's Performance and Effectiveness Department meeting PARC staff in Birmingham



Conference: New Directions in Impact Assessment for Development - Methods and Practice

**Enterprise Development Impact Assessment Information Service (EDIAIS)
24 - 25 November 2003
University of Manchester, UK**

The DFID-supported EDIAIS programme encourages information exchange about impact assessment methodologies and best practice.

This EDIAIS conference will facilitate cross-fertilisation and closer integration of ideas and methods by bringing together people working at

- the strategic or policy level
- at the meso level of programmes
- and at the project and grassroots level

For further information visit the PARC website www.parcinfo.org/news or www.enterprise-impact.org.uk