

Donors and INGOs - a collaboration in performance assessment?

DFID and the individual international NGOs that DFID funds are working to harmonise the monitoring and evaluation arrangements for their partnership agreements.

DFID has developed Partnership Programme Agreements (PPAs) with 15 INGOs and volunteer sending organisations. The PARC has been asked to provide a support panel of consultants to assist INGO colleagues in putting monitoring systems in place.

In October 2003, Rick Davis (consultant on PARC's PPA panel), Tina Wallace (an independent consultant), Margaret Newens (Oxfam) and Nigel Simister (former BESO) met with Juliet Pierce, director of the PARC to discuss lessons learned from monitoring the PPAs. They found many of the lessons could be applied to other situations where different partners share overlapping concerns and try to monitor progress in ways that fit within their own organisational systems. (Find out more on page 2)

PARC facilitation of donor harmonisation meeting in Vienna



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NEW EVALUATION TOOLS

PARC has been experimenting with new tools for project managers to use in presenting complex information to evaluation teams.

We have been trying to address the difficulty evaluators have in gaining an overview of complex projects and programmes operating over a number of years in volatile environments.

Last year PARC consultants were involved in four very different types of evaluation exercise which relied on understanding the interplay of different actors and decision-makers at different levels over a period of time, including:

- An Output to Purpose Review of a database designed to assist on monitoring DFID's work on conflict
- The preparation of a set of tools to assess impact over the range of DFID's 10 year, £200m, Renewable Natural Resources Research Programme
- The preparation of tools for reviewing DFID's State and Local Government Reform Programme in Nigeria
- The review of the UK government's Conflict Prevention Pools

All of these experiences pointed to the need for overarching analytical tools to enable evaluators and stakeholders to grasp the multi-level and multi-dimensional changes that take place in large programmes over time, and fundamentally change the way in which the original project or programme purpose is understood. (Find more information on page 3)

PARC ANNUAL MEETING

The annual stakeholder meeting was held at University College London in December.

Iain Murray from DFID's Evaluation Department gave an overview of his Department's work and its plans for the future. Lars Elle from DANIDA's Evaluation Department explained some of the changes that are taking place in DANIDA and the way these may affect the conduct of the evaluation function. Natalia Langlais from DFID's Performance Effectiveness Department gave a picture of some of the structural changes in DFID and how issues of performance are being addressed to assist staff to meet the challenging targets set out in DFID's Public Service Agreement. (Continued on page 2)

PARC ANNUAL MEETING

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John Kawalek from Sheffield University gave an overview of how an organisation development specialist views the use of logical frameworks. He also provided feedback on the lessons learned from PARC evaluations of three different global knowledge networks.

Juliet Pierce summarised PARC's work over the last year and the trends and themes that will be built on next year.

Participants commented once again on the value of meeting up and sharing ideas. They found it particularly useful to hear about DFID's structural changes and DANIDA and PARC's plans for next year. Given the range of experience in the room there was a special request for more time in informal discussion next year!

Full copies of presentations are available on the website: www.parcinfo.org

DONORS AND INGO'S - A COLLABORATION IN PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT?

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In 2001 Partnership Programme Agreements (PPAs) became the new funding mechanism between DFID's Information and Civil Society Department (ICSD) and the INGOs and volunteer sending agencies.

DFID PPA Agencies:
Action Aid, CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Save the Children, WWF, BESO, CIIR, IS, Skillshare and VSO.
The second round PPA partners include: ADD, HelpAge International, Care, and Water Aid

This new mechanism recognised that there were areas where DFID and the PPA agencies could work together to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes. The agreement specified these outcomes in return for funding. Through the PPA DFID recognised that partner agencies were often better placed to contribute to areas of development that were essential to the delivery of DFID's Public Service Agreement with the Treasury. In this sense the PPA could be seen as an outsourcing mechanism for work with UK and global civil society.

However, the PPA also recognises an older relationship between the UK government and UK civil society, in terms of development awareness and the UK civil society's unique links with global civil society and faith communities.

The PARC's services were enlisted to support all PPA partners in developing monitoring frameworks and systems to report on progress against the outputs and outcomes of each agreement.

Reflections on PPA monitoring arrangements that may offer insights for all work done in partnership:

• Is it a partnership?

If so what kind of partnership, who are the real partners?

• What is the partnership for?

Is it to determine joint strategy?
Is it a vehicle for mutual learning?
Is it to determine the funding level?
Is it to influence the internal management or priorities of each organisation?

• The challenge of monitoring organisational partnerships

It is a challenge for representatives of head offices to capture all the information necessary to monitor the effectiveness of a partnership agreement.

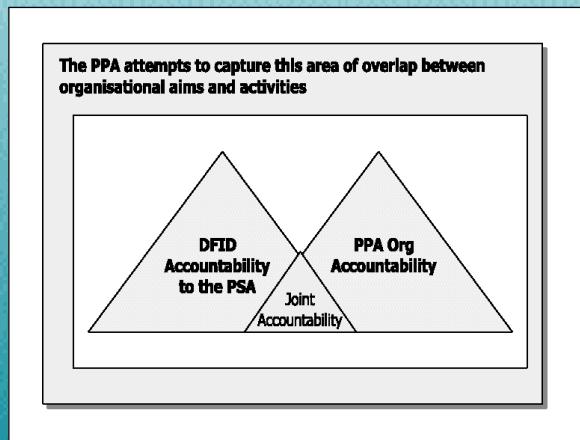
• Partnership based on mutual understanding

The review of the monitoring arrangements is a useful first step to ensure the relevant data that both sides of the partnership want will be collected. The annual review can then provide an opportunity for both partners to understand how each organisation is changing in relation to the partnership agreement.

Where one partner is more dominant or much larger this will be more difficult. Unless special meetings were convened, it was harder for the smaller PPA partner to understand how DFID is changing so that the INGO could relate their work to the changing DFID agenda.

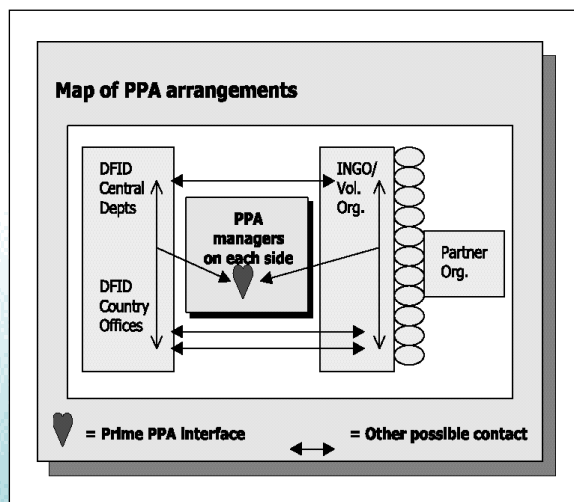
• Monitoring challenge and impact on funding

Where funding is involved the funded partner is likely to see the relationship as less symmetrical. In these circumstances joint monitoring takes on the flavour of accountability rather than joint lesson learning. Different PPA partners appear to have different degrees of anxiety about and draw different conclusions from this question.



Lessons for potential Programme Partnership Agreement holders with DFID:

1. Do not venture along this route if your organisation is really a collection of projects with neither a coherent strategic vision nor the capacity to bring this vision together and to plan for outcomes/impacts and monitor progress towards them.
2. Clarify the vision and values and your own identity first so that they are not perverted by the funding arrangement.
3. Use the negotiation and management of the PPA as an opportunity to develop an internal monitoring system, using external resource people to help, but building the skills of an internal monitoring and evaluation specialist.
4. Make sure the effort of embedding a performance assessment culture across your organisation is going to be proportional to your overall organisational resources, being aware that the initial effort will be large and time-consuming but will decline over time as it becomes institutionalised.



NEW EVALUATION TOOLS

(Continued from page 1)

Rapid staff changes in both stakeholder organisations and programme personnel often result in a crucial loss of institutional memory. Initial strategies and planning frameworks such as logframes are often eroded by small incremental changes that are not properly recorded. At the time of evaluation, the audit trail of key documents recording critical changes is often missing or contains substantial gaps.

Adapting logical frameworks as planning and monitoring tools in process projects

The process of change as a result of contextual pressures can make the logframe appear almost meaningless at the time of mid-term review or final evaluation. In some cases logframes do not exist, but

even where they do exist they may have limitations as a result of the way they have been used. The logframe is an abstract prediction at the start of the project or programme. If it is not updated as a result of contextual change it becomes obsolete. Surprisingly the programme managers often disregard it until the time of evaluation!

Even where the logframe has been used as the crucial monitoring instrument, it has often been used to monitor inputs rather than outputs.

We suggest that the risks and assumptions column provides the opportunity to consider the external contextual factors. It should be used by programme managers to monitor positive and negative contextual changes and to produce new activities to reduce newly defined risks.

The use of timelines and critical incident reviews is another way to convey the multi-level contextual changes that affect project outcomes.

Timelines and critical incident reviews

The timeline is a simple way of showing events over time in a graphical way by simply marking events along a horizontal line.

The critical incident overview simply adapts the timeline concept to show a number of inter-related incidents affecting the actions of different stakeholders along the same timeline e.g. international donors, Government, local partners, project staff.

See the **PARC website** for examples of timelines and critical incident reviews

Value of critical incident overview

The critical incident overview places the logical framework in a much more vivid context. It makes the invisible actors, whose actions affect the logframe, much more obvious. It also connects the logframe with a time-scale. Often logframe inputs and outputs are not related to real time, other than by the assumption that they will be achieved "by the end of the project".

Who and when?

The critical incident overview should be produced by the programme managers in preparation for a review or evaluation. It will help the review or evaluation team to focus on key areas of difficulty and enable them to elicit further information from the programme team and other stakeholders.

As a preliminary tool, the overview is easier for the visiting evaluators to grasp than a voluminous series of project documents, even though each area of the overview may need to be tested through an audit trail of related documents.

News from the world of evaluation

UKES CONFERENCE 2003

PARC representatives attended the recent UKES (UK Evaluation Society) conference in Cardiff where there were a number of presentations relating to evaluation in international development.

Evaluating the MDGs

Shiva Kumar (IDEAS), Sulley Gariba (IDEAS) and Robert Picotto (ex-World Bank's OED) discussed approaches to evaluating the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The speakers discussed the standardisation of MDG reporting, ownership of MDGs and the responsibility for reporting. It was agreed that building statistical and analytical capacity, including monitoring and evaluation, allocating resources and institutionalising statistical functions within and outside government are tasks for both developed and developing countries. The speakers concluded that an extensive dialogue within society was necessary to press governments to work towards the achievement of the MDGs.

International Development

Marta Foresti (ex-SCFUK) shared lessons about the process of embedding the human rights approach at the heart of SCF's Global Impact Monitoring.

Richard Longhurst (International Maritime Organisation) presented a paper about evaluation methodologies and the validity and usefulness of results when resources are constrained.

Francisco Mercado (University of Guadalajara) pointed out some fundamental differences in the perception of "participatory evaluation" in Latin America and Europe. He explained why European donors were often perceived as closed-minded and "eurocentric" when talking about stakeholder participation in Latin American host countries.

GERMAN EVALUATION SOCIETY CONFERENCE 2003

In 2003, the conference of the German Evaluation Society (DeGEval) took place in Hamburg. Once more evaluation issues in international development were a focus of the conference.

Representatives from GTZ, BMZ and the PARC, academics and consultants discussed new mechanisms and instruments used in German development co-operation: AURA, e-VAL and "Wirkungsmonitoring" (Impact Monitoring).

AURA

AURA is Germany's "development policy's framework of mandates". It is an answer to calls in GTZ and BMZ for more flexibility in the accomplishment of contracts. While the old "ZOPP" framework focused on inputs and outputs, AURA focuses on impact. In August 2002 AURA was agreed officially between BMZ and GTZ and will be tested for 3 years.

One aim of AURA is the clear division of responsibilities between BMZ and GTZ. Dr Breier, BMZ's representative, stressed that development policy is a core competence of BMZ, whilst GTZ is responsible for reporting the results and impacts to BMZ.

e-VAL

AURA and e-VAL are inter-linked. Although e-VAL was not officially presented during the conference because it is still being tested in GTZ, it was nevertheless the focus of lively discussion. e-VAL is an electronic evaluation method that aims to provide better results-oriented portfolio management and reporting. It substitutes the compilation of results and impact with questionnaires. With the application of e-VAL, a minimum of 9 interviews will be carried out for every intervention of the German technical co-operation: 3 interviews with GTZ staff, 3 with staff of partner organisations and 3 with members of the target group.

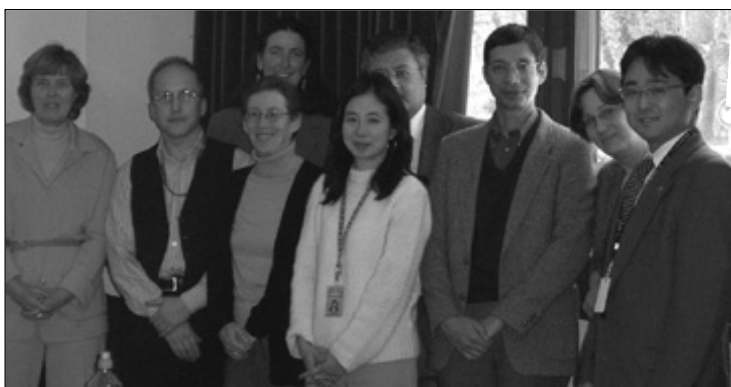
Impact monitoring

Tools for impact monitoring are part of a new impact orientation in the German development co-operation. GTZ sees impact monitoring as a new approach to evaluation that will strengthen learning.

"The decisive question for assessing success is not, therefore, whether the planned results were achieved. Instead it asks what results were achieved. The question of whether the arising impacts correspond to the planned targets is now seen as less important than the answering of the question: which impacts have actually occurred?" Guidelines for Impact Monitoring in Economic and Employment promotion projects with special reference to poverty reduction impact (Valhaus, M., Kuby, T., 2001)

For further information on impact monitoring in GTZ, go to http://www.gtz.de/forum_armut/english/c04.htm and http://www.gtz.de/wbf/doc/wbf6_hamp.pdf

PARC meeting evaluation officers of UN agencies in Geneva



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