

Helpdesk Research Report

Evaluation Capacity Development

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Question

Is there existing evidence of: A) Approaches that are more successful for developing (or building) capacity for evaluation supply in developing countries? B) What approaches are effective at building evaluation demand and the use of evaluation evidence? C) How endogenous public, civil society, academic, private sector, and other suppliers/commissioners can be strengthened? D) What financial support mechanisms (e.g. challenge funds, project or programme support, etc.) are best suited for building capacity without undermining local ownership?

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1. Overview

Donors' efforts to support evaluation capacities of developing countries have increased over the last twenty years, with a focus on strengthening national ownership of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). A rapid review of the literature finds a **limited evidence base** on evaluation capacity development (ECD)¹

¹ The literature often refers to evaluation capacity development (ECD) and evaluation capacity building (ECB) interchangeably, but some experts distinguish between them. According to Tarsilla (2012, slide 15), ECB 'mainly consists of a vast array of trainings and coaching activities', and is 'a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for ECD to take place', while ECD is .. [a] 'process consisting in both the integrated enhancement and maintenance over time of: individuals' knowledge, skills and attitudes; organizations' capabilities; and

approaches and their effectiveness. There are more reports of innovative and good practices (often single country cases, and based on authors' practical experience and consultation with other ECD practitioners), than rigorous evidence on what has worked (Bohni Nielsen S. and Attström, K., 2011, p. 236; Tarsilla, 2012).

Moreover, **evaluation of ECD is challenging**. Both evaluation and capacity building are complex, evolving fields (Heider, 2011, p. 1). In addition, there are multiple practices for conceptualising and implementing ECD, due to differing views of the purpose of ECD and of evaluation capacity itself (Bohni Nielsen S. and Attström, K., 2011; Schiavo-Campo, 2005). The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) (n.d.) notes that 'considerable ambiguity, even across international agencies, still exists on basic concepts and terms' of ECD (p. 34).

Experts point to **room for improvement in current ECD approaches**. Clotteau et al (2011, p. 173) finds that the significant evaluations undertaken have 'seriously questioned the effectiveness of existing ECB initiatives, especially those based exclusively on training'. Preskill (2013, p. 1) finds that despite 'a fairly robust knowledge base and common set of understandings of what constitutes effective [ECD]', there needs to be more focus on ensuring that ECD efforts make a difference, reach the right people and are evaluated for their impact.

Nevertheless the literature does provide findings on key lessons for ECD approaches, including:

- The **fundamental principles** of being demand-driven; context-specific; focused on strengthening incentives; working with evaluation systems rather than individuals; addressing demand as well as supply; and integrating human rights and gender equality concerns.
- A **number of recommendations for the ECD process and activities** such as, *inter alia*, assessing existing M&E; integrating ECD as part of a results-based M&E system and identifying clear ECD results; working with champions; adopting a sustained, adaptive roadmap approach; providing follow-up to training interventions; working with stakeholders beyond government; tackling any unintended negative impact of donor evaluation operations; and an emergent focus on building demand and use of evaluation evidence.

These findings include some evidence on **strengthening state- and non-state evaluation suppliers and commissioners**. Non-state suppliers and commissioners appear to be targeted mainly through national and regional Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluators (VOPEs), or specific interventions in the academic sector. This rapid review has not found any exploration of the impact of more general capacity building of these organisations on their evaluation capacity.

The literature does not appear to investigate in any detail the effectiveness of **ECD financial support mechanisms**. Innovative mechanisms include the EvalPartners' new challenge fund and South-South partnership support. Broader literature on aid effectiveness principles and the effectiveness of funding mechanisms for general capacity building provides relevant recommendations.

institutions' readiness' (Tarsilla, 2012, slide 18). For brevity, this report will use the term ECD to cover both evaluation capacity development and building.

2. ECD Approaches

2.1 Emerging principles

A number of studies identify fundamental principles for ECD approaches, including that they are:

- **Demand-driven**, led by national stakeholders and based on ‘identification of a real need for, and high potential to use, better evidence about effectiveness and results’ (OECD, 2012, p. 2). The DAC Network on Development Evaluation stresses that ‘the ultimate goal of ECD is to meet partners’ own learning and accountability needs (not just evaluating aid)’ (2009, slide 8). This can be especially challenging in fragile contexts. The mainstream ECD literature does not appear to address specific issues of ECD in fragile and conflict-affected states².
- **Context-specific**, ‘good fit’ approaches rather than ‘best practice’ or ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches (OECD, 2012; Schiavo-Campo, 2005, p. 5; Segone et al, 2013, p. 34; UNEG, n.d., pp. 17-18) that localise the evaluation jargon and use local experts (Moussa, expert comments).
- **Focused on strengthening incentives and the institutional culture**, as ECD is fundamentally a political as well as technical process, and fostering an environment of accountability (DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2009, slide 9; Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 175; OECD 2012; Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 114)
- **Working with ‘evaluation systems** – beyond conducting individual evaluations, isolated skills training’ (DAC Network on Development Evaluation, 2009, slide 8).
- **Addressing demand as well as supply** capacities (Segone, 2010, p. 13).
- **Integrating human rights and gender equality**. Most of the literature does not analyse ECD experience from a gender and human rights perspective, but recent UN publications make this a central concern (Segone, 2010; Segone & Rugh, 2013), with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) developing further practical guidance (Segone, 2010, p. 137).

2.2 Process

Lessons learned on the process of ECD highlight the importance of:

- **Working at three levels of capacity:** the enabling environment, the institutional framework and the individual (Heider, 2011, p. 89).
- **Assessing existing M&E** strengths and weaknesses to reach a shared understanding, inform an action plan, and foster a ‘coalition of support’ for the reforms (Mackay, 2012, p. 29). Identifying the unarticulated potential evaluation supply and demand can help identify gaps in evaluation capacity and what type of support is needed (Rugh & Segone, 2013, p. 95).
- Integrating ECD as **part of a results-based M&E system**, linking to the ultimate objective of strengthening public policies and programmes (UNEG, n.d., p. 18). Schiavo-Campo (2005) finds that ‘the habits of M&E should be built as soon as possible’ into systemic institutional reforms (e.g. as in Uganda, Chile and to a lesser extent, Ghana and Mozambique) (p. 5).

² There is a broader literature exploring capacity development in fragile and conflict-affected states (see Lucas, 2013, p. 10-11), including interventions for M&E capacity-building (e.g. as supported by the World Bank Institute – further details available at <http://wbi.worldbank.org/wbi/stories/building-capacity-fragile-states>).

- Identifying clearly **ECD results** – ‘the vision of what ECD ‘success’ looks like’ (Schiavo-Campo, 2005, p. 12) and building consensus among implementers. These key results should then be made accessible to other stakeholders for accountability purposes (e.g. see the case of Senegal) (Clotteau et al, 2011, p. 182).
- Working with **champions** in government (as evidenced by experience in Chile, Colombia and Australia – Mackay in Segone, 2009), and multiple national and local leaders including through national evaluation networks (Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 29). Labin et al (2012) find that ‘more attention should be paid to defining, targeting, developing and measuring leadership’ in ECD (p. 327).
- Supporting the **‘stewardship’ of M&E reforms by a capable ministry**, either close to the centre of government (e.g. a president’s office or budget office), or by strong sector ministries (e.g. as in the case of Mexico (Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 176-177)).
- Adopting an **adaptive roadmap approach**, (Clotteau et al, 2011, p. 177) maintaining ‘the flexibility ... to grasp opportunities as they arise, learn from experience, and change tactics’ (Heider, 2011, p. 96)³. Labin et al (2012, p. 328) also highlight the need to sequence activities, by considering which organisational processes and systems to target first for reform, and how the development of organisational and individual capacities inter-relate (Labin et al, 2012, p. 328).
- Providing **sustained support** over time, through close collaboration (Schiavo-Campo, 2005), and practical, hands-on, action learning and mentoring (Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 114)⁴.

2.3 Activities

Segone (2010) recommends selecting activities according to the **learning objectives and type of learning environments** best suited for the particular participants⁵. Labin et al (2012, p. 327) find that using multiple activities may be ‘optimal’ for achieving individual and organisational changes.

Experts provide a number of insights on training, a common component of ECD approaches:

- An impact evaluation of International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET)⁶ finds that participants want more recognition, understanding and even attempts to **influence the country institutional contexts, with strategies for improving organisational support**. The training tends to be most successful when there is a large country contingent participating in the training, or when a well-positioned person participates and returns home as a M&E champion (Morra Imas, expert comments).

³ Kusek and Risk (2004, cited in Clotteau et al, 2011) are considered the standard reference for the adaptive roadmap approach.

⁴ Mackay notes that most countries take more than a decade to build well-functioning evaluation systems (Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 178).

⁵ Possible ECD activities include: involvement in an evaluation process, training, technical assistance, using written materials, communities of practices, appreciative inquiry, technology, internship/apprenticeship, mentoring/coaching and meetings (Segone, 2010, p. 229).

⁶ Sponsored by the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank and operational since 2010, the programme had reached approximately 2,000 participants from over 125 countries by 2010 [unclear – you say created in 2010 and then look at membership ‘by 2010’?] (Cousins, 2010, p. i). See <http://www.ipdet.org/> for further details.

- The IPDET evaluation also finds that participants want more emphasis on practical exercises; others point to the importance of fostering the ‘**appreciative⁷ and learning**’ dimension in evaluation (Moussa, expert comments).
- IPDET has also found their **follow-up support** to be critical (e.g. a moderated listserve and a mentoring programme) (Morra Imas, expert comments). The importance of follow-up to training and the need for more funding in this area has been highlighted by others (e.g. Clotteau et al, 2011, p. 175; Moussa, expert comments).

Further evidence is available on the **Regional Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR) Initiative** (Segone & Rugh, 2013 pp. 115–124) – a global initiative supported by bilateral and multilateral donors that provides training, technical assistance and knowledge-sharing – including data on individual training programs and success stories. A comprehensive mid-term evaluation is under design by DFID (Westmeiers and Khattri, expert comments).

2.4 Approaches beyond government

In the past the focus has been on government’s evaluation capacities, but today there is a consensus that other stakeholders play an important role in ECD. **National, regional and international evaluation networks** are increasingly important actors, having grown rapidly in the last two decades⁸. They have government, civil society, academia and private sector representatives. They target these groups for capacity building activities, working on evaluation supply (most common) and (some on) demand (e.g. the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association – see Rugh & Segone, 2013, p. 276).

To date their impact is ‘**under researched**’ (Holvoet and Dewachter, 2013, p. 1), although the number of documented country cases is increasing⁹. Experts note that ‘many are stronger on paper than reality’ (Morra Imas, expert comments).

The International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) and UNICEF set up the **EvalPartners Initiative** in 2012 to support national Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) through peer-to-peer support and a toolkit on VOPE institutional capacity (p. 1). EvalPartners have published two key reports on ECD, civil society and VOPEs (Segone & Rugh, 2013; Rugh & Segone, 2013) which explore ‘the roles of different stakeholders, synergies and partnerships in strengthening country-led evaluation systems’¹⁰. To date there are no assessments of this new initiative’s performance.

There are also interventions targeted specifically at the **academic sector**. There are ongoing approaches in this area, for example the Consortium of Academic Institutions for Teaching Evaluation in South Asia (Rugh & Segone, 2013, pp. 41-53). This rapid review has not found documented cases of ECD interventions targeted to the **private sector**, except for activities through the VOPEs.

⁷ The appreciative inquiry approach focuses on positive features of a system or organisation. Further details available from <http://tinyurl.com/ouerx4l>

⁸ VOPEs have increased from 15 in mid-1990s to over 125 today (Segone & Rugh, p. 2 and p. 68), with most of the growth from national organisations in middle- and low- income countries, particularly Africa (Holvoet and Dewachter, 2013, p. 1).

⁹ There are reviews that describe their objectives and activities (e.g. Holvoet and Dewachter, 2013), capacity mapping exercises (Segone & Rugh, 2013b), an assessment of three African VOPEs’ capabilities (Tarsilla, 2012), and a recent report that presents positive case studies of regional and national VOPEs’ experiences (Segone and Ruth, 2013b).

¹⁰ <http://www.ideas-int.org/content/index.cfm?navID=5&itemID=735&CFID=276217&CFTOKEN=52569171>

2.5 Donor evaluation operations

The way donors operate can have both **positive and (unintended) negative implications for capacity** (Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 105). On the one hand, the evaluation process itself is seen as ‘an opportunity for learning and ... to leverage and strengthen evaluation capacities’ (OECD, 2010, p. 2). On the other hand, joint evaluations can be challenging due to differences in evaluation cultures, systems and needs which require ‘negotiation and sometimes time-consuming co-ordination’ (Segone, 2009, p. 88).

Negative repercussions can arise. For example, **uncoordinated donor-led evaluations** can result in ‘multiple, overlapping or uncoordinated field visits – putting pressure on in-country capacities to respond’ (Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 105). To address unintended negative effects, the OECD developed ‘a tip-sheet’ (OECD, 2010). Moreover the **increasing number of ECD actors** may result in poorly coordinated activities¹¹. Segone & Rugh (2013) point out that the challenge is to strengthen coordination, build on experiences, enhance coherence while prioritising alignment with national policies and M&E systems (p. 92). Segone & Rugh (2013) propose an evidence-based ECD framework to guide interventions, which promotes national institutions’ active role in coordination and decision-making (p. 37).

Another set of practices can also impact **negatively on national evaluation capacities**. According to an evaluation practitioner in Africa and Board member of the African Evaluation Association, a ‘glass ceiling’ prevents African evaluators from gaining experience and capacity. Donors reward firms for including local organisation on bids for global framework agreements but do not monitor if these local firms receive any work. Moreover, the short timelines expected of donors and projects privilege larger, better resourced organisations. (expert comments)

2.6 Other

There are other lessons learned which cannot be captured in detail in this short report. These include:

- Growing opportunities for ‘**South to South**’ learning (e.g. effective use of the Chile experience) (Schiavo-Campo, 2005, p. 8).
- Missed opportunities to include **legislatures as partners in M&E** reforms (Schiavo-Campo, 2005, p. 10). Today there are some parliamentary ECD initiatives - for example, Parliamentarians Forum on Development Evaluation is working towards the establishment of national evaluation policies in South Asia¹².
- **Information systems**, and understanding the key role knowledge management and learning units can play in many organisations, can be a good entry point for ECD (Clotteau et al, 2011, p. 187). As many developing countries have poor quality of data, building reliable ministry data systems which M&E systems depend on is often a necessity (Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 177).

¹¹ Looking just at UN agencies involved in ECD, there are 43 members of the United Nations Evaluation Group (Segone & Rugh, 2013, p. 88).

¹² Further details available at <http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/blogs/parliamentarians-forum-development-evaluation-south-asia>

3. Building demand and use

3.1 Building demand

Today there is a consensus that **substantive government demand is ‘prerequisite** to successful institutionalisation’ of M&E reforms. In particular, there is a concern that donors’ role in promoting ECD may have led, in the past, to prioritising the M&E needs of donor accountability over those of government and wider society (Levine, 2013, p. 10). This rapid review has not, however, found systematic empirical evidence on the performance of interventions in this area. Nevertheless there are some emerging findings and recommendations for improving ECD approaches to build demand, including:

- **Donors’ role:** A cross-country study of 12 Anglophone Sub-Saharan Africa countries finds that in most of the countries, donors ‘play a large role in generating demand for M&E services’, often driven by donors’ accountability requirements (Levine, 2013, p. 10). The study finds this can result in increased governmental M&E capacity, but not in all cases.
- **Wider environment:** Clotteau et al (2011, p. 193) draw attention to the importance of the wider environment, finding that improvements in the public sector results-based management system and in the quantity and quality of accountability drives demand for evaluation.
- **Improved understanding:** Demand is understood to increase when key stakeholders understand it better (Mackay in Segone, 2009; Patton, 2010; Segone et al, 2013). Mackay (2009) suggests good strategies are to disseminate examples of highly cost-effective monitoring systems and evaluation reports; successful cases of other governments’ experiences in setting up M&E systems; and ‘evidence of very high returns to investment in M&E’ (p. 175).
- **Early diagnostics:** The initial assessments of existing M&E can be a useful vehicle for ‘raising the awareness of the importance of M&E and the need to strengthen it, and should also investigate how M&E information is currently being used’ (Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 176).
- **Use incentives** to encourage and institutionalise demand and use of evaluations. Mackay (2009, p. 180-182) identifies three types of incentives. These include carrots that encourage and reward M&E implementation and use of findings (e.g. awards and prizes, financial incentives to ministries); sticks that penalise poor M&E performance (e.g. financial penalties, naming and shaming); and sermons that endorse or advocate the value of M&E (e.g. high level statements, awareness-raising workshops).
- **Institutionalising the ‘pull’ for evidence:** Patton (2010) talks of ‘developing organisation-specific processes for integrating evaluation into planning and programme development’ (p. 267). Such mechanisms could include ‘requiring spending bids to be supported by an analysis of the existing evidence-base’, and facilitating evidence use by ‘integrating analytical staff at all stages of the policy implementation’ (Segone, 2010, p. 31).

3.2 Maximising use and users

Popular evaluation theory promotes ‘**utilization-focused’ evaluation design** (e.g. see Patton, 2010, p. 252 – in Segone, 2010) and ECD experts highlight the need to clarify at the start the range of uses and opportunities for M&E information (UNEG, n.d.)¹³. Mackay (2009) identifies three possible uses of

¹³ UNEG (n.d.) provides a comprehensive account of the many uses and users of M&E information (p. 20-21), and the roles and responsibilities of national stakeholders in ECD (p. 25-26).

evaluation: as a learning function; for accountability purposes; as a tool for performance budgeting or to support evidence-based policy formulation and analysis. He finds it is important to understand which of the intended uses predominates because each 'involves different sets of stakeholders and thus incentives to drive the system' (Mackay in Segone, 2009, p. 180).

A number of studies provide findings on how to maximise the use of evaluation evidence:

- Weiss (1998) notes that the best known way of encouraging use of evaluation is 'through **involving potential users** in defining the study and helping to interpret results, and through reporting results to them regularly while the study is in progress' (p. 30) She advocates for including programme clients in evaluations, to broaden the study scope and 'help redress the inequalities in access to influence and the imbalance of power' (p. 30).
- Schiavo-Campo (2005, p. 11) finds that public support for M&E depends partly on **visible impact**, and recommends for the common focus on M&E improvements at the macro level to be complemented by improving M&E for services, working with sector ministries and local government.
- Segone (2010) also identifies **important roles for civil society organisations**. For example, VOPEs can 'play a major role in advocating for the use of evidence in policy implementation'; think-tanks, with the support of mass media, can make evidence available to citizens; and citizens can demand that policymakers make more use of the evidence (p. 31). Other detailed findings on promoting the use of evaluation evidence are provided in Segone, 2010 (p. 211 – 214).

4. Financial support mechanisms

Donors are providing support to developing country governments, non-governmental organisations, and regional and international initiatives through different financial support channels but there is little documentation of the types of mechanisms used. There does not appear to be any systematic investigation of the effectiveness of these mechanisms. This rapid review has identified the following findings:

- **Direct project or programme support** is a common mechanism, typically with direct funding and/or with international experts providing technical assistance (Westmeiers and Khattri, expert comments). According to Schiavo-Campo (2005, p. 8), dedicated funding can be an important component of the initial phase of ECD activities, as in the Brazil and Mexico Institutional Development Fund (IDF) grants, but it needs to be targeted clearly on M&E capacity building.
- **Challenge funds:** EvalPartners has initiated a challenge fund targeting VOPEs, with actions at international, national and/or sub-national levels, and with governmental and civil society partnerships¹⁴. It is too soon to assess the initiative's impact as it is currently under way. In addition there are reports of challenge funds being used for more general capacity building¹⁵.

¹⁴ Further information available at http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners/innovation_challenge

¹⁵ An evaluation of the International Development Research Centre's networking and relationship building activities notes that challenge funds were used '[t]o provide "catalytic" fund[ing] to drive certain processes of strengthening or strategic thinking...(CIES 34)' (Taylor and Ortiz, 2008, p. 21).

Moreover, challenge funds in other areas may include M&E components or (indirectly) result in M&E capacity building¹⁶.

- **Funding for impact evaluation research:** there are a number of funding streams for impact evaluation research, some for competitive grants, others for technical assistance. Experts highlighted competitive 3ie's funding¹⁷ in this area; another example is the World Bank's Strategic Impact Evaluation Fund¹⁸. The World Bank's Africa Impact Evaluation Initiative provides technical assistance to produce and support country-specific impact evaluations of public programs¹⁹. However it was not possible to find reports evaluating the impact of these funds on national evaluation capacities in developing countries.
- **Scholarships:** Morra Imas (expert comments) reports that donor support is critical for evaluation training scholarships, but also points out that 'free' courses may be undervalued, noting that a large part of IPDET's longevity stems from being fee-based.
- **Support to advance professional networks** in countries and regions (and sectors) is (anecdotally) considered effective (Westmeiers and Khattri, expert comments). This includes South-South partnerships as supported by EvalPartners (Moussa, expert comments). CLEAR is another case - for example, the CLEAR Center in South Asia has collaborated on hosting the South Asia Evaluation Conclave in Nepal²⁰ (Westmeiers and Khattri, expert comments).
- **Support to national VOPEs:** one organisations reports that donor support is not strengthening local ownership. The African Gender and Development Evaluation Network (AGDEN) reports that its main challenge is its unreliable funding and resource base. AGDEN depends largely on donor support (UN Women and the Ford Foundation mainly) and finds that it has periods of 'very low activity' when they have no funded project being implemented (Segone and Rugh, 2013b, p. 294).

There are relevant findings from the **broader literature on aid effectiveness and capacity development financial mechanisms**. Like aid to other sectors, the Paris, Accra and Busan principles of effective aid are relevant for financial support to ECD (expert comment). Other potential relevant evidence may be found from: reviews of pooled funds (e.g. Commins et al., 2013, p. iv), reviews of funding for civil society (e.g. GSDRC, 2009), and reviews of technical assistance for capacity building (e.g. Oxford Policy Management, 2006).

5. Case studies

These references provide detailed case studies on ECD experience. Due to time constraints, not all of these cases have been included in the rapid literature review.

¹⁶ For example, the global Civil Society Education Fund supports national education coalitions, and its goals include 'building the capacity of CSOs in developing, monitoring, and evaluating education sector plans' (<http://tinyurl.com/peufulh>).

¹⁷ Further details available at <http://www.3ieimpact.org/en/funding/>.

¹⁸ Further details available at <http://tinyurl.com/qbhcolp>

¹⁹ Further details available at <http://tinyurl.com/3dvfkq>

²⁰ Further details available at <http://evaluationconclave2013.org/>

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6.1 Key websites

- My M&E: <http://mymande.org/>
- EvalPartners: <http://www.mymande.org/evalpartners>
- Evaluation Capacity Development Group: <http://www.ecdg.net>
- DAC Network on Development Evaluation Task Force on Evaluation Capacity Development
<http://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluatingcapacitydevelopment.htm>

- International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS): <http://www.ideas-int.org/home/index.cfm?navID=1&itemID=1&CFID=603813&CFTOKEN=31566729>
- CLEAR Initiative: <http://www.theclearinitiative.org/>
- World Bank Independent Evaluation Group – Evaluation Capacity Development: <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/evaluations/evaluation-capacity-development-eccd>

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