International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications

Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information Phase II External Evaluation

2008-12

Executive Summary

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International Network **INASP**
for the Availability of Scientific Publications

Executive Summary

The International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications recently commissioned an external evaluation of the Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information (PERii)[1]. ITAD [www.itad.com] a recognised market leader in monitoring and evaluation, multi-stakeholder M&E systems, and the evaluation of projects, programmes and organisations were commissioned to undertake this work. The evaluation combined a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach and included country visits to Bangladesh, Nepal, Kenya and Uganda, plus interviews with representatives from an additional six countries actively engaged in the programme and survey engagement with representatives from the remaining 13 countries with which the programme works. The evaluation took place over September—October 2012.

Evaluation design

The evaluation aimed to identify successes and challenges to date in PERii and try to understand how they can inform the next phase of PERI. The evaluation focused on four key evaluation dimensions. These are:

- Results – is the programme achieving its intended results?
- Effectiveness – is the programme reaching the target stakeholders in appropriate and the most effective ways; are programme outcomes and relevant mechanisms *sustainable*?
- Relevance – is the programme meeting current and future priority needs?
- Efficiency – are programme results being achieved through optimum use of resources?

In addition to the four evaluation dimensions above, the evaluation considered key principles and approaches prioritised by INASP namely: innovation and learning, networking, advocacy, equity, and training and capacity development.

Findings

PERii's intended outcome is ambitious. INASP has made impressive gains across the research communication cycle as well as making contributions to the quality of education. It has achieved much, of which INASP staff and PERii participants should be justifiably proud. It has done so at modest cost, with value for money (VFM) considerations at the forefront of all it does, and with a strong concern for equity and sustainability. Overall findings are presented here though of course, given that PERii covers 23 countries, it does disguise some of more specific findings, achievements and challenges at country level.

Relevance: The problems and needs that PERii addresses are relevant. They are driven by a sound analysis of relative need at the international level and informed by an analysis of needs from key stakeholders in the country, though at country level analysis is often quite library-centric. There is clearly an appetite for the INASP inputs such as capacity development, negotiation with publishers, information literacy and support in scholarly writing and publishing, evidenced for instance in the demands for small grants in these areas and in the growing number of people registered in AuthorAID. However, greater attention to the broader research communication needs at country level, also to other organisations' activities and strategies in research communication at country level, and to other factors contributing to the problems that PERii seeks to address would increase complementarities and enhance potential impact.

Sustainability: A key theme running through PERii has been sustainability and the intention to build sustainable outcomes and structures. Perhaps one of the most marked results of the programme is the level

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[1] PERii is the second five-year phase of INASP's Programme for the Enhancement of Research Information and works with partners to support global research communication. The intended impact of PERii is that locally-produced research is available and used by policy makers to inform national and international poverty reduction strategies and policies in targeted developing countries. The programme's intended outcome is that within targeted developing countries an enabling environment for research communication is owned and driven by a sustainable local network of stakeholder partners.

of country ownership particularly of local structures such as consortia. There is still a long way to go to achieve sustainability particularly of outcomes and to achieve financial sustainability at the country level. This will need the involvement and support of a wider range of stakeholders including senior management of institutions and cooperation with other research communication agencies and stakeholders beyond the consortia which are predominantly made up of librarians to date. But there is a strong country-level commitment to ensure aspects of PERii will continue even without INASP input, albeit at a smaller scale due to monetary constraints.

Efficiency and value for money: The PERii programme is run in an efficient manner with VFM considerations taken seriously in programme management and implementation. This is seen across the INASP team and also at country level. Investments are used to generate high levels of activity. The Country Coordinator network is one of PERii's strongest elements, and enables a great deal to be achieved at modest cost. The programme is also run by a relatively small team at INASP level. This limits what PERii can itself seek to achieve, and the pace of change. At country level the additional workload on individuals poses a risk for sustainability. Strong management of INASP's own team is critical if it is to realise the potential of PERii.

Networking: PERii effectively built networks within countries particularly of librarians at national level through the establishment of the consortia as well as through training events. The common goal of purchasing e-resources collectively helps bind and strengthen this group. PERii also achieved some success in building the international network of country coordinators. There was less evidence of effective networks being developed between librarians and the research community at either institutional or national levels. At international level there are a number of other examples of networks enabled by PERii across its thematic areas notably by Evidence-Informed Policy-Making (EIPM). The effectiveness of all these networks will be seen in their sustainability but for the moment they are providing effective mechanisms for individuals to share information and experience. In the future INASP could consider how best to monitor and sustain those networks which are producing benefits to their members.

Advocacy: PERii has contributed to some significant advocacy achievements at country and international levels e.g. increasing publisher awareness of developing country contexts, and getting libraries and e-resources onto institutions' agenda. INASP and some PERii partners in some countries have established access to key fora for influencing and relevant partnerships to pursue an advocacy agenda, however this is limited to a few countries and instances. Advocacy and communication are critical areas for investment and where a more strategic approach is needed – both to strengthen PERI, and to ensure INASP's continued success as an organisation. The INASP team has been working during 2012 to develop a strategy and plan for the future PERI3, which includes advocacy more explicitly.

Equity: The programme's achievements in equity have gone beyond the annual review of country eligibility. The evaluation found the way that INASP have conceptualised and put into practice partnerships with country-level partners to be extremely effective and achieving equity in those relationships. Furthermore, some programme activities have addressed equity issues head-on e.g. in Ghana, the GINKS network has run a five-day ICT workshop for female legislative members to encourage more female participation in the Ghana assembly. However, overall, there may be a need for PERii more frequently to go beyond a equality approach to one based more on equity i.e. consider the need to provide differential access to give equal opportunities.

Training and capacity building: training and capacity development is at the core of PERii. PERii has undoubtedly raised levels of awareness, knowledge and skills among librarians and a range of users around e-resources and some other aspects of research communication. Some training methods were innovative in the sector such as the cascade approach to training. Methods which aim to build sustainable training resources were found to be popular and in demand by all countries. The evaluation found a demand from librarians in partner countries for more pedagogical support on how to train and engage with e-resource users, as well as for the training content itself. However, the evaluation found limited information about the collective impact of PERii capacity development work across a country or theme. Considering the importance

of capacity development in PERii, understanding the impact and outcomes of training and other capacity-development activities is something that should be focused on.

Learning and Innovation: As well as its training approaches being innovative for the sector, there have been innovations at the fringes of PERii in the components piloted and added during the programme (EIPM and AuthorAID). However, innovation as a principle and approach has not been central to PERii, perhaps because its purpose was not specifically defined in the programme's design. The challenge for the future remains how to apply and embed the innovative approaches that have been on the fringes of PERii across the whole programme more systematically. The evaluation found INASP as an organisation to be very self-aware and honest, as well as consistent in its approaches and understanding of country contexts and sectoral changes despite staff changes. What INASP has learnt through the experience of implementing PERii is well captured in the new concept note. However, even though INASP has produced a number of case studies and where possible adopted a learning approach, there has not been sufficient capacity to exploit this fully across the programme. It should be given more emphasis and resourcing in any future programme.

Implications for the future

The research capacity landscape is complex with initiatives at many levels. PERii is notable for two things: (1) its holistic view of the research cycle and (2) its emphasis on the infrastructure, resources, systems and skills which underpin all research, rather than focusing on specific thematic or disciplinary areas. The capacity needs in research communication and higher education (HE) are significant. INASP should certainly be ambitious – PERii has achieved real impact – but must take care not to overreach itself. Strengthening the research and HE system within a single country is a huge undertaking, let alone trying this in 23. PERii can achieve greater impact by focusing on its distinctive inputs and approach but linking this more closely to analysis and initiatives of others to improve the research communication cycle in any one country or thematic area.

Use by PERii of the research communication cycle approach is a strength. However, INASP cannot address all aspects of the cycle in all countries, and so to be effective at national level INASP needs a stronger picture of other research communication networks and activities and how these fit into the research communication and cycle and link with PERii (and vice versa). The evaluation found a real appetite from other organisations for closer cooperation e.g. R4L.

To do this, and to respond more effectively, INASP's own in-country networks need to be expanded in scope beyond the dominance of librarians, and it will need to forge stronger links with other peer initiatives. Analysis of needs and design of approach needs to take into account not just the gaps in skills but also the politics of the context. For instance, in relation to research-policy linkage PERii has developed a unique approach with its focus on 'evidence literacy'. However, this skills-based approach does not take on the politics of policy-making which has a significant impact on the extent of its success. Evidence literacy is one aspect of promoting the use of evidence to inform policy but this needs to be set in an analysis of how evidence informs policy, specific challenges at country level and the potential linkage to other initiatives. Similarly, at institutional level to build research communication capacity PERii needs to consider the incentives to academics to undertake and communicate research and to garner the support of senior management of institutions to embed change and support for research communication.

The evaluation concluded that PERii has achieved change and established a strong foundation at country and international levels to take this further as part of a more linked-up approach to build research communication at country and international level. The evaluation identified a set of recommendations, below, which aim to support the development of the future programme drawing on the experience and evidence from PERii.

Conclusion

PERii has made impressive gains across the research communication cycle, and has achieved much of which INASP and its staff should be justifiably proud. It has done so at modest cost, with VFM considerations at the forefront of all it does, and with a strong concern for equity and sustainability.

The capacity needs in research communication and higher education are significant. INASP should certainly be ambitious – PERii has achieved real impact – but must take care not to overreach itself. Strengthening the research and HE system within a single country is a huge undertaking, let alone trying this in 23.

The national research communication cycle approach is a strength and is important for sustainability. INASP cannot address all aspects of the cycle in all countries, and so to be effective at national level INASP needs a stronger picture of other research communication networks and activities and how these fit into the research communication and cycle and link with PERii (and vice versa). To do this, and to respond more effectively, INASP's own in-country networks need to be expanded in scope beyond the dominance of librarians, and it will need to forge stronger links with other peer initiatives.

The CC network is one of PERI's strongest elements, and enables a great deal to be achieved at modest cost. While this needs to be understood as part of a country's strategy, rather than solely a PERii network, the burden placed on particular individuals is often significant. This limits what PERii can itself seek to achieve, and the pace of change, and is a real risk for national sustainability. Similarly, stronger management of INASP's own team is critical if it is to realise the potential of PERii.

Learning better about its successes – and failures – presents a real opportunity for INASP, whilst also being essential for the project planning processes of PERii (particularly to develop appropriate M&E processes and indicators); to do so INASP will need to invest in its internal capacity

Advocacy and communication are critical areas for investment and where a more strategic approach is needed – both to strengthen PERii, and to ensure INASP's continued success as an organisation. The INASP team has been working during 2012 to develop a strategy and plan for the future PERI3. A number of the areas highlighted in this evaluation are already under consideration in that plan and so should serve to establish a strong strategy for a future programme.

Recommendations

1. Programme design, monitoring and evaluation	- Build on the effective use of the research communication cycle as a framework to hang INASP PERii inputs to make it a basis for the analysis of country and global situations which informs the priorities, approach and linkages of PERii. - Focus increased effort on partnerships with other initiatives to achieve results. - Develop a clear theory of change which details how PERii components complement one another at all levels. - Develop more specific aims including a clear articulation of the change the programme intends to achieve *within the programme funding period.* - Identify specific country and international targets or indicators *which can be attributed* to PERii activities. - Establish a system of regular reviews which look at progress and impact at country level across PERii activities. These could be carried out jointly with other key research communication partners e.g. EIFL, Sida. Track more systematically **results** of activities e.g. scholarly publications; skills increased and applied; results of networks; usage of e-resources made accessible.
2. Stakeholders	• Extend country networks working with existing networks such as NRENs and

and networks	research associations where possible. • Consider a national cross-PERii working / advisory group. • Consider links with organisations that can affect infrastructure quality and availability in-country.
3. Information delivery	• Work to develop an agreed shared strategy for information delivery and associated activities with R4L and EIFL. • Work with other access initiatives to present clearer information to consortia and users so that they have a better understanding of what is /is not included within each initiative. Consider whether a focus on discovery tools is needed. • Expand the scope of Publishers for Development, to engage with publishers over sustainability and affordability of subscription/access models, including INASP's role as intermediary. Increase the capacity and confidence of consortia able and willing to undertake direct negotiations but continue to offer support.
4. Quality of education and research	• Ensure PERii's existing work (e.g. information literacy) is understood as more than 'library skills', that academics are involved in its development, and that is embedded in institutional approaches. • Consider and articulate the impact that PERii has on the quality of education as well as research communication. • Build in analysis of the obstacles to quality research beyond access to e-resources and skills in scholarly writing e.g. funding, lack of incentives to undertake research in the development of PERii's strategy to support quality research.
5. Publishing systems	• Assist consortia, researchers and editors to understand changes in publishing due to open access etc. through the preparation of advice and guidance notes, online seminars, and the inclusion of OA in e-resource and publishing training. • Engage institutional leaders to ensure they understand the meaning and implications of OA and to encourage modifications to institutional policy (e.g. promotions criteria) to reflect this.
6. Research policy links	• Consider the wider environment including the politics of policy-making and what needs to be in place to ensure that evidence literacy and other PERii inputs achieve results. Consider how to embed PERii's inputs e.g. evidence literacy into a wider approach to building the influence of evidence on policy e.g. through collaborative initiatives (possibly sector specific) and events; through curricula / training programmes of university courses targeting current or future policymakers and their staff; through processes targeting parliamentary research assistants and committee chair-people.
7. Advocacy	• Develop clear strategies and plans for advocacy work, including a calendar of key events where international/regional research/HE policymakers might be engaged, and ensure this is more appropriately resourced in staffing and budget. • Building on the RIN studies, develop maps of the research/HE policy environment at national level in partner countries. Rather than 'snapshots' fixed in time, consider these an evolving resource and seek consortia involvement where possible; consider extending this approach to include some element of 'political economy' analysis to identify opportunities for change. • Develop advocacy materials for consortia, focused on key messages and arguments, and build the capacity of consortia members to present these (written and orally).

8. Training and capacity development	• Building on EIPM experience, focus on pedagogy to ensure that training is effective, and work with academic development and other existing units within universities where appropriate. • Develop a cadre of skilled master trainers with access to a dedicated body of training materials, tools and advice. • Consider additional measures to ensure equity across capacity development approaches e.g. between strong and weak universities, between men and women. This might mean extra support for groups with greater obstacles and methodologies to reach and build capacity of groups less easily accessible.
9. Sustainability	• Work with consortia to explore alternate funding streams on a country by country basis and as part of country road maps. • Reduce the burden on key people by encouraging consortia to share PERii coordinating duties across teams or working groups. Provide central INASP support specifically to assist consortia development and promotion to expand funding base. • Ensure sustained follow up to activities to embed change.
10. Management and resourcing	• Develop management systems to ensure continuity in key roles and responsibilities in INASP including cover for any extended absences. • Include a clearer definition of the roles and responsibilities within the organisation.

Further information

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The full evaluation report and accompanying appendices is available from:
http://bit.ly/RQF2PQ