

Evaluating Development Aid

Issues, Problems and Solutions

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IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre (Ottawa)
IDS	Institute for Development Studies (University of Sussex)
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ILO	International Labour Office
JU	Joint Inspection Unit
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
M & E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Development
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OED	Operations Evaluation Department (World Bank)
PCR	Project Completion Report
PEC	Projects and Evaluation Committee
PIMS	Policy Information Marker System
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
R & D	Research and Development
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SIDA (now Sida)	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TC	Technical Cooperation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation
WID	Women in Development
ZOPP	Zielorientierte Projekt-planung (Objectives-oriented Planning)

Foreword

In development aid, as in other domains of development, we are living in an era of self-critical reflection and of rapid methodological change. In the evaluation of development aid, the rate of innovation and change has been fast and seems to be accelerating. This presents challenges which are personal, professional and institutional. At the personal level, and depending on their positions and orientations, those professionally engaged in the field find themselves variously left behind, bewildered, threatened or exhilarated. For all of them this book has something to offer.

For those who feel left behind, here is a summation of much of the state-of-the-art at the end of the twentieth century. The historical section outlines where we have come from. The remainder of the book summarises and synthesises where we are now, including aspects and approaches which have only recently come into prominence.

For those who are bewildered, this magisterial review will be a helpful guide. For it covers the field with comprehensive authority. It presents and examines a whole range of methods and methodologies related directly or indirectly to evaluation. A selection of these can illustrate this. In alphabetical order, they include: automated data bases, baselines, cost benefit analysis, fourth generation evaluation, impact analyses, logical frameworks, participatory monitoring and evaluation, peer group review, policy-level evaluation, PRA, problem trees, project cycle management, qualitative and quantitative evaluation, rating and scoring systems, stakeholder analysis, evaluating sustainability and ZOPP. It also covers applications in a variety of contexts such as governance, NGOs, organisations and organisational dynamics, policy, poverty alleviation, programme aid, R & D projects, sector aid, small countries, structural adjustment and technical cooperation.

For those who feel threatened, here is a balanced presentation of where we have come from and where we are. All development professionals

have been trained into certain mindsets and methods. When these are challenged, it can be natural to react defensively. I have done this myself. Thirty years ago we were struggling with formal positivist evaluations. Like others I thought we could learn from baseline questionnaire surveys, with controls, followed by later similar surveys. I applied for funding for an impact evaluation of the Zaina water scheme in Kenya. This was to use a questionnaire survey. The results were to be compared with an earlier baseline study. When funding was refused because any 'findings' would be worthless, I was hurt and angry, and felt humiliated. My professional competence had been questioned. I was not willing to learn and change. Yet I came later to see that the proposed approach was fundamentally flawed, with many problems of comparability, unknown causal linkages and magnitudes, multiple causality, and the counterfactual, not to mention the costs and shortcomings of questionnaires and their analysis. What I should have done, and what I commend to myself and others now, is to accept and welcome critical debate, to enjoy change, and to embrace new ways of doing things as a normal and positive condition.

For others today who may feel similarly affronted when faced with, say, critiques of the logical framework and proposals for participatory monitoring and evaluation, there is comfort and inspiration in Basil Cracknell's own example. As an evaluation professional with long experience in a donor agency, he has himself lived and worked through the phases and fashions for evaluation which he describes. He has been part of the process of learning and change. He has been able and willing to adopt and adapt what has seemed good in what was new. As he stresses, the way forward is not rigid adherence to any one doctrine or methodology, but openness to diversity, innovation and change.

So this book can be read as an invitation to all who feel left behind, bewildered or threatened to join the growing band of those who find the current creative pluralism exhilarating. Some of the older approaches and methods seemed to promise a security and certainty which with hindsight we can see was hollow. We can now mingle, modify and replace them in a manner which is eclectic, flexible and adaptive. There is no methodological monoculture. There is no one solution. But there are recommended approaches and attitudes—self-critical awareness, inventiveness, learning from errors and successes alike, welcoming and managing change, and freely sharing information.

So the frontiers and challenges now are many. Above all they are to get it right about what has happened, and to make a difference.

On getting it right, we can now see that the old-style two or three week mission sent from a donor organisation to evaluate people-centred projects or programmes is deeply flawed. However well-intentioned and hard-working they are, outside evaluators are trapped in an epistemological cocoon. Their vision is blurred and bent. What is perceived and reported cannot reflect accurately the complex and diverse realities of people and institutions. Many conditions and interests combine to select and distort what is said, shown, and seen. In consequence, evaluation reports based on brief missions regularly mislead.

On making a difference, as Basil Cracknell points out, feedback is the Achilles' heel of evaluation. How, where and between whom it takes place are critical. The implications for process and reporting of his view that 'an ounce of face-to-face dialogue is worth a pound of automated data' are little short of revolutionary. They have yet to be worked through into common practice. Process and ownership do indeed seem to be key. So we can ask not just what methods should be used, but

- Who evaluates?
- Who analyses?
- Whose evaluation is it?
- Who feeds back to whom, where and how?
- Who gains experience and learns, and where and how?
- Who is empowered?
- Who changes?
- Who gains?

More and more we are learning that the answers can and should be 'poorer and local people' as well as or even instead of outside evaluators.

So it is that this book points to participatory monitoring and evaluation by local people as the major frontier. Evidence is accumulating that it has a huge potential both for empowering local and poor people and for improving aid. Again and again, participatory evaluations by local people are revealing a quality of insight and information inaccessible by other means. Moreover, such evaluations can have an authority and credibility that are otherwise inaccessible.

For participatory monitoring and evaluation to become widespread requires reversals and reorientations. These include shifts—of role from evaluator to facilitator, of style from judgement to learning, of mode from extractive to empowering, and of focus from one-off report to on-going

process. Accountability tilts in its balance from upwards to donors to more downwards to poor local people.

The prize to be claimed is projects and programmes which are better for local people, especially the poorer. To achieve that prize demands vision, courage and commitment on the part of evaluators. Many of them will have to struggle against the personal, professional and institutional inertia to be found in donor agencies, NGOs and governments. But those who see the need for continuous learning and change should not despair. Their allies are growing in number and influence. And they have authoritative support in this book.

Basil Cracknell tells us that we are at a crossroads. The territory ahead is uncharted. If we are serious about poverty, we have to explore the diverse paths towards which he points us. For those setting out to evaluate development aid in the twenty-first century, he has done a signal service. For he has provided a comprehensive and forward-looking reference point and perspective based on personal experience. To this book, future evaluators and facilitators of evaluation will be able to turn for practical enlightenment and for an understanding of the state-of-the-art at the turn of the century. Above all, they will be able to read in it a challenge to be bold, creative and courageous, as the author has been, in finding better ways of making a difference.

Robert Chambers

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