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A 'SOUTH EVALUATION' OF A NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT-RELATED ORGANIZATION

The RORG Evaluation 2002 (Norway)

Dr. Stiaan van der Merwe
RORG 2002 Evaluation Project Coordinator
South Africa

INTRODUCTION

In essence this 'south evaluation' of the RORG 2002 evaluation represents an external stakeholder evaluation of organisations. As such it is an evaluation by a minute symbolic sample of the primary stakeholders of development work, to whom such opportunity and option has hitherto been denied.

It is assumed that this presentation should focus on the processes of the RORG evaluation, perspectives that emerged and lessons learnt. The paper therefore:

- Presents an outline of the RORG evaluation process in telling the story of the project.
- Aims to illustrate that an evaluation from and led by 'the South' of a northern development organisation will and must of necessity differ qualitatively from a similar or the same evaluation if conducted from 'the North' as a normal external evaluation and even as an external stakeholder evaluation.
- Highlights an array of benefits, challenges and pitfalls faced by both the organizations willing to subject themselves to such an evaluation process ('the evaluated') as well as those from 'the South' engaged in ('the evaluators') in this type of evaluation.
- Points out that such challenges and benefits could add new and different dimensions to the normal, generic package of challenges faced and benefits accrued to organisations through organizational evaluation in general and of development organizations in particular.
- Argues that in view of the experiences and lessons emerging from the RORG 2002 evaluation it is argued that this kind of approach and process should become a fixture in the organisational life of northern development organisations as a matter that is long overdue.

Given the fact that no substantial body of experience exist on a south evaluation of a northern development organisation, no templates for future efforts along this line are

offered neither should it be offered at this point in time. It is merely hoped that the story of the RORG 2002 evaluation provide adequate impetus for other organisations to move in the same or in a similar direction and to learn from mistakes, failures and positive results.

BACKGROUND

RORG is a network of +/- 30 civil society organizations who receive funding from the Norwegian Government's development agency, NORAD to do Development Education in Norway on development issues and generally on matters relating to North:South relations. Members include research institutes, umbrella organizations or networks (co-ordinating and facilitating work related to women and gender issues, youth, children, disabled people, etc.), religious / church networks, the labour movement, campaigns, some political parties, NGOs working in the South and with partners in the South. Membership of RORG is voluntary but members should hold funding framework agreements with NORAD.

The overall purpose of the RORG as a network is to enhance the Development Education work by its members.

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) decides on policy for the organisation, admits new members and elects a Steering Committee. The Steering Committee exercise oversight functions in the interim period between AGMs. A Secretariat consisting of a Coordinator takes care of the day-to-day functioning of the organisation and is accountable to the Steering Committee and the AGM.

The amount and extent of the Development Education work done by and in members organisation vary in the sense that some organisations are only doing Development Education in terms of annual campaigns and/or research work and research products, others have a department with dedicated staff to do Development Education in the organisations, for others the Development Education function is either a part time position of one person or part of other responsibilities in an organisation. Other difference in terms of target groups, ideological and political differences, organisational cultures etc. both enrich and complicate the composition of the organisation and the work being done.

The means for doing Development Education include research publications, magazines, pamphlets, posters, policy interventions, public meetings, courses in formal and informal education, public awareness campaigns, exposure trips to the South, exchange programmes between Norway and persons/organisations from the South also visits of persons from the South to Norway etc. The topics and foci of activities and products differ from organisation to organisation and 'as needs may determine'.

Given the fact that RORG deals with North:South issues and wishes to promote as far as possible 'an authentic voice of the South' in Norway, it decided in 2001 to subject itself to an evaluation from 'the South'.

At the time there was no clarity as to what such a process would entail, how it will be managed, what the outcomes would be, how the member organizations will ultimately respond to outcomes, who to be approached for such an evaluation, etc. The only certainty was that the organization wanted to embark on a process of being evaluated from 'the South' and would like to gain the following from the process.

- An evaluation on the efficacy of Development Education in Norway by the RORG network as viewed from 'the South', with a view to assist the both RORG as a development or development-related organisation/institution and the members of RORG to improve their future endeavours both qualitatively and quantitatively.
- The usefulness of the Millennium Development Goals for Development Education in Norway as viewed from 'the South'. The choice of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was motivated by the fact that this framework of issues and implementation goals will affect development policy and financing for the foreseeable future and as such provides a concrete and practical focus for the evaluation.

THE STORY OF THE RORG 2002 EVALUATION

Organisational evaluation is not new in 'the North', though not necessarily universally utilised in development organisations. The RORG itself was evaluated in 1998 with a focus on organisational efficacy and funding processes. As indicated above the purpose and modality of evaluation changed for this project. By all accounts and to RORG's own surprise, the decision to be evaluated from the South turned out to represent a small yet unique development in organizational evaluation in 'the North' in general and in development organisations in particular. Furthermore, this approach and project, as initiated by a development-related organisation in 'the North' seems either rare or non-existent at least in 'the universe' of Development Education or Global Education in Europe.

BASIC PERSPECTIVES

Three themes emerged as tools to present and interpret the RORG NETWORK 2002 Evaluation. These also formed the glue which held an uncertain, fragile and sensitive and potentially explosive process together, keeping it going and assisting it to register progress also regarding potential follow-up beyond the evaluation process.

The themes are:

- *The wisdom of taking a long shot at goal.*

The process was and remains a huge risk on many fronts in particular being, what seems to be, a first of its kind. There were and are risks and uncertainties for both 'the evaluators' and 'the evaluated' particularly in absence of 'templates' or 'best practices' or certainty whether was a good thing or even the right thing to do. As such it was neither regulation shot nor a calculated risk. The wisdom of this shot at goal can only be determined well after the process has been completed. The management of this process therefore had its own challenges and dynamics.

- *The process is the purpose*

The management of this process has been an exercise in North:South relations and cooperation, other than the usual northern-dominated relations in

development work. Furthermore the process also held lessons and perspectives on substance issues involved in North:South relations with particular reference to development work.

As a result the process developed in being something else than merely a design and tool aimed at facilitating aims and meeting desired outcomes. The process became an 'active player' a 'teacher' for South and North on issues of substance and of process beyond planned or desired outcomes. The recognition of the process also being a subject rather than a mere object to manage enriched the project process and posed its own managerial challenges transcending the usual project management procedures.

- *The end is the beginning*

The project has progressed along a trajectory whereby the outcomes of the evaluation process signalled in many ways a new or different beginning for RORG as a network and for member organisations. In this way the reporting document should be an element of and a tool towards a larger organic process and momentum which could bring new and different challenges and benefits to the organisation and the work being done by members. The focus on organic process rather than sterile paper has been most rewarding.

THE COMPONENTS AND MANAGEMENT OF THE PROCESS

The basic story of the RORG 2002 evaluation from the South is probably best told in terms of presenting the story of the management and progress of the process. These elements are of importance to evaluators in terms of 'professional technicalities' and hopefully satisfy professional curiosity in this particular story. As such the significance of presenting particular elements of the story does not have to be explained or motivated. Advice on what may have been important or significant to include will be welcomed.

Though an initial process layout was designed the overall process changed and the following phases or components emerged.

Developing mandate, terms of reference and management structures

The basic elements of this basic phase of the project were:

- Mandates and terms of reference
 - During the 2001 AGM the RORG network decided on own initiative to be evaluated from 'the South'.
 - A mandate was given to the Steering Committee to design and facilitate the process.
 - In 2002 the Steering Committee appointed a project coordinator (from South Africa) on a consultancy basis.

- Terms of reference as well as outlines for contractual obligations were developed in a bilateral and a protracted process of mutual consultation.
- The 2002 AGM endorsed the terms of reference and mandated the Steering Committee to finalise a contract.
- The process remained accountable to the RORG Steering Committee in terms of timeframes and financial parameters as the legal 'owner' of the project. However the Steering Committee provided a clear commitment not to interfere in the substance and process matters of the project and to maintain the independence and integrity of the project as an 'outside evaluation' from 'the South'.
- A Project Reference Group was established with the following composition, roles and responsibilities.
 - The consultant as the project coordinator and doing the field work.

Note: it will probably be in everybody's interest if the fieldwork for evaluation of this nature will be conducted by more than one person. It is difficult to handle impressions, experiences and perspectives from a foreign context whilst not being able to share it on professional and personal level with someone from outside the context within which the evaluation is taking place.. The need for adequate costing becomes relevant here as well.

- In addition to the consultant being from 'the South' (South Africa) two additional persons agreed to cooperate and acting as resource persons to the Project Reference Group from 'the South'. These were: Ms. Naty Bernardino from the Philippines and Dr. Alejandro Bendaña from Nicaragua.
- The RORG Coordinator, Mr. Arnfinn Nygaard, was ex officio member of the Project Reference Group.
- The communication in the Project Reference Group sometimes took place with exclusion of the RORG coordinator where matters 'internal' to 'the South' participants were discussed. This was agreed to as an acceptable practice in the context of developing and maintaining trust between the participants from 'the South' and the RORG network and its officials.
- A general agreement existed between RORG and the project that the project will be approached and managed in a manner whereby unexpected eventualities or changes will be dealt with in a spirit of mutual trust and openness and that mutual trust and openness will be nurtured.

Initial internal processes in the RORG network

These processes included:

- Responding to a questionnaire developed by 'the South' participants of the Project Reference Group (April/May 2002)
- Processing responses to the questionnaire (May/June 2002)

- Visitation to organisations for more in-depth discussion of responses (June 2002)
- Round table interaction of South participants of the Project Reference Group with RORG member organisations on the responses to the questionnaire, the discussions with individual organisations, initial observations and findings. (June 2002)
- A work-in-progress report. (August 2002)

Opinions and perspectives from 'the South'

Attempts to get input from 'the South' with regards to opinions and perspectives from 'the South' on Development Education in the North/Norway and the MDGs included:

- General discussion amongst south participants of the Project Reference Group (throughout process);
- General discussions with individuals and a side-event at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2002);
- Questionnaire to targeted organisations and individuals (October-November 2002)
- Participation in the Europe-Wide Congress on Global Education organised by the North-South Centre (Maastricht, the Netherlands, November 2002,);
- Assessing a selection of documents from 'the South';
- Attending the World Social Forum (Porto Alegre, Brazil, February 2003).

Consolidation and strategic developments

This final phase of the project aimed at consolidating in particular the work done during the two latter phases and included:

- Visiting members of the network in discussing and developing strategic thinking, planning and management for the RORG network and for individual organisations and ultimately to ensure broad based buy-in for the process. Such process was a specific request from the RORG representatives at the June round table discussion. Additional funding had to be raised for this work. (October/ November 2002);
- Developing a draft of a final report (December 2002);
- A two day seminar with member organisations on the report and related issues with particular focus on the way forward(February 2003);
- Presenting a final report to be tabled at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting of RORG (March 2003). This report will include advice, perspectives and suggested recommendations provided by members of the PRG, the RORG

members and in particular from the joint seminar. The content of the document remains the prerogative of the co-ordinator

OBSERVATIONS AND LESSONS

As indicated, each of the elements and phases of the process provided valuable insights and lessons in their own right in relation to a south evaluation of this organisation. Time and space does not allow for such detailed discussion.

The fact that this type of evaluation was conducted in uncharted waters has to be acknowledged and reaffirmed as the context within which the following comments are made.

The findings of the evaluation report regarding substance and the detail of organisational dynamics will be presented in the final report to the RORG and is not regarded as relevant for this occasion since the focus of the conference is on the practice of evaluation and not on the content of this particular case. Substance issues will however be addressed in as far as it impacted on the nature and progress of the project and in relation to observations made and lessons learnt.

The following is a selection of insights and lessons which would hopefully would be informative, prompt further reflection and provide sufficient support background and support to the closing remarks.

MANAGEMENT

Substance and process

It is to be expected that differences in opinion and approach may exist between the evaluated and evaluators in an external stakeholder evaluation, even more of that in a South to North stakeholder evaluation of a development organisation. Mutual suspicion should also be factored in.

In the case of the RORG evaluation the situation was not only different it was more complex.

The core business of the organisation, i.e. Development Education, turned out to be rather uncertain in the mind of the organisation. Development Education in 'the North' in general and Norway in particular was also a practice to which the participants from 'the South' were not only totally unfamiliar with but also fundamentally suspicious about. The decision to involve 'the South' in an evaluation of the organisation was also treated with a fair amount of suspicion.

How could the efficacy of the core business of an organisation be evaluated under such conditions?

In mitigation of the RORG network and the PRG the following need to be noted.

- A language gap existed. Most organisations conduct their Development Education work in Norwegian. Literally translated, the two terms currently used by the member organisations on the one hand refer to '*information work*' and on the other to '*people's education*' or '*people's enlightenment*' regarding

North/South issues and development work in 'the South'. The introduction of the English term '*Development Education*' was new to most organisations and their representatives.

- Uncertainty and lack of clarity in the use of the term *Development Education* and the practice thereof exist in other organisations and networks outside Norway in Europe as well.
- The involvement of actors from the South beyond the PRG indicated not surprisingly total ignorance about and suspicion about Development Education in the North.

The lack of conceptual clarity from both the evaluators and the evaluated in addition to fundamental suspicion on the side of the evaluation group from 'the South' had a major, even defining, impact on the both the nature and the pace of progress of the evaluation process. It remained a constant sticking point and stumbling block in discussions on the work of the RORG members as well as on the nature and functioning of the organisation. It should then also not be surprising that the level and intensity of basic suspicion by the evaluator and PRG increased. The evaluation process had to be managed in such a manner that clarity on and trust in the core business had to be developed. At the same time acceptable / manageable levels of mutual trust between the organisation and the evaluators had to be established and maintained.

On the other hand this situation forced and guided the process to focus on fundamental qualitative issues and questions from 'the South' deemed to be relevant to 'the South' and provided a natural space for these to enter the project. In this way the process was deepened and enriched by starting to address in more detail and committing more and quality time to address very basic questions including conceptual clarity on the core business, mission, vision, management, mandates, pedagogy, involvement and presence of 'the South' in the organisational life of RORG as a network and in the life and work of the member organisations.

The Secretariat, Steering Committee and most members of the organisation showed great courage and commitment in acknowledging this difficulty and used the evaluation process as an opportunity to establish processes whereby greater clarity on the core business of Development Education could be developed.

It was often difficult to distinguish between change management and organisational evaluation. Nevertheless when this 'lemon' was thrown at us all involved eventually made 'lemonade' thereof. These basic questions and issues effectively became the benchmarks for evaluating the efficacy of Development Education at this point in time. The process was a great teacher.

Developing mandates and terms of reference

The parameters for the evaluation were by and large set by the contracting organisation.

This is certainly normal practice in most evaluation processes. With hindsight, much more discussion and consultation needed to take place with relevant stakeholders beyond the party contracted to do the evaluation but not excluding the latter.

It should be noted that an evaluation of a northern development organisation from 'the South' implies vested interest for and from 'the South'. The area first and foremost area in which these are being played out is in connection to fundamental perspectives on the evaluation process (e.g. mandates and terms of reference) and issues related to the core business of the organisation.

The initial phase of the project therefore requires adequate attention and thorough discussion and consultation. It should be remembered that there are reasons why there is a distinction between 'the North' and 'the South'. It is the responsibility of evaluators from 'the South' to remind the organisation of this reality and to act in a manner that does not compromise or obscure this reality.

The openness towards change, flexibility in management and a healthy degree of mutual trust carried this particular project beyond difficulties in the project design and management.

It could have turned out differently. The RORG secretariat and Steering Committee acted in an exemplary manner under the circumstances.

Oversight and independence

The integrity of a 'south evaluation' of a northern development institution will largely be determined by the extent of independence of the evaluation process.

The RORG network, its Steering Committee and secretariat 'surrendered' control and interference in the evaluation project beyond reasonable and agreed processes of project governance. Though the Development Education work is owned by the RORGs and the organisation legally owns the evaluation process, it was acknowledged that symbolically and 'politically' (i.e. in terms of North:South politics) the project is a Southern project and should be seen and respected as such. The officials 'stepped back' and played very useful and trustworthy facilitating role in the process.

Once again, the position taken by RORG secretariat and Steering Group is exemplary. Clearly, it was never easy for them.

Funding and finance

Finance should not compromise the 'independence' of contractors doing a south evaluation of a northern development organisation. It is generally easy to find (and buy!) contractors who would feel and act in a submissive and uncritical manner to the organisation being evaluated. In such a case, the overall integrity of such a process will inevitably be flawed and compromised and will result in nothing less than a public relations exercise. It will also tarnish and compromise the idea of a South evaluation.

Finance and funding is well acknowledged as the most obvious power tool from 'the North' towards 'the South'. It is imperative that evaluators of 'the South' also display sensitivity to this dynamic and not obscure the power relations represented by financial considerations in the project. Ideally leadership in the evaluation process should not come from the ranks of funding or project partners of the organisation to be evaluated. Also costing for the project should ideally be a joint undertaking by the organisation and the contractor.

Openness and mutual trust related to financial matters must be established right from the start and nurtured throughout the process. In the case of RORG, financial management of the project was left in the hands of the contractor.

The contractor had no organisational interest, e.g. being a project partner or from a partner organisation receiving funding from the RORG Network.

Preparation, orientation, participation and buy-in

It is commonly understood that participatory processes aimed at generating at least internal stakeholder buy-in towards an evaluation process should inform and guide the processes.

Participatory evaluation is time consuming to the extent that it could create its own timeframes and eventualities beyond original project planning and costing. Preparing for and investing in *pleasant and unpleasant surprises* is of utmost importance. These twists and turns may determine the ultimate value of the evaluation. Such twists and turns are to be expected not only where individuals or a team ordinarily interact with an organisation during an evaluation. It should be remembered that an evaluation of a northern development organisation from 'the South' also means that different worlds and horizons of North and South meet in a context and dynamic that is, as yet, still unknown and unfamiliar to 'both sides'. 'The South' is allowed into the backroom and backyard of a northern development organisation and the latter allows for such an encounter beyond the usual donor:recipient power relations.

Extensive and intensive orientation and preparation of those involved in an evaluation from 'the South' is required plus thorough processes to ensure commitment and full participation by the relevant stakeholders of the organisation becomes more than a generic part of an evaluation process of this nature. Such groundwork is necessary, whilst maintaining an overall management style of openness towards unforeseen developments.

In the case of the RORG evaluation, the issues related to strategic thinking, planning and management emerged spontaneously as a matter that required priority and additional attention prior to the finalisation of the final report. Additional work was undertaken to ensure that the project develops adequate quality of momentum and buy-in from within the organisation. In this case additional attention and funding was committed to such a process by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which made it possible for this work to ensue.

As things stand it looks as if this investment resulted in generating a suitable and enabling environment within which the final evaluation report could become an organic part of an existing process rather than facing the possibility whereby it becomes yet another expensive piece of paperwork with marginal effect if any. It could become a tool for change rather than a document for filing.

Generic as this ideal of effective change through organisational evaluation may seem to be, it needs to be remembered that changes within and changes of northern development organisations are also in the subjective and material interest of 'the South'.

Painful and uncomfortable as it might have been a substantial number of RORG members, the Steering Committee and the Secretariat showed courage and commitment

by spontaneously and proactively starting to address fundamental issues raised during the evaluation processes. Such developments might have been hoped for but could not have been foreseen or calculated as a definitive outcome at the start of the process. The investment into internal stakeholder participation (in this case mainly members) and buy-in and ensuring substantial commitment to the issues at hand certainly are playing themselves out in these positive developments.

The processes to involve external stakeholders from the South did not yield any success. Financial constraints did not assist in dreaming much bigger than what was done. It is hoped that through processes that emerged from the Maastricht conference where a small number of persons from the South committed themselves to show interest and involvement in Global Education in Europe will enable better and bigger possibilities for external stakeholder involvement in the future.

THE PROJECT RATIONALE: AN EFFECTIVE EXERCISE IN REVERSING TRADITIONAL NORTH:SOUTH RELATIONS

The rationale for an external South evaluation of this northern development-related organisation may have been stated from the start. However, as the process progressed the rationale for conducting this project probably only emerged more clearly towards the end and even may even be different from earlier intentions and expectations. This was due to the newness of the project and the very nature of the project.

A major peculiarity of a south evaluation of a northern development institution, at this point in time, is the reversing of roles in traditional North:South relations. As such the process became both a learning process on external stakeholder evaluation of a northern development-related organisation as well as a learning curve in overall North:South organisational or institutional cooperation.

By the look of things the following surfaced for the RORG during the evaluation processes:

- Norwegian organisations experienced what it means to be looked at from the context within which many organisations work and where they are used to be ‘in control’ – ‘the South’.
- Familiar questions related to fundamental issues such as a critical self-understanding and self-analysis, vision, mission, mandate, management, were raised not only from outside the organisation but from an angle and context, i.e. from ‘the South’, with a quality of importance to it which cannot (and dare not) be ignored.
- The effects of raising these questions are that the work done by RORG as an organisation and the members will have to be re-imagined. ‘The South’ was seen as a positive change agent for this organisation and its members.
- An evaluation from ‘the South’ highlighted the importance of providing a permanent presence of ‘the South’ in the ‘organisational mind and life’ of northern development organisations. Organisations in ‘the South’ always have to take ‘the North’ or ‘northern partners’ into consideration in almost every aspect of organisational life and management. In some cases ‘partners’ demand such a presence by virtue of funding provided. Processes have been agreed upon in RORG to ensure that practical effect is given to this principle.

- If true partnership has to develop, albeit in the context of unequal power relations, the question is: What could and should ‘the South’ do for you and your organisation other than being a grateful recipient of assistance? A few (lateral?) questions relating to North:South organisational cooperation surfaced, and include the following:
 - Is ‘the South’ (mostly project partners) adequately involved in all phases and aspects of strategic management of your core business including conceptualisation, planning, priority setting, costing, all aspects of operationalisation or implementation, management of strategic changes, evaluation, reporting (accountability), etc.?
 - How can you be accountable to ‘the South’ if the latter does not co-own your project? Also, why should it co-own your project?
 - Is ‘the South’ involved in developing and providing mandates to act ‘on behalf of’ or ‘in the interest of the South’ in Norway/‘the North’
 - Is consultation with ‘the South’ broad enough and does it go beyond specific and carefully selected project partners?
 - Are ‘partners’ in ‘the South’ empowered to raise critical questions without fear of reprisal? What values, policies, procedures and other mechanisms exist to ensure such an engagement?
 - How can actors (organisations, networks, individuals) in ‘the South’ and in particular project partners become part of your capacity to improve the efficacy of your work locally, in ‘the North’ and in ‘the South’?
 - Is it not necessary for partners in ‘the South’ to develop solidarity with you and the work you do and the cause or causes you pursue? How can it be done if you have not declared your struggle in your own context to change your context? What does solidarity with ‘the South’ mean if there is no reason from ‘the South’ to be in solidarity with you and your struggle in your context as well? Are the problems not related?
- In this context one question kept surfacing: Who ‘is ‘the South’”?

Questions and some initial responses related to this question are:

- *Who or what represent the ‘authentic voice of the South’ in a ‘South evaluation’ of a northern development institution?*

Nobody, including persons conducting a ‘south evaluation’ in ‘the North’, should assume to speak on behalf of neither are they mandated to represent ‘the South’ in all its complexities.

In the case of the RORG evaluation it was made abundantly clear that the individuals involved in this process do not represent ‘the South’. Symbolically they do ‘represent’ (i.e. come from) Asia, Africa and Latin America. Personally they have histories of personal, professional and broad involvement in the situation of and struggles in ‘the South’ and are able to articulate different positions in ‘the South’ whilst declaring own basic positions

on matters affecting and involving 'the South'. Such positions include a bias towards the interest of 'the South' and the way they see such interests, be that political, economic, cultural, morally, ideological etc.

Notably, the second aspect of the RORG evaluation process, whereby attempts were made to solicit opinions from 'the South' on Development Education, the Millennium Development Goals etc. played a significant part to indicate that the questions and thinking presented by the southern evaluators do not merely represent individual positions and biases of those involved in the process.

In addressing this question northern development organisations will have to declare and clarify their extent of involvement in 'the South' to indicate their ability to critically discern 'the voices from the South'.

- *Can an opinion or evaluation from 'the South' demand uncritical acceptance from an organisation in 'the North'?*

The interactions on this question posed an obvious and unequivocal 'No!'

It was agreed that it will be extremely arrogant from any person or group to demand uncritical acceptance of or engagement with 'the South'. Such a position will replicate the arrogance more often than not displayed towards 'the South' by actors from 'the North'.

However the discourse on the '*moral divide*' between the global North and the global South with particular reference to the inequities between the two and global injustices perpetrated towards 'the South' i.a. by means of development aid and structural political and economic violence (including recent developments related to militarised global politics and economic activity) puts a different dimension to the discussion. When terms such as '*global apartheid*', '*neo-colonialism*', '*neo-imperialism*', '*global Nazism*' become relevant in discussions of North South issues (and they are relevant), then fundamental and irreconcilably divisive choices of solidarity become eminent with all the political, economic, moral and other repercussions attached. Even in such cases of solidarity open critical discourse has to take place and need to be well managed.

The basic question in this regard to development organisations in 'the North' is: from which position and in whose interests are critical discussions with the South conducted?

- *To whom is 'the North' accountable to in 'the South'?*

This very practical question has no right answer and probably will never have. In the end it is a matter of choice. Proper account should be given of what informed the choice including account of processes of consultation with actors in 'the South', relevant to the organisation and the issues at hand. Broad involvement in 'the South' beyond project partners must be demonstrated including proper engagement with critical voices in 'the South'. On the whole a principled, explicit and demonstrable commitment towards accountability to the majority of people on earth and the environment should

be a general guiding line prior to choosing or focussing on organisational accountability to partner organisations in the South.

CLOSING REMARKS

A South evaluation of a northern development organisation or institution has proved to be or turned out to be more than a purely technical, clinical and presumed 'objective' process. It demands asking and pursuing very difficult, messy and uncomfortable questions. It demands vigilance from participants from 'the South' to act in the interest of 'the South' and the northern development organisation involved. It requires vision and courage from the Northern organisation to subject itself to such a process and deal with outcomes in its own interest and that of 'the South'. The RORG network has shown that it is possible and that such a process, painful as it at some points may be, add value to and enrich the life and functioning of the organisation. It will materialise if the organisation takes primary ownership of the problems and its potential solutions.

The 'verdict' on the efficacy of Development Education by the RORG Network, at least during this round, was not driven by means of mainly quantitative data and predetermined templates of benchmarks. A time may come when such an emphasis and process may be possible and useful. However, within the context as indicated above, the fundamental qualitative issues which were raised (in terms of the assumed vested interest from 'the South' in Development Education in 'the North' and in Norway in particular as well as the ability and willingness to engage with fundamental and critical questions from 'the South') became the guidelines and thereby benchmarks for this evaluation. It seems that such basic qualitative issues will have to be addressed in evaluating northern development organisations during a first round of south evaluation at this point in time. Quantitative issues may have to assume a secondary and supportive position.

Organisational cooperation in participating in an evaluation should neither be seen as nor used as upfront legitimization of a northern development organisation, its policies and practices. Treat the evaluation process with care and allow it to become and fulfil its own purpose of which both creative change and constructive pain are essential parts of.

Finally, whilst many issues are still in a process of discussion, regular evaluation of northern development organisations by stakeholders in 'the South' is long overdue. It should become common practice in the life and management of these organisations. The RORG network has taken it upon itself to ensure that such a procedure becomes a fixture in its organisational life and work. It can be done. ■