



**Collaboration for Development Evaluation:  
“IDEAS” Shaping a New Global Effort**

*Presented by*

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## **Introduction**

Development cooperation generally, and evaluation in particular are coming under considerable stress. With increased competition for public resources, in developed and developing countries alike, the parties to development cooperation are increasingly asked for evidence of their results, and challenged by increasing pressures for more domestic demands and impacts of development investments. The functions of measurement, Monitoring and Evaluation are called to the task. Demonstrating progress against the Millennium Development Goals, providing evidence of diminishing poverty and addressing challenges of sustainable development have become vital in maintaining support and resources for development assistance.

This paper is a short review of the pressures that are creating demand for new paradigms and partnerships for development evaluation, and the response to this challenge by IDEAS. The paper contains:

- An examination of some of the traditional pretexts for evaluation, driven by supply of aid and the demand for accountability;
- A description of the increasing efforts towards achieving sustainable development and poverty reduction, through responsive and accountable governance.
- An outline of some of the principles which are inspiring a re-thinking of development evaluation; and,
- A review of the prospects of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) as an emerging global forum for creating synergies among diverse evaluation communities.

## **The Tradition of Evaluation of Development**

From the donor perspective, aid is taxpayers' money spent outside national borders, often through use of third party intermediaries over which little formal control can be exercised<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, there remains a legacy of some opacity surrounding aid objectives. Albeit to a lesser degree than during the post-colonial and Cold War era, a layer of unspoken donor motivations relating to maintenance of strategic alliances and commercial interests frequently still remains. With these characteristics, there is no wonder that there are particular concerns with accountability. But although there are unique demands for

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Niels Dabestain, "Evaluation Partnerships", pp 65-68, in K. Malik and C. Roth (Ed), Evaluation Capacity Development in Asia, Proceedings from the International Conference, Beijing, 1999, UNDP/UNCSTE/WBI.

accountability and of development effectiveness the very same characteristics make it harder to establish.

National public services are being subjected to new standards of governance and transparency. In Western countries, from the US to New Zealand, Scandinavia, UK and Germany, concerns with public sector results and performance permeate legislation and management practices. A host of new mechanisms, such as performance contracts, outsourcing and client charters, have been introduced. The jury is still out<sup>2</sup> on whether these initiatives ultimately lead to improved public service delivery or living standards. Nevertheless, we believe the underlying sentiments of orientation towards downstream results and clients responsiveness to be enduring and relevant to development management.

In developing countries, increasing indebtedness and the absence of real impacts on poverty reduction have increased the cynicism about aid, and in deed, development effectiveness, and called in serious question the value derived from expensive projects and programs. The jury to settle the mounting frustration with impact is the enterprise of Monitoring and Evaluation, which seeks to assess the process as well as the outcomes of development efforts.

### **Challenge of Development Evaluation**

The point of departure in this paper is a view of the evaluation function that emphasizes its role in the process of *creating or adding value* to country-led development results, and *building capacities of development partners and institutions to sustain the results*. In this context, the challenge of development evaluation is to facilitate effectiveness in pursuit of development policy goals, rather than mechanics simply of measurement - the meticulous, sometimes expensive enterprise of calculating quantities of indicators. Development Evaluation therefore is itself integral to capacity development -- the abilities and functions that stand between adopting development policy on the one hand and success of development efforts on the other. In the intervening period between policy formulation, their adoption and implementation, negotiated values and the improvement of the capacities to internalize proposed reforms becomes central features of development evaluation. In effect the entire enterprise of development evaluation is to “account for development” – its governance, as well as its impacts on poverty reduction and the environment in which people live.

### **Development Evaluation as “Accountability”**

The notion of development evaluation as accountability increasingly revolves around critical questions concerning what to account for, to whom and how.

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<sup>2</sup> On the New Zealand experience, see e.g. “Can the Kiwi economy fly?”, The Economist, 30 Nov 2000, or Alan Schick report for Public Service Commission, Wellington, 1998.

**What to Account for:** As the volume and diversity of development assistance and investments increase, so have the demands for assessing “development accountability” in the context of the investments made in ODA, by donors. The tradition of demands for accountability therefore focused initially on the “supply-side” of ODA. Yet the quantum of public investments in development generally, and in the reduction of poverty specifically, are shared by all developing countries. The focus in the last few years on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) as the basic framework for planning and allocating resources to development in most poor countries has spurred a tighter fiscal framework for mutual contributions to development. This mutual investment in time and money calls for more comprehensive perspectives on the scope of development accountability, and the specificity of “accounting for the value-added by development assistance”. In this discourse, a number of principles underpin the need for cooperation in development evaluation, and correspondingly how and to what it can be applied.

Five basic principles for cooperation in development evaluation are examined. These relate to:

- (a) Partnership in defining scope of development objectives to be evaluated;
- (b) Collaboration on what is to be measured or evaluated;
- (c) Cooperation on Methodology;
- (d) Consensus on Evaluation Outcomes and their Utilization; and,
- (e) Imperatives for Mutual Evaluation Capacity Development.

## **Principles of Cooperation in Development Evaluation**

**1. Partnership in Defining the Scope of Development Objectives & Evaluation:** In the global political economy of development cooperation, development evaluation is called to the task of demonstrating progress against the Millennium Development Goals - within a concurrent context of competing demands for public resources and widespread skepticism about effectiveness of ODA. The challenge has been to determine what to evaluate? Are we to focus attention on the all-encompassing realm of Governance – comprising public policies, public sector management and interfaces with civil society; direct attention to internally-generated development agenda of countries, such as PRSPs; or should the emphasis be on the development assistance regimes, which are intended to facilitate the attainment of these development visions and corresponding investments. *The object of development evaluation should relate to the overall development effort,*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Nagy Hanna has demonstrated that long-term perspectives for development have been far more instrumental in shaping socio-economic transformation, especially in South-East Asia, than ad-hoc

*conceived and orchestrated by developing countries themselves.* In the current discourse of IDEAS, the focal point of the organization is the needs of “Developing countries and countries in transition.”

**2. Collaboration on What to Measure:** The generic purpose of evaluation is to guide organizations towards success in achieving their objectives. Within a growing realm of globalization, this generic purpose is moderated by the challenges and opportunities provided by the development partnerships that accelerate the attainment of development objectives, on the one hand; and on the other could block the realization of development possibilities for some developing countries. Consequently, the central purpose of development evaluation is to ascertain *the value-added to the overall development effort of not just the development assistance regimes, but the systems, rules and regimes that govern global trade, investment and the environment.*<sup>4</sup>

**3. Cooperation on Methods:** Measuring results and outputs involves a cumbersome data collection and form-filling exercise commonly associated with generic M&E which, ultimately, establishes ex-post-facto that change occurred or did not. Yet, the challenge continues to be how the exercise of evaluation feeds back into decision-making - the way needs are identified, priorities set, goals and targets expressed, resources allocated, activities coordinated, performance appraised and incentives applied. Presently donor evaluation rules are inordinately shaped by the shorter-term demonstration of “value for money”. The techniques and technologies applied for M&E are therefore fabricated by donor country technicians, whose language, style and presentation are more consistent with capacities of their consuming institutions and publics, rather than those of the developing countries. These systems, techniques and requirements frequently undermine rather than promote the incipient and indigenous capacities that are necessary for success and sustainability of the process of enquiry and the corresponding results accruing from it. Instead of building on the foundation of domestic culture, institutional arrangements and decision-making processes, managers' attention is diverted to the disparate, discrete,

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strategies determined in large measure through externally-generated impetus, ranging from the Bretton Woods accords to the Washington Consensus and more recently, CDF and PRSPs. See Nagy Hanna, “Analytical and Advisory Services for Comprehensive and Participatory Development”, OED Working Paper Series, no. 12, Summer 2000, World Bank, Washington.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Picciotto has recently stressed that the global issues associated with development effectiveness should also be addressed. He noted that from the experience of the World Bank it is apparent that even under a reasonable policy environment, development problems persist. This points to the need to look at global policies, especially those of developed countries and their impact on developing countries, especially trade and migration. Quoted from comments made during roundtable session on Development Effectiveness Report, UNDP, Accra, January 2003.

meticulous, complex and sometimes-expensive enterprise of data collection and indicator calculation characterizing Traditional M&E. *Development Evaluation needs to evolve a methodology which ensures mutual capacity development, enhancing the quality of collaboration among practitioners, and providing dynamic feed-in to development decision-making generally and the utilization of development evaluation results in particular.* This approach is thus integral to the concept of capacity itself.

**4.Evaluation Outcomes:** For development cooperation evaluation may help guard against people doing the wrong things in terms of rules, but fails to guide towards making a difference on the ground. Evidence of development impact is scarce - anecdotal at best. Even more rare is evidence about fundamental changes in policies, approaches and resource allocation. Generic evaluation has not yet resulted in the falsification of the Washington Consensus for developing countries; there is little evidence that the current CDF and PRSP perspectives to development will be significantly altered in-situ by generic evaluation. *In re-thinking development evaluation, participatory processes will need to evolve that legitimize the scrutiny of plans, priorities, strategies and outcomes as an on-going exercise rather than one to be measured at the end. Equally, juxtaposing the global perspectives underpinning the “new paradigms” of development, in particular PRSPs, against the local realities they are registering, is an essential task fostered onto the development evaluation agenda.*

**5.Mutual Evaluation Capacity Development:** The building of institutional, organization and human resource capacities for development is a central pre-occupation of many development cooperation processes. As the objectives, methods, and outcomes of development evaluation are becoming shared processes, so will need to be the processes of evaluation capacity development. Professionals in development evaluation from developed countries possess a unique combination of methods of scientific inquiry and data processing that are useful for building the capacity of professionals from developing countries and transition economies. Equally, the latter possess deep cultural, scientific and historic perspectives about complex human societies and development perspectives that offer variety in the methods of development evaluation. Mutual evaluation capacity development underscores the need for (a) exchange visits; (b) collaborative research activities; (c) joint evaluations; and (d) institutional partnerships between evaluation centers on the basis of North-South and South-South cooperation.

## **IDEAS to Shape Cooperation**

In translating the above principles into organizational form, the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) was established as a global forum of development evaluators, whose primary purpose is to:

“To further advance the practice of development evaluation by refining methodologies, strengthening capacity, expanding ownership, and increasing effective use of evaluation for enhancing individual and institutional capabilities, particularly by learning from developing countries and transition economies.”

Through its evolving work program, IDEAS presents an opportunity for building a constituency of development evaluation practice around a number of strategic streams. These include:

- Deepening Development Evaluation
- Governance and accountability
- Poverty and Environment Nexus

**In Deepening Development Evaluation** as a practice, IDEAS seeks to engage in theoretical inquiry about concepts and competing perspectives; promote the development of synergies between international and local practices; and support collaborative engagements and partnerships in development evaluation capacity development. Particular emphasis is placed here on the experiences of developing countries and economies in transition, using these experiences to enrich the evolution of new paradigms for evaluation methods and practices.

**Promoting responsive and Accountable Governance** has always been a long-term goal of development; yet assessing the progress towards this goal has in itself been elusive. In this area, IDEAS offers a long-term commitment to exploring:

- (a)Public Policies underpinning sustainable development efforts;
- (b)Public Sector Management efforts – institutional change, administrative reforms, decentralization;
- (c)Interfaces with civil society and the private sector – representation, participation, social and public accountability;
- (d)Parliamentary democracy -- public accountability, oversight for budgets, expenditures.

**Under its Poverty and Environmental Evaluation**, IDEAS seeks to examine the long-term impacts of new paradigms for development and poverty reduction, notably the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), on the environment; and builds coalitions and methods for sustained engagement in evaluation of MDGs.

Through knowledge-sharing, networking and capacity building issues of poverty will be examined from their global perspectives to local realities and in particular how these interface with increasing global and local concerns about environmental renewal. Renewable natural resources, such as water supply and energy are under considerable stress, as livelihood needs of the poorest sections of society increases. Finding a balance between environmental renewal and sustainable livelihoods requires the promotion of new methods of evaluation that appropriately analyze these trade-offs, establishing a balance between human and environmental wellbeing.

## **Conclusion**

Challenged by this vision, a civil society of development evaluators has emerged to not only demand evaluation and accountability, but work towards building a constituency of practice. Whether as institutions, organizations or individuals, IDEAS is the forum where your identity is shaped by your commitment to one or a variety of issues contributing towards development evaluation.

In joining IDEAS, you share knowledge; acquire the opportunity to work collaboratively with colleagues from developed, developing and transition countries, through networking and mutual capacity building. Beyond this, you have the opportunity as well to initiate and lead an initiative, as the frontier of development evaluation expands to include you and your IDEA.

IDEAS has a broad membership designed to be inclusive, participatory in its programs and focused on the needs of developing countries and economies in transition. Details on how to become a member are available the brochure and other related material for you.

Turn your idea into our IDEAS.

### **About the Author**

Dr. Sulley Gariba is a policy analyst with over sixteen years experience in academic and policy research, institutional change, governance and development evaluation. He is the President of the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), an independent international organization of people and institutions committed to promoting the practice, research, teaching and institutionalization of evaluation for development effectiveness. He also serves on the Board of the Participatory Development Forum, a global non-governmental organization based in Canada and is actively engaged in the global network of participatory development practitioners.

Dr. Gariba is currently Executive Director of a Public Policy think-tank in Northern Ghana, the Institute for Policy Alternatives. The Institute is committed to practice-research engagement, using empirical experiences to interrogate the boundaries of development policy alternatives and deepening evaluation of these policies. He is also Associate Director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research of the University for Development Studies in Northern Ghana.