



ROOM DOCUMENT NO. 10

DAC WORKING PARTY ON AID EVALUATION

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

**Submitted jointly by
UNDP and the World Bank**

Agenda item 7

**33rd Meeting
22-23 November 2000**

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION ASSOCIATION

This note is intended to stimulate discussion and provoke thinking about ways of improving the quality of and capacity for evaluation internationally. The note sets out some preliminary ideas which, through a participatory and transparent process of discussion and debate, could be translated into a fully articulated proposal.

The Setting

A new development consensus has emerged focused on sustained poverty reduction driven by economic growth; the removal of social and structural constraints to economic and human development; reforms that are owned by those who must carry them out and an intent, especially in the public sector, to manage for results and measure for performance. In parallel, citizens in developing and developed countries alike expect more efficient, more accountable and more transparent government and public sector programmes and projects that have measurably greater development effectiveness.

For these goals to be achieved requires managers, especially managers of public resources, to know whether their programmes and projects are on track and achieving expected outcomes and impact. Such measurements and assessments are the essence of monitoring and evaluation. Thus has the demand for professional evaluation of development policies, strategies, programmes and projects grown within developing countries and in official bilateral and multilateral development agencies, the private sector, the voluntary sector, foundations and other organizations. Not only is the demand for evaluation growing absolutely but there is also an urgent and growing need for qualitative improvement; for evaluation methods that are transparent, participatory and consistent and that allow valid comparisons across countries and institutions. But this growth in demand has not been matched by an expansion of supply.

The Need

Satisfying this demand for more and better evaluation is a formidable challenge requiring the energetic and coordinated actions of the world's evaluation agencies, more and better training, effective means for transmitting and accessing knowledge, and enhanced opportunities for professional discussion and exchanges. A start has been made. For example, there have been successful workshops in some countries (e.g. China and Ghana) and OED in collaboration with a number of development partners are creating a comprehensive training programme in international development evaluation that will be delivered through multiple modules in several locations. This course will complement existing courses and noticeably expand global training capacity in evaluation. In other areas of evaluation capacity development there has not yet been such significant supply response.

Among national and regional evaluation associations only one, the African Evaluation Association¹, has development evaluation as its core business. Most associations are mainly geared to the needs of developed countries. Thus, evaluators working on development issues lack a common professional network. International bodies concerned with development (UN, World Bank, Regional Banks, DAC) have provided platforms for professional exchanges among evaluators, but there remains an institutional gap in the system and a need for a mechanism to bring development evaluators together to discuss and debate issues of mutual interest, to provide a forum for professional interchanges and to promote excellence in the evaluation of development work through peer review and advice.

¹ There is also a very small "Central American Evaluation Association".

In addition, although training capacity is expanding, there is a need to match supply with demand and to enable those most in need to benefit from the enhanced training opportunities. IDEAS can play a coordinating and facilitating role in this regard. There is ample evidence of the substantial returns to investments in human capital achieved through the establishment and effective management of international scholarship programmes. In evaluation the need is for a programme that is broad in scope, offering both classroom and practical opportunities for skills development and which is responsive to demand from all classes of evaluator and to the needs of non-government as well as government institutions. IDEAS can offer one means of collective action in building such a program.

A Proposal

A new independent organization dedicated to providing opportunities for professional networking, spreading evaluation experience and best practice, organizing conferences and workshops, facilitating the development of evaluation training programmes; raising evaluation standards and promoting the exchange of development evaluation skills across countries and cultures, not least by operating a programme of scholarships in evaluation would significantly enhance the global supply of evaluation skills.

The aims and role of this organization would combine the activities of a traditional professional association with a strong developmental role aimed at expanding evaluation capacity both quantitatively and qualitatively. This organization, which might be called the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) would mainly be comprised of, and governed by, individual evaluators (institutional memberships would also be possible) from developing as well as developed countries, and would be independent of governments, bilateral donors and international agencies. Neither would IDEAS be a federation of national or regional associations seeking instead to connect to such associations through their existing topical interest groups or “chapters”.

Objectives

IDEAS’ central objectives would be to promote evaluation as a key tool of results based management of development policies, programmes and projects in both government and non-government institutions; to foster evaluation as a vital instrument of public accountability and learning in development; to build bridges of understanding among development evaluators; to promote exchanges of professional experience in development evaluation and to encourage the development, harmonisation and application of the highest intellectual, ethical and professional standards in the theory, practice, methods and utilization of evaluation with special reference to development.

Form

IDEAS would be a non-profit, non-government, voluntary organization with membership open to individual professional evaluators and evaluative institutions as well as other interested parties from the social sciences more broadly. The precise organizational form would in part depend on the country in which it is incorporated.

Governance

IDEAS would be governed by key officers and an unpaid Board or Council elected from among its members. The Board and its officers would be supported by a small secretariat of an office manager and one or two part-time evaluators. It would conduct its business in full accord with the law in the country of establishment and its finances would be regularly audited and publicly reported. The governing body would meet and report at least annually to the membership and to its sponsors.

Instruments

IDEAS would hold a biennial conference on evaluation and development, publish professional papers, award prizes for outstanding contributions to development evaluation, fund scholarships for postgraduate studies in evaluation as well as on the job training through secondments. It would help to develop centres of excellence in evaluation, provide an electronic newsletter and a referral service that would put evaluators facing a particular problem in touch with others who could help. In large measure these instruments would be operated through a specially developed web site.

Funding

The annual cost of operating IDEAS is not expected to be large. But, given its broad goals, membership dues, even allowing for relatively high priced institutional memberships, would be unlikely to cover more than a modest part of IDEAS operating on core costs. Thus the organization would be dependent on long term grant funding for both its core and programme activities.

Further Development

To properly and legally establish IDEAS would require careful preparation and planning and the construction of a consensus on draft objectives, governance and instruments. Such a consensus might be built by the establishment of a small committee (that would work virtually) to steer the development of a fully articulated proposal which would later be placed before a broader group of interested parties to confirm objectives and pledge funding. Thereafter, and following the necessary legal work and any further modifications to the proposal, an inaugural conference would be convened to discuss and adopt a constitution and to elect a governing body. The formal, legal establishment of the organization would then follow.

A Tentative Timetable

If there is adequate support for these preliminary ideas it should be possible to constitute the steering committee by summer 2000 and then, allowing for as much consultation as possible, develop and cost a full proposal for consideration by a wider plenary of interested parties in the fall. An inaugural conference could then follow during the summer of 2001.

Interim Arrangements and Next Steps

To draft the comprehensive proposal for the establishment of IDEAS under the guidance of the steering committee the UNDP (through its Evaluation Office) and the World Bank (through its Operations Evaluation Department) have agreed to establish and fund a provisional secretariat. This secretariat would also soon organize a meeting to discuss the proposal, revise the proposal in the light of the plenary discussions and, if adequate funding is secured, subsequently organize the inaugural conference and consequent formal incorporation of IDEAS. Thereafter, IDEAS would be administered on a day to day basis by its own secretariat and governed by its Board or Council.