

## ECD Newsletter no. 2

March 2015

*Task Team for Evaluation Capacity Development*

The DAC EvalNet Task Team for evaluation capacity development (ECD) is focused on developing and improving partnerships to strengthen the relevance, coherence and impact of our investments in evaluation supply and demand. The focus of the Task Team is on establishing a stronger evidence base of 'what works' in ECD, sharing and identifying opportunities for **collaboration**, and developing **joint initiatives**. The Task Team is currently chaired by the **United Kingdom's** Department for International Development (DFID).

This **biannual ECD Newsletter** represents an ongoing opportunity to inform others of ECD initiatives and opportunities for collaboration. It provides information on country, regional and global ECD initiatives, as well as new resources. This issue has been compiled by the ECD Task Team Chair.

Find out more: [EvalNet's ECD website](#)

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This is a summary of the newsletter. Access the full articles on our [ECD website](#).

## Theme : Competencies to improve the use of findings by policy-makers

### [What competencies need to be developed amongst evaluation professionals to improve the use of findings by policy-makers?](#)

Stimulating demand and promoting the use of evidence are issues for development evaluation professionals (evaluators, evaluation managers and commissioners). Two recent systematic reviews have emphasised the importance of contextual conditions in defining the use of evidence.<sup>1</sup> These reviews highlight that the more supply agents (e.g. evaluators and commissioners) are able to collaborate and form relationships with policy-makers (e.g. programme managers, senior civil servants and politicians), the more likely evidence is to be used. Deficits in the capacities of evaluation professionals to collaborate with policy-makers were identified in the 2010 [Evaluation in Development Agencies](#) report by the OECD. This report stated that the dissemination of evaluation has remained a passive exercise and lessons were not targeted at specific audiences in accessible and usable ways.

Although competencies in engaging people are found in lists generated by the evaluation profession, traditionally they have not received the same attention as technical competence. Behind technical competencies there lies a thick body of research and perspectives. The literature on competencies focused on engaging policy-makers is, in contrast, thin. This means that there is territory to be further explored around the relational skills and approaches required by evaluation professionals in working with policy-makers. There is a range of efforts to improve the relationships between evaluation professionals and policy-makers that help to highlight competencies that can be further developed; some of which are highlighted in this newsletter.

Exploring communication competencies may provide an entry-point to better understanding the capacities evaluation professionals require to shape the way evaluation is seen and valued by policy-makers. One promising area is brand development. Brand is not a concept encountered in the evaluation or the capacity development literature. A brand for evaluation would be defined by connecting a specific idea, valued by policy-makers, to the qualities of an evaluation process. In other

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3813708/>; <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1472-6963/14/2>

words, brand generates in target audiences an image of the total personality of the product or process. Think, for example, of Nike Air. The immediate vision that comes to mind is a person flying through the air with a basketball. Contained within the brand is a vision of quality that appeals to the target market: high performance, innovation, achievement, winning.<sup>2</sup>

The competencies in developing and maintaining a brand perspective in development evaluation emphasises the capacity to undertake a form of knowledge production that connects with policy-makers. Applying a brand perspective requires us to connect evaluation to the overarching institutional and psychological context of policy-makers. In turn, this places a requirement for all elements of the evaluation process to resonate with the quality dimensions in order to convey the brand. For example, if policy-makers believe that high quality development is responsive to the voice of poor people, then evaluations need to demonstrate that they can produce responsiveness to the poor. Brand seeks to develop interest and demand; people then will 'buy' the product or service. Evaluation use comes after the decision to buy the product and perhaps needs different activities. We invite further discussion on ways to change how demand can be stimulated and evaluation used through the application of communication competencies.

### [Rejoinders to 'What competencies need to be developed amongst evaluation professionals to improve the use of findings by policy-makers?'](#)

Responses were requested to the above article from evaluators, institutions and evaluation partnership projects.<sup>1</sup> Comments from the rejoinders include:

**Andy Rowe – ARC Economics:** The “selection of methods should no longer be the exclusive domain of the evaluator but should be decided as part of the joint knowledge process. In terms of competencies, evaluators who can comfortably and effectively do this will need strong facilitation skills and understand that evaluation is not just about technique or precision, they will need to be more nimble, adaptable and possess a wide range of technical competencies.

Approaching use from the concept of a brand is intriguing. The potential value added lies in improving the salience of evaluation over and above what would have been achieved through undertaking evaluations as a joint knowledge process. Brand seems to represent an overarching connectivity of an evaluation office or practice to the interests whose views will strongly influence prospects for use.”

**Donna Podems – Stellenbosch University:** “What would a policy-maker need to know to effectively engage with evaluation findings? This suggests one skill set that broadly describes an evaluator as an educator who has research and evaluation knowledge, and the skill set to effectively facilitate a process that engages a policy-maker, promotes good evaluation, and generates excitement and belief in evaluation processes and products.”

**Jayne Tambiti Musumba – African Development Bank (AfDB):** “The main two challenges of integrating knowledge management, communications and evaluation have been crafting technical content and feedback on the use of information. Evaluations tend to be heavy on technical information; therefore, the challenge is crafting messages to be non-technical, depending on the target audience.

A key lesson in interacting with policy-makers is not only the issue of adding new competencies to evaluators to better influence the use of evaluation findings, but also developing the capacities of policy-makers to be more receptive to the evaluation information and knowledge and knowing how best to use what is presented or shared with them.”

**Asela Kalugampitiya – EvalPartners:** Parliamentarians should engage with evaluation as:

- Users of evaluation for oversight parliamentary bodies.
- Supporters for the establishment of national evaluation policy and systems.
- Advocates to strengthen evidence based policy making which leads to sustainable development.
- Intermediaries to reduce the gap between the evaluation community and policy-makers.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.slideshare.net/Ahmed\\_Coucha/brand-managment-nike-building-a-global-brand-case-analysis](http://www.slideshare.net/Ahmed_Coucha/brand-managment-nike-building-a-global-brand-case-analysis)

The broader responses that can be found on the [website](#) also emphasised the following:

- Considering how to get evaluation used is a central concern of evaluation.
- Discussions on how to influence use have been very focused on technical merit. Overly technical content that is not crafted for policy-makers forms a barrier to use.
- Collaboration skills are needed both for the policy-maker (and the institution that they inhabit) and the evaluation professional in order for them to work together.
- The evaluation professional may also need to facilitate a process that not only engages a policy-maker, but also promotes good evaluation, and generates excitement and belief in evaluation. In the AfDB's experience, different professionals are required with skills in knowledge management, communications and evaluation.
- In exploring brand it is not the evaluation product that needs to be branded, but the evaluation process.
- An area for further examination is using brand to develop social capital in development evaluation between the evaluation professional and those who are intended to benefit from an intervention.
- There is unlikely to be a single brand for evaluation. Different evaluation professionals need to connect to different policy-makers based upon their organisational remit.
- Working directly with politicians to stimulate demand is an alternative to working with evaluation professionals. Work is being undertaken by both the AfDB and EvalPartners with parliamentarians. This work aims to generate networks of parliamentarians, improve national policy environments and improve politicians' knowledge and skills.

## Non-theme contributions



### [Challenges for Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Fragile and Conflict Affected States](#)

By the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Kieron Crawley

An enduring sub-national conflict provides major challenges to all levels of practical M&E data collection. Areas that are inaccessible to M&E teams constitute vast swathes of "dark data" that lead to an M&E jigsaw puzzle with very few pieces. The use of secondary or data of suboptimal quality to fill these gaps leads to a "big picture" that comes loaded with risk for decision making. Lessons from a case study on the potential for monitoring and evaluation in a fragile and conflict affected state can be found [here](#).



### [Strengthening RC/RC Volunteer-Based Community Approaches: IFRC realist multiple explanatory case studies](#)

By the Health Department of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Worldwide, the Red Cross and Red Crescent (RCRC) National Societies (NS) are training and supporting volunteers to improve the health of underserved communities and to strengthen their resilience. Volunteers are the backbone of the RCRC and many NS report difficulties attracting, motivating and retaining volunteers. These challenges have led to the Health and Volunteering Departments developing a research programme to better understand why, how and under what circumstances volunteer motivation and performance can be enhanced by appropriate managerial strategies. More information on their implementation of a realist approach can be found [here](#).



## [Proceedings from the Third International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities](#)

By UNDP, Independent Evaluation Office

The Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP is committed to using national evaluation systems as a way to strengthen national ownership over development processes and engaged in promotion National Evaluation Capacities among partner countries. Conferences, such as the one in 2013 in Brazil, provide a forum for discussion of evaluation issues confronting countries and enable participants to draw on other countries' recent and innovative experiences. The [proceedings](#) from the latest conference in Brazil capture key messages and outcomes from the conference, contributing to knowledge sharing and South-South co-operation among countries to strengthen evaluation related efforts.

This biannual newsletter is produced by the DAC Network on Development Evaluation's task team on capacity development.

The DAC Network on Development Evaluation contributes to better development results by using evaluation to build a strong evidence base for policy making and for learning. The Network is a subsidiary body of the [Development Assistance Committee](#) (DAC) of the OECD.

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<sup>i</sup> Thanks goes to Andy Rowe, ARC Economics; Donna Podems, Stellenbosch University; the African Development Bank; and EvalPartners.