NONIE 2012 MEETING REPORT

19-20 April 2012
FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy

1. Introduction and background

The Network of Networks for Impact Evaluation (NONIE) is comprised of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD/DAC) Evaluation Network, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG), and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) – a network drawn from the regional evaluation associations.

NONIE was formed to promote quality impact evaluations. evaluation and does not attempt to address wider monitoring and evaluation issues.

To this end NONIE aims to:

- − Build an international collaborative research effort for high-quality and useful impact evaluations as a means to improving development effectiveness
- − Provide its members with opportunities for learning, collaboration, exchange of experience, guidance, and support, leading to commissioning and carrying out impact evaluations.

UNEG volunteered to organize the NONIE 2012 meeting. It was hosted by Rome based UN agencies and held at the FAO Headquarters in Rome, between 19 and 20 April 2012.

The NONIE 2012 meeting gathered 221 participants[1] over a two-day period to: facilitate the exchange of experiences on impact evaluation (IE) of development programmes; identify innovative approaches to IE; provide the arena for promoting international standards on IE; and contribute to learning about IE at global, regional and country levels. The four themes selected for the 2012 meeting were:

- Mixed methods/ alternative design approaches/ methods for addressing the challenge of attribution;
- Policy use/ how IE influences policy;
- The role of IE in M&E systems; and
- Guidance on and experiences of IE on normative and institutional support work.

This document constitutes the report of the NONIE 2012 meeting. It presents some of the outcomes of the meeting and a report of the NONIE Networks' meeting held after the NONIE 2012 meeting.

Details of the organisational arrangements made by UNEG for the NONIE 2012 meeting (including financial management and reporting) are also included. Lessons learned and considerations for the next NONIE meeting organisers are equally presented.

2. Management and organisation

UNEG established an Organising Committee (OC) to organise the meeting. The OC was co-Chaired by Margareta de Goys (UNIDO) and Juha Uitto (UNDP) and consisted of UNEG members. Members of the

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[1] 273 registered participants with 221 actual attendees. 52 presenters/ panel participants and poster presenters. 24 sponsored participants.

UNEG Impact Evaluation Task Force also contributed substantively in the meeting preparations, helping to identify the meeting themes, review abstracts, develop the agenda, provide feedback to presenters and prepare questions for discussions during some of the sessions.

The OC worked in close collaboration with other NONIE Networks (DAC, ECG and IOCE) and 3ie, a privileged partner. Members of these networks participated in the abstract review groups and were invited to chair sessions.

Michelle Weston, an international meeting organiser, was hired to organize the logistical aspects of the meeting and Mille Bases, a Paris based web development company, was hired to develop the NONIE 2012 website.

a) Logistics

A logistic package (i.e. hotel information, FAO facilities and travel information) was provided to participants[2]. Information was collected by the host agency and added to by the meeting organiser. Participants were able to use the facilities available in FAO Headquarters (e.g. banks, travel agent, newsagent etc)[3].

Meeting rooms

The meeting was held in FAO Headquarters with facilities provided as contribution in kind. Three meeting rooms, of varying sizes, were reserved for the meeting to allow for breakout sessions. Most sessions were held in the plenary conference room which could accommodate 500. FAO conference services provided nameplates for session chairs and panel participants and notice boards.

Computers were available in each of the meeting rooms for presentations. Each room was allocated a UNEG volunteer to manage setting up the computers, ensuring the powerpoints were available and providing other general assistance.

Refreshments

Refreshments (e.g. coffee breaks, water) and a cocktail were provided. The cocktail was held on the first evening and was a useful event for participants to informally discuss and network.

Lunches were not provided but participants were able to use the numerous catering facilities within FAO Headquarters or the nearby local restaurants.

Visas

When registering online, participants were asked to indicate if they required a visa for Italy. If yes, the organiser sent a generic invitation letter prepared by the UN host agency. In some cases, a supporting letter to confirm the participant was registered for the meeting was also requested and sent.

Sponsored participants were issued detailed invitation letters indicating that their participation would be fully sponsored, details of what was covered in the sponsorship and dates of travel.

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[2] Available on the NONIE 2012 website.

[3] Information available on the NONIE 2012 website.

Some participants, including two sponsored participants, were unable to attend as they were unable to obtain a visa in time.

Registration

The meeting was open to everyone (no background checks conducted) and registration was managed through the website. Registration closed two weeks before the meeting in line with FAO's security requirements. The FAO security office prepared security/ participant name badges indicating participant's name, organisation/ affiliation and country.

Based on past NONIE meetings, the OC had estimated 150 participants for the NONIE 2012 meeting. However, three weeks ahead of the meeting over 200 participants had already registered and final registration exceeded 250.

b) Communication

No complete mailing list for NONIE existed/ exists. The initial call for abstracts was sent to focal points in the NONIE Networks and 3ie. The 2011 organizers (AFD) provided UNEG with their mailing lists which was used to send invitations to those registered for the NONIE 2011 Newsletter and meeting.

Website

The NONIE 2012 website (www.nonie2012.org) was developed by Mille Bases (a Paris based IT company) who also developed the NONIE 2011 website. New functionalities in the NONIE 2012 website included pages on logistics, biographies, NONIE background and information on the NONIE Networks and partners. On behalf of UNEG, UNDP purchased a one-year host server through greengeeks.com at a cost of USD65 per year, with option to renew.

Due to a larger number of participants registered than expected, an online survey was developed for participants to indicate in which of the breakout sessions they were considering participating. This was a useful exercise to ensure that the right sized rooms were designated.

The meeting was webcast using FAO webcasting facilities (costs borne by NONIE). The FAO IT unit provided links to the webcast and tests were carried out prior to the event. The webcast was not interactive in that online participants were not able to pose questions to panelists. All the sessions in the plenary meeting room were available live and recordings of the event are uploaded on the NONIE 2012 website. Available information indicate that at least 20 people watched the proceedings online at any given time.

Newsletters

Newsletters were provided via the NONIE 2012 website to announce the agenda, logistics, website updates and invite online registration.

3. Budget and funding

Based on the NONIE 2011 meeting, UNEG estimated a total budget of EUR125k to cover meeting costs. A request for funding was sent to UNEG Heads and NONIE Networks in late 2011.

Financial contributions were received from the Evaluation Department of the Ministry Affairs of Denmark (EUR 30,222), the UK Department for International Development (EUR 69,959), UNEG (EUR

7,310) and UNESCO (EUR 4,345). A total of EUR 111,827 was raised and the UNIDO support cost charge amounted to 13%. The total available budget for the NONIE 2012 meeting was EUR 98,961.

Financial contributions were transferred to a specific Trust Fund established for the meeting and managed by UNIDO. Major budget posts were international consultant and sponsored participants.

Contributions in kind included UNDP and UNIDO staff time and the meeting facilities were made available by FAO.

Total expenditure for the meeting came to EUR 88,121.78[4]. The remaining funds (EUR 10,840.17) will be transferred by UNIDO to the organisers of the next NONIE meeting.

Sponsored participants

UNEG sponsored a total of 24 participants[5] (twenty men and four women) to participate in the meeting. In terms of geographical breakdown there were ten sponsored participants from Africa, three from Asia, six from Europe/ CIS, two from Latin America and the Arab States.

A sponsorship request form was distributed with the call for abstracts. UNEG agreed (internally) that priority for funding would be given to applicants from the South whose abstracts were accepted. Sponsorship covered travel (full fare economy flight, on the most direct route) and provided a daily subsistence allowance (DSA) . UN/ UNIDO travel rules were applied.

The meeting consultant and UNIDO managed the travel arrangements for the sponsored participants. UNIDO liaised with Carlson Wagonlit (travel agent) who made flight reservations. All participants, sponsored or not, were responsible for reserving their own accommodation.

In terms of process, participants were sent flight details with their expected dates of travel (arrival day before the meeting, departure the day after) from their home location and were asked to confirm or request changes. Participants were expected to cover any additional charges arising from changes to the proposed itinerary. These charges were to be paid directly to the travel agent. Once confirmed, participants were issued with e-tickets.

Sponsored participants were given DSA (in cash) while attending the meeting in Rome.

4. Content: abstracts and agenda

UNEG conducted an internal survey of possible themes/ areas for discussion for the NONIE 2012 meeting. NONIE network partners were consulted on areas they wished to see on the agenda. From the survey, feedback from partners and discussions at the 2011 meeting four themes were identified: 1) mixed methods/ alternative design approaches/ methods for addressing the challenge of attribution; 2) policy use/ how IE influences policy; 3) the role of IE in M&E systems; and guidance on and 4) experiences of IE on normative and institutional support work.

A call for abstracts was sent to all NONIE Networks for distribution to their members and the mailing lists provided by AFD. Eighty-four abstracts were received over a three-week period[6].

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[4] See Annex 1 for full financial breakdown.

[5] Three sponsored participants were eventually unable to attend.

The OC co-Chairs read all the abstracts to get a general overview. They were then able to categorise the abstracts by theme and sub themes. Review groups, with representatives from all NONIE networks and 3IE, were established on these themes and sub-themes. There were 10-12 abstracts and four reviewers (the OC co-Chairs plus two others) per review group.

Abstracts were scored (on a scale of 1 to 10) according to five weighted criteria: relevance of the subject (weighting 30%); rigour (weighting 15%); clarity (weighting 10%); interest of the findings (weighting 20%); and novelty (weighting 25%).

Average were calculated and discussed during a teleconference with each review group. The process worked well and within three weeks of the abstract deadline, all abstracts had been reviewed, agreements made on accepted/ not accepted abstracts and submitters informed.

The draft agenda was then developed around the accepted abstracts and any identifiable common themes. Consideration was also given to gender and geographical location. The format of the session (plenary or parallel, presentations or panel discussion) was also decided upon. Questions were prepared to guide panel discussions.

Session chairs

Session chairs were identified from among the NONIE Networks and from the participants list. They were sent the presenter's original abstract and PowerPoint to allow them to prepare for the sessions.

Poster sessions

When abstracts were deemed interesting but not rated high enough to qualify for a presentation, the submitter was invited to participate in a "poster session". Poster presenters from the South were also sponsored. Detailed notes on poster content and format were prepared and sent to the presenters in advance. The poster sessions were difficult to manage and did not add much real value to the meeting for a number of reasons:

1. Poster presenters were asked to bring A3 size posters but many turned up with A4 sheets that were not large enough to draw attention.

2. Presenters were invited to post their posters in the main meeting room, but many did not post their posters until the last day.

3. The poster boards were in the main meeting room and participants were supposed to look at the posters during the coffee breaks. However, participants were not allowed into the meeting room with their coffee so preferred to stay outside.

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[6] There were 42 female contributors and 45 male contributors. Of the female contributors, seven were from Africa, eight from Asia, one from Australasia, 13 from Europe/ CIS, two from Latin America and the Arab States, seven from North America. Of the male contributors, fifteen were from Africa, ten from Asia, thirteen from Europe/ CIS, one from Latin America and three from the Arab States and North America. These figures reflect where there were multiple contributors and multiple contributions by one author. In a number of instances, the country of residence of the author was unidentified.

5. Outcomes

During the closing and final remarks session, the Organising Committee co-Chairs presented some common themes coming out of the sessions.

Mixed methods

- Rationale for mixing methods had been clearly illustrated Some opening of the 'black box" of mixed methods

- IE design should be question or issue-driven

- There is a need for 'methodological literacy

- Systemic approaches to impact evaluation is needed

- From 'gold standard' to good standards: more work needed on rigorous causal inference using qualitative methods but quantitative methods are not always the optimum option

- There are both benefits and challenges of mixed method designs

Role of IE in M&E systems

- Institutional strategy for impact evaluation is needed

- Building on existing M&E evidence needs to be further promoted

- Incentives for doing impact evaluation needs to be present: public good

Policy use: how IE influences policy

- 'Cherry-picking' can lead to underreporting of negative results and policy implications

- Decision-maker buy-in is important

- Policy influence is needed both within commissioning organizations and beyond

- Need for more syntheses and streams of evaluative knowledge to feed into policy

- A need to better understand how impact evaluation actually influences policy

Normative work

- Important area of work: still a lot to be done

- More work is needed on clarifications of causal chains, types of interventions, levels of accountability, levels for evaluating impact

- More work is needed on systematizing existing knowledge on impact of normative work

- A culture of evaluation of normative work needs to be promoted

5. NONIE Network meeting

As in the past, a meeting of NONIE Networks was held at the end of the NONIE meeting and provided an opportunity for Network members to give feedback and discuss next steps.

The UNEG OC was complimented on the organisation of the meeting with participants noting a visible evolution in the NONIE meeting programme and the large number of participants at the meeting. The following issues were discussed:

- The need for more lessons learning at the NONIE meetings, in particular on methodological challenges and how to make IE's better and more useful. This could be in done, in particular, through case studies and work shops. The need to define the meeting's target audience. Should it be open to evaluators as well as researchers.

- Suggested themes (area of exploration) for the next NONIE meeting include impact evaluation and policy utilisation, Randomized Control Trials and quantitative methodologies.

- The format of the meeting. The panel discussions were appreciated. However, the meeting seems to be serving a number of different objectives For instance exchange of experience and training. Suggestions were made to hold half-day capacity building workshops or "clinics".

Questions about the general objective of the NONIE meetings and their value added (i.e. how do they differ from other evaluation meetings) were raised. It was stated that the original purpose of NONIE was "to ensure more and better IE" and that it was the only evaluation meeting focusing on impact evaluation.

There was some hesitation by members to volunteer to organise the next NONIE meeting. Afrea indicated that they could be in a position to host in 2014, but not in 2013. The question was therefore raised as to whether it was necessary to hold a NONIE meeting every year. It was suggested that the next meeting be held outside of Europe and the Danish Ministry for Foreign Affairs indicated that they were willing to provide funding.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations for the next NONIE meeting organisers

Abstracts and agenda

- The way the review groups were set up and the review process itself worked very well and was very efficient.

- Organisers should check to see if abstracts have not already been presented/ submitted for other meetings and are the original work of the person submitting.

Poster sessions

- Poster sessions can add value to the meeting but should be managed as an integral part of the meeting and not as a side activity.

Communications and website

- Work needs to be done on the NONIE "mailing lists". Those who signed up for the NONIE 2012 newsletter should be asked if they wish to remain on the mailing lists for the next NONIE meeting.

- Basing the 2012 website on that of the 2011 website, and employing the services of the same website developer, was both a cost and time effective way of developing the website.

- Participants should be asked to indicate if they are a member of one of the four NONIE Networks (for information purposes) when registering.

- There was not much value added by either the "Resources" or "The Off" sections of the NONIE 2012 website.

Visas

Organisers should make enquiries on visa requirements and related processes from the relevant authorities as early as possible.

7. Conclusions and comment

The meeting was considered a success. There was large and wide participation, interesting presentations and intensive discussions. There was also very positive feedback on the organisational aspects of the meeting.

Annex 1 NONIE 2012 Financial Report

A call for financial contributions was sent by the OC co-Chairs to NONIE members in November 2011. The total budget raised was EUR 111,827.00 and total available funds (excl. 13% UNIDO support costs) EUR 98,961.96. UNIDO established a Trust Fund to manage the budget.

NONIE Meeting 2012 - UNIDO Trust Fund TE/GLO/11/026 - FINANCIAL OVERVIEW			
FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS			
Contributors (Name of Organization)	**Total amount received in EUR (incl. 13% UNIDO support costs)**	**UNIDO support costs (13%)**	**Total amount excl. support cost (EUR)**
Department for International Development (DfID), UK	69,950.00	8,047.35	61,902.65
Evaluation Department of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs	30,222.00	3,476.87	26,745.13
UNESCO	4,345.00	499.87	3,845.13
UNEG	7,310.00	840.97	6,469.03
TOTALS (EUR)	111,827.00	12,865.05	**98,961.95**
EXPENDITURES			
Description			**Expenditure (EUR)**
Int. Consultants			34537.99
Travel costs for 21 sponsored participants			17,090.01
DSA for 21 sponsored participants			24,070.00
Travel organizers			2,024.21
Hospitality/Coffee breaks (Ref Invoice No. 759095 - FAO)			3,804.90
Hospitality/Cocktail (Ref Invoice No. 759095 - FAO)			3,426.72
Other costs: Webstreaming/temp. staff/external & internal resources (Ref Inv. FAO)			2,864.40
Printing costs (400 agendas)			303.55
TOTAL EXPENDITURE (EUR)			**88,121.78**
BALANCE (EUR)			**10,840.17**

In accordance with the UNIDO Project Document any balance will be transferred to the organisers of the NONIE 2013 meeting.