



## Development Evaluation Lopsided says IDEAS

### *Development evaluation must reconsider its strategies, instruments and emphases*

**T**he International Development Association (IDEAS) has called for a radical shift in the practice of global development evaluation.

The Association wants development evaluation to shift its attention from assessing the performance of poor countries and instead focus more on developed countries.

The call was made as part of a raft of concluding observations in a synthesis report of IDEAS' Global Assembly 2009 held on March 17<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> in Johannesburg, South Africa.

“Vast resources have been mobilised to monitor progress in developing countries' policies and programs whereas little efforts have been devoted to monitor policies implemented by developed countries” the assembly concluded.

For instance, they said MDGs demand more of developing countries than they do of developed countries.

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The assembly also called for the strengthening of National M&E systems and recasting the role of donors in M&E saying the absence of qualified M&E personnel in African national institutions is to blame for poor development policies, strategies and programs. This situation is further compounded by donors who develop project Implementation Units (PIUs) outside the public sector.

The assembly, whose theme “Getting to Results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development” was convened to discuss and exchange analytical frameworks, lessons learned, best practices, and propose strategies to achieve greater results of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB).

The report pointed out that in many countries, the availability of institutions and/or experts with adequate training capacity coupled with regional or international experience is insufficient to enable relevant and practical transfer of M&E know-how.

M&E training programs tend to have a short term perspective (1 to 4 weeks at most) with very limited follow-up to ensure the application of new knowledge and techniques in participants' day-to-day work. The above situation is compounded by inadequate incentives and resources to smoothen the course of the learning process. Thus, ‘the daily grind and old habits



*A panel of facilitators listen to reactions from participants during one of the sessions of the IDEAS Global Assembly.*

quickly win over the desire for change and the temporary capacity gains just disappear over time’

The result of such training programs affect organisations' capacity to monitor and evaluate policies, strategies and programs and increases the likelihood of poor decision-making and inappropriate resource allocation.

The assembly also noted the key role played by M&E information systems sensitisation and policy dialogue forums in strengthening M&E. It brought together more than 220 evaluation professionals from all continents, representing public institutions, NGOs, the private sector, programs and projects, and multilateral and bilateral donors. *(Culled from a report by Ray Rist, president, IDEAS, 2009)*

## AGDEN's Chair Elected AfrEA President

**D**r Florence Etta is the new President of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA).

Dr Etta was elected during the last AfrEA conference held in Cairo, Egypt. On account of the election to the parent body, AfrEA, she relinquished the former position she held as AGDEN Chair. Consequently, AGDEN's current Vice Chair, Nestorine Sangare of Burkina Faso takes over at the helm of AGDEN.

Nestorine has been unanimously endorsed by the members of the Steering Committee as required by the constitution in this new position until an election is organised.

For continuity and to sustain institutional memory, Florence will become the Vice Chair until the next election is organised. All other offices and officers of the Network will also remain as currently constituted.

The immediate task of the new Chair, in addition to representing the organisation, will be to arrange and manage the next elections. The new Chair will be supported in this task by all other members of the Steering Committee.

The transition will be conducted over a 6-9 month window within which the new chair will pay a visit to the secretariat in Nairobi where she will be introduced to the key partners by her predecessor and a handover orientation with staff conducted.

AGDENews takes this opportunity to welcome the new chair and wish her the best in her new responsibilities. We also take this opportunity to thank the outgoing chair for her dedication and commitment towards achieving the goals of the network and wish her well in her new position.

## My Road to the IDEAS Global Assembly, March 2009

*Sarah Okwaare of AGDEN reflects on the IDEAS conference*

**I**t was a cold and windy midmorning in an internet café in Same, a rural township in Tanzania where I read an e-mail message from the chair suggesting a few AGDEN members to send in applications for scholarships to the IDEAS Global Assembly, which I did eagerly. A few weeks later in early March 2009, I opened up my email and I saw an offer of scholarship from IDEAS; I was thrilled and read it with smiles though it indicated that I was not yet a member of IDEAS and therefore not eligible. But to my amazement, Ms Darcy Vaughan, the Scholarship Administrator then, "*may her soul rest in peace*" indicated to me that if I was interested in attending the conference, all I needed to do was to join IDEAS through the website which I did immediately. No sooner had I registered than I got my itinerary and air ticket; so there I was in Johannesburg at the Birchwood Hotel.

But what is IDEAS? It is an independent Association whose mission is to bring credible information and knowledge to the development agenda. IDEAS was established in September 2002 in Beijing, China. It is open worldwide to individuals and organisations, and currently has nearly 800 members from more than 90 countries. The mission of IDEAS is to: "*improve and extend the practice of development evaluation by refining knowledge, strengthening capacity, and expanding networks for development evaluation, particularly in developing and transition countries.*"

The conference started off with pre-conference workshops that provided an opportunity for participants to build their skills and deepen their understanding of evaluation practices. Several workshops were organised among which was a workshop on '**What is the Sex of Development Evaluation?**'



*Dr Florence Etta (right) and Sarah Okwaare during an AGDEN workshop in Johannesburg, SA.*

presented by none other than our own Dr Florence Etta under the auspices of the African Gender and Development Evaluators' Network (AGDEN), with funding from UNIFEM.

During conference, AGDEN had the opportunity to present a paper on **Measuring Gender Equality Results of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action**; by then AGDEN Chair, Dr Florence Etta. Discussants included Olaronke Ladipo and Sarah Okwaare, both core members of AGDEN. The presentation was fairly well attended; and the questions raised provoked participants' thinking. The workshop concluded that in addition to other strategies, the network should employ the use of the space provided by the civil society to 'smuggle' gender responsive indicators in the Paris Declaration document.

In conclusion, I'd like to take a moment to honour the memory of Dr. Darcy V, then IDEAS Scholarship Administrator who passed on at the end of April 2009.

## South African Govt to Strengthen its M&E Capacity

The government of South Africa has initiated an ambitious plan to strengthen the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) capacity of its public sector. This follows the realisation that weak monitoring and evaluation practices are to blame for the ineffectiveness of public and private sector interventions.

Dr Ros Hirschowitz (pictured right) and Mr Oliver Seale from the Public Administration and management Academy (Palama) said the government was committed towards championing best M&E practices in the public sector. The duo was speaking during the IDEAS Global Assembly held in South Africa in March 2009. The Assembly was attended by AGDEN members led by the chair, Dr Florence Etta.

They said the South African government has already developed a government-wide M&E system under the stewardship of the office of the president. The M&E system is based on the existing structures in the Treasury, Public Service Commission, the Department of Public Service Administration and the Department of Provincial and Local Government.

'It aims to introduce a series of indicators to answer performance questions across government' said Dr Hirschowitz and Mr Seale. They said one of the main priorities of the government in strengthening its capacity in M&E is to provide training to key personnel whose work is crucial in ensuring that the initiative is implemented successfully.

### Quotes Corner

"The highest reward for man's toil is not what he gets for it, but what he becomes by it." -

John Ruskin 1819-1900

The first group to benefit from the training will include political heads, members of parliament, Directors General and other senior managers. The second group comprises of managers of M&E at various levels in government departments while the last group comprises of producers of M&E information – project managers and M&E practitioners.



In a bid to tailor the training towards meeting the needs of the beneficiaries, a focus group discussion and survey were conducted among relevant government officials and whose findings formed the basis of a new M&E curriculum. The survey findings have already been presented to the relevant government authorities and have been approved. (Dr Ros Hirschowitz and Mr Oliver Seale, IDEAS Global Assembly, 2009)

## Pan African M&E Summit

The Pan African Monitoring & Evaluation Summit was held on July 27<sup>th</sup> – 31<sup>st</sup> 2009 at the Premier Hotel, Pretoria, Gauteng, South Africa. This is the first outcomes-based and case study driven programme to be organised by the African Information Institute (AII). The summit focus was on delivering and improving public sector performance and enhancing accountability and good governance through showcasing best practices and African case studies by M&E practitioners.

AGDENews welcomes your views and comments on M&E, gender and human rights. E-mail: [admin@agden.org](mailto:admin@agden.org)

## AGDEN-Ford Foundation Rights in M&E Project Update

The Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN), with funding support from the Ford Foundation has, since August 2008, been implementing a project whose aim is to integrate elements of human rights and gender equality programming into programme and project monitoring. A major part of this project is the delivery of training workshops to an initial select group of Ford Foundation grantees. Two other dimensions of this interesting project are research and information sharing. The goal of the workshops is to improve comprehension by development evaluators of the human rights approach and, for enhancing skills for conducting monitoring and evaluation within that framework.

The first of these workshops has been planned for August in Johannesburg and the second for Lagos in October 2009. The objectives for these workshops are:

- Promotion of understanding and importance of gender equality and the human rights approach for development programming and participatory monitoring and evaluation
- Contribution to participants' capacity, knowledge and skills for integrating gender equality and human rights sensitivity and responsiveness in planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and/or projects.

Workshop training materials have undergone three revisions to date and the trainers are very excited about the workshops.

### Editorial Board

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*Newly elected AfrEA president, AGDEN's former chair, Dr Florence Etta having a chat with one of the participants during the IDEAS Global Assembly.*



*Members of AGDEN who attended the IDEAS' Global Assembly pose for a group photo moments after a pre-conference workshop.*



*A cross-section of participants listen keenly to the proceedings during the IDEAS' Global Assembly Birchwood Hotel Johannesburg, March 18, 2009.*



*The power of music! As the saying goes 'All work and no play makes Jack.....Participants at the IDEAS' Global Assembly being entertained by a local dance troupe after a week of serious work.*