

Towards Integrating Evaluation Into Development Strategies

Karl K. Kindel
Evaluative Studies Branch
International Statistical Programs Center
Bureau of the Census

Overview

Theoretically, the development strategy of an international donor agency should outline specific objectives, target areas, and populations to be the foci of development projects and programs. In addition, this strategy should be integrated into the host-country milieu and that government's development plans. Such a development strategy would form the foundation for attaining specific goals and for the action plan for development implementation schedules on the part of the donor agency. The goal of these efforts would be to attain the defined overall development objectives and to reach the overall target populations.

In this context, evaluation can be described as the tool used to determine whether the overall development goals have been attained and target populations have been affected by the projects designed and implemented under the development strategy. At a secondary level, evaluation is the tool used to determine whether specific project goals were reached assuming those goals are within the overall development strategy goals.

Clearly it follows that all evaluation must be carefully designed in order to accurately assess achievement of goals pertinent to the overall development strategy or, at the secondary level, achievement of goals specific to projects developed as a part of that strategy. Therefore, if evaluations are to accurately reflect the outcomes of a project, they must be integrated with the original development strategy in terms of timing, definitions and concepts. How to accomplish this then is a major concern.

Development Strategy and Evaluation

Development strategies as such are not always explicitly defined. The generally-accepted document used as the basis of a development strategy in AID is the Development Assistance Program (DAP) paper. This document outlines and defines the areas and populations of development concern and is usually suggestive of the project options available to make progress toward the development goals. As a result of the DAP and subsequent planning efforts, specific projects are identified and implemented after a thorough project review.

It is during this period of DAP development and review that the broad plans for evaluation should begin to take form. However, in practice the evaluation plan is usually considered and/or implemented when the program (or a specific project in that program), is well into the implementation stage, in its final stages or even completed. A much more pertinent and discriminating evaluation could be designed if the development strategy goals and purposes were defined in terms of evaluation outputs during the project identification phase for project-directed evaluation, and during DAP development for overall evaluation.

Integration of Evaluation

In order to integrate a complete evaluation* into development strategies, a two-tiered approach is useful. These two levels are:

- 1) Evaluation of the overall development plan.
- 2) Evaluation of projects or other subcategories of such a plan.

Early and persistent planning at the development strategy stage allow simpler and more direct methods of information-gathering to be employed, and would provide information more pertinent to development goals. The coordination of evaluation within and between sectors would prevent duplication of effort in establishing a data-base for areas in which more than one project is active. Also, the pooling of evaluation "resources" would allow more detailed information to be collected or would allow a broader and more representative sample thus utilizing more efficient methodology. Such planning would also permit the development of timely feedback mechanisms for control of the implementation of a development strategy.

At the first level, macro-level indicators could be established for the major features and anticipated outcomes of the development strategy. These would be designed to monitor the overall development progress with a minimum of effort in terms of data-gathering and input. This type of evaluation could be undertaken for programs (or possibly sub-programs) where AID is concentrating project resources for specific target areas, populations or the like. These data could then be compared to other similar areas where little or no resources are being expended, used in time-series analysis, or analyzed with other appropriate analytical techniques. Simple record-keeping systems can be developed to monitor progress towards the goals, using small, focused surveys at appropriate

* In this discussion, the term "evaluation" is used in the sense of information-gathering and analysis to determine program and project accomplishments.

points in time to supplement those data. A major benefit of a good record-keeping system is the monitoring aspect. The constant feedback from such a system, if designed properly, will be of use to the project manager as well as to the planner. Early planning eliminates the need for ex post facto surveys and other ad hoc data collection efforts. Evaluations done entirely after a project is completed or implemented are difficult to interpret because of the lack of base information for comparison. Prior planning can help to eliminate this built-in problem of comparability.

In the second type of evaluation, assuming the first is implemented, the only additional evaluation information which would need to be developed is that which would complement and increase the understanding of the overall development strategy evaluation. Evaluations of this second type would take the form of micro-studies in specific areas and subjects. While the general evaluation will be of constant use to macro-economic planners in showing development progress, this second level of evaluation will provide detailed information at the project level useful to both planner and implementer as well as to the evaluator.

The project-level evaluation should be designed to provide maximum feedback to the project manager and the implementing agency. It should provide the information required for short-term project modification and improvement, based on early perception of positive or negative results, and would thus improve the long-term design of the project. This project-level evaluation will also be useful in the design of other similar projects. Having evaluative data available before project completion will allow the project manager to prepare a timely extension of a successful project avoiding a period of time without funding for the project or terminate an unsuccessful project in a timely manner. Project-level evaluation plans should also provide systems for improving record-keeping capabilities, thereby enhancing administrative control and responsiveness as well as meeting basic requirements for project evaluation. An ancillary benefit of such an evaluation methodology will be the development of increased capabilities in the host-country for data collection, record-keeping and analysis.

Planning for Evaluation

Evaluation of the success of the overall development strategy must begin with the development of the strategy itself. The evaluation design for this broad level includes a constantly evolving analysis as new information becomes available or adjustments in the basic development strategy become necessary. This is properly called a monitoring system.

In order to adequately develop the project-level evaluation scheme, planning must begin well before implementation is underway, and must be integrated with the other data-using elements of the project. In AID this process should begin no later than at the project identification stage where documentation of projects in broad terms is required. This project documentation process should also be integrated with the project's social soundness analysis in order to support the data requirements for the essentially qualitative nature of that requirement. The social soundness analysis and the project identification documentation should provide strong direction for the evaluation plan and indicate the kinds of data and data formats which should eventually be used. Upon approval of the PID and integrated with preparation for the social soundness analysis, the evaluation plans should progress as follows:

- 1) develop a statement of data requirements and their relationship to project objectives;
- 2) review methods available for data collection;
- 3) determine the approximate level of resources and time required for the evaluation effort.

Planning for an evaluation at the project paper (PP) stage should include a:

- 1) detailed statement of data requirements and their relationship to project objectives;
- 2) analysis of methods of data collection, e.g., administrative records, expert observation, sample survey, and determination of those most appropriate;
- 3) description of data collection activities, coordination, and a rough timetable;
- 4) plans for analysis of data;
- 5) allocation of resources for accomplishing the plan.

There are various sources of data and methods of data collection which should be considered in developing an evaluation effort. Administrative and managerial records are data sources which can be used to provide abundant information given proper design. Existing data from surveys, censuses and other sources also must be considered as excellent sources of information for evaluation. By far the most difficult method of obtaining data is by using a household survey or similar field data collection. However, the fact that such surveys

can be tailored to specific data needs frequently makes their use most useful and efficient. A single survey might cover the data needs of several projects. A unified data collection effort is possible where projects are geographically diverse, but is most efficient, and in fact should be mandatory, for projects which are concentrated in the same geographical area, such as in an integrated rural development project. In addition, it may be desirable to make use of trained observers, especially those familiar with the country, customs and socioeconomic conditions in the country, to supplement and illuminate the quantitative data, or to give direction to the collection of quantitative information.

Summary

What is proposed therefore, is a two-tiered design for evaluation:

- 1) data collection for broad evaluation of the overall progress towards specific development targets, whether by geographical areas, specific population groups or other homogeneous grouping;
- 2) focused data collection activity for specific project-level elements of the development strategy design to meet specific information requirements.

These two bodies of complementary data can be integrated into the overall development progress evaluation and can be used in project design, implementation and analysis.

This comprehensive approach to program evaluation will entail planning for evaluation throughout the development stages of the overall country strategies and also requires that specific stages in the evaluation planning be reached at appropriate stages of project development. All data requirements must be embodied in a plan of action so that specific projects (within the development strategy context) can utilize the data to develop the best possible design and have the benefit of long- and short-term feedback for both project monitoring and new project design.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
Bureau of the Census
Washington, D.C. 20233

October 14, 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR Robert Meehan,
Evaluation Officer, ASIA/DP, AID

From: Karl K. Kindel *KKK*
Evaluative Studies Branch
International Statistical Programs Center

Subject: Evaluation and Development Strategies

Attached is a paper I have written titled "Towards Integrating Evaluation Into Development Strategies" which you requested. The ideas presented in this paper should serve as a basis for further discussion and eventual refinement in the AID development context.

As I see it, the next step would be to take a specific country and develop an evaluation plan according to that country's development strategy. This would demonstrate the applicability of these ideas and methods in a working context.

Let me know if you have any questions or comments on this paper so we can get together and discuss them.

cc: R. Love, ASIA/DP
H. Pehl, ASIA/DP
J. Silver, NE/DP
P. Benedict, NE/TECH