

STRENGTHENING IMPACT EVALUATION QUALITY IN AFRICA THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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“To meet our goals, we must be more selective and focus our efforts where we have the best partners and where we can have the greatest impact.”

- Barack Obama

Introduction

Impact evaluation quality directly affects its use as a learning tool. Increasingly, international donor agencies working in Africa are emphasizing the need to learn more about the impact of development assistance on the poor. This poster provides insights on the role development partnerships can play towards enhancing the quality of impact evaluations in Africa.

What is Impact Evaluation?

Impact evaluation measures the effect of a development program or project, on individuals, households, institutions, and the environment. It provides an in-depth understanding of various causal relationships, and the extent to which the program or project goals were attained. Emphasis is placed on randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and statistical analysis for illuminating causal effects; however, impact can also be measured using other rigorous methods. Knowledge gained from impact evaluations is critical for learning about what works and what does not work in development programming. It is a vital input into decision-making on program implementation and policy design to achieve long-term sustainability.

Impact Evaluations in Africa

Very few impact evaluations are conducted on development programs in Africa. Those that are conducted are sometimes of poor quality. Reasons for the quantity and quality levels of impact evaluation include:

- Limited capacity to conduct evaluations
- Few incentives to conduct impact evaluations
- Expensive
- Time consuming
- Technically complex
- Political sensitivity to negative findings

Availability of good quality data is crucial to impact evaluation. This can be a challenge in African countries, where capacity for data collection and analysis may be limited. Collection of high quality data can also be complicated from both an administrative and scientific standpoint. Enhancing data quality is an area that evaluation partnerships can contribute towards.

What is Development Partnership?

An organizational model that bring together groups that include governments, international agencies, civil society, private sector representatives, into a formal, collaborative relationship dedicated to the pursuit of a shared development goal.

Characteristics of Partnership

- A union of equals – (equity)
- A mutually beneficial alliance between orgs; roles, responsibilities & accountabilities are clearly defined
- Based on trust, shared vision & commitment to common objectives

Factors for Effective Partnership

- Development of trust between parties
- Cooperative interpersonal relationships
- Active communication
- Mutual influence

Why is Partnership Vital in Evaluation?

- Enhance effectiveness & efficiency
- Access to crucial resources - expertise & relationships that would otherwise be inaccessible
- Produce new knowledge to inform development – Mutual learning is a key benefit derived from partnership
- Accountability leads to stronger partners – Mutual accountability

Benefits of Evaluation Partnership

- Opportunities to harmonize and align the overall processes of impact evaluation
- Shared burden of work
- Increased acceptance and legitimacy of evaluation findings and recommendations
- Mutual learning
- Mutual capacity building
- Mutual accountability

Challenges

- Partner identification
- Partnership can slow down the evaluation process
- Building consensus can be expensive and time consuming
- Cost – If evaluation is large and complex

Evaluation Partnerships – Some Examples

- Africa Impact Evaluation Initiative – Program in the World Bank's Africa Region that supports capacity development for rigorous impact evaluation
- Africa Development Bank (AfDB) and International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) – Joint Evaluations of Agriculture and Rural Development in Africa (Assess performance and impact of AfDB/IFAD policies and operations)
- Joint Donor Evaluation of the International HIV/AIDS Alliance's Organizational Performance

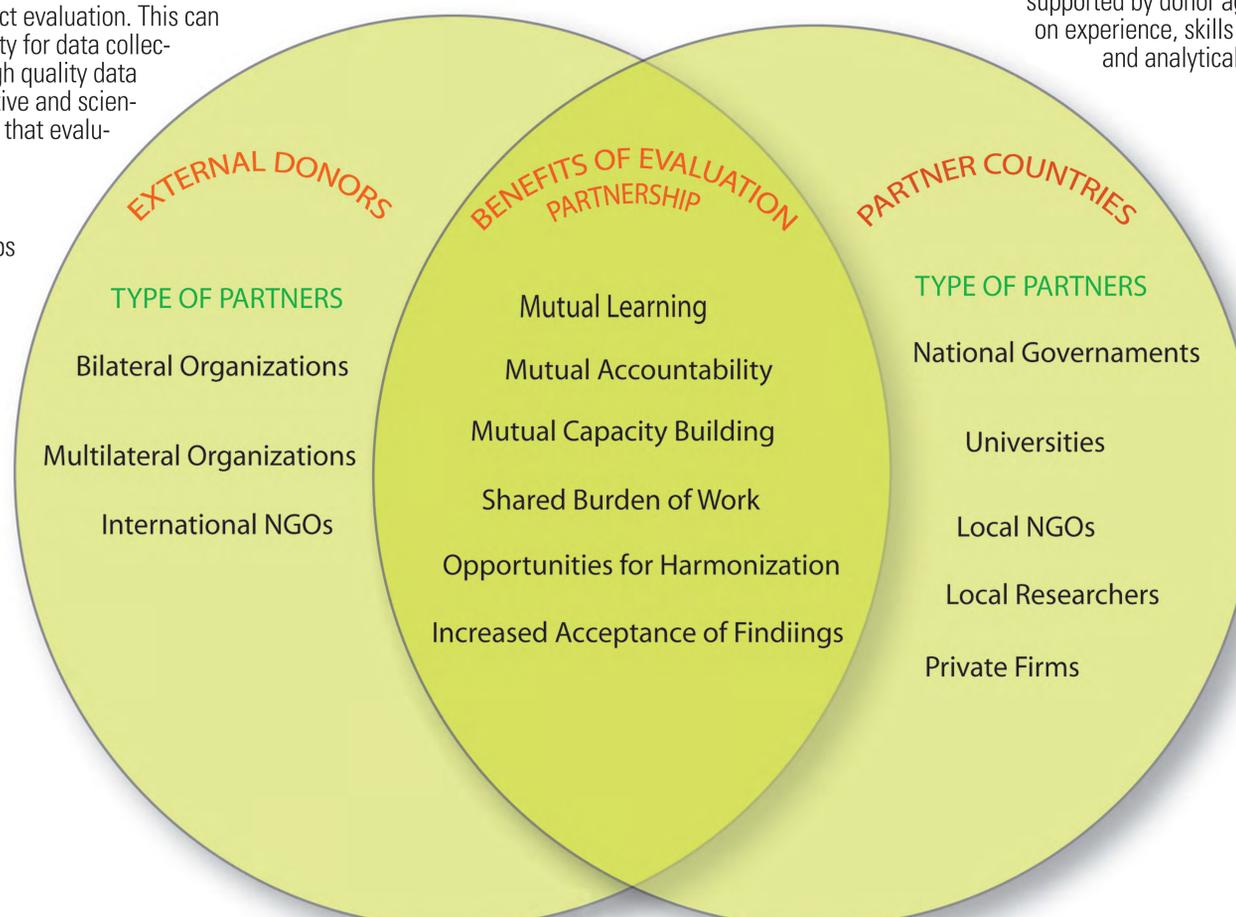
Conclusion

Evaluation serves two purposes, and these are accountability and learning for program improvement. There is significant potential in partnerships, towards institutionalizing impact evaluation, and improving data quality in Africa. Partnerships between donors and African institutions, to conduct joint evaluations, can contribute towards the enhancement of evaluation use for program decision-making.

Increased partnerships between donors and public and private institutions in Africa, is a goal that should be pursued, for strengthening capacity of African countries to conduct evaluations and measure development program impact. Effective partnership creates a sense of ownership, resulting in increased credibility and use of evaluation findings and recommendations.

Partnerships with Universities and increased support for evaluation training at the Masters level in African universities is one approach towards increasing the pool of skilled program evaluators, and contributing to increased quality of impact evaluations. Efforts should be made in including local evaluators as members of evaluation teams supported by donor agencies. This will provide much needed hands on experience, skills transfer, and enhance the harmonization of tools and analytical techniques.

Benefits of Evaluation Partnerships



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