

17-19 January 2007

**“MAKING EVALUATION OUR OWN:
STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR AFRICA-ROOTED AND
AFRICA LED M&E”**

Summary of a Special Conference Stream and Recommendations to AfrEA

Stream Overview

On 18 January 2007 a special conference stream took place at the Fourth Conference of the African Evaluation Association in Niamey, Niger to discuss the topic *Making Evaluation our own: Strengthening the Foundations for Africa Rooted and Africa Led M&E*.

The stream was designed to bring African and other international experiences in evaluation and in development evaluation to help stimulate debate on how M&E, which has for decades been imposed on the continent from outside, can become Africa led and owned (For further information refer to the attached invitation and programme). More than 100 persons signed in attendance during the first session.

The introductory session set the scene for the day's discussions by considering

- i) *The African Evaluation Challenge* (Dr Zenda Ofir, South Africa);
- ii) *The Trends Shaping M&E in the Developing World* (Prof Robert Picciotto, UK);
- iii) *The African Mosaic and Global Interactions: The Multiple Roles of and Approaches to Evaluation* (Prof Michael Patton & Prof Donna Mertens, USA).

The last two presentations explained, among others, the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation as it is practiced in the world today.

The next session briefly touched on some of the current evaluation methodologies used internationally in order to educate the audience about the variety of paradigms related to evidence in evaluation that exist internationally and that are likely to gain prominence in Africa. It also stimulated debate over the controversial impact evaluation initiative recently launched by the Centre for Global Development in Washington (Panel: Jim Rugh, Bill Savedoff, Rob van den Berg, Fred Carden, Nancy MacPherson and Ross Conner).

The final session considered some possibilities for developing an evaluation culture rooted in Africa (introduced and led by Prof Bagele Chilisa, Botswana). In this session some examples of how the African culture lends itself to evaluation was given and also some examples that demonstrated that the currently used evaluation methodologies could be enriched if it considered an African worldview.

The following key issues emerging from the presentations and discussion formed the basis for the motions presented below:

- Currently much of the evaluation practice in Africa is based on external values and contexts, is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid;
- For evaluation to have a greater contribution to development in Africa it needs to address challenges including those related to country ownership; the macro-micro disconnect; attribution; ethics and values; and power-relations;
- A variety of methods and approaches are available and valuable to contributing to frame our questions and methods of collecting evidence. However, we first need to reexamine our own preconceived assumptions; underpinning values, paradigms (e.g. transformative v/s pragmatic); what is acknowledged as being evidence; and by whom, *before* we can select any particular methodology/approach.

The lively discussion that ensued led to the appointment of a small group of African evaluators to distil from the discussions proposed actions that AfrEA could spearhead in order to fill the gap related to Africa Rooted and Africa Led M&E.

These actions, reflected in the motions below, were presented at the closing plenary session and received with great enthusiasm from participants both on the day and responding after the conference.

The stream acknowledges and extends its gratitude to the presenters for contributing their time to share their extensive experience and wealth of knowledge. Their biodata can be found in the annex to this report.

Also, many thanks to NORAD, in particular to Asbjørn Eidhammer, for their funding of the stream and for the generous offer to support an evaluation that may be used as a test case for an Africa rooted approach – an important opportunity to contribute to evaluation in Africa.

We are extremely grateful to Bob Picciotto for his gracious gesture in giving back to NORAD the full amount allocated to him with the request that it be used for further efforts to support the activities flowing from the stream.

In particular, the stream also extends much gratitude to Zenda Ofir and Sully Gariba, the stream organisers, for their enormous effort and dedication to ensure that AfrEA had the opportunity to discuss this important topic with the support of highly skilled and knowledgeable international and African evaluation professionals.

The motions follow below.

Motions

In order for evaluation to contribute more meaningfully to development in Africa, there is a need to re-examine the paradigms that guide evaluation practice on the continent. Africa rooted and Africa led M&E requires ensuring that African values and ways of constructing knowledge are considered as valid.

This, in turn, implies that:

- African evaluation standards and practices should be based on African values and world views
- The existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa
- There is a need to foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

We therefore urge AfrEA to consider the following:

- AfrEA guides and supports the development of African guidelines to operationalise the African evaluation standards and; in doing so, ensure that both the standards and operational guidelines are based on the existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews;
- AfrEA works with its networks to support and develop institutions, such as Universities, to enable them to establish evaluation as a profession and meta discipline within Africa;
- AfrEA identifies mechanisms in which African evaluation practitioners can be mentored and supported by experienced African evaluation professionals;
- AfrEA engages with funding agencies to explore opportunities for developing and adopting evaluation methodologies and practices that are based on African values and worldviews and advocate for their inclusion in future evaluations;
- AfrEA encourages and supports knowledge generated from evaluation practice within Africa to be published and profiled in scholarly publications. This may include:
 - Supporting the inclusion of peer reviewed publications on African evaluation in international journals on evaluation (for example, the publication of a special issue on African evaluation)
 - The development of scholarly publications specifically related to evaluation theories and practices in Africa (e.g. a journal of the AfrEA).

Task Team / Contributors

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