Experience of Promoting VOPEs

Lessons from the Community of Evaluators
Status of Evaluation

- **Genesis**
  - Need to establish evaluation as a separate discipline in South Asia.
  - Limited opportunities for knowledge exchange, interaction and learning
  - Absence of a regional platform
  - Limited research, documentation, dissemination of experiences
Present Status

- Diverse realities; similar development challenges;
- Evaluation getting increasing attention
- Absence of national level Evaluation Policy – Except Sri Lanka
- Difference in approach to evaluation between government and civil society;
- Absence of unified standards, ethics and protocols for the region
- Institutionalised capacity development on evaluation – slowly emerging
Experiences: Advocating for relevant public policies

- Very little collaborative work between the government and the civil society;
- National evaluation policy - limited to Sri Lanka
- Outcome monitoring is gaining prominence in government work
- Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) established by Government of India
Experiences: Strengthening Organisational Capacities

- Central challenge – Absence of formal institutional identity.
- No strategic planning
- Anchored by Host Organisation
  - Has legal identity, management expertise and experience in the sector
Experiences:
Enhancing skills of individual evaluators

- Dedicated CB events leading to increased knowledge and skills
- Regular practice, documentation of learning and dissemination beyond the conclave - not evident.
- Theory and practice – western in origin; limited practice opportunities and absorption.
- Knowledge products – yet to be developed and marketed.
- Absence of regional level capacity building needs assessment.
Established identity as a Regional Platform.
37 Individual and institutional members.
Edited volume on evaluative practices in South Asia – documented - will be published soon.
Regular conduction of events – Evaluation Conclave, Regional Events.
Strong networking – EvalPartner & CLEAR.
Results Achieved (2)

- Website used as an interactive medium
- Focussed CB events and Discussion threads to develop individual capacities;
- Improved understanding of different approaches, tools and techniques.
- Clarity and agreement on institutional form; registration will be done soon.
Challenges and How addressed (1)

- CoE without a formal identity
  - Host Organisation brought in to provide support
- Absence of decision making mechanism
  - Strategic Advisory Team facilitates decision making
- Members dispersed over a wide area; not actively involved in day-to-day activities
  - Dedicated task teams, practice tracks
  - Regular communication
Absence of institutionalised effort to build capacity
  ▪ Use of focused CB effort to build capacities of individual members.

Reaching scale to address large numbers of practitioners in all the countries of South Asia
  ▪ Membership drive to be initiated with Responsibility and Incentives Framework.
Success Factors

- Continued Core Funding from IDRC with strong technical support and backstopping.
- Host Organisations, with experience in managing networks, sector and discipline
- Participatory visioning - accommodating emerging views and expectation of members.
- Member driven platform
Effort to institutionalise should go hand in hand with effort to deliver the key results.
Role of Host Organisation with relevant experience and expertise is important.
Secretariat – important to facilitate delivery of key functions; role should be nuanced, clear and agreed
Members contribution should be guided by tangible give and take (Responsibility and Incentives Framework)
Learning (2)

- Continue engagement with more successful members; encourage contribution from the less successful ones.
- Recognise contribution; share responsibilities to avoid pressure on individual members.
- Donor support is a start-up capital; design and pursue a self-generating business model for sustainability.
- Ensure regular communication and engagement with members through a range of online and offline options.
- Take difference of opinion positively and strive for accommodation, diversity and common goal.
If you want to go fast, go alone
If you want to go far, go together

- African Proverb