The role of VOPEs in influencing an enabling environment for evaluation

A South African Experience

Global EvalPartners Forum on Civil Society’s Evaluation capacities
Chiang Mai, Thailand 3 December, 2012

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VOLUNTARISM, CONSOLIDATION, COLLABORATION & GROWTH – SAMEA AS VOPE

SAMEA - PHASES AND GROWTH

• Founders [Bisgard, Ofir, Kelly] and protocols [Board; voluntary, expenses]
• 2010 DPME Creation in Presidency as champion for M&E (now approx 200 posts, US$20 million budget)

STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

Strengthening an Enabling Environment for evaluation (SAMEA)

• Through its strategic goals: advocacy for M&E nationally; provide a platform for M&E debate; promote professional standards; capacity building
• SAMEA is one of several initiatives strengthening an enabling environment:
• Universities: Clear [Wits], Crest [Stellenbosch], university M&E courses leading to post graduate degrees
• Independents/consultancies: supply scarce evaluation skills
Other players: foundations, AG, Treasury, PALAMA
Key Enabling Factors for Evaluation (DPME)

- Evaluation Policy & Guidelines
- From Compliance to learning
- Standards & Competencies
- Training
- Funding of Evaluations
- Utilisation Focus (Improvement Plans; Dissemination)
- Evaluation Agenda/ Plan

Enabling Factors
Key enabling factors (DPME)


- National Plan identifies minimum evaluations based on National Priorities to be undertaken. 2012/13 plan approved with 8 evaluations & 2013/14 approved with 15 priority evaluations

- Draft standards for evaluations developed, and competences for programme staff commissioning evaluations, government M&E staff managing evaluations, and evaluators.

- Training course for government staff managing evaluations have been developed (using these competencies) and piloted 17-21 September 2012

- Guidelines: 4 evaluation guidelines approved. Plan in place for developing guidelines on 6 types of evaluations

- The methodology for Improvement Plans piloted.

- Evaluation and Research Unit, established at the DPME – currently consists of 7 members. It is responsible for setting up the evaluation system, providing technical support to departments on evaluations and oversees the evaluation system.
Key Enabling Factors (SAMEA)

- Willingness to debate, support new thinking, and decide [e.g.: key notes, fee collection, Conference theme]
- Protect balance sheet: 2 principles:
  [i] match disbursements with income,
  [ii] annually, the old Board present new Board with strengthened financial position
**NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT, COUNTRY-LED EVALUATION SYSTEM AIMED A MOVING FROM POLICIES TO RESULTS OR OUTCOMES, AND SAMEA**

*Segone’s (2007: 31-2) capacity development framework addressing the demand as well as the supply side of evaluation, provides a valuable tool for classifying SA as country led system.

We suggest it aspires to avoid the classification “vicious circle country” where evidence provided government is “technically weak and policy-makers have little capacity to make use of it”, and like most, aspires to be classified as “virtuous circle country”, where evidence provided is “technically robust and is being used increasingly for decision-making”.

For debate is whether it can be classified as: “evidence supply–constrained country” where evidence is technically weak, reduces the quality of decision-making and therefore the quality of services delivered, but is increasingly demanded by policy-makers who resent being held to account on the basis of inadequate evidence.

Or, “evidence demand-constrained country”, where the improved quality and quantity of evidence is not demanded because policy-makers lack the incentives and/or the capacity to use it.

Debate in SAMEA has turned to the issue of thinking M&E systemically, this classification assisting the Board, as well as 2 metaphors.
METAPHORS GUIDING THINKING EVALUATION SYSTEMICALLY IN SA

* “pincer” and “diminishing circles” (King Shaka, Zululand, SA)
* the ancient chronicler’s account of Daniel (Patton, CES St Johns, Canada)

Evaluation environment in SA: needs both,

* research oriented evaluation; force majeure; base of pincer; mainstream
* framework oriented evaluation; expands evaluation; tip of horn; increases the reach of evaluation; the ideal in a system – evaluees self-evaluate, refine, strengthen and improve (Fetterman).
* avoid re-inventing the wheel – indigenize M&E (Wehripihana, New Zealand)

STRENGTHENING EQUITY-FOCUSED AND GENDER-SENSITIVE EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND EVALUATIONS

* SAMEA actively advocates for evaluation being sensitive to ‘local perturbations and effects’ and for explicit values guiding evaluation – improvement, community ownership, inclusion, democratic participation, evidence-based strategies, social justice, capacity-building, accountability [of 10], and for empowerment as explicit aim. That is, values which cohere within a well conceptualized and tested framework [Fetterman 2001, 2005, 2012).

* In doing so, it actively advocates for ‘evaluee self-evaluation’ facilitated by an external evaluation specialist.

* And it has seen this as continuous theme in its strengthening the evaluation environment in SA.
STRENGTHENING A SUSTAINABLE STRATEGY TO ENHANCE INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES TO CONDUCT CREDIBLE EVALUATIONS

*SAMEA’s mandate: bi-annual Conference; capacity-building workshop series
*strengthened through Conference Proceedings: state of evaluation in SA
*strengthened through innovation: side-by-side in parallel Virtual Symposium, Conference 2011 [Wpeg]; hyperlinks to a repository of references to evaluation research shaping the field
  - e-texts on programme evaluation methodology
  - premised on substantive issues demanded for capacity building
*strengthened through collaboration: with national and provincial government, foundations, independents, to establish M&E Chapters in provinces promoting evaluation demand, capacity building workshops developing individuals to conduct credible evaluations

BOTTLENECKS AND CHALLENGES
*Board member time and overload
*establishing a steady income stream: principles [recoup disbursements; hand over to new Board improved balance sheet]
*physical space to house SAMEA
DPME Partnership with SAMEA

DPME has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SAMEA to collaborate in promoting M&E in South Africa. Rationale for this for entering into this partnerships was the following:

1. Broad and **diverse membership of SAMEA** (includes NGOs/VOPEs, etc) has several benefits for DPME including access to the broader stakeholders/community of practice;

2. Needed an **independent critical friend and adviser** to comment on these Government products;


**Areas of Cooperation**

1. Co-organising capacity building and learning activities;

2. Dissemination around M&E - helping each other reach a wider group of M&E Practitioners.

3. Collaborating on evaluation standards and competencies;

4. Working towards professionalising evaluation in South Africa;

5. To encourage citizen participation and reporting.
Progress and Results to date

**Policy-making**
- On 30 September 2011 SAMEA organised a working session to comment on the then draft National Evaluation Policy Framework, later approved by Cabinet on 13 November 2011.

**Evaluation Workshop and launch of an M&E Association in KwaZulu-Natal Province**
- A successful evaluation workshop, jointly organised by both organisations was held from 25-27 September 2012, which coincided with the launch of Provincial M&E Association.

**Standards and Competencies for Evaluation in Government**
- A Series of consultative workshops on draft Standards and Competencies for Evaluation in Government developed by DPME are underway, targeting SAMEA members in 4 Provinces (States) – one successful workshop already taken place on 23 November 2012 – very useful inputs.

**Face-to-face Board meetings**
- Significantly strengthened Board decisions
- Developed a Plan of Action.
INNOVATIONS GOING FORWARD AND LESSONS LEARNT

• Legotla’ or meeting where the Board can discuss substantive issues in M&E
• Conference Panels: -DGs use as platform for reporting and critical comment citizenry
• Conference paper strings: in Additional Mathematics, rigor, preparing quality students studying Engineering, back-end implication of innovation
Next Steps

• Build strong collaborative partnerships

• Strengthen income stream to remain an independent M&E player nationally: voluntarism vs a growing Secretariat (SAMEA)

• Increase membership pool: individual, Institutional

• Development of a 3 year DPME-SAMEA Strategic Plan is underway to concretise the Memorandum of Understanding;

• Consultative workshops on draft framework to strengthen the participation of citizens in service delivery monitoring, i.e. Citizens Based Monitoring (CBM);

• SAMEA reflecting on evaluation standards and competencies for Government and exploring a possibility of widening them or adopting them;

• Professionalising evaluation;

• Joint newsletter depicting findings of key evaluations, case studies and best practices.
THANK YOU!