

Partnership building in Sri Lanka to promote evaluation¹

The Sri Lanka Evaluation Association (SLEvA) success can be attributed to the strategic partnerships formed over the years. Its main strategic partner is the government through the Ministry of Plan Implementation with whom SLEvA has, amongst other things, organized several conferences, professional development workshops. Both parties benefitted from this alliance. While SLEvA gained recognition and credibility the Ministry was able to develop the capacity of its officials and gain more exposure. Collaboration with the UN has also been central to SLEvA's growth. UNICEF and UNDP are assisting SLEvA in most of their activities. This assistance was not primarily to provide financial resources but more as a catalyst in creating networks, accessing professional resources and above all imparting the strength of conviction in the role that a civil society organization like SLEvA can play, in supporting the development process in Sri Lanka.

The German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ, now GIZ), Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), and the American Red Cross are other agencies that have collaborated with SLEvA in capacity building and dissemination of information. SLEvA has also established links with other key evaluation organizations. It has been a member of the IOCE since 2006. It hosted the formation of the Evaluation Network of South Asia (ENSA) an initiative of the UNICEF Regional Office. SLEvA has also entered into a collaborative partnership with Community of Evaluators (CoE) of South Asia.

Numerous information exchange visits made by many delegations is a testimony to SLEvA's recognition as one of South Asia's leading evaluation associations. SLEvA has shared its experience with visiting delegations from Afghanistan, Republic of Yemen, Nepal and Uganda, who wanted to study its model of a civil society organization collaborating with the government on evaluation. SLEvA also shared experiences with the visiting study team from the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET). As a testimony of the recognition achieved by SLEvA, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) Evaluation Office in Washington DC, who visited SLEvA in 2012, have requested collaboration with the VOPE in the capacity of an independent review panel in evaluation of GEF support to Sri Lanka. GEF is now also a corporate member of SLEvA.

¹ http://www.ioce.net/en/PDFs/national/2012/SriLanka_SLEvA_CaseStudy.pdf

Tripartite collaboration to build a Conceptual Framework for Evaluation in Malaysia²

In Malaysia, the evaluation agenda has been integrated as a key factor in performance planning for the public sector. This change is a result of a tripartite collaboration between the public sector (Ministry of Finance), civil society (Malaysian Evaluation Society-MES), and private sector (Centre for Development & Research in Evaluation (CeDRE) International).

The conceptual approach to evaluation has been brought to new heights with the inclusion of evaluation as an integral component with three specific mandates being seriously considered:

Mandate 1: Annual formative evaluations to be required for every Ministry and its programmes and activities.³

Mandate 2: The Internalized Self-Evaluation (ISE) model to be adopted at every Ministry, where every Activity and Programme will be encouraged to carry out its own internal evaluation as a key strategy for improving performance planning and development results.

Mandate 3: The budgetary process is also pegged to the evaluation function. All government agencies to be required to conduct evaluations for their Programmes and to use the evaluations to support any proposal for policy or Programme adjustments.

Conceptually, evaluation is now factored into the performance planning and management agenda as an integral component rather than an end process. This has major implications for evaluation as it is now factored into the performance management agenda taking into account all key dimensions. Evaluation capacity development in Malaysia is thus guided and driven by this integrated multi-dimensional approach rather than a purely training-based conceptual approach. Under this approach, government recognizes that focusing on evaluation in itself or building capacity purely based on training and technical skills alone cannot be successful or sustainable.

This new conceptual approach was designed and developed within the tripartite partnership. The Ministry of Finance provided the right policy environment and support, MES provided the evaluation institutional and technical support, and CeDRE provided the technical design, development, testing, and capacity building support for many of the tools and techniques used for evaluation promotion in the Malaysian public sector. The partnership resulted in many new approaches and models for evaluation that the public sector would otherwise have perhaps taken years to accomplish. In addition, the three partners jointly organized public forums and conferences, which brought evaluation experiences and international examples to public officials.

² http://ioce.net/download/national/Malaysia_MES_CaseStudy.pdf

³ However, the selection of programmes for evaluation is based on a specific set of criteria to ensure that it is practical and manageable. Typically, it is recommended that programmes that have high impact, high cost, and serious implications are evaluated on a formative basis. This limitation is in recognition of the capacity constraints rather than the need itself. It was a temporary measure until adequate internal capacity is built within every public sector entity through the Internalised Self- Evaluation approach.

Recognizing and overcoming bottlenecks in managing a regional network in Latin America and the Caribbean⁴

ReLAC is a regional network of evaluators in Latin America and the Caribbean. It is understood to be a network of networks. Some of the main challenges of managing ReLAC have to do with the voluntary nature of the network, in which evaluators have joined voluntarily and pro bono (ad-honorarium). In the case of the Executive Committee, this has resulted in a significant burden of work (especially when regional conferences are being organized), which in several cases has led the committee members to overlook their jobs and formal activities. One way to deal with this situation has been by engaging network members who do not participate in the Executive Committee on specific tasks.

On the other hand, there has also been some lack of demand of accountability from the members of the network to the members of the Executive Committee. This is expressed in practices of delegating responsibilities, leaving it in the hands the management of the network, without the subsequent request for information or an offer to carry out tasks and activities.

The various Executive Committees constituted also had an absence of clear and agreed mechanisms for resolving conflicts and opposing positions. In 2012 the Executive Committee discussed and updated its internal operating rules in order to facilitate communication, problem solving and decision-making. The absence of a membership fee also leads to the lack of resources to address major actions.

⁴ UNICEF, EvalPartners, IOCE in partnership with Cooperacion Espanola, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, UNEG, UNWomen. (2013). *Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs): Learning from Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia, Europe and Middle East*, available at http://www.mymande.org/voluntary_organizations_for_professional_evaluation