



IEG
INDEPENDENT
EVALUATION GROUP

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Using Evaluation Evidence to Improve the Effectiveness of Partnership Programs

March 16 – 17, 2016, Washington, DC | Post-Workshop Summary Note

WHAT WORKS



Background

The Independent Evaluation Group hosted a two-day workshop on March 16-17, 2016 to discuss the use of evaluation in enhancing the effectiveness of partnership programs. Over 30 participants from across the development spectrum attended the workshop.

This note summarizes the discussions and key takeaways from the workshop for the benefit of the broader OECD-DAC community. It is intended to be a starting point for further discussions related to the evaluation of partnership programs. It concludes with some suggested next steps to move this agenda forward. It is hoped that implementation of the suggestions and subsequent discussion will contribute to improvements in the practice and use of evaluation in partnership programs.

Why focus on partnerships?

Partnership programs present unique problems for evaluators. Each program has its own governance and implementation arrangements, as well as a unique political economy, the dynamics of which can affect the environment for evaluation. In addition, partnership programs operate at multiple levels—country, regional, and global—and often support more than one type of activity in development areas where monitoring and evaluation are not well established or are especially difficult.

Evaluation (and monitoring) are not always part of the discussion when partnerships are established, and it can be challenging to introduce them later. Yet, stakeholders need assurance that the investments they make in partnerships produce the desired results. Evaluation not only provides such assurance but can produce learning to help partnership programs improve their effectiveness and efficiency.

Over the last decade, much has been learned about the issues involved in evaluating partnerships. Today, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) are among the few large partnerships that have independent evaluation functions of their own. Many other large partnerships have established transparent rules on how and when to conduct external evaluations. But such arrangements are still a minority in the rapidly growing universe of partnership programs. Meanwhile, partnerships of all sizes continue to proliferate and the quality of evaluation for these programs, when evaluation is done at all, is uneven. The use of evaluation findings to inform decision making is limited.

The unique challenges in evaluating partnerships

To launch a discussion of how best to enable the use of evaluation to enhance partnership program effectiveness, the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) hosted a workshop on March 16-17, 2016 in Washington, DC (see attached agenda). The objective of the workshop was “to promote shared understanding of the challenges in the monitoring and evaluation of global and regional partnership programs; disseminate good practices; and stimulate closer collaboration among stakeholders.”

Participants included 37 evaluation practitioners and representatives of partnership programs, international and regional agencies, bilateral partners, private foundations, and the World Bank Group (the full list of participants is attached).

The first day of the workshop featured a series of short presentations by partners and evaluation practitioners, followed by open discussion. The topics discussed included:

- How will partnership programs need to adjust and adapt to make relevant and effective contributions in the changing global context?
- What does evaluative evidence tell us about the challenges of building effective partnerships?
- What principles guide effective evaluations of partnership programs?
- What evaluative evidence do programs need to improve their development effectiveness?

The second day focused on harvesting the experience of the participants to address key issues identified during the panel discussions and through facilitated exercises. The issues identified by the participants included the following:

- Political economy of evaluation in partnerships
- Principles and standards for evaluation of partnerships
- Implications of program life cycle for evaluation and monitoring
- Building a culture of evaluation in partnerships
- Collaboration in evaluation
- Good practices for assessing program governance structures
- Creating governance structures for evaluation in partnerships
- Ways to establish continuous feedback to partners and stakeholders
- Maintaining independence while engaging
- Identify process-level indicators
- Good practices for assessing the value added by partnerships and programs
- What kind of evaluation best serves the needs of the partnership? (ex post, ex ante, “real time”)
- Serving learning as well as accountability

Participants discussed the issues in sub-groups and then presented their reflections to the plenary.

This summary note is the primary output from the workshop. It captures the major themes and insights that emerged over the two days of the workshop.

Making Room for Evaluation in Partnership Programs

Evaluation can provide partnership programs with essential knowledge about what works and what does not in the pursuit of defined development goals. It also provides a mechanism through which stakeholders can ensure accountability for delivering results. All of the partnerships that were discussed in the workshop highlighted the value of evaluation. In many cases, however, participants noted that evaluation was an afterthought in the process of developing and implementing partnerships. A major theme emerging from the discussions was the need to develop a culture of evaluation within partnership programs to ensure that the programs are not only designed to be evaluated but also use the learning generated by evaluation to improve programs.

To that end, evaluation and, by extension, monitoring need to be integral to the program from the start. This is somewhat easier for large partnerships and for partners with existing evaluation functions than it is for smaller programs and for partners without such functions. For example, the GEF was designed to accommodate evaluation and incorporated an evaluation function within its governance structure (shown in Figure 1).

The Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP), a medium-size program housed in the World Bank is another example which shows that it is possible to build effective M&E to demonstrate outcomes and results achieved by program activities via close collaboration with the donors and partners of the program. This is less likely to occur in partnerships that lack governing bodies or where more informal governance structures are common. Even in such cases, however, there are ways to conduct evaluations and ensure that findings are used in decision making processes.

At the MasterCard Foundation, monitoring and evaluation are organized around “learning frameworks”. A theory of change, learning questions,



What Is a Partnership?

Although the workshop did not attempt to define “partnership program,” the need for a shared definition was noted. Some participants also suggested that there is a need for greater clarity around the terminology used in partnerships, including the word “partner” itself. The term has many definitions and covers a wide array of partnership forms. IEG’s evaluation experience has mostly been based on assessing two types of programs: global and regional.

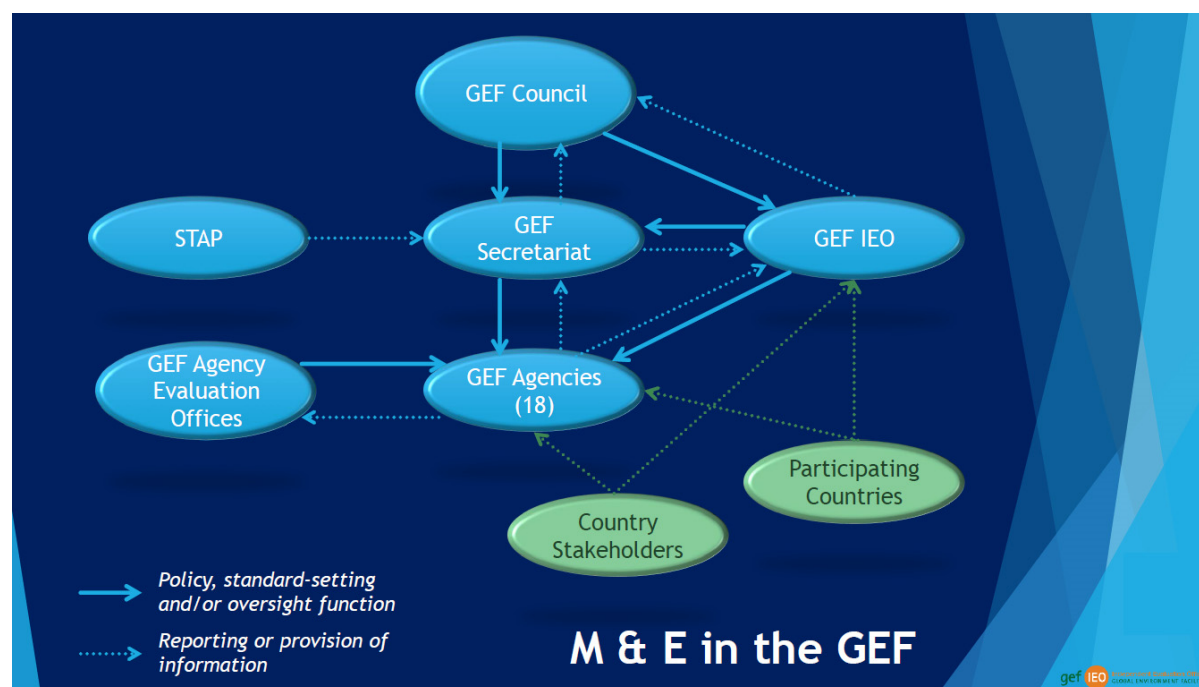
Global and regional partnership programs (GRPPs) are programmatic partnerships with three characteristics. First, the partners dedicate resources to achieving agreed objectives over time. Second, the programs conduct activities that are global, regional, or multi-country in scope. Third, the partners establish a new organization with shared governance and management unit to deliver these activities.

Many partnership programs do not have such formal governance arrangements. For instance, another common type of collaboration among partners and donors is the multi-donor trust fund (MDTF). MDTFs, like GRPPs, are programmatic in nature and conduct activities that are global, regional, or simply multi-country in scope. However, they do not have a governing body and the program manager reports only to a line manager and ultimately to the board of the host organization.

and core metrics are developed for each program and initiative. This allows embedding the evaluation and research into the full lifecycle of a project or program, allowing for ongoing learning and knowledge sharing for all the partners.

One way to build a culture of evaluation is to ensure that the partnership agrees at the outset on a regular schedule of evaluation and on the type of evaluation that will be performed. While such action can ensure that evaluation takes place, ensuring the use of evaluation in decision making requires deeper commitment.

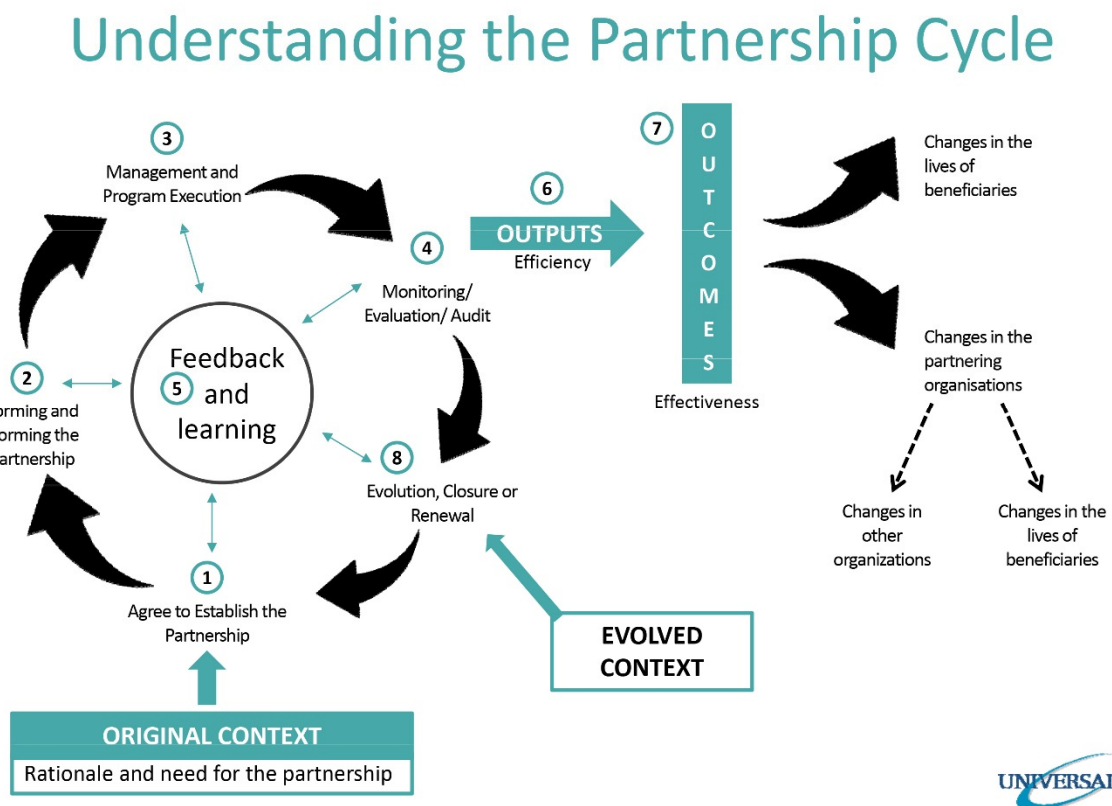
Figure 1. Independent Evaluation in GEF



Source: GEF Independent Evaluation Office (IEO)

Partnerships can further strengthen evaluation, in part, by designing results frameworks with a clear theory of change. Many partnership programs have produced outputs, but lacking a results framework for that work, it has been difficult to show any impacts from those outputs. Once a partnership program is under way, evaluation should be part of the program lifecycle, providing regular feedback to partners and stakeholders alike. This was underscored by the experience of Universalis, which offered a useful diagram of evaluation within the program lifecycle (Figure 2). When evaluation is fully integrated in the lifecycle of a program it can aid both the achievement of results and the evolution of the program when the context for the program changes.

Figure 2. Understanding the Partnership Cycle



Source: Universalia

The integration of evaluation into a program can result in incentives that undermine the value of evaluation. In partnerships where evaluation is informal, it may never happen. At the other end of the spectrum, mandated evaluation can result in ineffective “box checking” behavior around evaluation that yields little value for the program or its stakeholders.

Evaluation arrangements should be commensurate with the size and scope of a partnership program. Workshop participants noted that the burden of evaluation needs to match the scale of the program. While most of the programs described in the workshop were large and involved partners with well-developed evaluation functions, many programs are smaller and may include partners that are less adept at the commissioning and using evaluation. In such cases, workshop participants said, it would be useful to have guidelines for a minimum acceptable level of evaluation (and monitoring) for various program sizes or types, to which end a typology of programs would need to be developed. To better integrate evaluation into partnership programs, therefore, the programs themselves would benefit from clear governance principles and guidelines about how to build programs that not only make room for evaluation but build a culture that values the use of evaluation findings in decision making. It might also be beneficial to have a peer review process for partnership programs that would help to “certify” that good practices are being followed.

Adapting Evaluation Practice and Process to Partnership Program Assessment

The practice of partnership program evaluation has benefited from the IEG/OECD-DAC sourcebook, specifically for partnerships with formal governance structures, but workshop participants expressed interest in having more guidance on evaluating programs with less formal governance arrangements as well as on evaluating the partnering process and the health of partnership itself.

At the time the sourcebook was created, there was a relatively small body of evaluations of partnership programs. Now that a larger body of evaluations has been established, it would be helpful to conduct a review of existing evaluation methods to develop a more systematic approach to partnership evaluation. In this vein, a paper presented by IEG at the partnership workshop examined IEG's own evaluations of partnership programs and 20 recent external evaluations. The paper identified seven important principles that point toward a more systematic approach.

- To improve the authorizing environment, make sure there is a mutually agreed evaluation policy.
- To improve credibility, ensure evaluation independence.
- Invest time in planning the evaluation.
- To have quality evaluation, choose criteria that fit the purpose.
- To guarantee credibility and ownership, make sure evaluation is transparent and key stakeholders are consulted.
- Make sure that recommendations are agreed on and followed up.
- Plan dissemination in advance.

An area that is particularly important is the collaboration required within a partnership program, as well as among both partners and evaluators around the evaluation. Workshop participants noted that donors often have differing reporting and information requirements that can lead to multiple evaluations of a program by different teams examining different aspects of the program. Such duplication of efforts can also arise from the political economy of the partnership when there is a lack of trust between partners. A presentation by IEG highlighted a few issues that can affect collaboration in partnerships:

- Agreement on aims can be difficult
- Finance can dominate partnering
- Suspicion and lack of trust of participants can affect collaboration
- Collaboration fatigue can set in
- Leadership can be imposed or can emerge
- Manipulation and political activity can overtake collaboration.

Overcoming such internal frictions in a program can help smooth the way for evaluation and reduce the evaluation burden on programs, an issue that is particularly important for smaller programs. To help improve collaboration, it would be useful to document and share good practices in collaboration around evaluation.

How to ensure effective evaluation of partnership programs

In order to effectively evaluate a partnership program, the process must start at the program initiation stage by establishing mutually acceptable, clear rules for evaluation arrangements, regardless of the program size. By engaging before the evaluation, partners can ensure that the evaluation will serve their particular information needs. Evaluators, for their part, need to recognize that they have an imperative to understand the needs of the partners to ensure that the information they produce will be used. During the evaluation, evaluators and partners should stay in regular communication, providing opportunities to engage with the emerging findings. The report produced at the end should also be responsive to the needs of the partners and the partnership and should make room for engagement with the management of the partnership to ensure the recommendations are clear, useful, and actionable. Experience at IEG and other organizations has shown that this is possible to do without compromising the independence of the evaluation.

Participants cited three important considerations for evaluation of partnership programs: scope, indicators, and timing. Evaluations should not only assess the effectiveness of the program, but also assess the partnership itself. This area is especially weak in partnership program evaluations and points to a need for process-level indicators. For example, in evaluating partnership effectiveness, evaluators need to be able to gauge the contribution of the partnership to the outcomes of the programs and activities in which the partnership engages. With regard to timing, partners often set unrealistic expectations and scope for program evaluations. Assessing the effectiveness of a mature, 5 to 7 year old program is more realistic, while focusing on the relevance of the program's design and the effectiveness of its governance structure can be more appropriate and useful for newly established programs. It is also useful to have guidelines about when to engage and with what type of evaluation.

In some circumstances, it may be helpful to conduct a pre-partnership meta-evaluation to help in positioning the partnership and in defining its value added, in other cases, small-scale impact evaluations (with appropriate planning from the start) might be feasible. And in other instances, a "real-time" process evaluation would be more useful.

A common theme running through many of the workshop discussions was the need for some authority to act as the arbiter of good evaluation practice for partnership programs. There are two aspects to this issue. One relates to the programs themselves, the other to the evaluation of those programs. In the first instance, programs (particularly smaller or less formal programs) need guidance about the minimum level of capacity they need to take advantage of evaluation. With regard to evaluation, the OECD-DAC has provided some valued assistance in the past in promoting quality evaluations, disseminating good evaluation practices and encouraging better collaboration among partners in development evaluations, but more may be needed. One suggestion was the creation of a global partnership forum that would serve as a mechanism for the exchange of perspectives on the issues involved in partnership program evaluation and contribute to the development of solutions. Such a forum might also be used to stimulate research, such as a meta-analysis of evaluation methods that are unique to partnership evaluation to establish a base of knowledge. It would also be helpful to have research on the political economy of partnership programs.

While a global forum might fill some gaps, other participants suggested that some authority is needed to identify and promulgate good practice, including good governance standards. Adherence to the standards is also an issue, and it would be useful to consider ways to certify programs based on their evaluability and evaluators based on their knowledge and experience with partnership evaluation. A peer review process was suggested as another way to ensure adherence to good practice. This could build upon the existing OECD-DAC process, or it could be a separate independent entity.

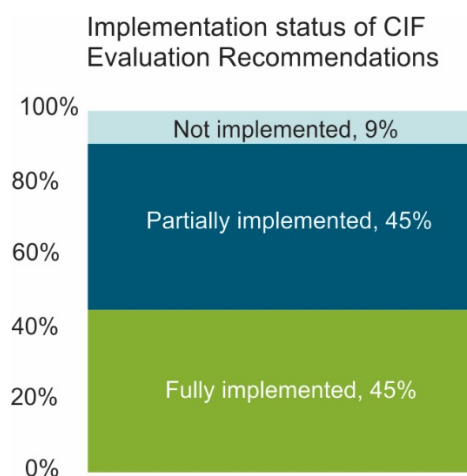
There are many partnerships that do not have or need their own evaluation functions. These programs currently lack the guidance they need to commission and use evaluation effectively. While, OECD-DAC provides guidance on the conduct of evaluations, and many large development institutions have well-developed evaluation functions, there are still some gaps. In particular, bilaterals and other partners would benefit from guidelines on capabilities and competencies required of evaluators of partnership programs. Such guidelines should help those who commission evaluations, those who conduct evaluations, as well as those who use the evaluation findings.

Tracking the Impact of Partnership Program Evaluation

To be valued, evaluations need to have a demonstrable impact on the operation of partnership programs and the outcomes they produce. Most evaluations offer recommendations to the programs and their stakeholders. In large development institutions, like the UN system agencies and the multilateral development banks, there are systems in place to track the implementation of those recommendations. A mechanism for tracking the implementation of recommendations in partnership programs would help ensure that evaluations result in actions to improve program processes, outputs, and outcomes. For partnership programs with governing bodies, the program management often reports on the implementation of the recommendations to the governing body. In programs with less formal governance structures such reporting arrangement can be stipulated in the evaluation arrangements.

Monitoring the Implementation of Recommendations

The Climate Investment Funds in 2014 established an Action Plan to monitor implantation of its recommendations. The latest data indicate that fully 90 percent of recommendations were partially or fully implemented. In May 2015, it took further steps to enhance evidence-based learning using evaluation.



Workshop participants noted that the planning for a partnership evaluation should start with an assessment of the potential for using the findings and identification of the points of influence that might be used to ensure that recommendations are acted upon.

Suggested Next Steps

The workshop brought together a variety of perspectives on the evaluation of partnership programs, including from evaluation practitioners, bilateral donors, partnerships that commission and use evaluations, and others. Despite the diversity of viewpoints, there was general agreement on two clear major messages.

First, partnership programs need guidance regarding norms and principles that they can apply systematically to carry out high-quality assessments of a program's development effectiveness. These should also include guidance on minimum levels of capacity they need to commission evaluations and ensure that evaluators have the information they need.

Second, evaluators of partnership programs would benefit from a systematic effort to identify good practices that are unique to these programs, such as ways to operate within the dynamic political economies of partnership evaluations. Together with norms and principles, these would help build a culture of evaluation.

With these challenges in mind, several steps can be taken to advance the use and practice of evaluation in partnership programs:

- a) **Organize a community of practice for evaluators of partnership programs.** This may initially be catalyzed by IEG, OECD-DAC, or UNEG. Such a group would provide a platform for gathering and sharing good practice and may help to stimulate research into areas of particular relevance for partnership programs.
- b) **Develop/adapt a set of standards and norms for evaluating partnership programs and for ensuring that evaluation is embedded in the lifecycle of partnership programs.** This might include development of a checklist for evaluators to use in the evaluation of different types of partnership programs. There is no obvious entity to undertake such an activity, but the OECD-DAC would serve as a useful place to begin discussions about how to undertake such an effort, and IEG could provide useful input to this activity.
- c) **Develop a peer review mechanism for partnership evaluations.** This could be somewhat similar to the joint OECD DAC Evaluation Network and UN Evaluation Group evaluation function peer review process. The community of practice might undertake initial discussions about how best to provide such services to a wide range of evaluations, and perhaps also to partnerships themselves to help ensure that evaluation arrangements and quality are up to established standards.

List of Participants

Bilateral partners

1. Antonie De Kemp, Coordinating Evaluator, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands
2. David Slattery, Director, Office of Development Effectiveness, DFAT, Australia
3. Tom Hennessy, Director, Evaluation and Audit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland
4. Patrick Empey, Leader of Irish Aid's Essential Services policy team, IrishAid
5. Riitta Oksanen, Senior Advisor, Unit for Development Evaluation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland
6. Krishna Kumar, Senior Evaluation Advisor, Evaluation and Aid effectiveness, State Department, USA
7. Olzhas Issabekov, Director, Foreign Economic Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan
8. Anuar Adilbekov, Third Secretary, Foreign Economic Policy Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan

World Bank Group Global Partnership Programs

9. Mafalda Duarte, Program Manager, Climate Investment Funds (CIF)
10. Josef Trommer, Program Manager, Global Program for Social Accountability (GPSA)
11. Hanh Le, Senior Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist, FIRST Initiative
12. Luis Tineo, Lead Operations Officer, Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)
13. Rohit Khanna, Practice Manager, Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP)
14. Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer, Deputy Director, Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office (GEF IEO)
15. Carlo Carugi, Senior Evaluation Officer, GEF IEO
16. Catherine O'Farrell, Program Manager, Global Partnership on Output-based Aid (GPOBA)
17. Moritz Bilagher, Senior M&E specialist, Global Partnership for Education (GPE)
18. Anne Francoise Marie Guison Dowdy, GPE

World Bank Group

19. Jaehyang So, Director, Trust Funds and Partnerships, World Bank Group
20. David Johan Kuijper, Adviser, Financing for Development, WBG
21. David Gray, Senior Knowledge Management Officer, Development Partner Relations, WBG
22. Ivar Cederholm, Senior Operations Officer, Africa Region Development Effectiveness Unit, WBG
23. Andrea E. Stumpf, Lead Counsel, Legal-Concessional Finance, WBG

International and regional organizations

- 24. Fumiko Ouchi, Evaluation Advisor, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP
- 25. Hans Lundgren, Head, Evaluation DCD/REED, OECD
- 26. Uwe Steckhan, Public Partnerships Specialist, Public Partnerships Division, UNICEF

Independent Evaluators

- 27. Marie-Hélène Adrien, President, Universalis, Canada

Private Foundations

- 28. Tricia Williams, Senior Manager, Research, Evaluation and Learning, The MasterCard Foundation
- 29. Tom Black, Senior Program Officer, Measurement Learning and Evaluation – Global Policy and Advocacy, Gates Foundation

Independent Evaluation Group, WBG

- 30. Nick York, Director, IEG
- 31. Marie Gaarder, Manager, IEG
- 32. Rasmus Heltberg, Lead Evaluation officer, IEG
- 33. Anna Aghumian, Evaluation officer, IEG
- 34. Nidhi Khattri, Lead Evaluation officer, IEG
- 35. Jorge Guillermo, Barbosa, Consultant, IEG
- 36. Brenda Barbour, Lead Knowledge Management Officer, IEG
- 37. William Hurlbut, Consultant, IEG

WORKSHOP AGENDA

March 16, 2016

Time	Topic
8:30-9:00 am	Registration and breakfast
9:00-9:15 am	Opening remarks – Nick York, Director, Independent Evaluation Group
9:15-9:45 am	Ice Breaker – Introduction, expectations
Session 1: Partnering effectively in the new global context	
9:45 – 10:45 am	<p>How will partnership programs need to adjust and adapt to make relevant and effective contributions in the changing global context?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nick York, Director, Independent Evaluation Group Jaehyang So, Director, Trust Funds and Partnerships, World Bank Group Moderator: Brenda Barbour, Lead Knowledge Management Officer, IEG
10:45 – 11:00 am	Coffee break
Session 2: The role of evaluation in improving partnership program effectiveness	
11:00 – 12:30 pm	<p>What does evaluative evidence tell us about the challenges of building effective partnerships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rasmus Heltberg, Lead Evaluation Officer, Independent Evaluation Group David Slattery, Director, Office of Development Effectiveness, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia Antonie De Kemp, Coordinating Evaluator, Policy and Operations Evaluation Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands Uwe Steckhan, Public Partnerships Specialist, Public Partnerships Division, UNICEF Moderator: Marie Gaarder, Manager, Independent Evaluation Group
12:30 – 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 – 2:00 pm	<p>Facilitated exercise</p> <p>Facilitator: William Hurlbut</p>
Session 3: Strategies to improve evaluation impact on partnership programs	
2:00 – 3:30 pm	<p>What principles guide effective evaluations of partnership programs? What evaluative evidence do programs need to improve their development effectiveness?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anna Aghumian, Evaluation officer, Independent Evaluation Group Geeta Batra, Chief Evaluation Officer and Deputy Director, Global Environment Facility Independent Evaluation Office Mafalda Duarte, Program Manager, Climate Investment Funds Tom Hennessy, Director, Evaluation and Audit, Department of Foreign Affairs, Ireland Moderator: Nick York, Director, Independent Evaluation Group
3:30 – 3:45 pm	Coffee break

Session 4: Overcoming challenges to results measurement and reporting	
3:45 – 5:00 pm	Building effective M&E systems and overcoming challenges in measuring and reporting on results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rohit Khanna, Practice Manager, Energy Global Practice Strategy & Operations • Tricia Williams, Senior Manager, Research, Evaluation and Learning • MasterCard Foundation • Marie-Hélène Adrien, President, Universalis • Moderator: Rasmus Heltberg, Lead Evaluation Officer, IEG
5:00 – 5:15 pm	Day's debrief and closing By Organizers, IEG
5:30 – 7:30 pm	Happy Hour: Tonic Restaurant at Quigley's Pharmacy 2036 G St. NW Washington, DC 20052 Ph: (202) 296-0211 Fax: (202) 747-5750 www.tonicrestaurant.com

March 17, 2016

Time	Topic
9:00 – 9:30 am	Check-in and Breakfast
Session 5: Applying good practice evaluation principles and strategies to maximize impact on partnership programs	
9:30 – 12:30 pm	Facilitated team work on priority issues identified on the day before Facilitator: William Hurlbut
11:00 – 11:30 am	Coffee break
12:30 pm	Closing remarks and evaluation of the event Rasmus Heltberg, IEG
1:00 pm	Lunch