



EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

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Evaluation Capacity Development in Zimbabwe: Issues and Opportunities

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The Backdrop

The following background information may help in understanding the current status and likely future trend for evaluation capacity development (ECD) in Zimbabwe:

- There has been consistent and sustained interest expressed by central government planning authorities since the late 1980s in improving the quantum and quality of evaluation. This interest was not shared evenly throughout government, but evaluation had a strong champion in the National Planning Agency (NPA) which at that time was located in the Ministry of Finance. The Director of the NPA (Dr. Stan Mahlahla) collaborated with a UNDP-funded external specialist (Adil Khan) to draw up a first conceptual framework for Zimbabwe in 1991 encompassing implementation monitoring, project completion reporting, performance monitoring and impact evaluation. Some of the framework's recommendations were followed up, as shown below.
- The starting point was the perceived need for better information on the effectiveness and implementation of the five year (static) development plan which was the primary tool of managing the Government's economic development program up to the early 1990s. The focus, however, began to shift after the government adopted its economic structural adjustment program, and greater emphasis is now placed on the three-year (rolling) public sector investment program (PSIP) which is in principle an integral element of the fiscal budget processes.
- Government established a National Economic Planning Commission (NEPC) separate from the Ministry of Finance and under the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) with specific responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). This was in line with the Mahlahla/Khan recommendations. The role and responsibilities of the NEPC are set out in a Presidential Directive dated July 11, 1994. These include: coordination of long-term plans and development policies; preparation of annual and medium-term development programs; assistance to the development of provincial development plans; monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation; and impact assessment of projects and programs (in close collaboration with line ministries and executing agencies). The secretariat for the NEPC was quickly established and staffed for its M&E role and a Commissioner was appointed at Cabinet level. However the Commission itself, a decision-making body with Cabinet level representation, has never been established. Nor has the National Development Council which was to be the tool for wider consultation on planning matters with civil society.
- Government has enjoyed consistent, if still low-level, support (initially from UNDP latterly from the Bank) to develop this interest in M&E and to exploit the institutional reforms leading to the establishment of NEPC into an appropriate framework and program for ECD. The Mahlahla/Khan work has been followed by exchange visits to OED in the Bank in 1992 and 1994, which helped build knowledge in Zimbabwe about best M&E practices. Then came a further study in November 1994 funded by the Bank and carried out by the Netherlands Economic Institute (NEI) to develop a proposal for a program on which basis government could request assistance from the Bank and others.
- Support for the program has to date been characterized by an 18-month pilot phase, mid-1996 to the present, which has involved NEPC and three pilot ministries (Agriculture, Health and Local Government) financed primarily by an IDF grant administered by the Bank of US\$340,000. After the pilot, a second phase was proposed to start by mid-1998 which would now involve all (15) key economic ministries.

The pilot phase has (with some help from the Bank and most notably from Pablo Guerrero) produced useful output, in particular the outline of a possible evaluation framework and a detailed situation analysis of M&E in Zimbabwe leading to conclusions as to the policy, legal and institutional measures that need to be taken to underpin the evaluation framework (see Annex 2). What else is suggested by pilot experience? More groundwork needs to be put into consolidating and strengthening the public sector investment program (PSIP) process before M&E can really take off; a successful program will probably depend on broader-based public sector reform to strengthen key line ministries and create better incentives in the public service; a considerable amount of effort still has to go into building skills and knowledge and to retaining staff with those skills in the appropriate institutions (e.g. the Project Manager was transferred out of NEPC just before the consultancy services financed out of the IDF grant commenced).

- Despite all the foregoing, achievements on the ground are very few and ECD still lacks credibility in Zimbabwe (as discussed in the Situation Analysis Report). Changes in management and institutional structure within the OPC have limited NEPC's effectiveness as an apex for M&E and as the driving force for setting the framework in place. Nothing systematic has been achieved yet, and no clear guidelines are yet in place to help implementing agencies plan and implement their own M&E work. As a result almost all evaluation remains donor-driven; what has been delivered to date by NEPC has tended to come too late in the process and has not been of great value in future project design. Clearly more focus on mid-term review and ongoing M&E would help increase the relevance of the work.

The Constraints

What does experience suggest as the key constraints which have to be overcome, and are still to be fully addressed, for sustainable ECD in Zimbabwe?

- There is a need to develop a receptive *culture* in which demand for and effective use of evaluation output can grow. This may prove to be easier to achieve in a market-driven policy reform environment than under the previous conditions. Certainly a positive factor is recent evidence

that demand at Cabinet level for information on the implementation of policy and programs is strong and increasing. This opportunity needs to be fully exploited by clarifying roles and responsibilities and ensuring that evaluation information is properly gathered, organized and analyzed.

- The next most important requirement is *sensitization* of key stakeholders, especially in the public sector, to the need for, and benefits of, evaluation. This goes together with building *awareness* of techniques and approaches which are workable in the Zimbabwe context. These are the critical building blocks to sustainable demand for evaluation outputs. At least a start has been made during the pilot phase given in NEPC and the pilot ministries: a significant amount of training has been carried out. To be sustainable, this training has now to be applied in specific processes and products which build up a solid base of evaluation output.
- *Linkage* has to be built between evaluation and specific public sector processes so that this is well understood and relatively straightforward to implement. In Zimbabwe, the PSIP process, for which NEPC is formally responsible, provides potential linkage in principle. In practice though this has yet to take off for a number of reasons. Linkage provides a context in which incentives to perform and to provide information and feedback, and sanctions for non-compliance, can be properly considered. Funding for both ongoing and future projects could be withheld (or additional funding could be made available to deserving cases) using the evaluation data base.
- Some constraints to effective implementation of the evaluation framework were highlighted by the experience of the pilot phase:
 - PSIP processes are not fully articulated and reporting requirements are not fully established. Because of this it is very difficult to determine compliance or non-compliance and there is no established or agreed basis for sanctions.
 - Initial approaches have focused on quantitative rather than qualitative data, something which NEPC continues to favor (NEPC wants to put in place large MIS-style systems

at an early stage). This creates some problems as most data may be difficult to retrieve and may be open to possible misinterpretation. A broader understanding is needed about evaluation information and the uses to which it can be put.

- While some good work has been done on preparing project profile forms and clarifying information requirements, it is still easier for line ministries and executing agencies to see the costs but not the benefits of evaluation. The costs to line ministries and agencies of “feeding the beast” are evident and seemingly increasing: the possible benefits of more data collection and regular quarterly reporting are not.
- A “Them” and “Us” mentality can very quickly be built up (who is evaluating whom, and for what purpose?) unless there is transparency in the process and NEPC’s responsibilities are clear. The notion of an apex should have strong positive connotations (center of excellence, quality input to review of ministry submissions, lead role in complex assignments). The incentives for the line ministries need to be stronger.
- NEPC must be able to keep and develop good people to establish and maintain its credibility as an apex institution. Government as a whole must be supportive and ensure that the quality of staff is maintained (and then improved) and that issues associated with overlapping or unclear mandates are dealt with decisively. Line ministries need more people than they currently have trained and designated for evaluation. However, some of the good staff who have left NEPC in the past few years now work in these ministries so the public sector as a whole has not been the loser.

Next Steps

What are the next steps needed to enable the second phase to contribute to the establishment of a sustainable evaluation framework for ECD in Zimbabwe? This is the basic list of items for the second phase of the program to begin mid-1998. High level backing and consistent follow through will be needed for the framework to come closer to reality. Some of the critical

measures are:

- Modify/strengthen institutional structure (within OPC) to create a more effective focal point for evaluation, and build demand for project and program evaluation at Cabinet level. Most legal instruments are in place, but the lack of a fully constituted NEPC means that no high level focal point exists; linkage of program evaluation to policy evaluation would increase demand and interest, but the respective roles of the Monitoring and Implementation Department (MID) and NEPC still have to be sorted out. If NEPC is to be apex, this has to be agreed and acted upon. MID and the Auditor General seem to have a ready market for their product: so far, NEPC does not. One option may be to restructure/merge MID and NEPC evaluation functions.
- Consolidate the linkage of evaluation to public investment programming through completing the PSIP manual, the monitoring and evaluation guidelines, quarterly reporting, and project profiling. This could start in fiscal 1998/99 with a few key ministries (the original three and three/four more), then roll out to all (15) economic ministries within two years.
- Recognize that the development of human capacity must come before the development of systems. A major training effort is still needed together with commitment to ensure continuity of staffing at the focal point, and exchanges with line ministry and agency staff are needed to build coalitions, encourage collaboration and discourage competition. The supply of evaluation skills available to Zimbabwe needs to be grown on a steady and regular basis, according to a series of annual targets.
- Ensure that adequate local resources are made available commensurate with the actual annual requirements of the evaluation program. This includes, but is not limited to, the suggestion that there be a budget line item for evaluation for each line ministry and agency. A number of ministries have planning or change management units which could accommodate in-house evaluation capacity if adequate resources were provided.
- Prepare and follow through annual evaluation plans with clear targets and identified outputs to help build experience

and strengthen the track record. The initial target should be three major evaluations a year to be led by NEPC. The first such plan should be for fiscal 1998/99.

Further Considerations

- The impact of decentralization policy on how projects are prepared, appraised, monitored and evaluated should be examined. Some provincial-level planning staff are in place but their task in evaluation is not clearly spelled out. These resources are not being effectively used to provide support to bottom-up planning processes which should enrich the quality and relevance of public sector investment programming. In the medium-term, decentralization will probably increase demand for evaluation from the center as more responsibility for preparation, appraisal and monitoring is pushed out.
- Attention should be given to building up the local consultancy resource base for evaluation. Zimbabwe has a pool of public sector expertise now in the private sector. Local consultants could readily be used to supplement the efforts of core ministry personnel on evaluations and could take the lead on some assignments. The local consultancy input to the design and implementation of the pilot phase was of good quality. A data bank of resumes of good candidates could be prepared, using what is already available on local consultants in the Bank Resident Mission as a start.
- The role of the Bank, and possibly other donors, needs to be considered in building and sustaining best practice initially, perhaps, through one of the three major annual evaluations. This means going much further than the usual ICR routine. One attempt to do this was the completion evaluation of the Emergency Drought Recovery and Mitigation Project (EDRMP). The ICR was completed in mid-1995 after a series of collaborative exercises with government, managed through the NEPC. The process included an early start to the evaluation exercise, a joint workshop to discuss findings at the draft stage, and the dissemination of the evaluation outcome to a broad range of local stakeholders. Both the ICR process and the final document have been cited as best practice by OED (Slade for OED to Marshall for AF1DR June 20, 1996).

Documents

Task One: Situation Analysis Report - Strengthening of the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Public Sector Investment and Planning In Zimbabwe by ISO Swedish Management Group and ARA Techtop Consulting Services dated September 1996.

Supplement to Situation Analysis Report (NEPC - Strengthening of the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Public Sector Investment and Planning in Zimbabwe) by ISO Swedish Management Group and Ara-Techtop (Zimbabwe) dated January 1998.

Draft Monitoring and Evaluation Guidelines (NEPC - Strengthening of the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity for Public Sector Investment and Planning in Zimbabwe) by ISO Swedish Management Group and Ara-Techtop (Zimbabwe) dated February 1998.

¹ This paper was presented to a World Bank seminar on *Public Sector Performance - the Critical Role of Evaluation*, in April 1998.

Outline of a Possible Evaluation Framework for Zimbabwe^{/1}

Annex 1

1. NEPC Evaluation Function

- sets evaluation system directives and standards
- sets guidelines for annual evaluation plans by line Ministries and key agencies
- develops and organizes training programs and workshops to disseminate methods and lessons of a cross cutting nature
- reviews TORs prepared by ministries for evaluations of major programs
- reviews the quality of evaluations done by ministries
- undertakes or participates in selected evaluations of complex projects, e.g., where more than two ministries are involved
- uses key performance information and evaluations from ministries to inform OPC, MOF: draws implications for policy and new program formulation, monitors performance across sectors and systemic issues, and delivers information prior to budget allocations
- follows up on the implementation of evaluation recommendations
- prepares annual report on evaluation results and use of evaluation findings.

2. Evaluation Function in Line Ministries

- define evaluation plans covering all major programs, taking into account evaluations by third parties, e.g., donors
- define, jointly with the sector units of NEPC, the key performance indicators to be used to assess progress and results ³/₄ these should be defined at the design/appraisal phase of new programs, and retrofitted to ongoing programs and projects
- delivery semi-annually to NEPC key performance information for major programs and major evaluation studies, according to annual evaluation program
- budget resources for monitoring and evaluation tasks
- establish feedback processes to ensure use of evaluation results within the ministry
- within each ministry, line departments monitor key performance indicators and submit results quarterly to internal central evaluation unit
- set up evaluation review committee at senior level to review evaluation reports and, periodically, to review performance information.

3. Organizational Implications

- Evaluation Unit of NEPC to be independent of line/sector functions and report to Head of Planning, or to OPC
- Rationalize evaluation responsibilities and working relationships between NEPC, MID and MIU
- Establish evaluation function at apex of each ministry, to focus on carrying out evaluations of major programs and projects, and analysis of performance monitoring information; central evaluation function, could initially be attached to central planning units
- Establish performance monitoring responsibilities for projects and programs in line departments within each ministry
- Auditor General to carry out a bi-annual process audit of the evaluation system established, and receive evaluation reports for major programs and projects.

^{/1} Based partly on NEPC's draft PSIP manual, pp 49-51.

Factors to Consider to Institutionalize Evaluation in Zimbabwe^{/1}

Situation Analysis^{/2}

Annex 2

Institutional Setting - Relations between Public Sector Institutions and their Functions

- The relationships between NEPC, other central ministries and agencies, including MID and MIU, and line ministries, with respect to: formulating policies, strategic planning, allocating public expenditures, defining public investment programs, and allocating and monitoring budgets, auditing and financial management, and monitoring and evaluating performance of public sector resource use
- The relationship of the preceding functions within major public sector agencies
- The relationship between NEPC and other executive level agencies, such as OPC, and with independent oversight agencies, such as with the Auditor General and Comptroller's Office, or the Public Accounts Committee of Parliament
- The legal or regulatory basis underpinning these relationships, including the role of the Public Service Commission, and other relevant official bodies
- The division of responsibilities between NEPC, other central agencies, e.g., Ministry of Local Government, line ministries, decentralized government functions, and local authorities.

Monitoring and Evaluation Setting^{/3}

- What is being monitored or evaluated at present, and by whom?
- Is the M&E focus on policies, programs or projects?
- Is the focus on public investment, or on public expenditures?
- Are Parastatals evaluated? What is the role of the Auditor General in evaluating Parastatals, e.g., through value-for-money audits?
- Is priority given to evaluation of externally-funded operations, and if so, what is the level of coverage, e.g., the Health Ministry suggests that 50% of their programs are covered by donor-specified evaluations. What is the situation in other ministries ³/₄ line and central?
- What is the focus of monitoring and evaluation work being done? Is it focusing on input monitoring, or on development? Is it focused on lessons or on accountability?
- Who receives evaluations and monitoring data at present? Is the information kept by the sponsors, or are the data used within ministries or across ministries?
- What are the feedback mechanisms in place? Are evaluations sponsored by donors used? And, if so, for what purpose? Is there a link from monitoring and evaluation information to decision-making? What is the situation in the key agencies and across agencies?
- Who follows up on monitoring and evaluation findings and recommendations?
- Are evaluations or monitoring information released outside the agencies? If so, what are the reporting arrangements?

Monitoring and Evaluation Resources

- Are there budget set asides for monitoring and evaluation? Are the resources built-in in externally-funded operations, or are they funded out of domestic agency resources? What level of resources is being applied to monitoring and to evaluation?

- What are the professional skills of staff involved in monitoring and in evaluation?
- Is training for monitoring or evaluation being done?
- Are external agencies, donors, and NGOs inviting national staff to participate in externally-driven evaluations?
- Do agencies have their own evaluation practices, methods, rules, policies or guidelines?
- What information technology and systems resources are available?

1/ See Annex 1 - Possible Evaluation Framework for Zimbabwe.

2/ To implement an effective and cost-efficient evaluation system in Zimbabwe, existing institutional relations and capabilities must be accurately assessed and an appropriate action plan developed.

3/ The issues listed are meant to provide guidance for the assessment and do not constitute a comprehensive checklist. Other relevant aspects may need to be captured to get a creditable assessment of current practices; in addition, practices are likely to vary between ministries and central agencies.

Other Forthcoming Papers in this Series

Keith Mackay, *Lessons From National Experience*.

Alain Barberie, *Indonesia's National Evaluation System*.

Keith Mackay, *The Development of Australia's Evaluation System*.

Other Recommended Reading

1. The World Bank, *Colombia: Paving the Way for a Results-Oriented Public Sector*, WB Report no. 15300-CO, January 28, 1997.
2. The World Bank, *Report of the Evaluation Capacity Task Force*, June 1994.
3. Eduardo Wiesner D., *From Macroeconomic Correction to Public Sector Reform: the Critical Role of Evaluation*, WB Discussion Paper no. 214, 1993.
4. Derek Poate, *Measuring & Managing Results: Lessons for Development Cooperation*, SIDA/UNDP, 1997.
5. Robert Picciotto and Eduardo Wiesner D. (eds.), *Evaluation and Development*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1998.
6. R. Pablo Guerrero O., 'Evaluation capacity development in developing countries: applying the lessons from experience', in R. Boyle and D. Lemaire (eds.), *Building Evaluation Capacity*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1998.

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