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MONITORAGGIO E VALUTAZIONE

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Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan by Nicholas Stockton
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PREFAZIONE

Anna Rocchi

Il tema qui trattato non solo si qualifica come uno dei maggiori argomenti di attualità nell'ambito della cooperazione internazionale, ma anche quale uno dei più dibattuti, poiché attiene ad ambiti di intervento di soggetti vari, molto spesso caratterizzati da orientamenti, ruoli e necessità tra loro molto differenti.

I vari sistemi di monitoraggio e valutazione non si limitano, infatti, ad agire nell'ambito della progettazione, ma si orientano sempre più all'indirizzo ed integrazione delle strategie di intervento nei vari settori.

Nella pratica, non esiste un principio oggettivamente accettato per la definizione dei termini di monitoraggio e valutazione ed anche se esistono delle caratteristiche comuni predominanti esse inevitabilmente aprono ambiti di interpretazione e di analisi.

In questo numero, abbiamo cercato di riunire alcuni degli argomenti più dibattuti del monitoraggio e la valutazione, sia in ambito progettuale che riferiti ai soggetti coinvolti.

In *Evaluation of Public Health Programs. Peculiarities and Challenges*, Stefania Pace-Shanklin, Public Health Officer WHO-DPR (World Health Organization – Disaster, Preparedness and Response Office, Albania) evidenzia co-

me in realtà il termine valutazione "descriva" modelli differenti riferiti ad obiettivi tra loro diversificati nell'ambito dei vari passaggi della vita del progetto. Inoltre, sottolinea come le caratteristiche attuali dei modelli di valutazione talvolta siano più volte a rafforzare concezioni preconcette relative alla valutazione che a soddisfare le esigenze reali di orientamento progettuale.

Nell'articolo, alcuni degli stereotipi più diffusi sono chiaramente esplicitati, indirizzando l'analisi verso le tendenze più fortemente radicate rispetto all'argomento in questione.

L'erronea credenza che l'esercizio di valutazione sia un'attività finalizzata unicamente alla produzione di dati poco utilizzabili in pratica, risale sicuramente alla concezione di una tipologia di valutazione a carattere prettamente scientifico, dalla quale si generavano rapporti incentrati su concetti ovvi e generici. A seguito dello sviluppo dell'approccio alla valutazione finalizzato a scopi di utilizzo specifici (Michael Patton), i rapporti e i sistemi di valutazione hanno atteso al soddisfacimento di criteri di utilità.

Inoltre, il preconcetto più diffuso rispetto all'esercizio di valutazione è quello che essa debba decretare il successo o l'insuccesso del progetto rispetto ai propri obiettivi.

Tutto ciò tende a trasformare la valutazione in uno scomodo esercizio tendenzialmente esterno rispetto alle reali esigenze di progetto.

Fortunatamente, i tempi stanno cambiando ed anche il significato e la struttura organizzativa dei sistemi di valutazione tende a rispondere meglio a necessità dirette e mirate a rafforzare il processo decisionale.

In particolare, nel suo articolo, Stefania Pace evidenzia come nei programmi sanitari si debba tenere conto di caratteristiche e peculiarità precise connesse alle tecniche di valutazione, sottolineando che la valutazione pratica ha spesso un impatto molto più diretto (in senso positivo) rispetto alla ricerca accademica.

In *Monitoraggio e valutazione nella cooperazione allo sviluppo* Flavio Lovisolo e Massimo Tommasoli (esperti Direzione Generale Cooperazione allo Sviluppo – DGCS – del Ministero degli Affari Esteri) attraverso l'analisi delle tendenze che hanno caratterizzato negli ultimi decenni l'approccio alla valutazione dell'aiuto pubblico allo sviluppo (APS) delle principali agenzie di cooperazione internazionale, hanno utilizzato il caso della co-

operazione italiana allo sviluppo per giungere a delle considerazioni puntuali rispetto al monitoraggio ed alla valutazione.

In particolare, nonostante venga chiaramente sottolineato che le funzioni di esercizio di monitoraggio e valutazione siano tra loro distinte e peculiari, si riconosce la necessità di identificare un contesto di armonizzazione delle due funzioni che tenda a valorizzarne al massimo le potenzialità implicite.

Infine, l'articolo evidenzia come la creazione e il consolidamento di sistemi di monitoraggio e valutazione abbiano, a loro volta, consentito la transizione da modelli di pianificazione di servizi incentrati sulla fornitura di risorse (materiali, finanziarie, umane) a modelli incentrati sul partenariato con conseguente assunzione di una maggiore responsabilità da parte degli stakeholders nella definizione di strategie di sviluppo orientate al conseguimento sostenibile di obiettivi e di risultati.

Erminio Sacco (esperto in sicurezza alimentare e analista di sistemi di informazione umanitaria delle Nazioni Unite) incentra la sua riflessione sulla risposta alle emergenze complesse riferendosi ad un caso particolare: l'Afghanistan.

Partendo dall'analisi del documento di Nicholas Stockton (*Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan*, un estratto del quale è disponibile in questa pubblicazione), Erminio Sacco sottolinea come il ruolo di coordinamento strategico delle Nazioni Unite (elemento focale del documento in questione) sia un'attività fondamentale nel contesto delle risposta umanitaria soprattutto in casi di emergenza complessa. Tuttavia, al di là della sua rilevanza finanziaria quale attività specifica, il coordinamento strategico si contestualizza quale fattore determinante rispetto all'intera risposta umanitaria ed all'esercizio di monitoraggio e valutazione di programmi umanitari.

In *Strategic Coordination as a Crucial Activity in UN Humanitarian Response: Need for Monitoring and Evaluation*, Erminio Sacco sottolinea gli elementi critici della funzione UN di coordinamento strategico ed in particolare l'efficacia dell'impostazione della stessa quale vera e propria attività prevalente nel contesto dell'assistenza umanitaria.

Nell'estratto di *Monitoring and Evaluation for NGOs Projects* di Development Researchers' Network (DRN) sono riuniti alcuni dei principali

passaggi liberamente tratti dal *Manuale di Monitoraggio e Valutazione* che verrà prossimamente adottato dalle ONG promotrici di Forum Solint (CISP, COOPI, COSV, Intersos e Movimondo).

L'obiettivo del manuale è quello di rafforzare le capacità di monitoraggio e valutazione e conseguente sviluppo di potenzialità strategiche di pianificazione e di impatto delle ONG promotrici.

Infatti, tra gli obiettivi della stesura del manuale si annoverano: fornire allo staff delle ONG strumenti per la migliore comprensione dei sistemi di monitoraggio e di valutazione con la finalità di sviluppare un comune terreno di dialogo tra ONG in questo settore; migliorare l'utilizzo pratico degli strumenti di monitoraggio e di valutazione; rafforzare le capacità di gestione delle ONG.

Pur se ideato e promosso dalle ONG di Forum Solint, il manuale è destinato allo staff di ONG in generale ed alle controparti locali a vari livelli.

Il manuale descrive I metodi di monitoraggio e di valutazione utilizzati dalle maggiori agenzie internazionali designando interessanti connessioni con il mondo delle ONG.

Nel manuale, inoltre, si sottolinea come il monitoraggio e la valutazione di interventi mirino essenzialmente alla riduzione del potenziale (talvolta reale) gap esistente tra ciò che si è pianificato e ciò che si è realizzato (o si sta realizzando).

In particolare, il monitoraggio diviene uno strumento di gestione che si concentra sull'analisi dei progressi del progetto (o programma) e che ha come obiettivo l'identificazione di successi o aspetti problematici relativi all'intervento considerato.

È un esame continuo e sistematico della realizzazione delle attività. Si svolge periodicamente, per tutta la durata del progetto o programma.

Orienta l'agenzia realizzatrice dell'intervento (sia essa agenzia delle Nazioni Unite o ONG o altro) nell'identificazione ed applicazione di eventuali misure correttive durante la realizzazione dell'intervento.

La valutazione è un evento puntuale. Essa, viene realizzata principalmente per tre motivi: informativo/conoscitivo (imparare dall'esperienza; predisporre interventi futuri); di trasparenza (dell'ente realizzatore nei confronti dei donatori e dei destinatari); di controllo (corrispondenza ad un momento specifico degli obiettivi e dell'impatto allo scopo dell'orientamento del migliore utilizzo delle risorse umane e materiali).

Il monitoraggio e la valutazione complessivamente perseguono i

seguenti obiettivi: assicurare che i risultati previsti vengano raggiunti; migliorare la gestione delle risorse; assicurare la partecipazione e la motivazione di tutti gli stakeholders; assicurare la circolazione delle informazioni; aumentare le capacità delle parti coinvolte; assicurare trasparenza.

La Sfida della Valutazione e la Responsabilità delle ONG e dei Donatori

EDITORIALE

Paolo Dieci*

In questo periodo sia i donatori e sia le principali agenzie di cooperazione, tra le quali alcune Organizzazioni Non Governative (ONG), stanno riflettendo sulla necessità di ridefinire le finalità e le metodologie dell'aiuto allo sviluppo. Pur nella pluralità dei punti di vista esistenti, sembra possibile registrare alcuni comuni denominatori di questa riflessione. Tra di essi vi è la necessità di inserire l'aiuto allo sviluppo in una dimensione strategica d'insieme, orientata verso l'obiettivo della riduzione della povertà.

Riteniamo che le ONG debbano accogliere positivamente la sfida rappresentata dall'inserimento di progetti e interventi specifici, siano essi di aiuto umanitario o di sviluppo, nel contesto di strategie globali, nella consapevolezza del fatto che nessuna singola iniziativa di cooperazione internazionale – da sola – è in grado di scalfire le problematiche "macro" associate alla povertà.

Una significativa manifestazione della tendenza a inserire l'aiuto allo sviluppo in prospettive strategiche d'insieme è rappresentata dall'elaborazione, da parte dell'Unione Europea, di *Country Strategy Papers*, che intendono rappresentare quadri di riferimento all'interno dei quali collocare progetti e iniziative di cooperazione all'interno dei paesi beneficiari.

A partire da questa premessa, risulta centrale il tema del "valore aggiunto" dei diversi soggetti della cooperazione internazionale e delle iniziative da essi attivate. Per "valore aggiunto" si intende in questo caso il contributo peculiare, in termini qualitativi e quantitativi, assicurato dai diversi soggetti alla definizione e alla realizzazione di strategie d'insieme. È in questo contesto che si inscrive, a nostro avviso, il tema del monitoraggio e della valutazione, la cui funzione, in termini generali, dovrebbe essere quella di analizzare – e quindi correggere – il contributo assicurato dai progetti alle strategie e da queste al superamento di emergenze o allo sviluppo di singoli paesi.

Il monitoraggio e la valutazione costituiscono vere e proprie priorità strategiche per la cooperazione internazionale. L'analisi sui risultati e sui benefici indotti dai progetti, nonché sulla loro rilevanza rispetto ai problemi dei paesi e delle aree nei quali si svolgono, non può che contribuire a rafforzare la trasparenza tecnica, economica e operativa della cooperazione allo sviluppo e degli interventi umanitari. Questa considerazione appare particolarmente rilevante in questo periodo, percorso da dubbi, critiche, ma purtroppo anche grossolane generalizzazioni circa le reali finalità, il rigore e l'impatto dei programmi di cooperazione internazionale.

Esiste ormai una diffusa tendenza – alla quale si prestano sempre più volentieri a fare da cassa di risonanza molti organi di informazione – a "bollare" come inefficaci, male gestiti, inutili, i programmi che puntano a fornire aiuto umanitario o a sostenere processi di riabilitazione e di sviluppo.

È del tutto estranea alla volontà – e alla possibilità – di chi scrive l'intenzione di compiere una generalizzata "difesa d'ufficio" del "sistema cooperazione". Né è questa la sede per addentrarsi nel merito delle critiche – più o meno fondate – che vengono rivolte a tale sistema. Abbiamo introdotto il tema, nel contesto di un ragionamento sul tema della valutazione, per affermare una profonda convinzione: troppo spesso, ancora oggi, le analisi sul valore e l'impatto dei programmi di cooperazione internazionale sono condotte in modo del tutto astratto rispetto alla conoscenza analitica dei risultati ai quali essi giungono. Il "sistema", in altre parole, appare innaturalmente indifferenziato. È giunto a nostro avviso il tempo di consentire all'opinione pubblica – quanto meno a quei settori di essa più interessati a queste tematiche – di operare i necessari distinguo e di disporre di basi conoscitive solide circa i risultati dei progetti realizzati nei paesi in via di sviluppo.

L'universo della solidarietà internazionale è estremamente articola-

to e differenziato e al suo interno emergono ormai distintamente istanze e orientamenti diversi anche su questioni essenziali, quali le finalità dell'aiuto umanitario e allo sviluppo e le loro priorità.

Abbiamo letto con sincera curiosità, ad esempio, un saggio intitolato *L'ambiguità degli aiuti umanitari*, a cura di un esponente di primo piano del Consorzio Italiano di Solidarietà, una struttura di coordinamento di gruppi italiani attivi nel complesso mosaico dei Balcani. Il testo contiene una serie di critiche alle ONG italiane e al loro rapporto con il governo, soprattutto nel periodo della guerra della NATO contro la Iugoslavia – guerra peraltro in merito alla quale abbiamo a suo tempo, assieme a tanti altri rappresentanti dell'associazionismo italiano, espresso pubblicamente una ferma contrarietà - e del contestuale lancio, da parte dell'allora Presidenza del Consiglio, dell'Operazione Arcobaleno. Non vogliamo ora entrare nel merito del testo, né quindi esprimerne in questa sede una valutazione. Ci permettiamo però una considerazione generale. L'autore non sente minimamente l'esigenza, dopo quasi un decennio di esperienza di lavoro nei Balcani, di trarre da essa qualche seppur minimo elemento di valutazione. Il Consorzio ha operato in decine di città e località dell'ex Iugoslavia, ma a chi legge il libro non è dato di sapere che cosa sia stato realizzato, quali benefici sono stati indotti, quali risultati raggiunti. Le stesse critiche rivolte alle ONG riguardano le loro strategie di *fund raising* e la qualità delle loro relazioni con le istituzioni italiane, non l'operato sul campo. La curiosità che ci aveva spinto a leggere il libro, attratti da un titolo che prometteva analisi di impatto nelle aree di crisi, si è progressivamente scontrata con la mancanza di qualsiasi informazione e analisi di un qualche rilievo per la vita di centinaia di migliaia di cittadini del martoriato mosaico balcanico.

L'attenzione è posta chiaramente altrove e l'obiettivo praticamente esplicito è quello di tradurre un'esperienza di mobilitazione in paesi terzi in forza d'urto politica e mediatica in Italia, per affermare, ad esempio, la necessità di lasciare spazio – politico, finanziario, informativo - a "nuove" forme di associazionismo al cospetto delle "tradizionali" forme della cooperazione non governativa. La valutazione dei risultati e dell'impatto dei programmi, in quest'ottica, rappresenta una questione sostanzialmente marginale, irrilevante ai fini dell'obiettivo che si intende perseguire, interamente collocabile dentro la società italiana.

La nostra idea di cooperazione internazionale è profondamente diversa. Non rinunceremo mai all'idea – a costo di apparire *naïfs e* un po' "ro-

mantici" – che questa cooperazione debba essere primariamente uno strumento per favorire e sostenere la qualità della vita nei paesi poveri e nelle aree di crisi e che, di conseguenza, il suo operato vada valutato alla luce di tali finalità generali.

La cooperazione deve sapersi sottrarre al rischio di essere totalmente inghiottita dentro dinamiche politiche, siano esse governative o non governative. Che essa sia concepita come parte integrante della politica estera – come l'attuale legge in Italia prevede – o meno, una volta che si materializza in scelte, strategie, progetti, deve essere sostanzialmente valutata per i benefici che reca ai paesi e alle popolazioni per i quali è stata concepita.

Ben vengano istanze critiche al modo di operare di chiunque, a cominciare dalle ONG, purché queste tocchino il cuore della loro azione: la qualità dei progetti, la loro coerenza strategica e metodologica, i vantaggi concretamente recati alle popolazioni locali.

Vorremmo proporre alla nostra cooperazione allo sviluppo, a tutt'oggi, come è noto, collocata dentro il Ministero degli Affari Esteri, di concepire e realizzare, con il concorso di esperti esterni ed autorevoli – europei e dei paesi beneficiari - una sistematica prassi di valutazione, a cominciare dai progetti realizzati nei paesi prioritari per l'Italia. Altre cooperazioni – e la stessa Unione Europea – hanno già intrapreso questa strada e ne hanno tratto indicazioni utili per il futuro. Perché in Italia si dovrebbe lasciare la cooperazione allo sviluppo e umanitaria alla mercé di analisi improvvisate, poco costruttive, non basate sulla conoscenza e, soprattutto, alimentate spesso da finalità del tutto astratte rispetto agli interessi dei destinatari finali? Un'istanza da rivolgere ai principali donatori – a cominciare dalla cooperazione italiana – è quella di assumersi con rigore chiare responsabilità nella scelta dei *partners* operativi, siano essi le ONG o altri soggetti, sulla base di un'attenta valutazione dei livelli reali di professionalità e competenza, nonché di una ricognizione sistematica dei risultati concreti raggiunti dai progetti realizzati.

Siamo coscienti del fatto che il linguaggio e le argomentazioni qui esposte possono apparire distanti dalla tradizione e dall'esperienza della cooperazione non governativa, e proiettarsi in un orizzonte meritocratico o tecnicistico. Non è certamente questa la nostra intenzione.

A nostro parere è proprio nel solco di una tradizione solidaristica internazionale che ha sempre messo in primo piano, rispetto ad altre variabili, gli interessi e i bisogni degli strati più poveri – e meno protetti – delle

popolazioni, che occorre esercitare una costruttiva pressione, presso le istituzioni nazionali e internazionali, affinché la credibilità complessiva del "sistema cooperazione" sia tutelata, consapevoli del fatto che il solo modo per farlo è valutare i programmi, rendere pubblici i risultati e operare, sulla base di tali valutazioni, scelte rigorose.

Esiste oggi il rischio, di fronte a drammi umanitari, politici ed economici di straordinaria gravità – si pensi alle incognite aperte dall'11 settembre, al collasso economico di un paese come l'Argentina, alla drammatica avanzata dell'AIDS in molti paesi, non solo africani – che gli strumenti della cooperazione internazionale vengano percepiti come inutili, di scarso o nullo impatto, superati. La nostra tesi è che gli strumenti messi in atto dalla cooperazione internazionale – i progetti e, più in generale, l'aiuto umanitario e allo sviluppo – non siano in sé stessi superati, ma spesso, purtroppo, non bene utilizzati, anche perché ancora troppo poco è stato fatto per valutarne, caso per caso, l'impatto concreto. Al tempo stesso, circa gli scopi e i risultati realisticamente ottenibili tramite gli strumenti della cooperazione internazionale sussiste, a nostro avviso, una certa confusione, che rischia di tradursi o in un esasperato scetticismo o, al contrario, in un eccesso di aspettative.

Per dirla con uno slogan, la cooperazione serve, ma non è sufficiente. Serve, o può servire, a sostenere strategie globali orientate verso la riduzione della povertà e lo sviluppo di processi di pacificazione, ma non può, da sola, invertire la crescita della diseguaglianza sul piano mondiale, né risolvere crisi geopolitiche complesse.

In Medio Oriente la cooperazione internazionale può certamente contribuire – e difatti a nostro avviso in molti casi contribuisce - ad alleviare le indicibili sofferenze umane causate da uno stato di assedio permanente, dall'occupazione militare del territorio e dalla violenza. Può inoltre contribuire ad evitare che l'assedio sul territorio si traduca in un totale isolamento di un popolo dal mondo esterno, attivando interscambi tra associazioni, università, istituzioni locali. Al tempo stesso la cooperazione internazionale – da sola – non può invertire i processi politico-militari alla base della crisi o, meglio sarebbe dire, del dramma medio orientale. Il perseguimento di un tale obiettivo richiede altri strumenti. Richiede, tra l'altro, un'Europa forte, politicamente credibile, in grado di esprimere una politica estera unitaria nell'interesse delle popolazioni civili – palestinese ed israeliana – oggi schiacciate dal peso della violenza e nell'interesse della pace e della sicurezza.

pio, quanto ha inciso sull'accesso all'acqua e sulla sua qualità? In che modo – e quanto – le popolazioni e le istituzioni locali erano state coinvolte nella scelta delle priorità? Quale rapporto costi/benefici si è stati in grado di mantenere? In circa vent'anni di lavoro e frequentazione di paesi in via di sviluppo e dell'est europeo ci è capitato di osservare grandi opere che nessuno aveva chiesto e, a distanza di pochi anni dalla loro realizzazione, del tutto fatiscenti. Occorre quindi smetterla con gli aiuti? O non sarebbe il caso di fare valutazioni rigorose e accertare livelli di responsabilità nelle fasi di pianificazione, progettazione, realizzazione? Esistono ormai decine di manuali sul ciclo del progetto. Perché questa manualistica viene così frequentemente disattesa?

Seconda domanda: i programmi riescono a favorire la creazione e/o il consolidamento di meccanismi istituzionali permanenti e sostenibili finalizzati a ridurre la povertà?

Per valutare un programma di micro credito, ad esempio, non è sufficiente analizzare quante persone hanno ricevuto i prestiti e quali tassi di rientro si sono verificati nell'arco di vita del programma stesso. La domanda da porsi, per capire se il programma è servito e soprattutto se a partire da esso esce rafforzata o indebolita una strategia di lotta alla povertà facente perno, in un determinato paese, sull'ampliamento dell'accesso al credito, è: quanto il programma è stato in grado di dare vita – o di inserirsi in – a meccanismi istituzionali permanenti? Che legame c'è tra il programma e il quadro legislativo locale? Chi assicurerà la continuazione del servizio una volta concluso il programma?

Alla luce di queste domande, riteniamo che un programma di micro credito, anche se gestito con efficienza e trasparenza, totalmente ed esclusivamente condotto da un soggetto esterno al contesto locale – sia esso un'ONG internazionale o un'agenzia ONU – che ha riservato a sé stesso le funzioni di garante e *decision maker* – sull'allocazione delle risorse, è un programma male gestito, perché, al di là dei benefici indotti nel breve periodo, difficilmente potrà avere un impatto nel medio e lungo periodo, essendo stato attivato in maniera sostanzialmente astratta rispetto al quadro istituzionale, giuridico e organizzativo locale. Il successo della *Grameen Bank* risiede anche nel fatto di essere una realtà profondamente radicata nel tessuto sociale, economico e istituzionale del Bangladesh. Un programma non può essere un corpo estraneo al paese in cui si realizza.

Terza domanda: i programmi riescono ad indicare strategie e meto-

dologie di intervento che, sperimentate in uno specifico contesto, possono poi estendersi ad altre regioni del paese? Hanno, in altre parole, la funzione di accrescere, correggere, migliorare, sostenere strategie nazionali in vari settori?

In questo caso una questione essenziale da affrontare, nell'analisi sui risultati e la vita del programma, è quella della sostenibilità economica e istituzionale. È un terreno difficilissimo, ma non rimandabile. Quanti programmi sanitari sono stati realizzati nel mondo con efficienza e rigore ma con livelli di spese di gestione correnti, per il mantenimento delle strutture realizzate, del tutto incompatibili con la realtà dei paesi? Il tema, ripetiamo, è molto complesso perché spesso dietro ai discorsi sulla sostenibilità economica si nasconde l'assunzione acritica di modelli di sviluppo che pongono la riduzione della spesa pubblica davanti al benessere e alla qualità della vita. È chiaro che la cooperazione internazionale non può, per elementari ragioni di ordine etico, assumere tali modelli come suoi riferimenti prioritari. Se un governo locale stanzia poche risorse per la sanità, anche nel contesto di bilanci nazionali comunque ridotti, è compito delle istanze preposte alla pianificazione e alla gestione della cooperazione allo sviluppo esercitare *lobby* costruttive per cercare di mitigare la tendenza riscontrata. Questo però non significa che il tema della sostenibilità possa essere rimandato a un futuro indeterminato, come spesso, purtroppo, è invece accaduto. In concreto: quali scenari si presentano se, al termine di un programma di cooperazione in campo sanitario il governo locale si trova ad ereditare una struttura complessa ed estremamente costosa? Gli scenari sono due: o si mantiene la struttura a scapito degli investimenti sanitari in altre aree, con evidenti scompensi in termini di pianificazione complessiva e altrettanto evidenti contraddizioni sui piani umanitario e politico oppure si abbandona la struttura che diviene, per usare un'espressione purtroppo ormai popolare, una "cattedrale nel deserto".

Anche nel caso appena richiamato è essenziale il coinvolgimento degli attori locali in fase di pianificazione e di gestione. Ci è capitato talvolta di assistere a strategie di *fund raising* messe in atto da organismi di volontariato, incentrate su messaggi accattivanti del tipo "garantiamo la piena ed esclusiva gestione delle strutture realizzate con i vostri fondi, senza interferenze esterne". Messaggi del genere li abbiamo ad esempio ascoltati da parte di *Emergency*, che ha indiscutibilmente sviluppato strategie comunicative particolarmente efficaci. Tuttavia il messaggio, benché accattivante,

è a nostro avviso sbagliato. Se le strutture che realizziamo diventano "nostre" e se al tempo stesso non è nel nostro mandato il radicamento a vita proprio del mondo missionario, stiamo commettendo un errore strategico di fondo, allontanando a tempo indeterminato la possibilità che attori locali possano assumere pienamente la gestione dei servizi che la cooperazione internazionale ha messo in piedi.

Infine, una quarta domanda: in che modo impattano i programmi in aree di emergenza complessa nelle direzioni del sostegno alla pacificazione e della futura riabilitazione del tessuto sociale ed istituzionale?

Tutti coloro che hanno operato in tali aree sanno bene che talvolta si rendono inevitabili alcuni compromessi organizzativi per assicurare la viabilità dell'opera di assistenza. Il caso dell'utilizzo di scorte armate in Somalia è al riguardo emblematico. È evidente che l'utilizzo delle scorte armate da parte di organizzazioni umanitarie rappresenta a tutti gli effetti un'anomalia. Tuttavia, e chiunque abbia messo piede in Somalia nel corso degli anni novanta potrà testimoniarlo, esse hanno rappresentato una condizione indispensabile per fare giungere, ad esempio, aiuti alimentari ai centri di raccolta. Al tempo stesso, se la soglia dei compromessi si alza, fino a giungere ad accordi di significativa rilevanza economica con le forze del conflitto, c'è da chiedersi se l'impatto politico dell'azione umanitaria non sovrasti, in negativo, i benefici recati alle popolazioni civili. Si tratta di valutazioni da fare caso per caso, ma comunque di valutazioni da fare. Nel caso della Somalia, che abbiamo citato, le ONG e alcuni tra i principali donatori sono stati in grado di convergere su un Codice di Condotta, che in pratica ha stabilito criteri oltre i quali il compromesso con attori locali non fosse accettabile. L'applicazione del Codice ha determinato scelte difficili, in alcuni casi la chiusura anticipata di progetti, ma ha rappresentato un antidoto nei confronti del rischio di "nutrire la guerra" con l'aiuto umanitario.

Se quello appena richiamato è un esempio in "negativo" del possibile impatto politico dell'intervento umanitario in zone di conflitto, possono invece essere identificati ambiti di analisi tendenti ad accertare il possibile impatto positivo dell'intervento. È il caso di progetti che, pur in contesti di prima emergenza, riescono ad organizzare e stimolare gruppi e associazioni locali e a dare forza organizzativa e visibilità a soggetti locali i cui interessi sono antitetici rispetto a quelli del conflitto. Alcune recenti valutazioni di progetti umanitari a sostegno delle popolazioni sfollate nella zona colombiana di Medellín, ad opera dell'Unione Europea, ci confortano sulla

convinzione che, quando i progetti riescono a saldare la risposta all'emergenza con l'organizzazione di gruppi e associazioni locali, essi possono avere un effetto positivo anche nel medio e lungo periodo. L'aiuto umanitario, se proiettato oltre la sola gestione immediata dell'emergenza, può avere un impatto significativo sulla futura riabilitazione e sul sostegno al processo di pacificazione. Occorre però anche in questo caso disporre di dati e analisi concreti, che scaturiscano da valutazioni mirate.

Le quattro domande formulate debbono poi arricchirsi di questioni trasversali, la principale delle quali, a nostro avviso, è rappresentata dall'impatto di genere. La questione di genere ha per noi, nel contesto della valutazione, un doppio significato. Da una parte indica la necessità di accompagnare l'analisi di impatto dei progetti ad una rigorosa ricognizione di come questi hanno inciso sulla qualità delle relazioni sociali ed economiche determinate, in un dato contesto, dall'essere uomini e donne. Esiste una letteratura sterminata ad indicare come lo sviluppo e il raggiungimento di livelli più avanzati e più solidi di stabilità di un sistema sociale dipendano grandemente dalla qualità delle relazioni uomo/donna, soprattutto in contesti dove il potere delle donne è inversamente proporzionale al loro contributo – sociale, lavorativo, economico – alla sicurezza sociale e alla stabilità dei contesti locali.

Il discorso sul genere inoltre richiama una questione per certi versi ancora più complessa: le società dove la cooperazione allo sviluppo si inserisce non sono uniformi e indifferenziate, come una certa cultura coloniale ci aveva indotto a credere, ma al contrario sono attraversate da profonde articolazioni interne, da dinamiche di potere e di egemonia. Il rischio, se tali dinamiche non vengono considerate, è di ingabbiare la cooperazione internazionale in ragnatele costruite da potentati locali, tramite le quali questi intercettano la gran parte dei benefici e delle risorse, impedendo – o limitando – che raggiungano gli strati più poveri e meno protetti. Non c'è da stupirsi se tali dinamiche si propongono nei paesi in via di sviluppo. Non si sono forse manifestate – e tuttora si manifestano – nel nostro mezzogiorno, dove gruppi locali "forti" hanno tradizionalmente fatto la parte del leone nell'acquisizione di benefici – sovvenzioni, sostegni economici, reti di protezione sociale – sulla carta pensati per i più bisognosi?

Una strategia di valutazione finalizzata a rilanciare e dare nuova credibilità al "sistema cooperazione" dovrebbe a nostro avviso misurarsi con le questioni che abbiamo sottolineato, al fine, come abbiamo chiarito in

apertura, di analizzare il contributo dato dai progetti al raggiungimento di strategie globali di lotta alla povertà.

È nostro auspicio che tale messaggio venga raccolto, a cominciare dalla cooperazione italiana. Da parte nostra, peraltro, non aspetteremo i tempi, che sappiamo essere necessariamente lunghi, delle istituzioni pubbliche. È per questo che abbiamo deciso di valorizzare decenni di prassi di cooperazione e di valutazioni su di essa dotandoci, assieme alle altre ONG facenti parte di Forum Solint (CISP, COOPI, COSV, Intersos e Movimondo), di un Manuale di Monitoraggio e Valutazione. Si tratta di un ulteriore contributo nella direzione auspicata: coinvolgere tutti i soggetti della cooperazione internazionale – paesi e popolazioni beneficiari, governo, istituzioni, ONG, agenzie ONU – in uno sforzo di analisi e di progettazione. Lo vogliamo ripetere in conclusione: se condotta con rigore, professionalità e motivazione la cooperazione internazionale ha una funzione insostituibile da svolgere nel mondo contemporaneo, accanto ad altri strumenti politici ed economici, nel quadro di una rafforzata coerenza di fondo verso l'obiettivo – ambizioso ma eticamente e politicamente "obbligatorio" - di ridurre la povertà.

*Responsabile dei Programmi Internazionali del CISP

Evaluation of Public Health Programs. Peculiarities and Challenges*

Stefania Pace-Shanklin**

The purpose of this paper is to help health program managers think practically about evaluation and the kinds of information evaluations can provide. The term "evaluation" describes different models that suit different purposes at different stages in the life of a project. Evaluation means different things to different people and takes place in different contexts. In a sense, we evaluate all the time as a routine part of program planning and operation. But do we evaluate well? And do we agree on what evaluation is?

Evaluations should be conducted for action-related reasons, and the information provided should facilitate deciding a course of action. Health programs have peculiarities that must be considered when choosing evaluation techniques. Practical evaluation is more manageable and effective than academic research. Evaluation is a way to improve and account for public health programs using methods that are useful, feasible, proper and accurate.

Some Myths About Evaluation

1. Many people believe that evaluation is a useless activity that generates lots of boring data with useless conclusions. This was a problem with evaluations in the past when program evaluation methods were chosen largely on the basis of achieving complete scientific accuracy, reliability and validity. This approach often generated extensive data from which very carefully chosen conclusions were drawn. Generalizations and recommendations were avoided.

As a result, evaluation reports tended to reiterate the obvious and left program administrators disappointed and skeptical about the value of evaluation in general. More recently (especially as a result of Michael Patton's development of utilization-focused evaluation), evaluation has focused on utility, relevance and practicality at least as much as scientific validity.

2. Many people believe that evaluation is about proving the success or failure of a program. This myth assumes that success is implementing the perfect program and never having to hear from project staff, beneficiaries and stakeholders again – the program will now run itself perfectly. This doesn't happen in real life. Success is remaining open to continuing feedback and adjusting the program accordingly. Evaluation gives us this continuing feedback.

3. Many believe that evaluation is a highly unique and complex process that occurs at a certain time in a certain way, and almost always includes the use of outside experts; therefore evaluation has frequently been viewed as an adversarial process. Its main use has been seen to provide "thumbs-up" or "thumbs down" about a program or project. In this role, it has often been considered by program staff as an external imposition, which is threatening, disruptive, and not very helpful. Today in contrast to a decade or two ago, evaluation is considered by most professionals as a tool that not only measures, but can contribute to, success.

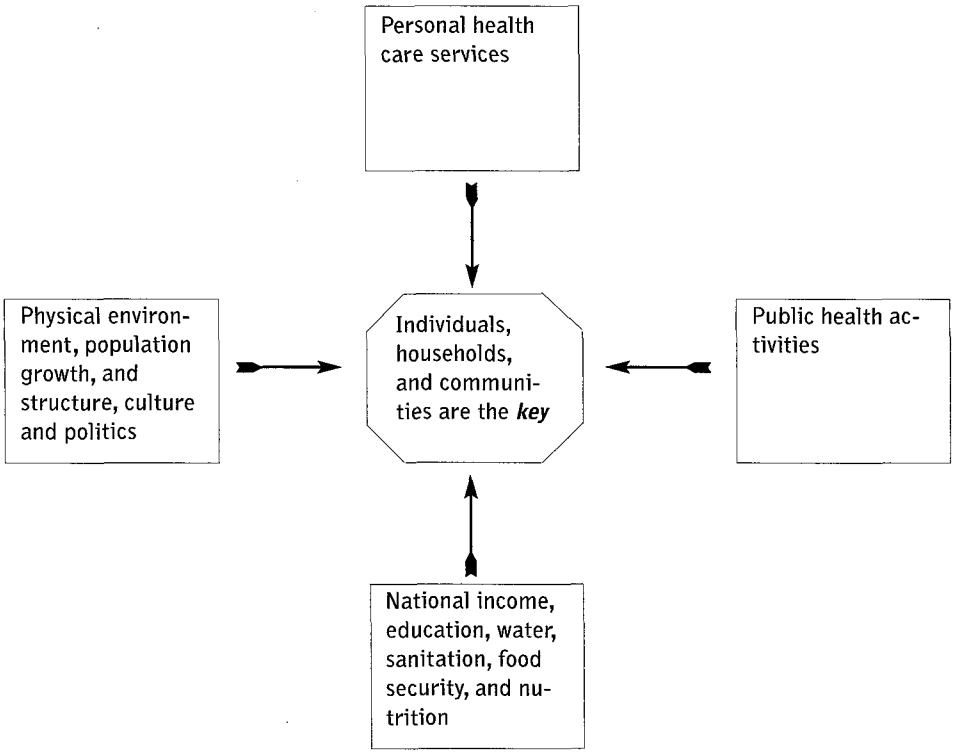
Peculiarity of the Health Sector

The model in Box 1 shows that here are many determinants for health. In

some cases the determinant is immutable such as genetics. More often, factors such as socio-economic status, nutrition, health services (access to and quality of), environment – particularly access to safe water and sanitation – and, most and foremost, behavior, all of which are modifiable, have a strong and direct influence over the health status of a given population. Few programs can take all these determinants into account.

Box 1 also makes easy to understand the major differences in designing health programs for low- or high-income countries: variables such as income, education, nutrition and access to services are much less likely to influence health outcomes in developed countries because they are usually at acceptable standards.

The Enabling Environment for Health



Source: The World Bank. Better Health in Africa

A program that tackles with most of these variables is the Health, Nutrition and Population (HNP) Program of the World Bank (WB). The program involves a myriad of interventions across sectors, such as health services, education, and infrastructure, all linked with economics and poverty reduction strategies. This program can influence health outcomes through two complex pathways. First, WB policy advice and investments could change health outcomes by improving socioe-conomic wellbeing, increasing family income and access to food, education, and clean water. Second, policy advice and projects could influence health outcomes through strengthening the "health care system" by expanding facilities, adjusting the role of public, private and voluntary providers; improving the skills of health providers; or through adjusting the institutions that contribute to health system performance.

Generally, an evaluation of such complex programs looks across projects, examining the utility of the activities and strategies employed, in light of the initial goal. It is carried to completion after the projects have become fully operational and adequate time has passed for expected outcomes to be achieved. Frequently, the evaluation is deferred until 3 to 5 years after program initiation. Other times, only reporting may be deferred, but data collection is begun simultaneously with program onset. In this case, the evaluation draws upon information collected on an annual basis that is aggregated across projects and summarized at an appropriate checkpoint.

Challenges to Evaluation

There are two major challenges for an evaluation of public health programs. First, as we said, health outcomes are determined by a complex array of influences in addition to health services and behavior (and the non-modifiable genetics). It is therefore difficult to establish clear causal links between specific health interventions - which, in the case of HNP program, for instance, are mainly based on provision of health services - and improvement in health outcomes.

The process is further complicated by the lack of agreement on a single best measure or index of health status. Mortality may immediately seem

the most obvious indicator, and it is so in most developed countries; but mortality data, which do not indicate changes in morbidity or disability, are not a feasible measure for many programs, for several reasons among which are that assembling reliable baseline information on mortality status requires special surveys because few countries have reliable or generalizable vital registration systems. Use of the DALY[1] has clear advantages over using mortality alone: It explicitly accounts for age differences in mortality, and it includes disability in its definition.

Not all health programs are as complex as the ones of the World Bank. However, most of them must deal with variables, such as income, educations, and environment, which may be not addressed by the program, yet do influence its outcome.

Most public health programs, even those with a better-defined causal relationship between intervention and health outcome, show the same challenges in measuring impact and evaluating outcomes as described above since very seldom a project or program[2] consists of a single intervention addressing one health problem. Take for example a public health program whose stated goal is "to reduce mortality for smoke-related lung cancer". There will be a number of projects that individually contribute to the achievement of such program goal since, as in all health promotion initiatives, there are many approaches and components in use, including policy development, organizational changes, community development, legislation, advocacy, education and communication, in combination with one another.

Another example of multi-component public health program is an HIV-AIDS reduction program; the goal of "Reducing HIV-AIDS Mortality", will have components of different nature: preventive, curative, and educational; all part of the same project.

1. Disability Adjusted Life Year (DALY). This measure scores the number of years and quality of life lost as a result of ill-health, using a 3% discount rate to compute the present value of years of life gained through mitigation or prevention of disease. The resulting estimates of the costs of specific interventions can then be used to rank interventions according to the cost at which they deliver a DALY. Also this measure, however presents problems: estimating the burden of disease at country level is very onerous and national capacity to do so is beginning to be developed now in developing countries. Only in five-ten years it may become feasible to use burden-of-disease data as a basis for assessing program impact.

2. A Program is a coordinated approach aimed at achieving a global health outcome (e.g. reduction of mortality); a Project is a particular developmental activity funded by that program. Thus, a program consists of a collection of projects that seek to meet a defined set of goals and objectives. Given that merit and challenges of the evaluation do not change, in this paper the term Program will be used to describe the object of evaluation; it applies to any organized action to achieve a desired end.

Often, programs addressed more than one health problem to achieve the goal of "Improving the Health Status". In this case, each individual project will address one problem and all together they will contribute to achieving the goal.

How do we evaluate such programs? How do we measure each individual project or component's impact in reducing or mitigating the health problem?

Academic Evaluation

Theoretically, the only scientific way to do so is conducting academic evaluation using randomized control trials, which tests hypothesis and establish the clear link and causal relation between one intervention and its outcome. For example, it would be ideal to say that the reduction of mortality for lung cancer, observed in the evaluation of a health promotion program for smoking cessation, is due for 35% to education in schools, for 25% to television spots, and for 40% to enforcing laws and regulations. This result would allow us to focus more on the component that has achieved the best result.

Unfortunately, in order to conduct this analysis we should randomly select two samples, one on which the health promotion activities will be tested and another one as control group. Ideally, the groups should be isolated for a very long time in a controlled environment, in order to exclude other factors' influence on the behavior change.

This evaluation would be theoretically perfect from the point of view of accuracy of measurements and result; but it would also be completely unfeasible and improper. How could we establish a clear link between cause and effect given the multidimensionality of the determinants of health? How could we impose tight environmental controls, which would be unacceptable and unethical? In this regard, the World Health Organization (WHO) European Working Group on Health Promotion Evaluation has concluded in 1998 that "The use of randomized control trials to evaluate health promotion initiatives is, in most cases, inappropriate, misleading and unnecessarily expensive".

The conclusion applies to many other programs as well. In general, academic evaluation is a lengthy and costly process that required the service of expert researchers versatile in data collection and quantitative analysis.

Very few program managers can afford to wait up to five years to be proved wrong or right about the relevance of the program or its conduction. We often work with short-term projects, scarce resources, unreliability of baseline data, and, often, the obligation of evaluating the program impact before projects are stabilized and even completed at times.

In the environment of the international development cooperation, program evaluation is completely different from those designed and planned by academic institutions, and/or rich government or private corporations. Time and resource constraints as well as program peculiarities dictate other choices of evaluation techniques.

Practical Evaluation

As an alternative to academic, research evaluation, a few years ago Michael Patton proposed the use of "Practical Evaluation", which is defined as:

"The practice of evaluation that involves the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and outcomes of programs, personnel and products for use by specific people to reduce uncertainties, improve effectiveness and make decisions with regard to what those programs, personnel, or products are doing and affecting".

Thus, the focus of the evaluation is now on describing what is being done and in which context. Box 2 highlights some of the main differences between the academic research and the practical evaluation.

Comparison between academical research and practical evaluation models

	Academic Research	Practical Evaluation
Purpose	Test Hypotheses	Improve program and practice
Method	Controlled environment	Context sensitive
Statistics	Sophisticated	Simpler statistics

Source: University of Texas – Houston Health Science Center

This approach to evaluation is practical and doable, recognizing real world constraints such as lack of time, resources, knowledge, and political boundaries.

There are a number of important components to this definition of practical evaluation. The first component is that data is collected in a systematic manner. This requires that the collection of data for the evaluation be planned from the beginning. It is too late when report time arrives to discover that essential data elements have not been collected.

Secondly, this definition specifies that evaluation focus on the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of the program being evaluated. Another component of this definition states that the purposes of evaluation are to:
– reduce uncertainties;
– improve effectiveness;
– make decisions about the program.

Practical program evaluation can provide feedback on program operations, expenditures, and results. It can be useful in deciding among budget alternatives, and in managing and reporting on uses of public funds.

Two other components emphasized in this definition of evaluation relevant to public health, are context and collaboration.

A practical evaluation is one that can reasonably be implemented within the context and constraints of a particular situation. Such constraints include inevitable limitations of time, resources, and knowledge as well as specific political boundaries. One example of context lies in the method of data collection and analysis for the evaluation. Data may not be available for certain evaluation questions within the time frame studied; personnel and automation resources may be limited in the collection of the required data; budgets may not include extra dollars to "out-source" the analysis of the evaluation data; and some of the evaluation questions may be politically "taboo" in some areas.

Collaboration is another important concept in the definition of evaluation. The team or collaborative approach involves a group of people, including selected stakeholders, who share the decision making for the major aspects of the evaluation. This approach to evaluation has many benefits. Using a collaborative approach to evaluation is not only one way to ex-

pand or maximize available resources; it is also a way of ensuring stakeholders' ownership to the evaluation, which will not be longer seen as "intrusive" or "controlling", but as a tool for improvement.

The type of evaluation we undertake to improve a program depends on what we want to learn about that program. Some of the questions to address may be the followings:

What are we doing and how are we doing it? Plans about how to deliver services, end up changing substantially as those plans are put into place. Evaluation can verify if the program is really running as originally planned.

What is the initial impact of products or services of the program on beneficiaries? Too often, program designers rely on their own instincts and passions to conclude what their beneficiaries really need. Over time, program staff finds themselves in a lot of guessing about what would be a good service, or how that service could be delivered.

Are we being efficient? Improve delivery mechanisms to be more efficient and less costly. Over time, product or service delivery may end up to be an inefficient collection of activities that are less efficient and more costly than need be. Evaluations can identify program strengths and weaknesses to improve the program.

Is the program worth of continuation or replication? Evaluation can produce valid comparisons between programs to decide which one should be retained, and describe effective programs for duplication elsewhere.

In summary, an evaluation will provide a public health program with the answers to the following questions:

— What have you done?
— How well have you done it?
— How much have you done?
— How effective have you been?

Often, program managers want to know everything about the program. However, limited resources usually force us to prioritize what we need to know to make current decisions; the more focused we are about what we want to examine by the evaluation, the more efficient we can be in our evaluation, the shorter the time it will take and ultimately the less it will

me future date. Indicators measuring the achievement of these objectives must be set during the program-design phase.

STEP 3: Focus the evaluation design: it is not possible for an evaluation to address all questions for all stakeholders. There must be a focus. Is the purpose of the evaluation to improve your program, to improve health status, or to demonstrate accountability? The evaluation team must do advance planning and reach agreement regarding exactly:

– what questions the evaluation will attempt to answer;
– the process that will be followed;
– what methods will be used to collect, analyze, and interpret the data;
– who will perform the different activities;
– how the results will be disseminated.

The team approach to the evaluation, brings into the process a wide range of resources, skills, experiences, and viewpoints. This ensures optimal input from both internal and external sources and increases the possibility that the evaluation will be useful, feasible, proper, and accurate. In many small projects, the evaluation is often conducted by one person; that does not exclude the team approach as project staff and main stakeholders can be involved to obtain the same result.

STEP 4: Gather credible evidence: credible information is the raw material of a good evaluation. It must be perceived by all stakeholders as trustworthy and relevant to answer their questions. Evidence should be viewed in a broad sense. Evidence consists of information and data from a variety of source: demographic descriptors; indicators of health status, such as Morbidity, Mortality, Disability, Health behavior related to illness; Qualitative indicators; Quality of life indicators; Inventories of interventions; utilization and Expenditures. It is important that most data collection begin from the start of the project and continue at appropriate checkpoints.

STEP 5: Justify conclusions: once the evaluation evidence is collected, care must be taken in reaching justified conclusions. The process of reaching justified conclusions involves several questions:

– What are the findings and how significant are they?
– How do the findings compare to the objectives for the program? To what degree the program is successful or not?

– What claims or recommendations should be made for program improvement?

Step 6: Ensure use and share of lesson learned: finally, it is important to ensure that the evaluation findings are used and that the lessons learned are shared. One of the main purposes for doing an evaluation is to improve practice. Evaluation provides a way to discriminate between program strategies that are successful and those that are not. Evaluations that are not used or inadequately disseminated are simply not worth doing. The likelihood that the evaluation findings will be used increases through deliberate planning, preparation, and follow-up.

Adhering to these six steps will facilitate an understanding of a program's context and will improve how most evaluations are conceived and conducted. It does not matter what evaluation technique are we choosing. These steps can be applied regardless, since they provide the appropriate frame in which any evaluation can be conducted.

The second element of the framework is a set of standards for assessing the quality of evaluation activities, organized into the following four groups:

STANDARD 1: Utility. Is it useful to evaluate your program? Will the results be used to improve practice or allocate resources better? Will the evaluation answer stakeholders' questions?

Evaluation is useful in developing new program proposals, in reauthorizing existing programs, in justifying requests for additional funding, in accounting for use of public funds, and especially in improving program performance.

STANDARD 2: Feasibility. Is it feasible to evaluate the program? Given the specific political environment and current resources, can we afford to do it? Do we have adequate support to conduct the evaluation? Does the budget allow for contracting with outside professionals to conduct the evaluation? If not, do we have the personnel, time, and monetary resources to do it in-house? If we cannot evaluate all aspects of the program, what parts can we evaluate?

STANDARD 3: Propriety. Are we able to conduct the evaluation properly? Is the approach fair and ethical? For example, in conducting a survey, the

results are intended to be kept confidential. Are we truly able to maintain that confidentiality within the constraints of the organization and with the types of data processing and analysis required?

STANDARD 4: Accuracy. Is the evaluation accurate? It is important that appropriate data collection methods have been used and that the data have been consistently collected. For example, if we have several people involved in conducting interviews, have we provided adequate training to ensure consistency and quality in gathering the information?

These standards help make evaluation practical. They are well-supported decision principles to follow when faced with having to make real-world tradeoffs or compromises. For example, the standards can guard against creating an imbalanced evaluation – such as one that is accurate and feasible, but useless; or one that would be genuinely useful, but is not feasible or ethical. An optimal (as opposed to ideal) evaluation strategy is one that accomplishes all steps in the evaluation framework in a way that accommodates the program context and meets or exceeds all relevant standards.

Evaluation is closely tied to program practice. Many of these activities are part of everyone's daily job activities. In a sense, everyone conducts evaluations all day long, but these evaluations are very informal and generally the stakes involved are lower. As the stakes increase, for example when there are hard decisions to be made regarding the future of the program, then evaluations become formalized.

Conclusions

This paper intentionally did not provide a description of some of the over 35 different types of evaluations, since there is no recipe or formula that is best for every case. Quantitative and qualitative methods each have advantages and drawbacks when it comes to an evaluation's design, implementation, findings, conclusions, and utilization. The challenge is to find a judicious balance in any particular situation. It is important to remember that evaluation is not a single thing but it is a process and that, in order to be effective, this process must be framed into a context and planned since the beginning of the program.

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*Views expressed in this article reflect solely the author's opinion.

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Monitoraggio e Valutazione nella Cooperazione allo Sviluppo*

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Il sostegno pubblico allo sviluppo (APS) è un campo nel quale sono state elaborati e applicati, più che in altre aree di intervento dello Stato, sistemi di verifica dell'efficacia dell'azione pubblica. Le spinte che hanno prodotto questo fenomeno meriterebbero un'analisi approfondita. In questo contributo ci concentreremo su una ipotesi di spiegazione di tale processo, secondo la quale è possibile considerare la creazione e il consolidamento di sistemi di monitoraggio e valutazione come uno dei meccanismi fondamentali per consentire la transizione da modelli di pianificazione di servizi incentrati sulla fornitura di input (risorse materiali, finanziarie, umane) a modelli più attenti al conseguimento sostenibile di obiettivi e di risultati, attraverso l'adozione di approcci partecipativi.

Nella nostra analisi ci avvarremo del caso della cooperazione italiana allo sviluppo. Considereremo innanzitutto le tendenze che hanno caratterizzato negli ultimi decenni l'approccio alla valutazione dell'APS delle principali agenzie di cooperazione internazionale. Analizzeremo poi alcuni aspetti dell'evoluzione del sistema di monitoraggio e valutazione nel-

la cooperazione governativa dell'Italia nello stesso periodo. Concluderemo con alcune considerazioni sul rapporto tra monitoraggio e valutazione.

1. Cenni sull'evoluzione degli approcci alla valutazione dell'aiuto pubblico allo sviluppo

Nel suo libro sulla valutazione dell'APS Basil Cracknell (2000) suddivide la storia della valutazione in quattro fasi. Egli distingue tra una fase nascente, il periodo dell'istituzionalizzazione e la cosiddetta maturità, che aveva identificato precedentemente (Cracknell, 1988), alle quali aggiunge una quarta fase caratterizzata, in sintonia con le tesi di Rieben (1996), da un ripensamento critico dei metodi e degli strumenti di valutazione. Rieben, infatti, sottolinea che gli sviluppi più recenti della valutazione sono consapevoli delle potenzialità e dei limiti del "Quadro logico" (*logical framework*), soprattutto quando viene impiegato come strumento rigido di pianificazione, e si fondano su una maggiore attenzione verso il tema della partecipazione nei processi di sviluppo e, di conseguenza, sulla ricerca di un approccio in grado di catturare le dimensioni partecipative.

La prima fase viene indicata da Cracknell (2000) nel periodo compreso tra l'inizio degli anni sessanta e la fine degli anni settanta. Si tratta di una fase di fondazione che ha visto la nascita e ha accompagnato i primi passi della valutazione nella cooperazione allo sviluppo.

In quegli anni negli Stati Uniti si sviluppò e perfezionò la verifica dei risultati ottenuti nel settore della formazione professionale e dell'assistenza sociale. Gli approcci a tale verifica produssero ben presto vere e proprie pratiche di valutazione supportate da analisi teoriche. Il riscontro avuto sulle scienze sociali e nel settore dell'educazione indusse l' Organizzazione per la Cooperazione e lo Sviluppo Economico (OCSE) a consultare alcuni esperti americani di questa nuova disciplina per apprendere come, secondo loro, si potevano valutare dei progetti di sviluppo sociale, realizzati nei Paesi in via di sviluppo (PVS). Da quel momento, l'OCSE ebbe un ruolo centrale nell'approfondire queste prime indicazioni ricevute, e diffondere tra i suoi membri le pratiche della valutazione di progetti e programmi di APS.

Malgrado quest'opera, tuttavia, pochi donatori ed organizzazioni internazionali dimostrarono di avere una particolare attenzione al tema e solo alcuni furono disposti ad investire risorse in questo campo ed a creare, all'interno delle loro organizzazione, unità esclusivamente dedicate alla valutazione.

Non dobbiamo dimenticare che predominava la valutazione "ex ante" dei progetti, basata soprattutto sulle analisi di convenienza economiche per finanziare e realizzare un intervento. L'analisi costi e benefici era lo strumento più utilizzato per valutare l'opportunità di eseguire una iniziativa. Solo timidamente si parlava di costi e benefici sociali, cercando di applicare l'analisi costi e benefici ai progetti con marcato indirizzo sociale.

Vedremo in seguito come l'esperienza italiana si uniformava a tale orientamento, quali sforzi furono fatti per introdurre la valutazione nelle fasi successive al finanziamento e quanto ancora resta da fare per consolidare tale funzione

La seconda fase comprende i primi anni ottanta e può considerarsi il periodo in cui la valutazione viene introdotta e formalmente riconosciuta come una funzione all'interno di molte organizzazioni di cooperazione allo sviluppo, sia bilaterali che multilaterali.

L'importante flusso di risorse verso i PVS avvenuto negli anni precedenti e l'impatto sull'opinione pubblica di alcune catastrofi umanitarie, come la siccità nei paesi saheliani e nel Corno d'Africa a metà degli anni ottanta, indussero la dirigenza politica ed amministrativa dei Paesi finanziatori a interrogarsi sull'efficacia dell'APS.

Già da alcuni anni si erano avviate le prime riflessioni sulle metodologie che si potevano applicare per rendere più efficaci ed efficienti gli aiuti e, in questo contesto, la United States Agency for International Development (USAID) incominciava a prendere in considerazione l'uso del *logical framework* e del Ciclo di Progetto, che solo più tardi influenzò le attività di molte agenzie di cooperazione allo sviluppo di Paesi europei e della stessa Commissione Europea.

In quegli anni, le maggiori risorse dedicate alla valutazione incrementarono il numero di valutazioni realizzate. La concentrazione di valutazioni in alcune aree geografiche produsse risultati che influenzarono non

solo l'andamento di progetti in corso e di quelli che si stavano preparando, ma anche le strategie di cooperazione e logicamente i negoziati con i Paesi destinatari. La valutazione incominciò ad assumere un carattere "politico" – nel senso di capacità di fornire una base conoscitiva empirica sull'efficacia, l'impatto e la rilevanza delle *policies* perseguite dai principali donatori nel loro dialogo con i Paesi destinatari – e quindi ad avere quell'importanza fino ad allora negatale.

Le organizzazioni di cooperazione allo sviluppo incominciarono a costituire delle Unità di Valutazione che riportavano i loro risultati direttamente ai responsabili delle agenzie di cooperazione (Ministro, Presidente o Direttore Generale, a seconda del sistema istituzionale adottato dai singoli Paesi finanziatori) o al Consiglio di amministrazione (o organo corrispondente), e si dotarono di procedure e manuali per meglio renderle operative.

Anche in questa fase, l'OCSE assunse un ruolo trainante. Risale a quegli anni la costituzione dell'"Expert Group on Aid Evaluation" del Comitato per gli Aiuti allo Sviluppo (DAC) dell'OCSE, che realizza una serie di studi e produce un compendio delle pratiche realizzate dai vari donatori sulla valutazione dell'Aiuto allo sviluppo. All'OCSE si affianca anche la Banca Mondiale che investe cospicue risorse nella valutazione. Il testo di Casley e Kumar (1986) ha guidato molti esperti nella valutazione e monitoraggio dei progetti di sviluppo rurale, mentre le linee guida elaborate dalla stessa Banca Mondiale in quegli anni, furono un punto di riferimento per molti valutatori delle Unità di valutazione che si stavano a quel tempo formando.

La terza fase può essere considerata come l'epoca della maturità per la valutazione, e coincide con la fine degli anni ottanta e l'inizio degli anni novanta. Essa corrisponde all'introduzione del *logical framework* nel quadro della gestione del Ciclo di Progetto (*project cycle management – PCM*) come base delle procedure e delle metodologie adottate dalla maggior parte delle organizzazioni bilaterali e multilaterali. "Il nuovo approccio (*logical framework*), alla gestione dei progetti rappresenta il più importante miglioramento sulla disorganizzazione e non sistematicità dei metodi applicati fino a quel momento. Per la prima volta gli obiettivi possono essere chiaramente definiti ed i criteri per misurare lo stato di avanzamento del progetto ed il loro raggiungimento sono identificati. In quel periodo il *logical fra-*

mework regna supremo ed i suoi vantaggi sono considerevoli in relazione a quanto si faceva prima, così che poche persone sono inclini ad essere critici verso tale metodologia" (Cracknell, 2000).

In questo periodo si consolidano anche i principi su cui le attività di valutazione debbano fare riferimento, ed un importante contributo viene dato, ancora una volta, dall'OCSE (1992) che con le sue analisi riesce a stimolare la riflessione all'interno delle varie Organizzazioni di cooperazione allo sviluppo, soprattutto dei più importanti Paesi donatori. Proprio in quegli anni tale contributo fu particolarmente apprezzato in Italia dove incominciavano ad emergere le esigenze di razionalizzazione delle attività, definizione di procedure e maggiore trasparenza nelle metodologie applicate per il finanziamento e la realizzazione dei progetti di cooperazione allo sviluppo.

L'inizio della *quarta fase*, che caratterizza ancora i giorni nostri, partì proprio dalla critica al *logical framework*, nell'ambito di un più complessivo ripensamento dell'adeguatezza degli strumenti tradizionali della cooperazione allo sviluppo (soprattutto dell'aiuto-progetto) rispetto ai nuovi principi di partenariato con i Paesi destinatari affermati nel corso degli anni novanta. In quel periodo si spostò, innanzitutto, l'accento dal ruolo dei donatori per garantire il conseguimento degli obiettivi di singoli progetti al ruolo che spetta ai diretti beneficiari, ed alla loro effettiva partecipazione nelle varie fasi del Ciclo di Progetto. L'applicazione di strategie partecipative alla gestione del Ciclo di Progetto comportò dunque la sperimentazione di approcci innovativi, anch'essi basati sulla partecipazione dei soggetti coinvolti nelle iniziative di cooperazione, alla valutazione degli interventi, nel quadro di una considerazione più flessibile del *logical framework*.

Nello stesso tempo, cambiò anche l'attenzione verso il progetto, in precedenza inteso come unità primaria dell'azione di cooperazione allo sviluppo[1] e successivamente considerato soprattutto in ragione del suo effetto dimostrativo nell'ambito di approcci di più ampio respiro, rivolti a influenzare macropolitiche e riforme strutturali. Si incominciò ad operare nei Paesi più poveri attraverso Fondi di sviluppo locale che richiedono l'applicazione di pratiche di valutazione partecipata e di autovalutazione. Per in-

1. La logica di intervento delle agenzie di cooperazione non è più – se mai lo è stata in passato – focalizzata sul progetto di sviluppo, ma tende a spostare la propria azione di sviluppo sul livello dei programmi settoriali, dei piani integrati di area e, più in generale, delle politiche di sviluppo (Tommasoli, 2000).

tervenire nei Paesi meno poveri andò affermandosi l'orientamento verso un approccio di programma (aiuto-programma), l'analisi settoriale ed i conseguenti *sector-wide approaches* o programmi settoriali, nei quali l'analisi dell'efficienza e dell'efficacia del sostegno dei donatori prende in considerazione il contributo dell'insieme degli enti finanziatori e non solo quello di un singolo soggetto in relazione a un singolo progetto. I principi del partenariato e dell'appropriazione (*ownership*), propugnati nel corso delle conferenze globali delle Nazioni Unite degli anni novanta, attribuirono un peso decisivo al ruolo del governo e delle istituzioni del Paese destinatario (incluse le istituzioni della società civile), e in ultima analisi dei diretti destinatari di un intervento, per il conseguimento degli obiettivi delle politiche di sviluppo definite da un PVS.

Tutto questo sta trasformando inevitabilmente anche il ruolo della valutazione. Dopo l'interesse preponderante per l'analisi dell'efficienza e dell'efficacia al livello di progetto, tipico delle prime fasi, va maturando l'attenzione all'efficacia e alla rilevanza delle politiche, all'impatto delle strategie adottate, alla sostenibilità delle riforme volte a migliorare la capacità di erogare e rendere accessibili servizi di base ai soggetti più marginali, definendo e sostenendo le condizioni di un ambiente favorevole per l'azione dei soggetti locali di sviluppo economico e sociale. Attraverso azioni di *mainstreaming*, vale a dire misure che mirano a riflettere nelle strategie di cooperazione con un Paese destinatario o con una regione le priorità "orizzontali" o non settoriali affermate negli orientamenti della cooperazione internazionale, si affermano "temi" trasversali che tendono ad incidere sulle politiche di più settori, come la lotta alla povertà, la gestione delle risorse naturali, l'uguaglianza di genere, il rafforzamento istituzionale, lo sviluppo di capacità e competenze locali, il *community empowerment*, il buon governo. L'appropriazione delle azioni di cooperazione da parte di soggetti locali determina, Inoltre, l'esigenza di rafforzare anche le capacità di valutazione locale, rendendo maggiormente effettiva la partecipazione ai processi di sviluppo.

2. La valutazione nella cooperazione allo sviluppo dell'Italia

Il quadro sopra delineato è utile per l'analisi del caso dell'Italia dove, sep-

pur con molti ritardi, il significato e il peso attribuiti alla valutazione si sono evoluti nel tempo. In questa sezione percorreremo le principali tappe del consolidamento della valutazione dell'APS italiano, sia in ambito non governativo che governativo, considerando le attività finanziate inizialmente dall'ex Dipartimento per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (DIPCO) del Ministero Affari Esteri e, successivamente, dalla Direzione Generale per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (DGCS) dello stesso Ministero.

La fine degli anni settanta e l'inizio degli anni ottanta furono segnati da un crescente impegno finanziario per la cooperazione italiana, in parte in controtendenza rispetto al resto dei Paesi donatori. In quel periodo, sulla base delle prime riflessioni internazionali svolte nel corso delle *prime due fasi* indicate nella precedente sezione, il DIPCO avviò una riflessione sul tema della valutazione stimolata dalle consultazioni con gli esperti delle unità di valutazione che erano state istituite in altri Paesi donatori ed in alcune agenzie multilaterali, nonché nell'ambito dell'OCSE.

Alla luce dei cospicui investimenti realizzati, della conseguente esigenza di capire quali effettivi risultati tali investimenti ottenevano in termini di sviluppo e per approfondire quanto veniva dibattuto in sede internazionale, fu istituito informalmente nel Dipartimento un "Nucleo tecnico di valutazione".

Come osserva un documento della DGCS, risale "a quegli anni l'inizio della partecipazione dell'Italia al citato gruppo di esperti OCSE che risultò particolarmente significativa per l'evoluzione del concetto di valutazione all'interno della cooperazione italiana. Nel 1983, al fine di sperimentare sul campo le lezioni apprese e le ipotesi metodologiche via via formulate dal "Nucleo tecnico di valutazione" informale, il Dipartimento realizzò un primo programma di valutazione relativo alle attività di cooperazione finanziate dallo stesso Dipartimento a partire dal 1979 in Egitto ed Etiopia. Paesi già allora prioritari dove erano concentrate tipologie di iniziative particolarmente rappresentative dell'azione di cooperazione italiana per dimensione finanziaria, strumenti, canali e settori di intervento. Gli esiti delle due missioni svolte nel 1983 e nel 1984 con risorse professionali del Dipartimento, pur sensibilmente significativi ai fini di un riorientamento delle modalità di cooperazione con quei Paesi, man-

carono, tuttavia, l'obiettivo di una reale "retroazione"[2], anche perché l'assenza di formalizzazione del citato Nucleo disperse rapidamente le risorse professionali ad esso dedicate, riassorbite dalle altre attività operative del Dipartimento, che andavano crescendo, in quegli anni, molto rapidamente" (DGCS, 1997).

Durante il periodo di consolidamento dei principi della valutazione e della creazione delle Unità di valutazione in molte organizzazioni multilaterali e bilaterali (*terza fase*), la cooperazione italiana stava predisponendo la normativa secondaria che avrebbe regolato l'applicazione della nuova legge n° 49/87 e avviando le nuove strutture operative della DGCS, che non prevedevano, peraltro, la costituzione di una Unità di valutazione. La continuità della partecipazione al gruppo dell'OCSE[3] consentì, tuttavia, di seguire il dibattito a livello internazionale e di avere un progressivo aggiornamento di un ristretto gruppo di esperti, interno all'Amministrazione, sui temi della valutazione. Il coordinamento, la programmazione e la gestione delle attività di valutazione furono svolti in questo periodo (1986-1993) nell'ambito degli uffici della DGCS preposti alla programmazione. Nello stesso periodo la DGCS, attraverso una convenzione-quadro, affidò il controllo e la valutazione in itinere ed ex post di attività di cooperazione ad un soggetto esterno, la Società Italiana di Monitoraggio (SIM) (DGCS, 1997).

2. La retroazione è la trasmissione di quanto è stato constatato dalla valutazione a coloro che possono ottenerne delle lezioni utili e pertinenti al fine di favorire una migliore preparazione e gestione delle attività future. L'attività di retroazione può consistere nel riunire e diffondere le constatazioni, le conclusioni, le raccomandazioni e le lezioni apprese dall'esperienza di valutazione.

3. Negli ultimi anni l'Expert Group è stato trasformato in un Working Party on Aid Evaluation.

All'epoca era consolidato un equivoco che ancora oggi alcune volte emerge quando si parla di chi debba fare la valutazione, se un soggetto esterno o interno all'Ente finanziatore. Molti ritengono infatti che un soggetto esterno sia il solo che risponda ai requisiti di "terzietà ed indipendenza", un consulente o una Società privata, assicuri un grado di autonomia ed indipendenza di giudizio che un soggetto interno all'Amministrazione non può garantire. I concetti di "esterno" ed "interno" e di indipendenza devono, a nostro avviso, essere invece definiti tenendo conto della distinzione tra Ente finanziatore ed Ente esecutore delle iniziative sottoposte alla valutazione, laddove la credibilità dei risultati della valutazione si basa

sul fatto che chi esegue la valutazione non possa essere l'Ente esecutore.[4]

L'applicazione della convenzione con la SIM, più volte rinnovata e definitivamente venuta a scadenza nel 1997, fu da subito orientata al monitoraggio piuttosto che alla valutazione ex post ed in itinere, in quanto la DGCS voleva avere uno strumento di controllo su alcuni progetti che manifestamente dovevano essere riorientati sul piano operativo. Si sovrapponeva così l'azione di valutazione con quella di monitoraggio, sovrapposizione che viene fatta ancora da molti soggetti che si occupano di cooperazione allo sviluppo e che, come vedremo in seguito, necessita di un chiarimento.

D'altronde anche la legge n° 49/87 generava questa confusione in quanto non prevedeva, come già accennato, l'istituzione di una Unità di valutazione (responsabile della valutazione in itinere, finale ed ex post) analoga a quelle esistenti presso la maggior parte delle agenzie dei Paesi donatori, attribuendo compiti di valutazione all'Unità Tecnica Centrale (UTC) della DGCS ed al Nucleo di Valutazione Tecnica (NVT) del Comitato Direzionale.

All'UTC si richiedevano compiti di natura tecnica "relativi alle fasi di individuazione, istruttoria, formulazione, valutazione, gestione e controllo delle iniziative di cooperazione", dove la funzione di "valutazione" fu nei fatti interpretata come attinente alle proposte di finanziamento da sottoporre all'approvazione degli organi deliberanti[5], mentre la funzione di "gestione e controllo" rimandava essenzialmente ai compiti del monitoraggio.

4. In verità la valutazione viene sempre richiesta ed indotta dall'Ente finanziatore che di norma ne affida l'esecuzione ad un soggetto esterno, diverso dall'Ente esecutore del progetto valutato. L'Ente finanziatore redige i Termini di Riferimento (TdR), copre i costi della valutazione e, pertanto, la orienta secondo gli obiettivi che ritiene prioritari, ponendo le domande sulle questioni centrali che richiedono una risposta, definendo i tempi e spesso la metodologia di valutazione. Il soggetto esterno, nell'ambito del contratto o convenzione che stipula con l'Ente finanziatore, conduce il suo lavoro in piena autonomia, con il solo vincolo di rispettare i TdR. Questo vuol dire in particolare impegnarsi a fornire le risposte, sulla base dei dati empirici raccolti sul terreno, alle domande sollevate nei TdR. Il soggetto esterno non è pertanto "indipendente" dall'Ente che commissiona la valutazione nel senso che non ha la facoltà di definire le domande chiave poste nei TdR, ma gode di piena indipendenza di giudizio nel formulare le risposte a tali domande. In questa prospettiva, fatto salvo il principio secondo il quale chi definisce i TdR non possa poi condurre l'incarico di valutazione (e viceversa) e quello relativo alla separazione di funzioni tra chi esegue un progetto (Ente esecutore) e chi esegue la valutazione di quel progetto, non è molto rilevante se l'esecuzione della valutazione sia condotta da un soggetto interno o esterno all'Ente finanziatore.

5. Il prodotto di tale attività di "valutazione" è consistito in pareri tecnici e principalmente nelle cosiddette "schede di valutazione" per il Comitato Direzionale, ovvero atti amministrativi corrispondenti all'adepimento finale del cosiddetto appraisal di un progetto, talvolta definito "valutazione ex ante".

L'attività svolta dal Gruppo PROVAL 2 si concluse nei primi mesi del 1995 con la produzione di una serie di documenti sul "Sistema di gestione del Ciclo di Progetto" in seguito approvati dal Comitato Direzionale con delibera n° 43 del 28 luglio 1995. "Nell'ambito del primo di tali documenti la funzione della valutazione in itinere ed ex post assumeva finalmente ruolo di attività primaria e ad essa veniva attribuito pari rilievo rispetto alle altre funzioni tradizionalmente riconosciute nello svolgimento dell'attività di cooperazione, fra l'altro separandone nettamente l'ambito di competenza e la finalità da quelle di monitoraggio" (DGCS, 1997).

Al fine di consolidare tale processo, nel febbraio 1997 fu trasferito l'incarico di realizzare le valutazioni in itinere ed ex post dal NVT ad una nuova unità definita "Gruppo di Valutazione" (GV) alle dirette dipendenze del Direttore Generale della DGCS. Tale modifica inseriva formalmente la valutazione all'interno della DGCS in quanto struttura operativa, che assumeva la valutazione come una funzione gestionale a tutti gli effetti.

L'attribuzione infatti delle competenze al NVT del Comitato Direzionale, come era stato indicato precedentemente, dava competenze di valutazione e di controllo ad un ambito esterno alla struttura operativa della DGCS. Il vantaggio di unire valutazione delle iniziative e controllo delle Proposte di Finanziamento al NVT era di dare una maggiore efficacia alla retroazione derivante dalla valutazione, caratteristica che aveva contraddistinto la DGCS dalle altre Organizzazioni.[9]

La distinzione fu tuttavia solo formale in quanto gli esperti che costituirono il Gruppo di Valutazione coincisero sempre con gli esperti del NVT. Successivamente, nel settembre 1999 fu formalmente istituita l'Unità di Valutazione (che assunse le funzioni in precedenza attribuite al GV), con il compito di programmare e formulare le valutazioni in itinere ed ex post delle iniziative di cooperazione e di curare la retroazione dei risultati.[10]

Sulla base del mandato ricevuto, il GV propose il primo programma triennale di valutazione, che venne approvato dal Comitato Direzionale con

9. Più volte durante le riunioni dell'OCSE/DAC Expert Group on Aid Evaluation era infatti emerso che uno dei maggiori problemi delle Unità di Valutazione era l'efficacia della retroazione e la sua capacità di incidere effettivamente sulle decisioni che vengono prese dall'Organizzazione, sia su nuove iniziative e programmi paese, che in merito a nuovi orientamenti strategici.
10. Articolo 16 del Decreto Ministeriale n° 29/3466 del 10 settembre 1999 "Disciplina delle articolazioni interne degli uffici di livello dirigenziale generale istituiti presso l'Amministrazione centrale del Ministero degli affari esteri".

la delibera n° 37 del luglio 1997. Tale programma formalizzava per la prima volta una strategia di valutazione all'interno della DGCS e "*sulla scorta dell'esperienza della cooperazione italiana ed alla luce dei principi adottati dai Paesi donatori in sede OCSE/DAC in materia di valutazione dell'Aiuto Pubblico allo Sviluppo (APS)*," introduceva alcune novità significative, come:

- il superamento di una prassi di valutazione incentrata sui singoli progetti ed una maggiore attenzione rivolta alla valutazione delle politiche, programmi, settori ed insieme di iniziative di APS fra loro correlate e riferite a tematiche trasversali, aree geografiche e strumenti di cooperazione;
- la considerazione che era necessario coinvolgere "*gli utenti*" della valutazione, per cercare di soddisfare le loro aspettative ed ottenere dei risultati dalle valutazioni che fossero effettivamente utili;
- la programmazione su un triennio, che permetteva di affrontare valutazioni complesse;
- la disponibilità di risorse adeguate ai compiti da svolgere;

l'orientamento ad eseguire valutazioni ex post piuttosto che in itinere, verso le quali si erano principalmente orientate le attività di valutazione della DGCS fino a quel momento.[11]

In sintesi la programmazione della valutazione del 1997 prevedeva:

- la valutazione ex post di attività di cooperazione nell'area dell'Africa sub sahariana, mediante l'analisi di un campione rappresentativo delle principali regioni del subcontinente;
- la valutazione ex post del campo della formazione, nell'accezione sia di settore specialistico di intervento che di rilevante componente di interventi multisettoriali, mediante studi Paese, selezionati in base a criteri di rappresentatività per le aree dell'America Latina, Bacino del Mediterraneo e Vicino Oriente (BMVO) ed Africa Subsahariana;

11. L'enfasi data prima al monitoraggio, attraverso la convenzione con la SIM, e successivamente alla valutazione in itinere, corrispondono all'attenzione che la DGCS attribuiva al buon andamento dei progetti e di conseguenza alla possibilità di "correggere" i possibili "errori" fatti in corso di realizzazione. La programmazione realizzata nel 1997 ed orientata principalmente verso la valutazione ex post, spostava l'attenzione verso i programmi, le strategie e le politiche, con la consapevolezza intrinseca che non si poteva ottenere un miglioramento nella realizzazione dei progetti se non si miglioravano anche i contesti in cui questi venivano inseriti e realizzati.

— la valutazione ex post dell'utilizzo dell'art. 7 della legge n° 49/87 su "Imprese miste nei PVS" con particolare riferimento alle aree dell'Asia e del BMVO, a partire da almeno uno studio Paese per ciascuna area (DGCS, 1997).

Di questo programma sono state realizzate tutte le valutazioni previste, mentre debbono ancora concludersi le attività di retroazione e non è stato predisposto un successivo programma di valutazione, a testimonianza del grado di priorità che ancora hanno le attività di valutazione concrete. In verità, alla luce del percorso di maturazione del concetto di valutazione all'interno della DGCS descritto in precedenza, sarebbe auspicabile consolidare definitivamente le pratiche di valutazione in itinere, finale ed ex post e provvedere ad un rafforzamento della struttura operativa preposta, distinguendo tra l'altro il personale dell'Unità di Valutazione da quello del NVT.

Per concludere questa prima parte dobbiamo ricordare che tra le attività significative che hanno caratterizzato la valutazione all'interno della DGCS assume particolare rilievo la preparazione del Manuale Operativo di monitoraggio e valutazione (DCGS, 2002), anch'essa compresa tra le attività inserite nella programmazione 1997-1999. Tale Manuale, oltre ad contenere alcuni accenni al monitoraggio, costituisce la prima sintesi di tutte le procedure e modalità applicate dalla DGCS per la valutazione ex ante, in itinere ed ex post.

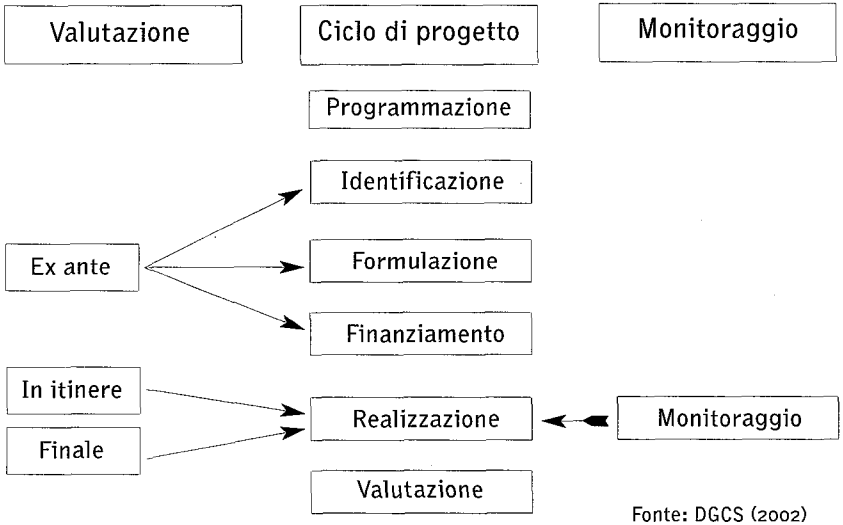
3. Monitoraggio e valutazione: differenze e complementarietà

Come abbiamo potuto constatare, ripercorrendo brevemente la storia della valutazione, più si precisavano gli ambiti e gli aspetti di applicazione di quest'ultima, più si chiarivano gli elementi di distinzione tra valutazione e monitoraggio. Tuttavia in molti operatori non è ancora definitivamente chiara tale distinzione e un certo grado di confusione emerge in molti documenti che contengono capitoli definiti genericamente con il termine "monitoraggio e valutazione", ciò probabilmente dovuto alla forte correlazione esistente tra le due funzioni.

In verità le due funzioni sono legate tra di loro ma anche distinte, in quanto il monitoraggio è un'importante azione all'interno della fase di realizzazione del Ciclo di Progetto ed è utile anche per acquisire i dati e le informazioni che saranno necessari ad eseguire la fase di Valutazione. Come illustrato nella figura 1, la valutazione è una funzione che, se realizzata ex ante, interviene nelle fasi di Identificazione, Formulazione e Finanziamento, se in itinere e finale riguarda la fase di Realizzazione e quando è attuata ex post costituisce la vera e propria fase di Valutazione (DGCS, 2002).[12]

12. Sulla base di questo schema ed al fine di contribuire a chiarire le diversità esistenti tra monitoraggio e valutazione, nel resto di questa sezione useremo il termine valutazione per indicare implicitamente la valutazione in itinere, finale ed ex post. Appare, infatti, chiara e ovvia la distinzione tra monitoraggio e valutazione ex ante. Per una trattazione del rapporto tra monitoraggio e valutazione si veda Masoni (1997). Per una raccolta di definizioni dei principali termini impiegati nel campo della valutazione dell'APS, si veda il glossario pubblicato nel 2002 dal Working Party on Aid Evaluation del DAC e consultabile on line nel sito www.oecd.org/dac.

Rapporto tra monitoraggio, valutazione e ciclo di progetto



Fonte: DGCS (2002)

La valutazione ha obiettivi sostanzialmente diversi dal monitoraggio, tanto diversi che i due termini non possono essere trattati, come talvolta accade, come sinonimi.

Il monitoraggio è uno strumento di gestione dell'iniziativa utile a coloro che la realizzano, per conoscere in ogni momento lo stato del progetto ed i progressi o i problemi che sono sorti in sede di realizzazione. Il monitoraggio è realizzato dallo staff del progetto e si basa su una raccolta sistematica di dati e informazioni, che può anche avere cadenza quotidiana o settimanale.

La valutazione vuole sostanzialmente analizzare l'andamento del progetto per correggere eventuali errori, ma soprattutto per apprendere dagli "insegnamenti" ottenuti e trasferirli in progetti futuri e simili a quello che è stato valutato. La valutazione è realizzata da personale e consulenti esterni alla gestione del progetto, quindi esterni rispetto non solo allo staff del progetto ma anche all'Ente esecutore.

Il monitoraggio è un continuo processo analitico attraverso il quale colui che ha la responsabilità di eseguire il progetto raccoglie e riceve dati, informazioni e aggiornamenti per rispondere a tre domande chiave:

- le attività progettuali sono realizzate in conformità con quanto è stato programmato, nei tempi e con i costi preventivati?
- le attività progettuali che si stanno realizzando portano effettivamente al raggiungimento dei risultati?
- sono stati riscontrati degli scostamenti che possono impedire il raggiungimento dei risultati? È necessario intervenire, modificando quanto è stato inizialmente programmato? (Murphy e Marchant, 1988).

Per rispondere a queste domande è necessario organizzare un sistema interno al progetto (*Management Information System*) che possa raccogliere i dati, analizzarli, coordinarne la sintesi e fornire al management del progetto informazioni sullo stato di attuazione dell'iniziativa e sulle immediate conseguenze e misure da prendere per permettere il conseguimento dei risultati programmati.

La valutazione in itinere, finale ed ex post invece cercherà di spiegare con quale grado di efficacia il progetto è stato realizzato o si sta realizzando, in quale misura l'iniziativa è stata rilevante[13] e se gli obiettivi specifici di sviluppo sono stati raggiunti. Il tipo di informazioni che si ottengono dalla valutazione sono solo in parte utili a

13. Per rilevanza si intende la misura in cui l'iniziativa soddisfa la coerenza, le priorità e le politiche del gruppo destinatario, del Paese beneficiario e dell'Ente esecutore (DGCS, 2002).

coloro che gestiscono il progetto, ma sono estremamente utili per coloro che identificano nuove strategie e preparano nuovi programmi e progetti.

> "La valutazione è un evento puntuale, realizzato in un momento preciso e definito della vita del progetto per ottenere un giudizio il più sistematico possibile, su un intervento da iniziare, in corso o completato, sul suo disegno, realizzazione, risultati e impatti" (DGCS, 2002).

Riprendendo la terminologia introdotta dal logical framework potremmo dire che il monitoraggio analizza il rapporto tra input ed output mentre la valutazione prende in considerazione il rapporto tra effetti ed impatto.[14]

Per fare un esempio concreto, Murphy e Marchant (1988) indicano che il monitoraggio di un viaggio in auto riguarda i controlli regolari che l'autista compie sulla correttezza del percorso che si sta realizzando, se la velocità ed i tempi di percorrenza corrispondono a quanto programmato e se il carburante, l'olio e la pressione delle gomme permettono di concludere il viaggio. La valutazione dello stesso viaggio – che può essere eseguita prima, a metà, alla fine o un po' di tempo dopo che lo stesso si è concluso – vuole analizzare se la destinazione scelta è o era quella giusta e se l'itinerario seguito è o era il più appropriato in funzione degli obiettivi che ci si erano posti (in pratica si vuole sapere se l'itinerario era economicamente il più conveniente, per limitare i costi ed il tempo, ovvero se era il più adatto per una gita turistica).[15]

Definita quindi la diversità esistente tra le due funzioni e la loro complementarità, in quanto una valutazione in itinere, finale ed ex post, incontra molte difficoltà ad essere realizzata senza potersi approvvigionare dei dati e delle analisi ottenuti dal monitoraggio, resta da stabilire quale delle due ha maggiore peso e che ruolo hanno rispettivamente il monitoraggio e la valutazione nella vita di un progetto.

14. Gli effetti sono i vantaggi e gli svantaggi creati dall'intervento, mentre per impatto si intende il cambiamento a lungo termine determinato nella società e nel contesto in cui il progetto ha operato.

15. La differenza tra monitoraggio e valutazione in itinere può essere spiegata con quest'altro esempio: se qualcuno è ammalato, misurandogli la febbre si può constatare la gravità dei sintomi della malattia e l'impossibilità del malato di realizzare certe cose, mentre quando arriva il medico, attraverso la sua diagnosi, è possibile indicare una cura e, sull'esperienza acquisita, curare altre malattie simili a quella riscontrata. Misurare la febbre e altri sintomi equivale ad analizzare il rapporto tra input ed output, che si ottiene attraverso la pratica del monitoraggio, mentre l'intervento del medico equivale all'azione che può svolgere la valutazione in itinere e analizza il rapporto tra impatto della diagnosi e gli effetti della cura. (Wye College, 1994).

Abbiamo accennato precedentemente al fatto che la DGCS alla fine degli anni ottanta ed all'inizio degli anni novanta ha dato particolare importanza al monitoraggio, attraverso la convenzione con la SIM, e successivamente alla valutazione in itinere.

Il tipo di monitoraggio a cui si faceva riferimento si distingueva concettualmente dal monitoraggio a cui si accenna in questo capitolo poiché era indotto e gestito direttamente dal donatore e non dallo staff del progetto, ed inteso semplicemente come una attività di mero controllo sull'iniziativa, controllo esercitato soprattutto verso coloro che gestivano e partecipavano alla sua esecuzione.[16]

16. Negli anni ottanta tale concetto di monitoraggio portò la Banca Mondiale non solo a controllare direttamente la gestione del progetto ma anche a creare delle Unità di monitoraggio e valutazione interne ai progetti e che relazionavano direttamente alla sede centrale, creando non poca confusione nei ruoli ed indebolendo la funzione direttiva e gestionale dell'iniziativa.

In seguito il ruolo della valutazione, come abbiamo visto, è cresciuto, e, nello stesso tempo, si è distinto e definito quello del monitoraggio. Il ruolo rispettivo di tali funzioni è variato quindi nel tempo ed è cambiato anche rispetto alla tipologia dei progetti analizzati.

Anche per fare fronte all'incertezza della realtà in cui si agisce o meglio della dinamicità sociale ed economica in cui i progetti si inseriscono, nel recente passato i donatori hanno sempre più rafforzato le loro capacità di preparazione e di definizione di un progetto, ed hanno sempre più assunto le funzioni di Ente finanziatore, delegando sempre più la realizzazione delle iniziative ad un Ente esecutore.

Tale delega, soprattutto per ragioni amministrative e gestionali, era ed è basata su una programmazione la più dettagliata possibile di un intervento, anche mediante appositi accordi con le controparti, per non avere "sorprese" in fase di realizzazione; nella gestione delle risorse, nelle attività realizzate, sui risultati ottenuti e nelle relazioni con le autorità locali.

L'esperienza ha tuttavia dimostrato che un'eccessiva rigidità dei progetti crea non pochi problemi gestionali e che spesso allontana il progetto dall'effettiva rispondenza rispetto alla realtà in cui interviene. Per favorire maggiormente la partecipazione di tutti coloro che sono interessati ai risultati dell'iniziativa è opportuno assicurarsi che le attività di moni-

toraggio dell'iniziativa permettano nello stesso tempo un controllo e un aggiustamento continuo del progetto attraverso approcci partecipativi.

Non bisogna tuttavia sottovalutare l'importanza della valutazione, soprattutto dopo la fase di finanziamento. Infatti se il monitoraggio permette di modificare le attività e riorientare le risorse programmate, solo la valutazione in itinere potrà permettere di rivedere l'obiettivo specifico e modificare i risultati attesi. Il monitoraggio è una funzione gestionale del progetto ed interviene sistematicamente sulla sua vita interna, mentre la valutazione è un'analisi di come il progetto si inserisce in una certa realtà, provocando modificazioni nello stesso tempo nel quale la realtà modifica a sua volta il significato del progetto.

Lo stesso strumento del *logical framework*, se interpretato come un fine in se stesso, può cristallizzarsi in uno schema rigido e deve essere rivisto alla luce delle possibilità di renderlo utile anche alla gestione di un'iniziativa e non solo per permettere di razionalizzare un quadro progettuale al fine di decidere se finanziarlo o no. Il *logical framework* può infatti diventare uno ostacolo se non è inteso anche come un strumento di gestione progettuale e non solo come uno strumento di formulazione di un intervento.

L'adattabilità e la flessibilità del *logical framework* può condizionare il successo di un'iniziativa. L'effettiva possibilità di apportare le modifiche necessarie in corso di realizzazione è determinante per l'efficacia, l'impatto e la sostenibilità di un'iniziativa.

In tale contesto il progetto non è più concepito come uno schema da applicare, ma come un'ipotesi di intervento nella quale il *logical framework* esplicita le assunzioni che hanno guidato la formulazione dell'intervento dal punto di vista del pianificatore. Esso deve mantenere uno spazio di apertura al confronto con le dinamiche di mutamento che il progetto stesso, in sede di realizzazione (ma ancora prima, all'atto della sua formulazione), attiva in quanto genera aspettative tra gli attori locali. Tale concezione porta automaticamente a pensare ad una diffusa, attiva e profonda partecipazione ai processi decisionali di tutti coloro che ne sono implicati e di conseguenza alle attività di monitoraggio e valutazione che li determinano.[17]

17. Negli ultimi anni si attribuisce in-

fatti molta importanza al concetto di partecipazione, che viene considerato un tema prioritario dalle più importanti Organizzazioni di cooperazione allo sviluppo, malgrado che non siano state ancora risolte le contraddizioni esistenti tra le logiche di pianificazione, programmazione ed uso delle risorse dei donatori e l'effettiva partecipazione ed appropriazione dei soggetti a cui l'attività di cooperazione è rivolta.
"Le differenze di prospettive dichiarate dalla retorica partecipativa riguardano non solo il sovvertimento della direzione di pianificazione, dal basso verso l'alto, ma altri aspetti, come il ruolo delle popolazioni locali, non più concepite come bersagli passivi dell'intervento ma come soggetti attivi, o come i tempi di pianificazione, necessariamente più lunghi per l'incremento dei flussi informativi e dei partecipanti al processo decisionale, sia nelle fasi di preparazione, sia in quelle di esecuzione e di controllo delle iniziative" (Tommasoli, 2001, pag. 107).

In conclusione, se da un lato le funzioni di monitoraggio e valutazione vanno distinte, dall'altro lato esse dispiegano pienamente le proprie potenzialità solo all'interno di un sistema coerente che le impieghi entrambe e che applichi consapevolmente il grado adeguato di conoscenza che da esse deriva ai propri processi decisionali, con il correttivo – rispetto ai modelli tecnocratici degli esordi della cooperazione allo sviluppo – di dare voce anche ai soggetti tradizionalmente esclusi dalla pianificazione dello sviluppo che pure li riguardava in quanto beneficiari. Se adeguatamente distinte, eppure mantenute in rapporto sistematico tra di loro, tali funzioni possono dare un contributo decisivo all'efficacia dell'APS nell'ambito di una pianificazione orientata ai risultati, con riferimento all'insieme degli strumenti di cui dispone la cooperazione allo sviluppo per conseguire i suoi obiettivi.

Resta da approfondire la questione relativa a come la funzione di valutazione stia cambiando alla luce dei più recenti mutamenti del paradigma della cooperazione allo sviluppo. Tali mutamenti hanno riguardato l'adozione di modelli di partenariato fondati sull'assunzione da parte dei destinatari dell'APS di una responsabilità maggiore nella definizione delle proprie strategie di sviluppo e nell'individuazione dei propri bisogni di sostegno attraverso i meccanismi e le risorse finanziarie – peraltro in preoccupante diminuzione – della cooperazione allo sviluppo. Ciò ha portato negli ultimi anni le agenzie di cooperazione a ripensare il proprio ruolo, legando maggiormente le implicazioni della propria azione al livello micro con i macro-orientamenti, e dunque ad adeguare i propri approcci di valutazione al di là delle dimensioni classiche (temporali, geografiche, settoriali, tematiche) del progetto di sviluppo. La sfida della valutazione è dunque orientata ad attrezzarsi sul piano analitico, metodologico e concettuale per

rispondere alla domanda di solide *evidence-based policies*, ovvero politiche fondate su fatti, a fronte dei troppi scacchi subiti in un passato non troppo lontano da chi ha dato ascolto ai produttori di *policy-based evidence*, vale a dire fatti basati su politiche.

*Le opinioni espresse nel saggio sono solo degli autori e non rappresentano necessariamente il punto di vista ufficiale delle istituzioni nelle quali operano. Sebbene il saggio sia stato concepito insieme dai due autori, la prima parte è stata redatta da Lovisolo, la seconda da Tommasoli, e la terza congiuntamente.

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Strategic Coordination as a crucial Activity in UN Humanitarian Response: need for Monitoring and Evaluation

Besides the financial relevance of this specific activity, strategic coordination determines the context for the whole humanitarian assistance. As a consequence, it is a crucial element to be considered in monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programmes.

Erminio Sacco*

Is the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) strategic coordination a poorly designed project? In its current configuration, it does not seem to stand a chance of success.

The series of excerpts from the paper "Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan"[1] highlights an increasingly critical element of international assistance in complex emergencies, i.e., the strategic coordination function of the UN. In addition to the Executive Summary, the selection attempts to capture the sections more relevant and pertinent to M&E.

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In the author's view, several ambiguities surround and shape aid policies' formulation for Afghanistan, namely donors' commitment and political will, UN strategic capabilities, humanitarian actors' vision, International Financial Institutions' objectives and, last but not least, government's goals. With specific regard to strategic coordination, the author points

at two major grey areas: (i) strategic vs. operational coordination; and, (ii) strategic coordination as a process as opposed to an outcome. The author contends the UN capability to formulate a strategic coordination policy backed by all stakeholders on the one hand, and to effectively implement operational coordination on the other hand.

Indeed, UNAMA is dealing with operational coordination as a process, although the official documents state otherwise. In the aftermath of the 9/11 events, the UN Security Council issued an unprecedented number of resolutions to enhance the UN profile in both the political and aid arenas. Of particular interest, the Security Council Resolution 1401 of March 2002 established UNAMA[2] to support the Afghanistan Interim Administration (AIA)[3] in its endeavour to bring peace, establish a legitimate country-wide authority and initiate the reconstruction process while addressing a major humanitarian crisis.

The UN felt the need to reform their structures in order to "*integrate all the existing UN elements in Afghanistan into a single mission*"[4] and inject an element of discipline in the international assistance in support of the implementation of the Bonn Agreement.[5] Indeed, the UNAMA mandate is based upon the principles of unification and integration and the very concept of strategic coordination is borrowed from military science, with its corollary of hierarchical structures and authoritarian control. On the other hand, UNAMA is mandated to strategically coordinate the international assistance to Afghanistan, while not having any handle on the 'strong' tools for international relations, i.e., diplomacy, peace keeping, trade and international law.

In the UNAMA and AIA/ATA vision, the mainstays of the international assistance are aid-induced pacification on the basis of the peace-dividend approach and aid conditionalities related to security and human rights.

The UN has urged bilateral and multilateral donors to coordinate with the SRSG, while encouraging (both humanitarian and development) aid agencies to cooperate. However, UNAMA and AIA/ATA have not yet been able to articulate any comprehensive and clear strategy for international assistan-

2. UNAMA is composed of Pillar One - Political and Pillar Two - Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction-, each headed by a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG).
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5. The Bonn Agreement (Dec. 2001) had created AIA and outlined the framework for the international assistance to Afghanistan.

ce to Afghanistan, nor to engage all stakeholders in a consensus-building process. Many key agencies within and out the UN family, such as UNHCR, WFP, the Red Cross movement, international NGOs, some large donors and the World Bank, have political and strategic objections to UNAMA being the locus for strategic coordination -in spite of the Security Council resolutions.

Particularly so when UNAMA and AIA/ATA leave room for allegations of aid politicisation through the peace dividend approach and conditionalities attached to humanitarian aid. Independent or neutral strategies of many humanitarian organisations become incompatible with the UNAMA mandate to improve strategic coordination. Importantly, agencies with statutory non-political mandate include UNHCR and WFP, which administer the largest share of the UN assistance. Moreover, the signatories of the Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief – including the Red Cross movement and many NGOs – have problems with any political objectives attached to aid. In fact, these humanitarian agencies constitute the bulk of the implementing capacity in Afghanistan – only recently, some UN agencies are trying to extend their direct outreach.

With specific regard to the M&E discourse, the study portrays international assistance to Afghanistan, based on the perceptions of the aid agencies' expatriate officials – it is a kind of self-monitoring tool. In the authors' words, "*this leads to an over-estimation of the strategic significance of aid and contributes to the sense that the assistance community is less in touch with the aspirations of ordinary Afghans than it should be, for its own, as well as for Afghanistan's good*". The study intends "*to make a contribution towards improving the conceptual approach to future studies of strategic coordination*". Such an improved conceptual approach may feed into refined and comprehensive methods of M&E of international assistance in complex emergencies.

The author points out that the strategic objectives of UNAMA and AIA/ATA are loosely defined and by no means shared by all stakeholders. Furthermore, no monitoring capacity is in place to gauge the performance and appraise the outcome of the international assistance.

Both the assistance strategy and the coordination modality promoted by UNAMA are undermined by a number of (not internalised in the "project" design) internal and external risk factors:

- aid conditionalities and consequent institutional conflict with key humanitarian agencies;
- dubious commitment of several senior aid workers to the current strategic cordination approach;
- poorly articulated objectives, activities and outputs, as well as lack of any monitoring capacity;
- poor control over the implementing capacity (mainly, NGOs) and mechanisms;
- lack of inclusive stakeholder analysis and the existence of "*a multiplicity of self-designated "strategies" operating both bilaterally and multilaterally, and designed by supra-state, sub-state, non-state as well as state entities*";
- poor control over inputs provided by donors, vis-à-vis an exceedingly slow pace of donor disbursement.

Of particular concern, a few key (killer) assumptions seem to exist:

- real intention of the international community to provide sufficient resources for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) deployment beyond Kabul, "*while the main threats to AIA emanate from the provinces*" and "*security is and will remain the essential requirement for the protection of the peace process*".[6]
- no control over "*the most powerful instruments of international relations*"[7], whereby the UNAMA's strategic coordination mandate refers in practice to "*the exercise of bringing harmonious integration to the sub-operational or tactical elements of the international assistance operation*".

Contextually, the international community is disbursing aid resources at a pace well below the one required to tackle the massive humanitarian emergency relief and reconstruction needs. Hence, the pre-conditions for the international community's strategy of aid-induced pacification are not being fulfilled. The author concludes that the donors lack the political will to create a conducive environment for stable pacification, respect of human rights and reconstruction in Afghanistan.

6. UN SG's report to the Security Council, 18th March, 2002.
7. i.e., international military forces, trade relations and international law.

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Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan

Nicholas Stockton*

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research institution that conducts and facilitates quality, action-oriented research and analysis to inform policy, improve practice and increase the impact of humanitarian and development programmes in Afghanistan. It was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a management board with representation from donors, UN agencies and NGOs.

Fundamental to AREU's purpose is the belief that its work should make a difference in the lives of Afghans. AREU is the only humanitarian and development research centre headquartered in Afghanistan. This unique vantage point allows the unit to both produce valuable research and ensure that its findings become integrated into the process of change taking place on the ground.

Summary

This study was prompted by the proliferation and growing complexity of the arrangements to coordinate aid for Afghanistan in the wake of the Bonn Agreement, the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, (UNAMA) the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, and the establishment of the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) by the Afghanistan Interim Administration (AIA). In addition, the deployment in Afghanistan of the Coalition Joint Civil/Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF), and the arrival of many new actors such as the World Bank, has added to the crush of more recently arrived non-government organisations (NGOs), donors and private sector organisations. The purpose of the study, as discussed in Section 1 below, is to identify issues relating to the "strategic coordination" of the international assistance effort for Afghanistan at a relatively early stage in its renewal and expansion. The study is based upon consultations with more than 70 people, carried out in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States during April and May 2002.

The methodological and conceptual problems encountered in the course of the study are described in Section 2. As this study does not purport to be an evaluation of either the impact of international assistance or of the process of coordination, objective verification of the often contrary views of the effectiveness of the assistance effort has not been attempted. However, it is clear that opinion was divided about what the strategy for international assistance actually is. There are also unresolved arguments about what it should be, and what it is capable of achieving. Likewise, there were widely differing views expressed about the effectiveness of strategic coordination, although many observed that it was too early in the lives of UNAMA and the AIA and its successors, to make a fair judgement. The study took place at a time of rapid change associated with the abolition of the former aid coordination architecture, and of growth following the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan (also known as the Tokyo Ministerial Meeting). Whether the major aid institutions are merely exhibiting superficial, chameleon-like adaptive characteristics or a more profound phoenix-like trans-

formation is therefore yet to be determined. Nevertheless, the common incidence of inter-agency and inter-personal fractiousness does give cause for concern as it can not bode well in terms of the extra demands that it must place upon already overworked personnel. In addition, at the time of this study, there was still no mechanism in place for making reasonably objective judgements about the strategic impact of the international assistance strategy. This suggests that the system is unlikely to learn strategic lessons as it proceeds.

In Section 3, it is noted that there are a multiplicity of strategies being pursued by various foreign governments, donors, NGOs and multilateral agencies in Afghanistan, not necessarily all sharing coherent or even complementary objectives. Therefore, the strategic coordination of international assistance is about the attempt to bring greater coherence and complementarity to quite literally hundreds of different strategies, every one of which is being pursued by a largely independent entity. This contrasts with the classical notion of strategic coordination where a single strategy is supported by a set of operations, each one managed within the framework of an integrated management hierarchy. The study therefore challenges the view that strategic coordination, which must attempt to encompass the whole strategic diversity of the international assistance effort, is in fact an achievable outcome. The brief review of the strategic coordination literature argues that the conventional definition of strategic humanitarian coordination does not recognise the possibility of irreconcilable assistance strategies and also misleadingly proposes that an "element of discipline" can be injected into the coordination function. It also fails to acknowledge that investment in coordination must be subject to diminishing returns, and that it is therefore sensible to judge the point at which too much effort is being put into coordination. This is clearly necessary because a coordinated outcome for international assistance can never be guaranteed on the one hand, and because the opportunity costs of wasted effort and resources can be equated with human welfare benefits foregone on the other. Furthermore, by appearing to assume that strategic coordination as an end can be achieved through the process of harmonising international assistance strategies, the international assistance community also risks being held to account for matters over which it has no control.

It was as impractical for this study to analyse every national and organisational strategy as it is impossible to coordinate them all. For this reason, and in recognition of the high priority given to Afghanistan by the UN Security Council, its policies are analysed in section 4 because they represent the most credible proxy for the strategic objectives of the international community. Section 4 begins with a brief summary of the essential elements of the relevant Security Council resolutions, which are then compared with the international assistance strategies described by the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme (ITAP), Pillar Two of UNAMA and the National Development Framework (NDF) of the AIA. While the strategic objectives of these entities are largely consistent with each other, the conditions attached by the Security Council to the provision of international assistance are not reflected in the respective strategies of ITAP, UNAMA and the AACA. It is also noted that critical differences exist between these actors concerning the status of humanitarian assistance, human rights and gender policy. This section concludes with an elaboration of the key assumptions upon which the international assistance strategy rests. In terms of substantive programme policy, a model of "aid-induced pacification," reinforced by Security Council imposed human rights and security conditions, is the main distinguishing feature of the strategy for international assistance. For the United Nations, it is noted that a structural approach to improve effectiveness has again been adopted as the principal change management strategy in the establishment of UNAMA.

In Section 5, the strategic coordination issues that were raised in the course of the interviews are summarised. While it is impossible to be certain whether these reflect an unusually high degree of dissatisfaction about coordination on the part of most interviewees, or whether it reflects the especially complex and trying context in which assistance is being delivered, it is nevertheless clear that the assistance effort is perceived by those involved in it to be characterised by internal argumentation, inter-agency rivalry, weak co-operation and strategic disarray. Overall, some 19 strategic coordination issues, reported in the course of the interviews are presented. While this study is not able to verify the validity or seriousness of these issues, they present an important agenda for further analysis because they were raised

by actors who are relatively well informed and close to the strategic heart of the assistance effort. This list is therefore in essence a critical mirror reflecting deep, varied and in many cases troubling concerns expressed by those designing or delivering aid for Afghanistan. It is recommended that the performance of the international assistance effort is evaluated with regard to these strategic issues. A modified version of the multi-agency evaluation of the 1994 Rwanda crisis would serve as a useful model.

It is acknowledged in Section 6 that the failure to deploy ISAF beyond Kabul may ultimately undermine the most important working assumption of the international assistance effort, although this is a failure of political will rather than a matter concerning strategic coordination. The remaining part of this section discusses seven strategic issues in more detail and makes recommendations for their resolution. In summary these are:

Building "strategic" alliances

The study concludes that the actual lack of authority of the United Nations system over donors, NGOs and the international financial institutions (IFIs) will almost inevitably mean that the UNAMA reforms, which confer considerable notional powers upon the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), will have little real impact over the outcome of the strategic coordination process. In fact, this approach might even make matters worse through provoking suspicions that one of UNAMA's purposes is the manipulation of humanitarian agencies for political ends, and by encouraging fears that it is attempting to undermine the independence of NGOs. In reality, the remit of the SRSG's legal authority does not extend very far even within the UN system, and therefore the attempt to practice "coordination by command" is futile, distracting from the more important task of building voluntary and consensual strategic alliances between "like-minded" nations and agencies.

Instead, the coordination arrangements as practiced appear to generate dysfunctional inter-agency transaction costs, especially with regard to the integration of humanitarian and political objectives into the remit of a single assistance coordination structure. This creates inter-agency gridlock in coordination processes, to the detriment of all concerned and prob-

ably at some cost to public welfare objectives in Afghanistan. Thus, less coordination rather than more is indicated, and the disaggregation of coordination arrangements, at least for the humanitarian and the political components, would help to reduce "value-subtracting" transaction costs.

UNAMA and the AIA/ATA should adopt a new strategic approach, based upon a combination of a compelling strategic argument and the identification of strategically like-minded UN agencies, NGOs and donors, organised through the principle of voluntary complementarity rather than structurally imposed integration. To begin with, UNAMA and the AIA/ATA should distinguish between the humanitarian agencies that wish to remain politically on the fence or are obliged to be neutral by mandate, and those which are willing and able to support the political/peace-building strategy, and then pursue strategic coordination with these two groups through separate processes.

The ambiguous position of the World Bank should be resolved. By statute the World Bank is obliged to be non-political, but in Afghanistan it will implement what is perhaps the most politicised of any of the international aid programmes. Officially in denial of having political objectives, the World Bank is thus constrained as a player within any formal strategic coordination process, to the frequent consternation of others. To a lesser degree perhaps, this argument also applies to UNHCR and WFP. If these institutions continue to be formally prevented from undertaking political tasks, then they should not be funded for such purposes.

Strategic coordination efforts should focus upon the ten to twenty percent political additionality that could be crafted by the agencies, NGOs and donors, instead of pursuing vain attempts to convert all assistance organisations to support the political/peace-building agenda.

The label "NGO" disguises enormous institutional diversity in terms of scale, objectives and governance arrangements. ATA/AACA, UN and donors should redirect the management energy currently being wasted in anguished debate about how to "control the NGOs," towards a more effective process of inter-agency co-operation based upon strategically critical characteristics such as size, reach and function.

Communications - a strategic vacuum

UNAMA's lack of a genuine communications strategy leaves a serious vacuum in this mission-critical policy dimension. In the vacuum, donors and agencies seek to enhance their domestic profiles, inadvertently raising unrealistic public expectations in Afghanistan about the peace-dividend. This is counter-productive of the political strategy of UNAMA, which is expected to build public confidence and support for the peace process, in part, through the contribution of international assistance in the provision of public goods and services. Furthermore, as public opinion is not systematically consulted or polled, international assistance programmes are more often than not based upon flimsy hypotheses concerning the political utility of particular aid priorities, or upon "business as usual" supply-side aid agency behaviour.

UNAMA should invest in the full range of modern political tools to support its strategy. Most obviously, the international aid effort requires a genuine communications strategy (instead of just a public relations policy) which is capable of distilling public opinion, measuring attitude trends and identifying popular priorities drawn from realistic policy options.

Donor governments should draw from their domestic political expertise (for example, in the technique of focus group research methods) to enhance the capacity of UNAMA and the AIA/ATA to understand and respond to public opinion in the formation of international assistance and national development strategies. A study of the political/peace-building utility and disutility of agency/donor signboards, mounted in great profusion upon every object that can be construed of as a product of assistance, should be carried out with some urgency.

Transition from de jure to de facto government coordination

It is noted that the key strategic objective of transferring authority to the AIA/ATA is a highly complex process. However, the absence of a realistic timetable for the AIA/ATA to acquire the necessary capacity to exercise de facto authority allows the misleading impression that the effective exercise of authority is simply a matter of a de jure decree. The confusion and ill will concerning this matter is probably due in large part to the absence of a comprehensive and realistic organisational development plan for the transition

process, rather than the manifestation of a more fundamental conflict of interests with some agencies.

A comprehensive organisational development plan for the transition process, disaggregated by function and geography, should be developed.

Simple critical success indicators of capacity building targets, appropriate human resource standards, and vital events or milestones should be negotiated with all the relevant parties. The organisational development plan, the capacity-building targets and human resource standards adopted for the transition process should be genuinely transparent. This quality will not be achieved through the use of the internet alone. Much more accessible communication channels need to be used.

The process of transition should allow for some degree of flexibility and, with regard to certain strategically vital activities, it should be conditional upon agreed levels of capacity being acquired by the AIA/ATA, and reversible in the light of unexpected events that significantly reduces capacity below an agreed critical mass.

Human rights and aid conditionalities

The consternation generated by the contrary positions of the Security Council and UNAMA regarding aid conditionalities is having an especially deleterious effect on the credibility of both, and perhaps upon the protection of human rights in Afghanistan too. The confusion concerning the human rights monitoring arrangements and lack of progress on the establishment of the Independent Human Rights Commission warrants urgent attention.

The UN Security Council and UNAMA should clarify their strategies on human rights and aid conditionalities. It is quite conceivable that there may be irreconcilable differences between the Security Council and UNAMA, and between UN agencies, donors, NGOs and the AIA/ATA. It is better that these are acknowledged and then managed on an "agree to disagree" basis, than to allow critical amounts of senior management time to be swallowed up in the politics allowed by the current confusion.

The independence of the Human Rights Commission should be reviewed. If it is to be in fact a government led commission, it is inappropriate for it to be called "independent". If instead the spirit of the Bonn Agree-

ment is to be upheld, the composition of the Commission needs reconsidering and adequate international support should be availed rapidly.

The human rights monitoring arrangements are confused and unsatisfactory. The decision to place the human rights monitoring function in Pillar One, reporting to the SRSG's office should be reviewed. The possibility of merging the two monitoring capacities under a revitalised and genuinely independent Human Rights Commission should be considered.

Gender policy confusion

There is a significant difference between the gender policies described in the NDF and those contained in the Pillar Two Management Plan. Policies that promote gender equity are likely to produce very different outcomes from those just pursuing gender sensitivity. It is not clear how the NDF and the UNAMA policies are meant to be applied, nor how far these are negotiable. A process that can resolve these differences where possible, and manage disagreements where not, is required. A strategic gender policy review should be conducted jointly by the ATA, AACA and UNAMA with donor, IFI and NGO participation. This should also seek to promote a well informed public debate and involve a more systematic sampling of public opinion on the issue of gender based rights and gender-sensitive public policies.

While opinions may vary sharply about strategic policy options, the obligations of the ATA in terms of its treaty obligations, perhaps particularly regarding the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), should be used a benchmark for policy development and in coordinating the international aid effort.

Humanitarian issues

The policy confusion concerning the political status and utility of humanitarian assistance needs resolving. The Security Council's recognition of the requirement that humanitarian aid is provided on an impartial basis of need stands in contrast to the policy of the National Development Framework which implies that humanitarian aid should be contingent upon its contribution to an over-riding political objective. The adoption of humanitarian language and other humanitarian symbols by the Coalition civil/mili-

tary operation (CIMIC) may also be generating new threats for the humanitarian agencies.

The ATA/AACA should concur with the principle that humanitarian assistance is given solely on the basis of need (and in accordance with the other Red Cross principles) in the revised NDF.

UNAMA/AACA should establish a separate humanitarian coordination mechanism, the sole strategic objective of which would be to prevent excess morbidity and mortality. Some mutually agreed forums for information exchange between humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors should be continued.

The adoption by CJCMOTF of the language and the symbols of conventional humanitarian actors should be ended forthwith. CJCMOTF's "hearts and minds" and ISAF's "force protection" objectives can be pursued with equal effect without recourse to the use of civilian, humanitarian trappings.

The "light footprint"

The policy of the "light footprint" confuses operational means with strategic ends, and has become a damaging, albeit well-intentioned, hostage to fortune.

The light footprint policy should be demoted from its status as a UN strategic objective to and re-designated as an operational guideline. In spite of this well-intentioned and much-needed initiative to control agency management costs, it should still be acknowledged that there are yet no objective standards for measuring the "weight of institutional footprints."

However, transparency concerning the costs of management and coordination should be adopted as a reporting principle by all assistance organisations.

A management system and culture that rewards organisational development policies that promote achievement over effort, and management information over data, should be encouraged as an alternative to the "light footprint" policy.

Finally, it is argued that most studies of strategic coordination have suffered from their use of a "standard" definition of coordination that erro-

neously assumes common strategic objectives on the part of all aid organisations, and which fails to recognise that coordination has a cost, which is in effect, a levy upon the extremely scarce resources allocated to the poorest and most desperate people in the world. It is recommended that a thorough evaluation of the strategy of "aid-induced pacification", and a study of the costs as well as the benefits of aid coordination in Afghanistan, should take place.

"While it is expected that the Government will further consolidate its position in the months ahead, it is critical that key projects in those parts of the country that are peaceful receive assistance immediately, in the expectation that economic stability will contribute to political stability"

David E. Lockwood,
Resident Coordinator United Nations, Kabul, 25 October, 1993.

"Implementation should commence whenever and wherever possible, in as many regions as possible without further delay. Rehabilitation work would itself enhance and accelerate efforts to normalise and stabilise national security"[1]

United Nations Development Programme, 1993.

1. Introduction

These words, written by a former head of the United Nations in Afghanistan, might well have been produced in 2002 to summarise the ambitious strategy of the international assistance effort, and its implicit working hypothesis of "aid-induced peace-building". In the past six months, Afghanistan has been subjected to more externally commissioned academic, journalistic and aid-driven investigations, than probably at any time in its history. Yet, in spite of this flurry of research, appraisal and evaluation activities, and the unprecedented international interest in Afghanistan, there is still a tendency towards being trapped in the eternal present, a condition David Keen once memorably ascribed to the hu-

1. UNDP 1993, Afghanistan Rehabilitation Strategy: Action Plan for Immediate Rehabilitation, Vol. 1, Executive Summary.

manitarian aid effort in Africa[2]. There have been at least two major UN peace-building initiatives in Afghanistan since the end of the Soviet occupation[3]. By the very existence of this third one, one can but assume that the two previous peace-building strategies must have failed, or perhaps more fairly, have been insufficiently successful. Yet, what is remarkable is that the current strategy of the international aid system and the coordination arrangements put in place to deliver its programmes are little different from its predecessors. Of course the context has changed, most notably in terms of the intervention of the United States-led Coalition Military force, and the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul. However the basic policy instruments of the international assistance effort in Afghanistan are otherwise arrayed in the familiar form of diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights and development agencies. If they are to triumph on this occasion through making a demonstrably significant strategic contribution to the building of a just, prospering and sustainable peace in Afghanistan, then effective strategic coordination is likely to have played a key part. This study was prompted by the concern that excessive coordination processes might be getting in the way of, rather than promoting efficient strategic coordination of international assistance in Afghanistan. The research, undertaken at an early stage in the history of the new United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has been commissioned by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) and made possible by the support of the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO).

2. David Keen, The Benefits of Famine: the Political Economy of Famine in South-Western Sudan, 1985-1988, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
3. See the Afghanistan Rehabilitation Strategy; and United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan: Toward a Principled Approach to Peace and Reconstruction (New York: United Nations, 1998).

2. Methodology

The photographic analogy used above may give the misleading impression of an undisputed and singular "truth" revealed by the study. In reality, the author has had to contend with a wide range of often very sharply differing opinions about strategic coordination, both in generic terms

and specifically with regard to Afghanistan. Of course, all realities are, in a sense, socially constructed, and the degree to which this study captures any objective reality must remain open to question. It depicts, as faithfully as the author could manage, a complex reality fabricated from many diverse and often conflicting perceptions. Arguably, the picture that emerges becomes more three dimensional, more "real", when seen from this multiplicity of perspectives, even though the individual accounts may have little in common. If the report serves any purpose at all, it will do so mainly through allowing the readers from the main constituencies of the international aid system to obtain a glimpse of themselves from the perspective of some of the other principal actors.

This study is neither an evaluation of strategic coordination, nor of international assistance to Afghanistan. Such an undertaking would be both premature and, for a single researcher working within a 4-5 week remit, quite impossible to fulfil[4]. Furthermore, the strategic context in Afghanistan would appear to be highly dynamic, if not unstable, and the institutional adaptations, at least at the formal level and especially within the UN system and the AIA/Transitional Administration (TA), means that it is a study of several rapidly and independently moving targets[5]. Whether the major aid institutions are merely exhibiting superficial, chameleon-like adaptive characteristics or a more profound phoenix-like transformation is perhaps the most critical issue of all. In one of my final interviews in Afghanistan, a highly influential senior official in the AIA expressed the view that after fifty years of mixed fortunes and achievements, the international aid system is embroiled in a profound crisis of confidence. Therefore, perhaps Afghanistan is more important as a "last chance" opportunity for the international aid institutions than international aid is for the future of Afghanistan. However, while the jury is still out in terms of any final verdict about the efficacy

4. The most common judgement upon strategic coordination ventured by interviewees was that "it is too early to tell".

5. For example, between the short period when the terms of reference for the study were finalised and the arrival of the author in Kabul, several coordination bodies and instruments designated as objects of the study; such as the Afghanistan Programming Body (APB), the APB Standing Committee, the Regional Coordination Bodies (RCBs), and the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) had reportedly been abolished, transformed or were in the process of being "folded" into other groups.

of international aid in delivering either to the new security agenda or to its long-standing poverty eradication objectives, it may be that such judgements will soon be made and that its performance in Afghanistan might constitute a significant part of the determining evidence. Following the demise of the architecture of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, the absence of any objective strategic monitoring capacity in the new aid coordination arrangements is all the more surprising.

Finally, and perhaps most critically, I am aware that this study is very prone to the ethnocentricity of the international aid system. This is reflected in the fact that the great majority of interviewees were not Afghans, and those Afghans I did speak to have become used to dealing with and perhaps acculturated by the international aid agencies. The study therefore is built mainly upon the perceptions of expatriate aid agency officials who have a tendency to place the aid community at or very near to the centre of events. This leads to an over-estimation of the strategic significance of aid and contributes to the sense that the assistance community is less in touch with the aspirations of ordinary Afghans than it should be, for its own, as well as for Afghanistan's good.

3. Defining terms: "Strategic Coordination" and "International Assistance"

Early on in this study, it became evident that the rather neat sounding phrase, "the strategic coordination of international assistance," is actually highly problematic as an analytical device. There is no standard usage, either for the phrase as a whole, or for any of its constituent parts. It is worth noting that previous studies of the strategic coordination of international aid have also faced similar difficulties, with one reporting that "the topic of investigation was ill-defined and unfamiliar."

Beginning with what is understood to constitute "international assistance" in the Afghanistan context is obviously contingent upon who is giving the

assistance, who is receiving it, and, most important of all, who is describing the transaction. Afghanistan has been the object of very many forms of international assistance during its turbulent history, by far the largest proportion of which has been, and still probably is, military in kind. Much of this sort of "assistance" was supplied for diametrically opposed political ends by the Soviet Union and the USA during the Cold War, while more recent "assistance" given by Pakistan, Russia, Iran and less regular sources such as al Qaeda, has been in pursuit of diverse and conflicting objectives. In Afghanistan, one nation's assistance is another's unwarranted interference. The International Coalition against Terrorism and ISAF are currently providing massive, albeit undisclosed, sums of "international assistance" for the new regime in Kabul. Presumably it is likely, as in all recent phases of Afghanistan's history, that other non-state Afghan actors are receiving "international assistance" to oppose this new political dispensation. That international assistance is very much defined in the eye of the beholder, especially so in Afghanistan, makes the determination of what constitutes it, a very complex and highly politicised matter.

"Strategy" is another ambiguous term, used to describe both the means and the ends of assistance. Some documents refer to sustainable peace as a "strategy," others speak of the "strategy" to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda, while others discuss organisational development "strategy". Although there is consensus that "strategy" has something to do with the future, there exists amongst the providers of assistance to Afghanistan plans without strategies, strategies without plans and, in some cases, strategies with plans. Many aid agency representatives were able to describe their programme or project objectives, but a substantial proportion could not identify their organisation's strategy for Afghanistan. In fact, several representatives positively argued that their organisations had no strategy, since "strategy is by definition political"[6]. To add to the confusion about what strategic coordination might entail, a senior government official insisted that UN agencies and NGOs should not be allowed to have strategies since this level of planning is now the exclusive preserve of government.

6. Both UNHCR and WFP have "non-political" mandate.

Lastly, "coordination" is another slippery term. For some it is simply about the voluntary sharing of information, while for others it is an authoritarian form of control. Confusingly, the term is used as a noun to refer to an outcome as well as a verb to describe a process. For most, it is a positive value-laden term; being "coordinated" is seen as a desired state of affairs. For others, the word is pejorative, referring to a time-consuming process of pointless meetings and inconsequential discussions, or, as a mechanism for illegitimate control that serves to undermine much cherished agency independence.

Given this degree of disagreement over the meanings of the key terms for this study, a short review of the strategic coordination literature is provided below. This serves both to locate the Afghanistan experience in the wider academic debate and, hopefully, to make a contribution towards improving the conceptual approach to future studies of strategic coordination.

Donini's study attempts, in the end inconclusively, to establish an empirical link between particular styles of coordination process and the effectiveness of coordination outcomes. This same approach, in essence the search for best-practice in strategic coordination, has been pursued by many subsequent studies. For example the study of UN strategic coordination of the Great Lakes crisis of 1996/97 by Sue Lautze, Bruce Jones and Mark Duffield also adopted the Minear definition. They noted the importance of the use of information and the critical role that political and economic analysis can play in enhancing the effectiveness of coordination, thereby expanding rather than challenging the basic Minear hypothesis of best practice. Marc Sommers also adopted both Minear's definition and Donini's ideal-typology in his study of the Sierra Leone and Rwanda crises. Sommers concluded that structural institutional arrangements, as opposed to individual leadership qualities, are more important than is often acknowledged, and he also came down in favour of, "the importance of incorporating a command element into the practice of humanitarian coordination and establishing a clear role in coordination for the national authorities".

What all these studies seem to have in common is that they assume that an effective coordination outcome can only be achieved through the application of ever more hierarchical structural integration and ever greater degrees of authoritarian control. That failed coordination outcomes may be due, for example, to the absence of a universal strategic objective amongst assistance agencies, or to weak or dysfunctional policy instruments, are possible explanations that are overlooked or ignored. That organisational development processes, such as coordination and structural integration, may have financial and political costs is almost never considered either. Therefore, the common-sense view expressed by many aid workers, that aid coordination can be wasteful of time, effort and resources is, rather remarkably, a hypothesis which is never examined in such studies. Consequently, as a cost-free good, there seems to be no limit to the amount of coordination recommended by the literature.

The words "strategic" and "coordination" both have their origins in military science. A standard definition of strategy describes it as the:

> "art of employing all elements of the power of a nation or nations to accomplish the objectives of a nation or an alliance in peace or war. Tactics, on the other hand, are the dispersing and manoeuvring of forces to accomplish a limited objective or an immediate end. Strategy involves the use and close integration of economic, political, cultural, social, moral, spiritual, and psychological power. Strategy can be formulated only after the objectives to be accomplished have been determined"[7].

7. Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001.

In its origins therefore, strategic coordination is concerned with the vertical connections between a single over-arching strategy and its subsidiary tactical operations.

3.1 A multiplicity of strategies – shared objectives?

The first [issue] arises from the classical notion that "strategy" is the exclusive preserve of nations or groups of nations, an assumption which is still often made by students of international relations. However, in addition to the obvious fact that NGOs prepare strategic plans beholden to

boards of private trustees rather than to states, it is also clear that the supra-national mandates of multilateral and UN agencies have, in reality, such indefinite links to member states' interests that they in effect constitute distinctive strategic entities in their own right. These agencies as a rule also produce their own country strategic plans[8]. In addition, certain nations, such as the United States, simultaneously pursue multiple "stovepipe" strategies, sometimes in apparent competition with each other[9]. Thus, aid coordination as a process must contend with not one, but with a multiplicity of self-designated "strategies" operating both bilaterally and multilaterally, and designed by supra-state, sub-state, non-state as well as state entities.

8. For example, UNDP's Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); OCHA's Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP); the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) of the World Bank, though in Afghanistan's case, there is as yet no CDF, CAS or PRSP.

9. The USA seems to have three "strategies" operating largely independently of each other in Afghanistan, founded upon three powerful bureaucracies: the State Department (Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Defence. A senior US Government official referred to the existence of "stove-pipe" policies.

If there is no common agreement on these matters, it could be argued that, by definition, "strategic coordination" can not be realised as an outcome and that whatever inter-agency relations do exist, these will constitute nothing much more than basic information sharing. This study found no widely held consensus on shared objectives, no sense of national or organisational subsidiarity to a universal international strategy, and no shared understanding of the locus of strategic coordination. This does not augur well for the achievement of harmony and coherence either within the international assistance effort or across the totality of the instruments of international relations in Afghanistan.

3.2 The strategic/operational conundrum

The second issue arising from this review of its classical origins, is that a study of strategic as opposed to operational coordination, should logically focus upon the vertical linkages between strategy and tactical operations, rather than upon the horizontal linkages or operational coordination process. The problem here lies with the looseness with which the term "strategy" is applied within the international assistance context. Arguably,

"international assistance," in the narrower but commonly used sense of international development and humanitarian aid, is in its totality just one operational component in a larger array of strategic instruments of international relations, that also include diplomacy, peacekeeping, trade and international law. In this sense, the term strategy would be applied only to the overall plan of the international community (in whatever form this might take), and the job of bringing harmony to the various elements of international assistance would be relegated to the category of operational coordination, and thus not the object of a study of strategic coordination. Although this may be a reasonable argument, in contemporary usage within the international aid context (including the terms of reference for this study) the term "strategic coordination" is intended to refer to the exercise of bringing harmonious integration to the "sub-operational" or "tactical" elements of the international assistance operation.

As the assistance community in fact excludes the most powerful instruments of international relations, the status of it can hardly be described as strategic. A risk of aspiring to strategic status is that those so designated will be expected to perform at the strategic level, whether or not they actually have the capacity to deliver. By accepting strategic status without having any control over critical strategic policy instruments, the international assistance effort must simply hope that those other strategic tools over which they have little or no influence deliver fortuitous results. This could be characterised as operating in a state of strategic hubris.

3.3 Strategic coordination: managing without a definition

This short review of the established tradition of strategic coordination studies provides three crucial observations relevant to the study of aid coordination in Afghanistan. First, while the term "strategic coordination" is widely used, it is in many senses a vanity that the providers of international assistance can at best only aspire to, at least that is, while the "strong" instruments of international relations are excluded from the normal definition of assistance and practice of strategic coordination. Second, the trend towards ever more authoritarian means of coordina-

tion, as widely recommended in the literature, is rooted in a questionable value-judgement that coordination is an unmitigated good, a coordinated end therefore justifying authoritarian means. This conventional view conceals the possible existence of coordination opportunity costs, mainly by obfuscating the existence of genuine strategic competition or conflict between different assistance actors. It also fails to acknowledge that investment in coordination is bound to be subject to the law of diminishing returns, and that it is therefore sensible to judge the point at which too much effort is being put into coordination. This is clearly necessary because a coordinated outcome for international assistance can never be guaranteed on the one hand, and because the opportunity costs of wasted effort and resources can be equated with human welfare benefits foregone on the other. Therefore, this study rejects the commonly held assumption that coordination is by definition an unequivocal good. It also challenges the view that strategic coordination is a realistic outcome for a coordination process as it only involves "weak" assistance providers. Instead the study adopts a critical view of coordination, which is seen as a tradition engaged in by a self-selected group of assistance providers which may, or may not, bring about a harmonious integration of their organisational strategies. Most basically, this study rejects the view that coordination as a process will necessarily lead to coordination as an outcome.

3.4 What comprises the international assistance effort?

As this research is supposed to analyse the strategic coordination of assistance efforts, a term which seems to encompass the entire range of internationally sponsored activities that are deemed to be of assistance to Afghanistan, the identification of the strategic objectives of international assistance is a complex and major undertaking. To review every self-styled assistance strategy would require an examination of all bilateral aid agencies, multilateral aid agencies, the UN humanitarian and development agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and every NGO. It would possibly include the ISAF for Afghanistan and the CJCMOTF. In terms of commonly accepted usage, it would probably exclude the combatant elements of the Coalition Military force in Afghanistan.

3.5 Is there a common international assistance strategy?

There is no common perception about who is in charge of defining strategy, nor by extension, what constitutes the international assistance strategy in the Afghanistan context. The great majority of representatives and organisations interviewed in the course of this study expressed fealty to their immediate organisational objectives. For example, when senior governmental and non-governmental aid workers were asked how binding Security Council decisions and strategies are upon their own work, the question was invariably answered either with a look of incomprehension or one of mild amusement. Yet, supposing for a moment that the Security Council was in charge of setting strategic objectives for international assistance and relations more widely in Afghanistan, then an effective outcome of strategic coordination would be reflected in a commitment to Security Council resolutions first, and to organisational objectives second. Although there may be exceptions in practice, this study encountered no such expressions of organisational or national subsidiarity, or recognition of the authority of the Security Council, or indeed of any other collectivity of states, NGOs or UN agencies[10].

That being noted, the next task is to identify the strategy of the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, no matter how effective, or otherwise to describe what strategic coordination is in practice. After all, as argued above, not all coordination outcome failures need necessarily be attributed to the performance of the coordination function.

4. The Strategic Objectives of the International Community

The practical problems involved in simply identifying the Afghanistan related strategies of every state, sub-state, non-state and supra-state actor with an interest in the country is an unrealistic task for this brief study. Instead, a working assumption has

10. However, at the very end of the research period while in Washington, D.C., it became clear that there may be yet more stones to turn over. The informal weekly telephone conference call convened by the US Department of State, involves certain major donors and heads of agencies. While having had neither access to the content of these conference calls, nor confirmation of the identity of the participants, it is clear that this is a high level strategic coordination process, albeit involving no representatives of the principal aid deliverers, the NGOs. Nevertheless, whatever the potential of this process, it has yet to bring harmony to the assistance effort in Afghanistan.

been made that the formal resolutions of the UN Security Council are a reasonable approximation of the collective strategic objectives of the UN member-states, and thus of the international community too. Wherever practicable, this assumption has been questioned, but unfortunately any attempt to "triangulate" this hypothesis is also hampered by a general lack of transparency concerning states' strategies towards Afghanistan. While it is probable that a number of nations and non-state actors do indeed harbour objectives and are pursuing strategies that are in conflict with those of the UN Security Council in relation to Afghanistan, these do not identify themselves as such, nor are they readily available for consideration.[11]

11. The objectives and strategies of states and non-state actors that are against the Bonn Agreement and UNAMA objectives would be a controversial and difficult topic of study, but one which might add great value for strategic planning purposes.

4.1 UNAMA Pillar Two Strategy

To understand more specifically what strategic coordination is intended to achieve, it is necessary to examine the precise behavioural changes that the United Nations expects to invoke from the conditional provision of assistance for Afghanistan.

In the course of this study, no single document has been identified which could reasonably be described as the strategic plan for the international assistance effort. The closest that any comes to earning this title is the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People 2002 (ITAP), but this is essentially a fund-raising document, prepared as a functional alternative to the UN consolidated appeals process (CAP) for the Tokyo Ministerial Meeting. The report itself acknowledges that it is the product of a work in progress. In addition it has since been reviewed by the AACA, and although some 80% of its content has been approved, its current status is now somewhat in doubt.[12] Nevertheless, as the nearest thing that exists to a comprehensive overview of the assistance effort in late 2001, and its claim to be "a key strategic tool to bring coherence in the assistance response," it is reasonable to ex-

12. This figure is approximate – various figures from 80% to 95% were given in interviews; In August 2002, UNAMA estimates that more than US $960 million were allocated through the ITAP mechanism. The ITAP is currently being "melded" into the NDF. It is expected that the next round of resource mobilisation will likewise occur through the National Development Budget (NDB).

pect that it should contain clear objectives and at least a preliminary elaboration of strategy[13].

In fact the ITAP refers to the need for "sustained humanitarian action" and proposes a programme that will help Afghanistan "return to normal life and stability and to prepare for longer-term development," As a means of achieving the latter, and citing the Bonn Agreement the ITAP states that:

13. ITAP is based upon "elements from the Preliminary Needs Assessment carried out by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and UNDP," and upon "consultations with UN agencies as well as cost estimates from NGOs".

> "the critical issue will be to ensure the present and future capacity of Afghans to manage recovery and reconstruction in the best interests of all parts of their population. A vital concern will be to reverse the disempowerment of women and to support them in their efforts to rebuild Afghanistan's society and economy. In addition, children must be central to this process of recovery and reconstruction in order to avert the recurrence of conflict and to maximise the chances for sustainable peace for future generations. A commitment for immediate assistance for reconstruction by the international community will be an important incentive. The quick and effective establishment and re-vitalization of basic social services can help engender support for political stability and peace, while political dialogue and reconciliation can help expand on access and opportunities for recovery. Prompt attention to, and action on, longstanding problems of discrimination, exploitation and violation of rights will signal the importance of ensuring all Afghans benefit from the new peace. A tangible "peace dividend" is essential for Afghans to unite around the peace process"[14].

On humanitarian assistance, the first guiding principle proposed in the ITAP is that:

> "humanitarian assistance will continue to be provided in accordance with the *principles of humanity, universality, neutrality and impartiality*. It will be provided on the basis of need; and cannot be subjected to any form of discrimination, including that of gender"[15].

Thus, while being broadly consistent with the overall objectives of the Security Council, it is worth noting that the ITAP contains no reference to aid conditionalities. On aid coordination mechanisms, ITAP starts with the bald statement that "coordination rests

14. ITAP, op. cit., 6.
15. ITAP, op. cit., 10.

with government authorities," and that the "UN presence is based on the concept of having a 'small footprint' within the country." Given that the ITAP was prepared some two months prior to the "UNAMA resolution," the absence of references to the human rights and security conditionalities is perhaps not so surprising, although in contrast, the UNAMA structural reforms were quite accurately predicted.

The Pillar Two Management Plan subsequently produced by the DSRSG for Pillar Two, was however prepared after Resolution 1401. The Management Plan contains the following reaffirmation of the key strategic role for the assistance effort:

> "United Nations agencies and their partners have a rare opportunity to help the citizens of Afghanistan, the Interim Administration and its successors, to rapidly acquire the capacity to lead, coordinate and manage both the response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the acceleration of the recovery process, and to transition from dependence on external assistance to self-sufficiency built on Afghan knowledge, skills and productivity. *Such support, if extended quickly, can help Afghanistan to transition from a recent past of considerable instability and volatility to a more peaceful and stable society*". (my emphasis)

The Pillar Two Management Plan then sets out main elements of the strategy to achieve this:

> "The assistance community ... now has to rapidly transition from a reliance on self-regulatory mechanisms to working with and supporting a recognised national administration that is determined to guide and direct assistance priorities. *This will require review and rationalisation of the existing proliferation of coordination bodies, and their incorporation into a coordination system in which the national administration plays an active and leading role*". (my emphasis)

> "The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms will continue to depend on endorsement of, and respect for, the processes of shared plan development, programme harmonisation and joint formulation of strategies and plans of action for relief, recovery and reconstruction. However, these processes now have to be incorporated within the National Development Framework and national budget, to ensure that humanitarian and recovery activities respond to the needs of the Afghan population and to *the requirement to support the strengthen-*

ing of governance structures at national and sub-national levels. ... Under the Bonn Agreement, the UN in particular has been given the role of stabilising and supporting the political process that is intended to result in a stable and legitimate government in Afghanistan". (my emphasis).

"However, the humanitarian emergency is likely to continue into 2003 because of the combined effects of drought, displacement and abject poverty, as well as of continued insecurity in some parts of the country. In this context, the international community has an ongoing obligation to help address human suffering and vulnerability as rapidly as possible, as well as to undertake recovery and reconstruction activities. *Such actions will assist the return to normalcy and will also contribute to the restoration of public confidence in the political process, to the stabilisation and consolidation of the Interim Administration and successor administrations, and to an improved security environment*". (my emphasis)

"The demands of this new situation mean that the UN will have to develop a new approach to the coordination and management of assistance in its attempts to address both the ongoing humanitarian crisis and opportunities for reconstruction. *A new approach will be required, not only to fulfil the UN's responsibilities to the people of Afghanistan, but also if the UN is to retain the confidence of the international community and the IA and its successors*". (my emphasis)

Curiously, like the ITAP, the UNAMA Pillar Two Management Plan also makes no reference to the Security Council conditions concerning Human Rights and security, and instead simply proposes as a guideline, a "commitment to rights-based programming in order that respect for human rights and promotion of *gender equity* are at the heart of all assistance activities". The absence of a transparent mechanism for the suspension of assistance in response to insecurity or human rights violations is an interesting omission and one, rather surprisingly, which is not explained in the plan.

To summarise, the contribution of the UN-led assistance effort to the international community's overall objective for a peaceful, prosperous and rights-compliant Afghanistan is based upon the dual strategies initiated by the Bonn Agreement, endorsed by the Security Council, and elaborated in the Pillar Two Management Plan. These are 1) the transfer of *de facto* authority from the United Nations and the international assis-

tance community to the *de jure* authorities of Afghanistan, and 2) the simultaneous popular legitimisation of those authorities to be in part achieved through the provision of effective international assistance. These strategies, combined with the reform of the UN mission for Afghanistan, are the essential elements of what might be called a strategy of "aid-induced pacification." However, it is striking that the Security Council's policy for the selective and conditional provision of assistance has not been incorporated into the UN system's strategy for managing and coordinating the assistance effort.

4.2 The National Development Framework

The fourth decree of the AIA, which established the AACA, provides a legal basis for the AACA's NDF, published in draft form in April 2002, to be considered as the official summary of the development objectives of the new sovereign authority in Afghanistan.

The NDF offers a very bold vision of a state where growth and development is driven by the private sector, where government is light, flexible, transparent, accountable, rights based, gender-sensitive and responsive to public opinion. In the short term, the NDF is not incongruent with the UN Security Council strategy for international assistance, with three significant exceptions discussed below, and it does, somewhat portentously, reaffirm the heavy burden of responsibility placed upon international assistance for the future peace and prosperity of Afghanistan.

> "There is a widespread desire to retain the current international interest in our country ... This desire for engagement is premised on the hope that international engagement will be an instrument for ending our poverty, the re-establishment of our sovereignty and national unity, and a foundation for sustainable prosperity. Our people's expectations have been raised by the promises of world leaders that they will be with us for the long haul ... Discussions of development, however, remain abstract. Public opinion is shaped by concrete manifestations. If the general discussions are not connected to changes in the daily lives and experiences of the people, public opinion could easily turn skeptical. Afghans have been disappointed by the International Community before. Hope could then be replaced by frustration, and frustration, in a context of raised expectations, is a recipe for anger, discord and finally conflict. For us to

> capitalise on the current consensus, then, we must deliver, and deliver soon; as words become deeds, belief in the possibility of a safe and prosperous future will grow".

The NDF goes on to summarise its developmental strategy, which in fact covers the whole spectrum of international assistance. It describes itself as having three pillars (not to be confused with the two pillars of the UNAMA structure).

> "The first is to use humanitarian assistance and social policy to create the conditions for people to live secure lives and to lay the foundations for the formation of sustainable human capital. The second is the use of external assistance to build the physical infrastructure that lays the basis for a private sector-led strategy of growth, in such a manner as to support the building of human and social capital. The third pillar is the creation of sustainable growth, where a competitive private sector becomes both the engine of growth and the instrument of social inclusion through the creation of opportunity".

4.3 International assistance effort strategy in summary

Notwithstanding the significance of these specific points of divergence between the major actors in the setting of strategic objectives and the design of their strategic plans, two essential, albeit rather basic, points of strategic consensus would seem to tie the Security Council, UNAMA and the AIA/AACA together:

a) authority to set national development priorities and coordinate international assistance should pass from the existing mechanisms, most obviously the ASG and the APB, to the AIA and the AACA, and
b) the primary strategic objective for the international assistance effort should be the promotion of peace, or what could be called a strategy of aid-induced pacification.

There remain important differences between some of these actors regarding the purpose and coordination of humanitarian assistance, the approach to human rights and security conditionalities and policies concerning gender. To complete this section on the objectives and key strategies of the international assistance effort, a summary is provided below

of the most critical assumptions upon which the assistance effort rests. These are linked together in a complex set of mutual dependencies and critical sequences. Some are explicitly recognised in the key documents cited above, others glossed over. The validity of these assumptions will, to a significant degree, determine the extent to which the objectives of the international assistance effort can be attained. The strategy for international assistance is based upon the following assumptions:

1) The external and internal forces of political, economic and military opposition to the peace process can be contained.
2) Public attitudinal change, resulting from the impact of assistance and capacity building, will reflect positively upon the peace/political process and in particular lend legitimacy to the Interim Administration and the Transitional Administration.
3) Pacification of Afghan warlords will result *either* from aid conditionalities relating to respect for human rights and the maintenance of a secure environment, or from an unconditional "peace dividend," and conversely that violent conflict will not be fuelled by international assistance.
4) The objective of conferring de facto authority upon the AIA/ATA can be agreed, and acted upon, by donors, NGOs and UN agencies and, conversely, that the AIA/ATA will establish a coordination process that gives an acceptable level of autonomy to the agencies.
5) Once in "the driver's seat" the humanitarian and development approaches, including gender and human rights policies, of the AIA and its successors will not depart from the current guiding principles of the international assistance effort to an extent that becomes unacceptable to donors, agencies and NGOs.
6) The actual capacity of the AIA, AACA and line ministries to lead and coordinate the international assistance effort can be achieved in a timely fashion through a combination of capacity building and the return of Afghans from exile.
7) The donor community will support the assistance strategy in a coherent, complementary, timely and innovative manner.
8) The implementation capacity required – mainly NGO and private sec-

tor – to deliver the new assistance programme will support the strategy in a coherent, complementary, timely and innovative manner.

9) The UNAMA reforms will achieve effectiveness in the UN-led international assistance effort in general, and in particular that:
   - The human rights and protection issues in Afghanistan can be addressed without major and unsustainable internal transaction costs.
   - The unresolved gender equity versus special programmes and gender mainstreaming debate can be managed without unsustainable transaction costs.
   - The humanitarian emergency versus recovery and reconstruction divide can be managed without fatal results and unsustainable management costs.
   - The international assistance programme can be delivered through a "light footprint" which will get still lighter as capacity building progresses and as Afghans in exile return.

It goes without saying that there are some risky and ambitious expectations as well as contradictory assumptions, in this list. At some near future date, the validity of these assumptions should be tested. The international assistance effort in general and the United Nations system in particular deserve to be held accountable for the quality and effectiveness of their strategies, rather than being appraised on the basis of individual projects and programmes. Whether the eventual judgement is that the international assistance effort was a strategic success, an exercise in hubris, or some mixture of both, only time will tell.

5. Strategic coordination in practice

While a number of important strategic assumptions and coordination issues have been identified above, the approach to these has so far been deliberately descriptive, rather than analytical. What have not yet been described are the strategic coordination mechanisms or processes themselves. This has been partly due to the simple problem that there is no entity, meeting or process that incorporates the term "strategic coordina-

tion" in its formal title, and partly because the processes of coordination were being re-invented at the time of writing. It is also due in part to the difficulty in identifying what actually constitutes strategy for the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, and who or what is responsible and accountable for it. Furthermore, the study had only limited access to strategic coordination meetings, such as those between the SRSG and his deputies. Finally, the absence of an extensive description of strategic coordination in practice is also due to the simultaneous preparation of a complementary AREU publication that summarises the history, composition and mandates of the various coordination and inter-agency processes.

However, it is important to note that the degree of satisfaction in the existing practice of strategic coordination, as expressed by the great majority of agency and donor representatives, was generally very low. Prior to listing the issues reported during the interviews, it is important to stress that their inclusion here does not in any way validate them as facts. It is also the case that the great majority of opinions expressed were contradicted by other respondents and not all have equal claim to be classified as strategic rather than operational coordination issues. No significance should be attached to the order in which they are presented below.

5.1 Strategic coordination – reported issues

1) *Frequency of meetings*: Considerable disquiet was expressed about the number of coordination mechanisms and the frequency of inter-agency meetings. As well as the regular meetings, there are complaints about too many *ad hoc* gatherings. Many agency staff expressed the view that coordination was getting in the way of implementation. The characteristic of coordination most favoured was "streamlined", although there was little consensus as to what this might mean in practice.
2) *Complexity of processes*: "Confusion" was probably the most frequently used word when describing strategic coordination arrangements. There was nearly universal consensus that greater clarity regarding purpose, authority and membership of the various bodies is required. This applies particularly to meetings of the Emergency Task Force (ETF),

the Afghan Support Group (ASG), the Implementation Group (IG) and the IG Standing Committee. As noted elsewhere, these arrangements may, by now, have been simplified.

3) *Inclusion/exclusion*: There were contradictory but very frequent complaints made that the coordination meetings are too inclusive, and thus unmanageably large on the one hand, and on the other, that the key policy coordination meetings are too exclusive, badly informed and poorly reported on.
4) *Weak communications*: Many complaints were heard about the failure of the UN to provide adequate advance warnings of meetings, of ill-prepared agendas and presentations and poor records of meetings. While it is widely recognised that the technical constraints of weak or non-existent telecommunications infrastructure, inadequate office accommodation and staffing, ever more demanding donors and the complexity of transferring authority to the AIA, there is a strong sense that poor communications are hampering coordination. There are paradoxical (although not necessarily inconsistent) complaints of information overload.
5) *The bilateral/multilateral paradox*: Although the rhetorical support amongst donors for multilateralism is strong, there are competing claims that actual donor behaviour is too bilateral (from UN agencies) and too multilateral (from NGOs).
6) *Competitiveness versus complementarity*: Mutual recriminations about competitive behaviour between agencies are commonly made. These are felt to mar the coordination process.
7) *Lack of leadership/slow pace of reform*: Many interviewees in April and May expressed impatience that the creation of UNAMA, and particularly the establishment of Pillar Two, was moving far too slowly. Many UN agency and NGO staff felt that there was a strategic leadership vacuum, paradoxically, in spite of the proliferation of coordination events and processes.
8) *Pillar One versus Pillar Two*: Many interviewees volunteered a view about which Pillar of the UN system was "in the driver's seat". There are great variations of opinion and considerable time spent in analysing which Pillar is most favoured in terms of UN support. There was also anxious

anticipation about the impending announcement of appointments for the future sub-national area coordinators, and whether these will be from Pillar One or Pillar Two.

9) *The "light footprint/heavy jackboot" debate*: Almost everybody accuses almost everybody else of wearing heavy jackboots, while claiming to be very nimble-footed themselves. Many agencies simultaneously feel profoundly constrained by the "light footprint" objective and believe that their effectiveness is being undermined by this requirement.

10) *Operational coordination*: The strategic relevance of operational coordination arrangements is explained by the debate about the alleged political allegiances and objectives of the various line ministries, and the possible undesirable political impact that their control over sectoral coordination processes might have. Put crudely, the argument is that Afghan warlords are in control of the ministries and that a successful international effort made to legitimise the AIA/ATA and the peace process will, *inter alia*, legitimise those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, thereby reinforcing rather than overcoming a culture of criminal impunity. It is argued by many that the operational coordination arrangements therefore risk reinforcing the economic and political hegemony of the warlords. A parallel argument was brewing over the logic, rationale and effect of the UN lead agency model and similar concerns have been expressed about the newer programme secretariat model.

11) *Centre-region disconnect*: There is a commonly expressed view that the UN assistance strategy and the purpose of the UNAMA reforms are understood in Kabul, but that the reality in the rest of the country is markedly different where a sense of "business as usual" prevails. In contrast, regional staff argued that Kabul based managers are out of touch with the reality on the ground, where the powers of local warlords and individual agency mandates remain undiminished.

12) *Regional/provincial incoherence*: The pre-Bonn UN coordination arrangements used the "region" as the operational locus of aid coordination. Fears that local authority coordination at this level equates to and thus legitimises undesirable warlord and ethnically rooted authority, has

led to a decision that operational field coordination should be located instead at the "area" level. The uncertainty about the future status of regional offices has generated anxiety amongst staff and arguments about the viability of area coordination.

13) *Slow pace of disbursement of funds*: Considerable frustration, in some cases downright anger, is building up over what is perceived as the exceedingly slow pace of donor disbursements. This calls into question the legitimacy of the Tokyo pledges, the credibility of the assistance effort and, in turn, the effectiveness of the peace process. It is the staff of those agencies which are closest to the extreme privations of life in Afghanistan who bear the major brunt of unrealistic public expectations, stoked up by unrealistic aid pledges.

14) *Slow pace of programme implementation*: Universal criticism was heard from all AIA officials interviewed at the slow pace of the reconstruction and recovery programme. In some cases this was accompanied by expressions of anger, accusations of corruption and a growing rhetoric of "betrayal by the international community". The perceived failure to initiate a major labour-intensive road building programme was the most commonly articulated frustration.

15) *Gender equity*: There is mounting internal criticism about the seriousness with which the UN system applies its own commitment to gender-equity, both in terms of the programmes it supports and the manner in which it manages itself.

16) *Human rights*: There are many differing opinions, mostly strongly felt and expressed, about the proper place of human rights in the assistance effort. Some hold the view that political pragmatism dictates a measured approach to continuing human rights violations, while others argue that the current approach encourages impunity and warlordism. The marginalisation of protection and human rights is seen by some as the direct consequence of simultaneously mainstreaming human rights in Pillar Two and monitoring human rights in Pillar One, while maintaining control of human rights activities by the SRSG's office . There are concerns expressed that there has been inadequate attention paid to and support for the Judicial Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

17) *The NGO problem*: There are mixed, contradictory, but very strong opinions expressed about NGO behaviour in Afghanistan. Many government officials (the AACA excepted) spoke of the urgent need for legislation to "control the NGOs". Many donors and UN agencies expressed rather similar, although generally less extreme opinions. In contrast, the NGOs feel increasingly beleaguered and unappreciated by a donor community and UN system that has, from the NGO point of view, almost totally depended upon NGO courage and ingenuity to deliver programmes throughout years of conflict.

18) *The humanitarian/development divide*: There appears to be considerable disagreement about the severity of the current humanitarian situation and the appropriateness of continued large-scale food aid. These arguments may be closely bound up with the mandates of the agencies, with the humanitarians arguing the need for continued emergency assistance and the development agencies claiming problems of dependency and stunted development and the need to move from relief to development.

19) *Assistance conditionalities and aid-induced pacification*: While this study is concerned with coordination, it cannot entirely avoid questions about the conceptual and empirical validity of the strategic choices and instruments deployed by the International Community in Afghanistan. While it is noted elsewhere that the politicisation of aid, as represented in the UNAMA peace-building objectives, creates division and disarray amongst aid actors, this is not only due to matters of agency mandate and practical concerns about staff security. It is also a matter of some debate whether the conceptual logic of "aid-induced pacification" reinforced by a strategy of aid conditionalities is robust or flawed, and whether or not there is an empirical case to support it. While the Security Council treats these matters as given, they most certainly are not accepted as such by many within the aid community.

5.2 Additional observations

To add to this litany of reported concerns, there are a further four observations made in the course of this study which, indirectly, may also have strategic consequences.

1) *Accommodation*: Many agency staff live in accommodation with very limited privacy and personal space. This, combined with many other work-related stresses, probably contributes to what appears to be unusually high rates of illness and difficult inter-personal relations amongst international staff.
2) *Over-work*: In almost all cases, agency personnel are working excessively long hours with inadequate periods of rest and recreation. This is bound to have a deleterious impact upon health, efficiency and judgement.
3) *Verbal communications culture*: The strong attachment exhibited by many staff to their mobile phones and other verbal communications gadgetry, the apparent lack of time-zone awareness on the part of headquarters, and a heightened sense of the "need to know" (about almost everything it seems), all contribute to a relentless 24-hour mobile phone and walkie-talkie culture that gives these devices precedence over every other activity, including business meetings, conferences, eating and sleeping. All of these processes (and probably others too) must surely suffer as a consequence.
4) *Afghan interlocutors*: While there appears to be a wide measure of agreement about the strategy to transfer authority to the AIA and the primary importance of capacity building for Afghan institutions, the daily practice of programme delivery and operational coordination seems yet to be little changed, and certainly Afghans are not yet occupying the driver's seats of most parts of the international assistance effort. Indeed, many of the more high-level inter-agency meetings are reported to take place with no Afghan involvement at all. At a time when the international assistance effort is particularly keen to demonstrate that it can have an impact on Afghan public opinion and the conduct of public affairs, this makes the strategic level of inter-agency discussion very prone to acting upon unintentional or deliberate misinformation about what is happening in the country.

Comment on reported issues and observations

While the players in the process of strategic coordination of the interna-

tional assistance effort are far from complimentary about each others organisations, this is not necessarily to be taken as conclusive proof of a malfunctioning policy coordination mechanism. Under the circumstances, given the combination of uncertainty, insecurity, the hurried transfer of offices from Pakistan, unsustainable workloads, unsatisfactory housing arrangements, radical policy change and huge pressure from headquarters to be seen to be delivering, it is hardly surprising that the actors involved are prone to letting off steam when talking to a researcher in a confidential interview. Furthermore, the list of complaints and concerns above are certainly not unique to Afghanistan, and it would be wrong to interpret the amount of argumentation and dissonance as overwhelming evidence of a failing system. Indeed, some argued that much had already been achieved, and most interviewees agreed that it is really too early to tell on an empirical basis whether or not a strategically coordinated outcome will be delivered.

However, the consistency with which interviewees dwelt upon the perceived failings of the system and the outstanding challenges still to be addressed, provides no grounds for complacency. The 19 strategic coordination issues and the four additional observations are not an exhaustive list covering every concern raised, although they were all mentioned or observed with sufficient frequency to merit their inclusion here. However, given the non-random nature of the sample of people interviewed, any attempt to prioritise them on the basis, for example, of their reported frequency would be a spurious exercise. Arguably, the exercise of validating these issues, taking corrective action to resolve those that warrant a response, and disposing of those which have little or no merit, are tasks for those in charge of assistance strategies and coordination processes. Nevertheless, from this author's perspective, there are certain tractable issues which demand special attention.

These are, in order of importance:

1) the "command and control" model of UNAMA leadership and management, coupled with the failure to date to get a critical mass of donors and NGOs to engage with the UN strategy of aid-induced pacification;
2) the communications strategy vacuum;

3) the absence of an agreed and transparent plan for the migration of authority from assistance agencies to the AIA;
4) the confusion over the place of human rights in the strategy;
5) the growing controversy about gender policy; the uncertainties surrounding humanitarian principles; and
6) the distractions caused by the policy of the "light footprint".

The omission from this list of many human resource and management considerations, which actually make up the great bulk of the reported and observed issues described above, should not be seen as dismissive of their significance. In particular, until workloads have been brought down to manageable levels it is difficult to see how the assistance effort can be more strategically managed. This is not the place for a detailed organisational development needs analysis of the aid system in Afghanistan, but in the case of the UN agencies in particular, it is worth pointing out that much of the work pressure is self-induced, stemming in part from a corporate culture that values effort over achievement, and quantity of data above quality of management information. The UN work culture also appears to reward the tendency, paraphrasing the Brahimi Report, to tell managers what they want to hear rather than what they need to know. The effect is to fuel expectations, while the chosen remedy, which probably in fact makes matters worse, is to work ever longer hours. This creates a self-defeating and vicious cycle of unrealistic promises, unachievable objectives, unproductive meetings and untenable workloads. It encourages the notion that sleep is unnecessary, that rest is indulgence, and that virtue equates to physical and mental exhaustion. If a regimen of achievable personal objectives linked to the delivery of strategic goals were to be imposed upon UN personnel, many of the substantive strategic policy issues discussed below would stand a far better chance of being resolved.

Also excluded from this list of strategic issues is perhaps the most fundamental of the threats to the effectiveness of the international assistance effort. This is the very troubling situation concerning security in

Afghanistan and the failure of the international community to provide sufficient resources for the deployment of ISAF beyond Kabul. The reasons for this are subject to considerable speculation, but for the purposes of this study of strategic coordination, it is very clear that the Secretary-General has been as forthright as he could possibly be concerning this matter. For example, in his report to the Security Council of 18 March 2002 he states that:

> "At present the Force (ISAF) remains limited to Kabul, while the main threats to the Interim Administration emanate from the provinces. There is a continuing danger that existing security structures, both Afghan and international, will not adequately address the security threats that are currently discernible and that are likely to increase as the convening of the emergency loya jirga approaches. I hope that the Security Council will consider these factors and support the wish of the Afghan people for the expansion of the Force. Security is and will remain the essential requirement for the protection of the peace process. Consequently, the Afghans are unanimous in considering security as their first and most important need. This view is reflected by Chairman Karzai, who has repeatedly called for the expansion of the ISAF to other parts of the country. Afghans and most close observers of the Afghan political scene are confident that such a geographic expansion to a number of major urban centres would significantly minimise the likelihood of large-scale hostilities erupting again between existing armed factions...I cannot emphasise enough that, whatever form of security assistance the SC and Member States should decide to provide to Afghanistan at this, its hour of need, speed is of the essence".

He goes on to argue that speed is also of the essence for the indigenous security sector:

> "Without a credible national security apparatus in the short and longer term, all that has been achieved to date could unravel quickly. Moreover, without security today, the billions pledged for Afghanistan's reconstruction will be of little use tomorrow".

However, as strategically critical as this obviously is, it is not really a coordination issue as such, since there is, outside Kabul, no ISAF, nor any prospect thereof, to coordinate. This is a straightforward matter of a lack

of political will, which has provoked considerable dismay for the assistance effort and which might still yet prove to be the undoing of this particular opportunity for peace in Afghanistan. In this respect, an international assistance strategy which is in fact bereft of key strategic instruments is not just an illusion, but arguably also a political alibi that will enable the burden of responsibility to be shifted to the assistance agencies should the peace process fail. This would affirm the proposition that strategic coordination when undertaken exclusively by assistance providers, carries with it the risk of being used as a strategic scapegoat[16].

Having acknowledged both the primacy of this matter and the fact that the issue is not one of coordination, we now turn to those strategic issues for which remedies might still lie within the grasp of the assistance community.

16. This phenomenon is well described in Eriksson et al. The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, (London: ODI/HPN, 1996). UNHCR in particular, and humanitarian aid more generally are held to have "fed the killers in the camps," whereas at the time, pleas by the high commissioner for an international force to detain the genocidaires were several times rejected by the Security Council. Few remember the latter, while many still associate UNHCR with the former.

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Monitoring and Evaluation for NGOs Projects

A manual for FORUM SOLINT

Development Researchers' Network (DRN)*

Excerpt freely drawn from a provisional version of the Monitoring and Evaluation Manual that will be adopted by the NGOs promoting Forum Solint (CISP, COOPI, COSV, Intersos and Movimondo). The manual is under completion by Development Researchers' Network (DRN). Its elaboration has been preceded and accompanied by a strong consulting and analysis work oriented to the enhancement and the standardisation of the evaluation practices already applied by the mentioned NGOs.

Testo estratto liberamente da una versione provvisoria del Manuale di Monitoraggio e Valutazione che sarà adottato dalle ONG promotrici di Forum Solint (CISP, COOPI, COSV, Intersos e Movimondo). Il manuale è in corso di finalizzazione a cura della Development Researchers' Network (DRN). La sua elaborazione è stata preceduta e accompagnata da un intenso lavoro di consultazione e analisi orientato alla valorizzazione e alla standardizzazione di pratiche valutative già utilizzate dalle ONG menzionate.

0. Introductory note

The final version of this manual will be adopted by Forum Solint, a consortium of five Italian NGOs[1], with the objective of strengthening their Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) capacities and thus improve the quality of their development interventions and strategies, both in terms of planning and impact.

1. CISP, COOPI, COSV, Intersos, Movimondo.

PURPOSE

In view of the growing importance that is being attributed to M&E, this manual has been prepared to:

- Provide NGOs staff with a better understanding of what is meant by M&E in order to develop a common knowledge within the NGO community;
- Improve project design and implementation through the use of M&E methods and tools;
- Strengthen the learning and management culture of NGOs.

AUDIENCE

This manual has been designed primarily for NGOs staff; its main intended users include:

- Project staff, who is directly responsible for the day-to-day management of projects and should be fully involved in the development and utilisation of M&E practices.
- NGOs national and regional co-ordinators, who assure the liaison between the headquarters and the activities on the field, participate in the monitoring of on-going projects and in the identification of new interventions in their geographical area, and are responsible for the relationship between NGOs and local partners and donors' delegations.
- Desk officers and NGOs managers at the headquarters, who are responsible for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the activities in particular geographic areas, as well as for the coherence of the projects with NGOs overall strategies.

NGOs may also want to share this handbook with local and international partners who might be interested in developing and applying M&E techniques and practices to their activities. Thus, it might also become a useful

tool to enhance partnership on the basis of a better and common understanding on how M&E work and how they fit into NGOs programming and implementation activities.

ORGANISATION OF THE MANUAL

This manual describes the M&E methods and approaches used by the major aid organisations and provides the NGOs with operational instruments to strengthen their M&E capacities. It is divided into six chapters.

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the evolution of M&E approaches within the donor community and examines the NGOs approaches to M&E.

1.1 Evolution of M&E

Over the last decades, evaluation has evolved from a one-dimension exercise, carried out by a single evaluator, generally a specialist of the technical field being evaluated, to a multi-dimensional exercise, realised by a wide range of evaluators, analysing multiple levels of the project(s) and addressing a diverse audience.

Many M&E ideas and methods were developed in response to the need of understanding how money was being spent on social and education programmes in the West, in order to justify expenditures to funders.

Concepts of M&E related to development began to be used in response to requirements of large-scale bilateral agencies to better manage and control their projects. In the 1960s and 1970s development was seen as something tangible and measurable and this led to the predominance of economics and cost-benefit analysis. M&E were mainly means of control relying on the measurement of quantitative data with only minimal allowance for qualitative aspects.

These methods, which claimed to be scientifically neutral and unbiased, were characterised by the utilisation of standardised procedures and a high degree of managerial control; external evaluators were contracted in the belief that this would increase objectivity.

A second generation of M&E methods focused more on the achieve-

ment of objectives and the analysis of projects' strengths and weaknesses.

During the 1990s, the evolution of M&E approaches and practices reflected the considerable changes in development co-operation strategies, instruments of intervention and management.

New issues such as democratisation, institutional strengthening, environment and gender gained importance, while the reduction of poverty became the priority and the common ultimate objective of most aid organisations. In order to achieve these objectives, there has been a tendency to shift from forms of assistance that focused on the implementation of single projects towards more complex interventions at programme, sector and country level. In order to face these new challenges, a re-assessment of M&E and their potential use was considered to be indispensable.

The importance of interventions' results and impacts on beneficiaries was emphasised and major aid organisations began to look for ways to improve the performance of their overall strategies and policies. The acknowledged need to improve the performance called for the establishment of effective M&E systems, both to support the implementation of projects and programmes and to provide useful feed back for the design of new initiatives, and to support learning from experience.

1.2 Reasons for M&E

M&E should be carried out with the aim of reducing the gap between plans (projects' designs) and realities (implementation and results).

Monitoring is primarily a management tool that focuses on projects' progress and should help project staff and NGO managers to identify actual or potential successes and problems in order to facilitate the adoption of corrective measures during project implementation.

Evaluations are carried out for three main reasons

1. *Learning*: evaluations allow NGOs and stakeholders to learn from experience, improve future interventions and support institutional learning. For this purpose, procedures have to be set in place to ensure that the lessons derived from completed projects contribute to shape future policy and project planning.

2. *Empowerment*, by enhancing the capacities of local partners, proj-

ect staff and project beneficiaries to use evaluations as an instrument of learning and control.

3. *Accountability*: evaluations allow NGOs to account to funding agencies on the use of funds.

Purposes of M&E

- Ensuring that planned results are achieved
- Supporting and improving management
- Generating shared understanding
- Generating new knowledge and support learning
- Building the capacities of those involved
- Motivating stakeholders
- Ensuring accountability
- Fostering public and political support

1.3 M&E and the NGOs

In the last decades, the total amount of public aid being channelled through NGOs has grown considerably both in absolute terms and with respect to funds managed by bilateral and multilateral agencies.

This has increased the donors' community's concern with the analysis of NGOs' achievements, associated with a growing scepticism of taxpayers and donating public about the results of development aid. One of the most comprehensive studies on NGOs impact and impact evaluation methods to date [OECD/DAC Expert Group on Evaluation, *Searching for Impact and Methods: NGO Evaluation Synthesis Study*, 1997] reports that "... a first conclusion – confirmed by data and interviews in all the different case studies and countries – is that in spite of growing interest in evaluation, there is still a lack of reliable evidence on the impact of NGO development projects and programmes". [First page of the Executive Summary]

Means to strengthen M&E capacities

- Creation of new roles within the NGOs with specific mandates for M&E
- Support for the strengthening of NGOs' operators capacities (training)
- Allocation of funds for external evaluations
- Promotion of regional and local networks
- Collaboration with academic institutions for exploring new methods and models of M&E

The limited use of instruments by NGOs to monitor and evaluate their

development activities, as well as major data problems and poor or inadequate systems of monitoring, are among the main reasons for the incapability of NGOs to substantiate their achievements. Thus, NGOs have often been unable to provide firm evidence about their results and few have produced accessible information, based on the systematic use of M&E tools.

New donors' expectations, along with recent changes in development co-operation and the evolution of M&E methods, led to an increased NGOs' interest in M&E issues and awareness of the need for effective M&E. Today, the vast majority of NGOs view M&E not only as a useful exercise but as an important activity.

NGOs, especially larger NGOs in both the North and the South, are now undertaking a series of varied (and often uncoordinated) activities with the aim of deepening their knowledge about M&E methods and practices and strengthening internal M&E capacities.

1.3.1 NGOs common features

A review of the literature on NGOs evaluations highlights some common features and distinctive characteristics.

1. There is an almost universal concern with participatory methods: beneficiaries' and major stakeholders' views should be incorporated into the evaluation process (an overview of participatory approaches is provided in the next paragraph).

2. Projects are increasingly implemented in partnership between Southern and Northern NGOs. Despite a reduction in the latter's functions – often limited to supervision and to the provision of specific technical inputs – they still bear the onus of strong accountability towards donors.

3. Major emphasis is placed on evaluation (and monitoring) as a learning

NGOs on donor-commissioned evaluations

Though there is a widespread agreement between NGOs and main donors about methods and approaches used for project evaluation, NGOs still have some concerns and often criticise donor-commissioned evaluations on some specific points:

a) Cost of the evaluations, which is considered to be to high;
b) Focus, excessive attention is given to the past compared with the future;
c) "Pre-packaged" methods, mainly based on economic and quantitative data analysis, which fail to embrace and evaluate the complexity of different social contexts and do not encourage participatory approaches;
d) Scope, which reflects excessive concerns on issues related to accountability in order to ensure that funds provided have been well spent.

tool, thus the feedback of M&E findings and the use of results are seen as an important means to improve future performance of all implementing partners.

4. There is a growing interest towards longer term and more complex interventions, e.g. in capacity building and institutional strengthening issues, thus leading to a growing interest in evaluation methods other than project evaluations.

1.4 Main donors' community's approaches to M&E

Broadly, there are three main approaches to M&E in use by the major aid organisations.

1. The Logical Framework Approach (LFA), which is the most widely used;
2. The German ZOPP, a close derivative of LFA (from the German Zielorientierte Projektplanung, then translated into English "Objective Oriented Project Planning");
3. The Result Based Management, which, in recent years, has become the favoured model of the Canadian and American agencies.

However, despite the existence of a number of differences between the approaches, the underlying principles of M&E currently in use are similar and can be summarised as follows:

- The development of programmes and projects based on a thorough understanding of the situation in which an intervention is planned.
- The development of a set of clear logical objectives that can realistically be achieved within a particular timeframe and within an allocated budget.
- The efforts to make explicit the cause and effect (means-ends) relationships and external factors that underpin the programme or project.
- The establishment of M&E systems, including indicators, which will show if the objectives have been achieved and provide information to support effective management and learning.

1.4.1 Logical Framework Approach

The LFA, created in 1969 for the US Agency for International Development, was conceived as a technique to improve the systematic planning of devel-

opment projects. Over time, it has evolved from a simple framework to structure projects' objectives to a more sophisticated, process oriented approach to involve stakeholders in project design, implementation and evaluation.

In the last years many bilateral and multilateral donors, including the EC, have adopted the LFA as their main tool for project/programme planning and management.

The LFA aims at presenting the programmes/projects' objectives in a logic and systematic way. It reflects the casual relationships between the different levels of objectives, indicating how to check whether these objectives have been achieved and establishing the assumptions which are beyond the control of the project that may influence its success.

This approach is normally developed through the following steps:

a) systematic analysis of the situation in which the intervention is planned;
b) clear identification of the problem(s) to be addressed and their cause and effects relationship (usually done through the instrument of the problem tree);
c) consideration of intervention alternatives and development of a logical hierarchy of activities and objectives that will allow to overcome the problem(s);
d) identification of the assumptions that underlie the logic of the objectives hierarchy and the external risks that may lead to these assumptions not being realised;
e) establishment of the indicators that will be used to verify if the objectives have been achieved;
f) indication of the means by which the information for the indicators will be collected and analysed.

The result of this process is summarised in a matrix, the "LogFrame", which shows the overall logic of the programme/project and its main aspects. Thus, the LF has the advantage of presenting the essential elements of complex projects clearly and succinctly. The M&E practices of specific interventions are included in the LF where the levels, people, processes, documents and information used to monitor and evaluate the project are defined.

	Logframe Matrix structure		
Project Description	**Performance Indicators**	**Means of Verification**	**Assumptions**
Overall Objective: The broader development impact to which the project contributes – at a national and sectoral level.	Measures of the extent to which a contribution to the goal has been made. Used during evaluation.	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it.	
Purpose: The development outcome expected at the end of the project. All components will contribute to this.	Conditions at the end of the project indicating that the purpose has been achieved. Used for project completion and evaluation.	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it.	Assumptions concerning the purpose/goal linkage.
Component Objectives: The expected outcome of producing each component's outputs.	Measures of the extent to which component objectives have been achieved. Used during review and evaluation.	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it.	Assumptions concerning the component objective/purpose linkage.
Results: The direct measurable results (goods and services) of the project which are largely under the project management's control.	Measures of the quantity and quality of outputs and the timing of their delivery. Used during monitoring and review.	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it.	Assumptions concerning the output/component objective linkage.
Activities: The tasks carried out to implement the project and deliver the identified outputs.	Implementation/work programme targets. Used during monitoring.	Sources of information and methods used to collect and report it.	Assumptions concerning the activity/output linkage.

The LF is thus a tool for improving project planning and implementation although, however good it is, it does not alone guarantee successful results. If used too rigidly, it risks to lead people towards a formal "blueprint" exercise, while already during the planning stage it is necessary to deal with a number of factors that are likely to influence the success of the project,

such as the ability of the planning team, the process of consultation with the stakeholders and the consideration of the lessons learnt from previous experiences.

The LF must also be seen as a dynamic tool, which has to be re-assessed and revised during project implementation in order to take into account changing circumstances.

1.4.2 Other approaches: ZOPP and RBM

ZOPP Approach

ZOPP is a project planning and management method that encourages participatory planning and analysis throughout the project cycle with a series of stakeholder workshops aimed at setting priorities and planning for implementation and monitoring. The purpose of ZOPP is to undertake participatory, objectives-oriented planning that spans the life of the project work to build stakeholder team commitment and capacity through workshop sessions.

This process relies heavily on two techniques – stakeholders' workshops and matrix building – that encourage participation. The main output of a ZOPP session is the Project Planning Matrix (PPM), similar to a LogFrame, which provides an analysis of project objectives, outputs and activities. The development of the PPM is the result of a process characterised by various phases, each of which requires a workshop that focuses on a fixed goal. Traditionally, five ZOPP phases were conceived, the first three taking place during project planning.

Although there is no set formula for a successful stakeholder workshop, some important issues for the development of the PPM can be mentioned:

- Participation analysis: identification of stakeholders' identities, interests, expectations and concerns.
- Problems analysis: similar to the LF – often visualised as a problem tree, through which key problem(s) to be addressed are identified, grouped and prioritised, making clear their causes and effects relationship.
- Objectives analysis: in a corresponding objectives tree, the desired solutions are articulated, clustered and prioritised.

– Alternatives: analysis of the range of available means to meet the objectives.
– Assumptions: examination of conditions necessary for successful transformation of problems into secured objectives.

Participants first review the variety of means available to achieve the project objectives. The PPM shows activities and results as well as the conditions necessary for achieving both. These conditions are important assumptions on which rest decisions about activities, location, timing and so on. The information is organised along axes that show (a) why the project is being undertaking and (b) what are the project outputs that signal success .

1.4.3 Result Based Management Approach

Over recent years the Canadian and American development agencies (respectively CIDA and USAID) have moved away from the explicit use of the LFA and have begun to use the so-called result-based approaches. The two agencies use different definitions (Result Based Management for CIDA and Result Oriented Assistance for USAID), although their approaches can be associated for the purposes of this Manual. The adoption of these approaches follows the recognition that, if planned results are to be achieved, more attention has to be given to the management of programmes and projects. It was in fact deemed that, form this point of view, the LFA (and ZOPP technique) was considered excessively rigid.

Besides the necessity to provide a more effective and flexible tool for implementation, the Result Based Management (RBM) approach also represent an attempt to link more explicitly development projects to an overall donor development strategy at country or region level.

CIDA defines Result Based Management (RBM) as: "*a management approach that centres on the establishment of a process and environment where individuals work together to accomplish expected results. The RBM process allows project managers to allocate or reallocate scarce project resources based on performance information that incorporates lessons learnt into project management*".

The main elements of RBM are:

- a result oriented programme/project description, through the definition of realistic expectations for results, the clear identification of beneficiaries and the design of plans to meet their needs;
- a performance measurement system through the monitoring of progress towards results using appropriate indicators;
- the added value of independent internal audit and evaluation functions;
- responsibility for performance and transparency in reporting on results achieved and resources consumed.

While RBM and LFA emphasise different aspects, the underlying principles are quite similar. They are both aimed at ensuring logical project design, achieving results and identifying mechanisms for monitoring programmes/projects in order to demonstrate what has been achieved.

The main difference between RBM (and the American Results Orientated Assistance) and LFA/ZOPP is that the first places great emphasis on management, M&E and the design phase, in the attempt to enable programme/project managers to cope with changes, while the second tends to focus more on planning and design.

In essence, there is no particular conflict between the LFA and RBM approach, and they can be used as complementary approaches.

2 .Principles of M&E

The aim of this chapter is to help NGOs develop an understanding of some of the key M&E issues and principles by looking at different types of evaluation.

2.1 Definitions

There is no universal agreement on what the terms monitoring and evaluation should cover and which should be the demarcation between them. A useful distinction can be made between activities that are essential to support project implementation (monitoring) and activities that serve a broader and more reflective purpose (evaluation).

Monitor the conversion of Inputs into Outputs **ARE WE DOING THE PROJECT RIGHT?**	EVALUATE the conversion of outputs into objectives **ARE WE DOING THE RIGHT PROJECT?**

a. MONITORING

Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of project implementation and first impact through the process of data collection and analysis, reporting and use of information.
The DAC defines monitoring as

> "a management function which uses methodological collection of data to determine whether the material and financial resources are sufficient, whether the people in charge have the necessary technical and personal qualification, whether activities conform to work-plans, and whether the work-plan has been achieved and has produced the original objectives".

Monitoring is therefore primarily a management responsibility and should continue throughout the life of a project; monitoring practices should provide mechanisms through which relevant information is provided to the right people at the right time to help them to make the right decision. In particular, feedback on implementation should help managers and other stakeholders in identifying actual or potential successes and problems as early as possible in order to facilitate timely adjustments to project activities.

Monitoring should focus on:

— Physical progress (service delivery, implementation of foreseen activities)
— Process (management and eventually local capacity building)
— Preliminary response of target groups/communities to project activities
— Unexpected events and projects' responses
— Financial matters (budget, expenditures)

The different ways in which the projects' field staff and NGOs' managers may carry out monitoring is extremely varied: different circumstances, people and skills will require different approaches and methods. Further discussion on monitoring issues is provided in chapter 4.

b. EVALUATION

An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, of its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and the fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. (DAC, 1992)

Monitoring and review systems are very important for evaluation purposes, as evaluations significantly depend on the information regularly collected and reported through monitoring and review activities.

Evaluation is both a management and a learning tool: (a) it offers opportunities for organisations to be reflective about the quality of their work and the appropriateness of their strategies, and supports learning for decision-making, resource allocation and accountability; (b) it provides the opportunity to draw lessons from the experience gained and therefore guide future planning action.

The role of evaluation vis-à-vis monitoring

	MONITORING	EVALUATION
Function	Project management	Learning and accountability
Project selection	All projects should be monitored	Selective basis for projects of interest or concern to management
Timing	Continuously, all along the project duration	In specific moments of the project cycle
Responsibilities	Carried out by project staff and NGO management staff	Carried out by external (to the project or to the NGO) evaluators
Focus	Focus on project's progresses and first results	Focus on results and longer-term impact
Methods	Emphasis on quantitative indicators	Relies more on qualitative methods
Reporting	Straightforward presentation following standard and comparable formats	Less standardised presentation focusing on fewer performance issues analysed in greater depth
Dissemination	Normally limited to internal staff and direct users	Wider diffusion, including public opinion

a. OTHER ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Appraisal

Appraisal is the critical examination of a proposal, on the basis of agreed selection criteria, that takes place before the approval for funding of the proposed action.

The DAC identifies three possible standpoints for guiding the selection of proposed interventions: (i) relevance; (ii) technical, financial and institutional feasibility; (iii) socio-economic profitability. The EC uses the same criteria although the third criteria is more focused on sustainability.

Review

The main purpose of reviews is to share information and perspectives on project progress, to identify management actions that may be required to keep the project on track and to overcome constraints, and to agree on who should take the required action, when and how. Reviews' findings should feed back into planning to help keep operational plans updated and relevant. Reviews thus provide project implementers with the opportunity to further analyse the information collected through monitoring and take appropriate management actions to support implementation.

Reviews are normally carried out at pre-determined points in time (e.g. every year or every year and a half) but they may also be conducted on an ad-hoc basis when a problems arises. The frequency of reviews is influenced by a number of factors such as their purpose, who is expected to attend and contribute, the reporting and review requirements of donors, the scope and duration of a project.

Reviews involve the examination not only of implementation, but also of basic concepts and strategies. DAC defines the concept of "Management review" as "a term used to describe an element of manager's job which may involve a wide range of monitoring and problem-solving activities designed to ensure that operations are functioning satisfactorily".

Audit

Audit is the process of determining whether, and to what extent, the measures, processes, directives and organisational procedures of the aid organisations conform to norms and criteria set out in advance. The audit function is therefore more limited in scope than an evaluation, in that it only examines compliance with the legal and contractual obligations.

2.2 Making your way through definitions and terminology

A correct application of the LFM for M&E starts with the establishment of a common understanding of key terminology. A brief set of definitions is given below:

Overall Objective: The longer term, high level improved situation, at sector or national level, that a programme or project is contributing towards. The Overall objective helps explain why a programme or project is being undertaken. Generally the overall objective can only be achieved through the combined efforts of multiple actors, i.e. a programme or project cannot be solely responsible for the overall objective being realised. Example – *To improve living conditions in the region XY.*

Results: Generally used to refer to both outputs and outcomes, distinguished as follows:

Purposes: What the project or programme is expected to achieve within the timeframe and the resources available. A project or programme may have more than one purpose. Example – *provision of health services in community X, Y has increased, and their quality improved by the end of the project.*

Outcomes: The observable change in, for example, behaviour, institutions, economic circumstances or physical conditions that need to result from a programme or project in order to realise its purposes and contribute to the overall objective. Example – *community members correctly applying new water disease prevention methods.*

Output: The direct service or product that must be delivered for the realisation of outcomes. They are tangible and they result from the undertaking of a series of activities. Each

purpose must have at least one output. Example – *health personnel trained to provide support to communities. Network of feeder road increased and maintained.*

Activities: Specific tasks that need to be undertaken for an output to be produced or an outcome/result/objective to be realised. Example – *Training workshop for Health Centre personnel.*

Inputs: Resources, i.e. personnel, equipment, material required in order to do the work. Example – *10 m/m of project manager; textbooks; equipment and material to build new Health Centre; provision for travelling.*

Assumptions/risks: Refer to conditions which could affect the progress or the success of a project and on which the project manager does not have direct control. *A killing assumption* is a condition, which is not under the project's control and makes the project unfeasible. *Pre-conditions* are those assumptions that need to be realised prior to the project implementation to guarantee its success. Example – *funds are available to hire new health Centre personnel through the health sector budget.*

Indicators: Represent a qualitative and/or quantitative statement about the situation that will exist when an objective is reached. They should be specified in terms of quantity, quality and time (QQT). Indicators do not cause a result, but only measure it. Example – *infant mortality rate decreased from X% to Y% in the villages A, B and C by the end of the project.*

Quantitative indicators: Are indicators that can be measured in an objective way, can be object of statistical treatment and can be com-

pared. They give the breadth of a result. Example – *number of kilometres constructed per year*. There are also quantitative indicators of quality, example – *teacher per pupil ratio*, and quantitative indicators of qualitative information, example – *number of women participating in leading position in village committees*.

Qualitative indicators: Are mostly used to understand a process, a change and are therefore suitable in relation to participatory or capacity development projects. They give the depth of a result. They are defined as descriptive statements and require specific skills and time-consuming methods for information collection. Example – *capacity to develop quality project proposals following the participation in PCM*.

Though definitions remain broadly unchanged among donors, the terminology used may differ and thus lead to possible confusions. The following table compares the terminology used by main donor agencies and is provided to clarify the use of key words used in the manual on the basis of the terminology adopted by the European Commission.

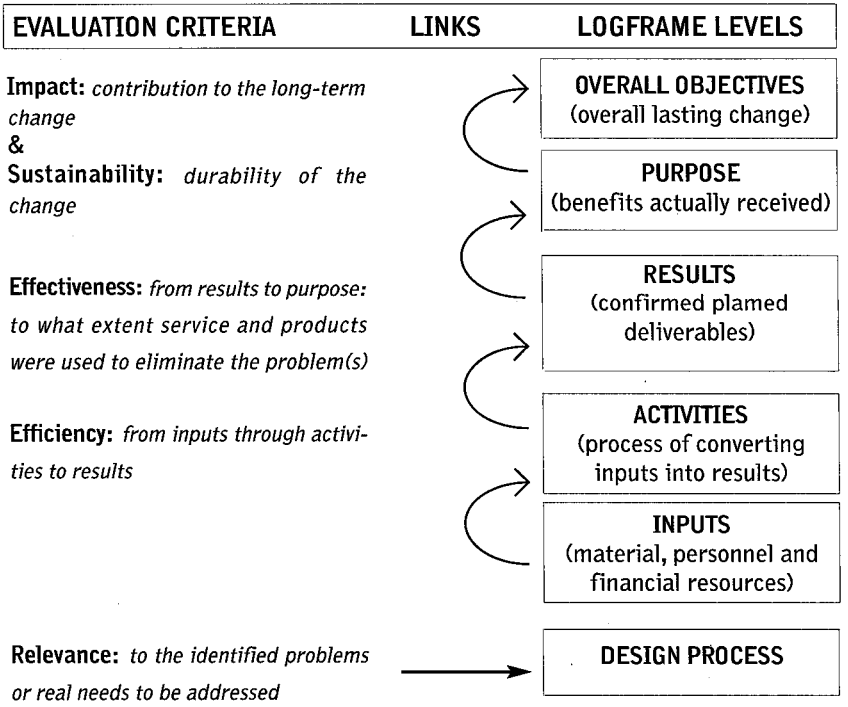
DONOR	*GOAL*	*PURPOSE*	*RESULTS*	*ACTIVITIES*
EC	Overall objective	Purpose	Results	Activities
UNDP	Development Objective	Immediate Objective	Outputs	Activities
World Bank	Country Assistance Strategy-related Goal	Project Development Objective	Outputs	Activities
CIDA	Goal	Purpose	Outputs	Activities
DANIDA	Goal	Immediate Objective	Outputs	Activities
DFID	Goal	Purpose	Outputs	Activities
FINNIDA	Overall objective	Purpose	Results	Activities
GTZ	Overall Goal	Purpose	Results	Activities
SIDA	Development Objective	Project Objective	Results	Activities

2.3 Evaluation criteria

Most of the basic evaluations criteria and concepts are universally accepted and used by all the organisations within the donors' community. They are based on the OECD/DAC criteria for evaluation, and address five major sets of issues:

1. Relevance
2. Efficiency
3. Effectiveness
4. Impact
5. Sustainability

Each of these criteria is linked to key elements of the Logical framework, as explained in the following chart and paragraphs.



Adapted from EC, AidCo Evaluation Unit H6; Evaluation in the EC Brussels. 21 march, 2001

2.3.1 Relevance

The relevance of a project relates to its design and concerns the extent to which the original design:

- continues to reflect the beneficiaries' needs and addresses the identified problems;
- reflects development priorities and policies of local partners;
- contributes to the NGOs' development priorities.

Relevance needs to be assessed throughout the life of the project, and focuses on the appropriateness of the project design to the problems to be solved at two points in time: when the project was designed and at the moment of the evaluation.

The analysis of relevance refers to the continuing rationale of a project and focuses on:

1. The consistency of the design with the local situation and coherence with other interventions:
   - identification and selection of target groups/beneficiaries;
   - identification of target groups/beneficiaries' needs and priorities;
   - participation of local stakeholders in the design phase;
   - assessment of local absorption and local implementation capacities;
   - coherence with other development initiatives in the same country/region and/or sector.
2. The overall logic of the project design:
   - quality of the LF, including the assumptions and risks identified;
   - realism in the selection of objectives and services to be provided;
   - overall degree of flexibility.

2.3.2 Efficiency

Efficiency refers to the extent to which:

- services were provided and managed;
- foreseen activities were carried out in the most appropriate manner giving the available resources and time;
- the above was done at the least cost to produce the expected results.

Thus, efficiency addresses the question related to whether similar results could have been achieved in a better way by other means at lower costs and in the same time, or at the same cost but in less time.

The analysis of efficiency focuses on:

1. The quality of the project management:
– management of the budget;
– timely provision of services;
– relationship with stakeholders, beneficiaries and other local institutions/authorities;
– quality of monitoring procedures and practices, including the use of indicators of efficiency.
2. The use of the most cost-effective alternatives to achieve the results in comparison to similar projects or approaches.
3. The unplanned results eventually arising from project's activities.

2.3.3 Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the extent to which:
– the project produced the expected results;
– the results achieved lead to the project purpose.

The effectiveness measures whether the planned specific objectives have been achieved and whether the planned benefits have been reaped by the intended beneficiaries. In particular, it focuses on:

1. The factors influencing the achievement of the purpose, including unforeseen external factors.
2. The management capacity to ensure that the results achieved allow the reach the purpose.
3. The reaction of beneficiaries and the use of project results and benefits.
4. The unplanned results that are likely to affect benefits.
5. The potential effects of results obtained on cross-cutting issues such as gender, environment and poverty reduction.

2.3.4 Impact

Impact refers to the effects of the project on target beneficiaries as well as

to its wider overall effect on larger numbers of people, within the sector or in a geographic area, in terms of technical, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. It relates to the relationship between the project's purpose and overall objectives, taking into account the fact that at this level the project is normally one of the variables contributing to the wider outcome.

The focus of impact is normally on:

1. The extent to which the overall objectives were achieved and the contribution of the project to their achievement.
2. The external factors that influenced the overall impact and the capacity of the project to respond to these factors.
3. The possible unplanned impacts of the project and their effects on the overall impact.
4. The possible longer-term effects of the project.
5. The impacts of the project on gender-related, environment and poverty issues.

2.3.5 Sustainability

Sustainability is often the most important criteria of evaluation and refers to the extent to which:

- the positive impacts of the project at the purpose level are likely to continue after the project assistance is over;
- the target groups/beneficiaries want - and can - take over the project activities and thus continue to accomplish the project objectives.

This criterion is very large and the relative importance of the different issues will depend on the nature of the project and its relation with the local context. Analysis of sustainability can focus on:

1. Stakeholders' ownership of objectives (participation in their definition during the design phase) and achievements (participation throughout the duration of the project).
2. Institutional sustainability: the extent to which the project is embedded in and respects the local organisations/institutional structures, the capacity of these structures to take over after the project end and the adequacy of the project's budget for this purpose.

3. Financial sustainability: whether the services provided to the beneficiaries are likely to continue after the funding ends; whether enough funds were available to cover all costs and whether the costs are likely to continue after the funding ends.
4. Socio-cultural sustainability: whether the project takes into account the local perception of needs and respects the local status' systems and beliefs; whether the changes produced by the project have been accepted by the beneficiaries and other stakeholders and how.
5. Technical sustainability: whether the technology and knowledge provided fit in with existing traditions, skills and knowledge; whether the beneficiaries are likely to be able to maintain the technology acquired without further assistance.
6. Possibility of replicating successful impacts for a possible extension of the project or of other similar interventions.

2.4 Types of evaluation

There are several ways of categorising evaluations.

A first distinction can be made between summative and formative evaluations. Summative evaluations are carried out when the project is over, and aim to assess effectiveness, impact and overall value. Formative evaluations, on the other hand, are usually undertaken earlier to gain an understanding of what is being achieved in order to introduced improvements.

A second distinction can be made between quantitative and qualitative evaluations. Quantitative evaluations focus on measurable inputs provided and changes that result from the direct implementation of projects' activities. Qualitative evaluations are more process oriented and focus on the assessment of changes of uncountable factors such as attitudes, behaviour, skills, level of knowledge.

Other distinctions between types of evaluation include the following:
By agent:

a) *Self-evaluation*: an evaluation conducted by people that are directly involved in the implementation of the project in the field.
b) *Internal evaluation*: an evaluation conducted by people who form part of

the staff of the organisation that provided the aid but are external to the project.

c) *External evaluation:* an evaluation conducted by those who are external to the aid organisation and the project.

By timing/stage in the project cycle:

a) *Mid-term evaluation* (sometimes referred as "on-going"): an evaluation carried out during the project implementation with the purpose of assessing performance to date, and provide recommendations for adjustments during the continuing implementation.

b) *End-of-project evaluation:* an evaluation carried out at project completion. If the project is part of a multi-phase initiative, the evaluation provides information for consideration in the implementation of the subsequent phases.

c) *Ex-post evaluation:* an evaluation carried out after (usually two/three years) project completion with the purpose of assessing the longer-term impacts and draw conclusions for similar interventions in the future.

By scope:

a) *Project evaluation:* evaluation of a single project.

b) *Programme evaluation:* evaluation of a programme composed by a number of projects.

c) *Country evaluation:* evaluation of development aid strategies and interventions in a particular country.

d) *Sectoral evaluation:* cluster evaluation of projects or programmes in a sector or sub-sector as well as of general support of aid organisations to a sector.

e) *Thematic evaluation:* cluster evaluation of projects or programmes addressing a particular theme that may cut across sectors or geographical boundaries.

Evaluations focusing on specific issues and processes:

a) *Policy evaluation:* evaluation of programmes and projects dealing with particular issues at sectoral or thematic level.

b) *Institutional evaluation*: evaluation of multilateral aid organisations or international, national and local NGOs.
c) *Process evaluation*: evaluation of programmes and projects to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of a particular process or modality adopted.

3. M&E Through the project cycle

Defining and setting up a M&E system begins with the understanding of the links between M&E and the project cycle as indicated in the following chart.

How does M&E intervene in the project cycle?

Phase of Project Cycle	Appraisal	Design	Implementation	Conclusion/ follow-up
	↑	↑	↑	↑
Role of M&E	Provides lessons learnt	Defines the project evaluability	Monitors the progress and provides elements for re-orientation	ASSESSES THE RESULTS TO EXTRACT LESSON AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

The close relationship between the project cycle phases and M&E activities implies that increasing effectiveness and quality of projects through M&E requires a forward thinking. It is necessary to answer the question "*what do we need to do today to be able to assess a change tomorrow?*". The first step will be ensuring the evaluability of a project since the beginning of the project cycle.

3.1 M&E and project approval: making evaluability possible

Ensuring that a project will be able to benefit from future monitoring and

evaluation activities is a concern both for the donors when selecting the project proposals for funding and for the NGOs who would like to ensure the quality of their work and increase the probability of being funded. Assessing the evaluability is therefore the first quality control to be carried out on new project documents. It includes four main steps, which need to be undertaken during the project design phase:

a. Ensure that the intervention logic is coherent and that all parts are clearly set out.
b. Ensure that the M&E framework is feasible and meaningful in relation to the project results and objective.
c. Ensure that the project plan provides for adequate monitoring and evaluation activities.
d. Ensure that the lessons and best practices from previous projects have been incorporated.

Making sure that a project is evaluable is the responsibility of those appraising and approving a project. The following checklist should help project designers and people in charge of the project appraisal to assess project evaluability on time.

Checklist to assess evaluability	
Objectives	a. Problem or need that the project is attempting to address has been identified and analysed
	b. Identification of whose problem or need it is
	c. Causes of the problem or need have been identified and ranked
	d. Expected objectives have been consistently defined
	e. Lessons learnt from previous operations and evaluations have been taken into account
Indicators	f. Conditions (physical, institutional, economic, social) prior to the execution of the project have been described
	g. Base line data on the conditions prior to the execution of the project have been included

	h. If no baseline data are provided, project design includes data collection
	i. Benchmarks, target figures, or other evidence to monitor progress and determine attainment of the objectives have been provided
Results	j. Goods or services that the project will generate have been identified and described
	k. Description of how and when the beneficiaries will use the goods and services generated by the project has been provided
	l. Benefits to be derived from the use of the goofs and services generated by the project have been identified
Assumptions	m. Individuals, groups, institutions and organisation that could positively or negatively affect the execution of the project have been identified
	n. Events or elements that are outside the direct control of project management and that could affect project viability, outputs and objectives have been identified and described
	o. Provisions have been made to review financial and economic feasibility analyses if the project experiences implementation delays which will negatively impact the indicators of project success

Source: IDB: Evaluation: A Management Tool for Improving Project Performance, 1997

3.2 M&E at the project design phase: the use of the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM)

Assessing a project evaluability starts during the design phase. The output of this phase, will have to be presented in such a way to allow the understanding of the project intervention logic, of its main assumptions, the project's time frame and to deduct which are the key stakeholders and key data that will have to be taken into consideration when carrying out M&E activities.

To facilitate the assessment of the above indicated elements, it is suggested to fill in the Logical Framework Matrix (LFM) as the final step of the

project design phase. The LFM is a synthetic presentation tool that illustrates a project's intervention logic and its main components. The *LFM should be considered an aid to thinking*, as it allows the assessment of: (a) *the cause-effect* relationship between different parts of a problem; (b) the *assumptions*, constraints and risks, which could influence the successful implementation of a project; and (c) *the principle of the correspondence, or horizontal logic*, which links each level to the corresponding measure of achievement and therefore provides the framework for project monitoring and evaluation.

Furthermore, if appropriately reviewed and modified, the LFM is also a useful management tool during implementation, that provides a clear point of reference to assess progress towards a stated objective.

However, it is important to remember that the construction of a *LFM provides no magic solution to the correct identification or design of a good project.* It is merely an analytical, synthetic presentation tool. The principle "garbage in, garbage out" can apply to the LFM if it is used mechanically.

4. Monitoring

Monitoring refers to the continuous assessment of project implementation and first impact through the process of data collection and analysis, reporting and use of information.

Donors are mainly concerned with demonstrating tangible projects results, whereas NGOs are generally more concerned with the process of implementation and the way in which results are attained. This difference in approach needs to be recognised and appropriately managed to reduce the scope of disagreement between NGOs and donors.

For this purpose, additional monitoring practices and tools specific to the NGOs - complementary with those required by donors, such as progress reports - need to be developed and used. This chapter presents the steps required for successful monitoring activities and provide NGOs with such practical monitoring tools.

Data and information collected for monitoring purposes will be sum-

marised into specific formats here presented in a way that take into account the NGOs needs and constraints. The formats have some common characteristics:

– only data of interest and use to the field staff are included;
– information that are not too difficult to obtain are selected;
– a simple presentation is provided;
– Sound basis for summary conclusions and comparisons by third parties is included.

4.1 Introduction

NGOs' projects involve many players with different roles who are involved at different levels in monitoring activities: each of these levels is characterised by distinct information needs and must be provided with specific management tools. Thus, monitoring will that take into account the existing NGOs' structures, as well as their accountability obligations, and will focus on different issues reflecting different monitoring purposes.

Purpose of monitoring:

(a) Support day-to-day management; (b) Assess progress towards planned results; (c) Assess progress towards achievement of specific objectives.



Focus of monitoring:

(a) Implementation of on-going activities; (b) Quality of results and analysis of deviations; (c) Review of the intervention logic.



Organisation of monitoring:

(a) Information collection on an on-going basis: project staff; (b) Quarterly analysis of information collected: national/regional co-ordinators; (c) Field visits at specific moments in time: managers from headquarters.



Monitoring tools:

(a) Management records; (b) Flash reports; (c) Field visit reports.

4.2 NGOs' structure and current monitoring practices

NGOs have different project management systems and related monitoring and evaluation practices. Nevertheless they can generally be simplified as presented in the following bullet list and table.

- At the headquarters level, the Management (Desk Officers and Programme managers) is mainly concerned with information and analyses useful to organisational learning, to lobbying initiatives towards donors and to information dissemination within their constituency. In such framework it will be important to be able to provide indications (on a sample basis) of the actual impact.
- At Country level, the management (Country/Region Representative) and local partners are concerned with receiving feed-back from the field in order to prepare progress reports for donors and local authorities, demonstrate results (thus with a focus on outputs and outcomes indicators) particularly with main donors whose decision-making mechanisms are often decentralised at country level, understand the overall progress of the project in the framework of the NGOs Country strategy, extract lessons for future projects in the Country.
- At project/field level, NGO staff (project team-leader and administrator) and implementing partners are concerned with the day-to-day management of project inputs and outputs and of their related monitoring and therefore they focus on inputs and process indicators. Data, information and reports are usually transmitted to Country Office and/or Headquarters.

Level	Focus	Questions
HQs/Program level	Evaluation/Impact	Is the portfolio working? Is the strategy effective?
Country/Project level	Evaluation/Impact	Is the project working? Is it sustainable?
Project management level	Monitoring/Performance (results)	Is the project producing results? Can it be more efficient?
Project operational level	Monitoring/Progress (inputs & activities)	Is the project on schedule? Are disbursements on schedule? Any changes in the context?

Monitoring is thus undertaken at different levels and by different actors which require different but complementary information.

Financial monitoring is carried out on a regular basis by project administrators and supervised by the desk officers and/or NGOs managers responsible for the specific geographical area. As this is the area where procedures and monitoring practices seem to be more systematic, this manual will provide no specific tools. Thus, the financial monitoring will be treated within the other types of monitoring.

4.3 Purposes and focus of monitoring

Not everyone needs the same information or the same detail. Information requirements and tools for collecting them need to be broken down accordingly to the role of each actor within the management structure, and to the purposes of monitoring at different levels. In this way, functions and responsibilities can be clarified and a clear link can be made between information needs and levels of management.

The importance of selectivity needs to be stressed, as only a limited amount of information can be realistically collected, analysed and used for monitoring purposes. NGOs project managers have often to deal with much more information than they need for making key decisions, while they still lack the critical information they would need for making those decisions.

In order to clearly define the different types of management information needed by project managers, as well as what this information will be used for, we can consider three main categories of information that correspond to three different purposes of monitoring:

a) information on the implementation of planned activities and beneficiaries' participation, for supporting the day-to-day management of projects on the field;
b) information on the results attained through the realisation of activities and beneficiaries response, for assessing the progress towards results and reviewing work plans for follow-up;
c) information on the achievement of specific objectives and first impacts, for reviewing the logic of intervention and problem solving.

As a consequence of the different types of information required and monitoring purposes, monitoring activities will be carried out at distinct levels of implementation. In particular, we can distinguish between three types of monitoring:

- on-going monitoring: identify and highlight problems as they emerge;
- regular monitoring: analyse problems and deviations and suggest follow-up measures;
- monitoring at specific moments of project life: review the whole intervention logic and recommend adjustments.

These monitoring activities are complementary: they provide feedback mechanisms aimed at helping managers in the identification of successes and problems during project implementation, and facilitate appropriate adjustments.

The local partners and beneficiaries should be involved in all types of monitoring, through participatory mechanisms that will be specific to the nature of the project and the local contexts.

4.4 Organisation of monitoring

The types of monitoring will fall under the responsibility of the different actors presently involved in project management, both in the field and at the headquarters, and will require specific monitoring tools. The interval of monitoring activities will be function of the monitoring purposes.

The table below illustrates how monitoring activities can be organised. Some of its elements will be developed in the next sections.

Report	Frequency	Purpose	Content	Responsible	Users	Type of project
Management records	1 month	- Support day to day management - Keep track of activities	- Inputs - Physical progresses - Beneficiaries participation	Project team leaders	National/ regional co-ordinators Central administration	All projects
Flash report	3 to 6 months	- Assess progress towards planned results - Analyse deviations and review work plan	- Quality of results - Coherence with other projects in the region - Beneficiaries response	National/ regional co-ordinator	Co-ordinators Heads of project in the region Desk officers and managers Local partner	All projects

Field visit report	8 months to 1 year	– Assess the relevance of intervention logic – Assess progress towards the achievement of specific objectives – Problem solving and recommendations for follow-up	– Review of the LogFrame matrix – Coherence with NGO's strategy – Beneficiaries satisfaction	NGO managers and desk officers	Heads of project Co-ordinators Local partner Other desks and managers Board of directors	Projects of minimum 2 years Projects with particular problems

On NGOs' projects monitoring will then be undertaken at three distinct levels:

– by project staff;

– by national and/or regional co-ordinators;

– by managers and desk officers from headquarters.

NGOs resources, capacities and constraints must be kept in mind in order to design procedures that are not too complex, time-consuming or expensive. The focus of the following paragraphs is then on optimising value-added, while respecting the realities of what can be achieved.

4.5 Data and information collection techniques

Here are presented different main options that NGOs might need for collecting data and information for monitoring purposes: observation, question checklists and interviews. They are likely to be applied to all levels of monitoring, and can be used independently or in combination.

By respondent selection

Individual interviews

They are easier to manage and allow interviewers to get some information that would have been difficult to get in group interviews because people speak more openly. They have the disadvantage that they are time-consuming and judgements can easily be biased by individual opinions: interviewers may need an important number or respondents to have a representative picture of the situation.

Focus group interviews

They involve small group of people (usually eight to twelve) who have common interest in the project and are useful for validating project design, and assessing project performance as well as the response of a particular category of people. Members of focus groups should be selected within the same economic and social milieu: they draw from local experience

and traditions and provide local insight. Topic focused or semi-structured techniques may be used for focused group interviews (see below).

Community interviews
They involve a large mixed group of community members and are aimed at knowing how the target communities consider the effects of project activities on their lives. More than one interviewer through structured or semi-structured techniques preferably carries out community interviews. They must be planned in advance in order to guarantee the presence of the majority of the community involved.

By interview technique

Semi-structured interviews
They are less formal than structured interviews, having more open-ended questions and a more flexible sequence of items that allow for conversation and reciprocal transmission of information. Preparation usually involves outlining the broad areas of inquiry, while the specific questions are formulated during the interview itself. The questions should be kept simple and be sequenced with easier questions coming first and more personal at the end of the interview. The principal advantage of this technique is that the project managers receive information on topics that have been established by them in a relative short time.

Topic focused interviews
They are carried out through an interview guide focused on specific topics that the interviewer wants to be covered. The kind of information and type of questions are decided in advance, while the specific questions will result from the interview depending on target group response. With a group of people using the same guide for interview, this technique allows for comparison between respondents. Statistically reliable data on the whole population, however, cannot be obtained through topic-focused interviews and will require more structured approaches.

Informal interviews
They are carried out to get information through an informal conversation between the interviewer and the respondent. Particular communication skills are required: the interviewer must keep a neutral attitude in order to avoid any influence on the answers. This technique may be very much time-consuming as conversation can easily drift from issue to issue and conclusions are often difficult to draw. It may be useful to use this technique for getting feelings and concerns about project implementation in a way that does not influence respondent opinions.

4.6 Monitoring at the field level

The first level of monitoring falls under the responsibility of the heads of project and project administrators, who will keep administrative and management records on a on-going basis. For this purpose they will be provided with specific job descriptions, including monitoring activities as a part of their management tasks.

Basic administrative records describing actual expenditures against expected costs will be established on a week-by-week basis. They will be summarised and reported in the form of *management record reports once a month.*

The main purpose of monitoring at this level is to support the day-to-day management through the collection of information concerning the realisation of activities. Problems will be highlighted when they arise and reported to the co-ordinations offices, which will deal with the analysis of possible solutions and suggest measures for follow-up.

The aim is then to provide sufficient information to the co-ordinators, while minimising the reporting workload placed on project management.

Data and information will be reported through management records that will compare the activities planned in the LogFrame matrix (and eventually reviewed during the inception phase) with those carried out on the field, with particular attention at the participation of beneficiaries.

5. Evaluation

"An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and the fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability".

5.1 Characteristics of a good evaluation

In order to contribute to NGO's performance, the evaluation process should be:

- impartial, implying neutrality, transparency and fairness of the analysis and findings. The evaluator can have no vested interest or conflict of interest;
- credible, using appropriate evaluation design and reliable data that ensures the thoroughness of data analysis. The connection between findings, conclusions and recommendations should also be made explicit;
- useful for NGOs and key stakeholders, who should benefit from timely contributions to decision-making processes and learn from the evaluation;

– participatory, reflecting different stakeholders interests, needs and perceptions;
– cost-beneficial, balancing the need for thoroughness and validity with appropriate return;
– feed back into decision-making and organisational learning. Thus, the evaluation managers have particular responsibility for ensuring the systematic dissemination of findings to NGO staff (in particular project planners) and other stakeholders.

5.2 Type of evaluations

The selection of the type of evaluation to be carried out will depend on the purpose and the user(s). Thus, self-evaluations should be carried out to strengthen internal capacities and empower project staff and local partners, while evaluations undertaken by people not involved in the implementation should be carried out for accountability purposes as they are often seen as more "objective".

The planning and management of the evaluation will largely depend on who is going to carry it out, i.e. whether or not an "outsider" (external consultant) will be entrusted of the study. Some benefits and limitations of internal and external evaluations are in the table.

Pros and cons of external/internal evaluations

External evaluation	Internal evaluation
Pros - No vested interest – more objective - Free from organisational bias – fresh perspective - Well developed evaluation skills and/or technical knowledge of evaluator - Can be participatory, given time and skills	*Pros* - Evaluator closely involved with the NGO's activities – knows its way of working - Less likely to cause anxiety and defensiveness - Develops in-house skills and capacities - Produces findings and recommendations that are more likely to be acted upon
Cons - Evaluator may not fully understand NGO's policies, procedures, personalities - Can give those being evaluated a negative perception of the evaluation process - Less likely to be able to follow-up on implementation of recommendations - May be more expensive	*Cons* - Evaluator finds it harder to stand back from the project - May avoid critical/negative conclusions - Evaluator may lack appropriate evaluation and/or technical skills - Lack of time to commit to evaluations

5.3 Managing effective evaluations

This section is intended to help those who will manage evaluations by describing the steps that are to be taken to initiate and manage an evaluation following the NGO's decision to proceed. Sometimes external evaluators contracted for this purpose will carry out these evaluations. In such cases, this section will provide the evaluation manager and the evaluator a step-by-step guide to help the evaluation manager control the quality of the evaluation, and ensure successful evaluation.

5.3.1 Responsibilities

Successful evaluations often require a combined expertise of:
– evaluators;
– managers; and
– stakeholders.

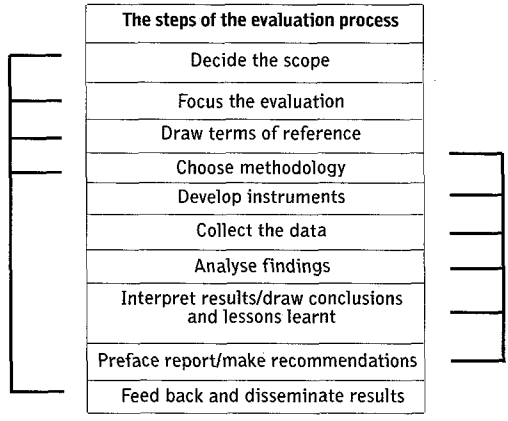
The evaluator is responsible for the content and the presentation of the evaluation report, while the evaluation manager is responsible for the management of the evaluation process. Other stakeholders are expected to participate in the evaluation, provide data as requested and respond to the findings and recommendations presented in the evaluation report.

Professional evaluators have the necessary evaluation and technical skills and knowledge, but it is the task of the evaluation managers to ensure that the evaluators' expertise fits into NGOs' existing processes and practices. The evaluation management is an important task at all stages of an evaluation: (a) during the design phase, to identify and administer the human and financial resources to carry out the evaluation; (b) throughout the evaluation, to ensure the quality control; (c) following evaluation completion, to ensure the dissemination of results to stakeholders and other people concerned.

5.3.2 Key questions when planning an evaluation

Asking a few questions before starting an evaluation will help the evaluation manager to make the study more effective. Questions will include:
a) Why is the evaluation being done? What is the purpose of the evaluation?

b) What are the major issues to be addressed by the evaluation? What is the scope and the focus of the evaluation and what are the key questions that need to be answered?
c) Who will conduct the evaluation? Who else will be involved within the NGO?
d) Who will participate in the evaluation? Who are the key stakeholders to be involved?
e) How will the evaluation be carried out? What is the appropriate methodology?
f) When will the evaluation be undertaken? Is the timing suitable for key stakeholders to be involved in the evaluation?
g) How long will the evaluation take? How many persons-days should be calculated for external expertise?
h) How much will the evaluation cost? What resources will be needed, financial and other?



5.3.3 Preparing the Evaluation Plan

Once the contract is signed, the evaluator is ready to start with the study. The contract should set out the terms and conditions of the evaluation. The first deliverable output is typically the Evaluation Plan. It is prepared by the evaluator and represents his/her response to the ToRs and the proposal for conducting the evaluation. Thus, one of the major functions of the Evalua-

tion Plan is to re-conceptualise the ToRs into a more operational framework that applies directly to the project evaluation.

In order to adequately prepare the work-plan, the evaluator should review the ToRs with the evaluation manager (or the person who drew up the ToRs) so that parameters and requirements can be clarified and eventually redefined. The evaluator will also need basic information on the project that can be obtained through a review of major project documents and possibly by consulting with the project co-ordinator or staff.

Evaluation Plan Outline
- Project overview
- Evaluation matrix
- Methodology
- Evaluation team
- Schedule of activities
- Report outline

Evaluation Plans typically address a number of key components. The following paragraphs provide a sample work-plan outline and a description of the contents by section.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

It should be 1-2 pages long and summarise the project background and context. The expected results of the evaluation should also be included, and they should incorporate the results of the evaluator's preliminary review of major project documents and consultation with project staff.

A) Is the reader left with a clear understanding of the project being evaluated?

B) Are management's expectations for the evaluation clearly articulated?

EVALUATION MATRIX

In the evaluation matrix the evaluation issues elaborated in the ToRs (typically in the section concerning the scope and focus) are turned into specific questions related to each level of the LF: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

A) Are the essential questions that need to be answered well articulated?

B) Are the indicators clearly established?

C) Are the sources of data and methods for data collection provided?

Sample of Evaluation Matrix

Criteria	Key questions	Indicators	Data sources	Data collection methods
Relevance				
Efficiency				
Effectiveness				
Impact				
Sustainability				

METHODOLOGY

Aims at formulating a strategy to achieve the objectives of the evaluation given the range of available information and time/resources limitations. The evaluation matrix should be developed here, in particular with regards to: (i) performance indicators that will be used to measure progress towards the attainment of results (those identified through the LF will be the starting point; others can be developed); (ii) most relevant data and information sources; (iii) data collection processes; (iv) techniques for data analysis.

A) Are the methods identified likely to achieve the objectives of the evaluation?

B) Will the methods for collecting and analysing data and information identify results attributable to the projects?

EVALUATION TEAM

Name, role and responsibilities of the members of the evaluation team and of the evaluation manager should be indicated.

A) Have the primary roles and responsibilities for all individuals involved in the evaluation been adequately identified?

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

It should list the tasks to be carried out and the dates for milestones, as well as an estimate of the persons-days necessary for the evaluator to complete the tasks.

A) Does the work schedule set out a logical progression of activities from inception through to completion?

B) Has the timing been clearly established for all milestones?

Sample of schedule of activities

	Month 1				Month 2				Month 3				Month 3			
Activities Week	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Briefing with NGO staff	x															
Desk study phase	x	x														
Interviews in EU (NGO, donors)	x															
Field mission			x	x	x	x										
Briefings in the capital			x			x										
Visits to project area 1			x	x												
Visits to project area 2				x	x											
Preparation of mission memo						x										

	Month 1				Month 2				Month 3				Month 3			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
End of mission workshop						x										
De-briefing with NGO staff							x									
Report writing								x	x	x						
Submission of draft report											x					
(Waiting for comments)												x	x	x	x	
Submission of final report																x

REPORT OUTLINE

An outline or table of contents for the evaluation report should be included in the work-plan. Although it will invariably change during the evaluation process, it serves the purpose of indicating what will be covered in the report and gives an idea on how issues will be presented. Formats for reporting are provided in annex 6.

a) Are the key issues of the evaluation taken into account in the report outline?

5.3.4 Field work

Once the evaluation manager has accepted the work-plan and the evaluator basic has revised the documentation available, the field mission is ready to start. It is recommended, however, to organise a briefing with the evaluator and the other persons concerned by the evaluation before the evaluator leave for the field mission.

5.3.5 Reporting

The evaluation report is the most important output of the evaluation process. The evaluator is the responsible for writing a report that meets the requirements established in the ToRs and the work-plan, while the evaluation manager should ensure that the report meets the contractual obligations and provides an useful response to the evaluation questions.

The purpose of the evaluation report is to give a clear picture of the assessment of the project being evaluated and to brings useful elements for planning and implementing future interventions.

Answering to some basic questions can do this:

— Does the report provide answers to the evaluation questions settled in the

work-plan? Does the report provide evidence for these statements?
- What results and objectives were achieved by the project relative to the expectations? Did the project produce any unexpected result?
- What recommendations would help to improve NGO planning, both specific to the type of project and/or region and more widely?
- What can be learnt from the project that could benefit NGO strategies?

Evaluation reports serve some key functions. These include:
- informing NGO management. The report is primarily intended to inform the NGO management about the findings, conclusions and recommendations came out from the assessment;
- advising project staff and co-ordination offices. Field operators of the project being evaluated, as well as those who are directly concerned with the project such as the co-ordinators, need to know how the initiative they are implementing (or they have implemented) is performing and what recommendations have been developed for the future;
- demonstrating accountability and transparency. Donors need to know how they are spending public funds and NGOs need to give evidence of the impact of their interventions. The evaluation report can be an instrument for measuring the appropriateness of resources being used through NGOs;
- promoting knowledge and learning. Through the evaluation process NGOs and major stakeholders can build knowledge about best practices and strengthen their planning and management capacities.

It is recommended the report contain some essential elements specified below.
- Answer the questions posed in the ToRs and the evaluation matrix
- Include an executive summary outlining the major findings, conclusions and recommendations
- Describe the methodology used during the desk study phase and field mission for collecting and analysing data, including the assumptions
- Provide evidences for the statements and indicate the reliability of data used
- Present figures, graphics and tables

– Provide information on any reference included in the report
– Present a clear structure, including table of contents, executive summary, core text, conclusions and recommendations, and annexes.

5. 4 Participatory evaluation

5. 4.1 Participatory methods

This paragraph provides an overview of Participatory Evaluation (PE) characteristics, function sand rationale, as well as its differences with other traditional approaches.

The growing interest in participatory approaches accompanies the increasing attention to issues such as democratisation, partnership, and sustainability. Each of them reflects an attempt to give a greater say to the spectrum of voices in the South not only at the level of national governments, but also to civil society, local institutions and communities.

Moreover, over the past ten years the value of engaging key stakeholders has become critically linked to the achievement of performance results. Various donors and organisations have been experimenting with the concept of participation, although for most donors Participatory Evaluation (PE) is relatively new and methods and PE approaches do not seem to have been mainstreamed into operational processes and organisations.

> "Participatory evaluation, a dimension of participatory development embodying many of the same concepts, involves the stakeholders and beneficiaries of a programme or project in the collective examination and assessment of that programme or project. It is people-centred: project stakeholders and beneficiaries are the key actors of the evaluation process and not the mere objects of the evaluation" (UNDP-Office of Evaluation and Strategic Planning (OESP), 1997.

In this process, local people (stakeholders and beneficiaries) are involved together with NGOs, development agencies and policy makers in order to decide how progress should be measured, and results accepted upon.

Beside the definitions, there is no definitive approach to PE. Rather, each evaluation requires a unique response that addresses NGOs/stakeholders expectations, the local contexts, the capacities and abilities of key stakeholders and limiting constraints (e.g. financial, timing).

Different approaches to PE, however, share some basic principles that set them apart from conventional approaches. These include:

1. Participation, which means opening up the design of the process to include those most directly affected, and agreeing to analyse data together.
2. Negotiation, to reach agreement about what will be monitored and evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analysed, what data actually means, and how findings will be shared and action taken.
3. Learning from experience, which becomes the basis for subsequent improvement and corrective actions.

Key characteristics of Participatory Evaluations
- Draws on local resources and capacities
- Recognises the knowledge of end-users
- Ensures that stakeholders are part of the decision-making process
- Uses facilitators acting as catalysts and assisting stakeholders in the evaluation process

4. Flexibility, essential because of the changing over time of multiple factors such as the number, role and skills of stakeholders involved in the process, as well as the external environment.

On the basis of these principles, PE serves some key functions that relate to both stakeholders/beneficiaries and to funding agencies.

— It enhances local (stakeholders and beneficiaries) learning, management capacities and skills. Ideally, participatory methods are incorporated into the projects from the beginning (e.g. needs identification, implementation, monitoring), and thus this learning process should occur throughout the life of the project. If this is not done, then it falls to the responsible for the evaluation to involve project recipients at mid-term or at the end of the project.

— It contributes to the development of lessons learnt that can lead to corrective actions for improvements by project recipients. The involvement of stakeholders in problems analysis and proposing solutions establishes stronger partnerships and increase their sense of ownership; in this way the findings and recommendations of the evaluations are much more likely to be taken into account for introducing necessary changes.

— It helps in the identification of problems during implementation and provides feedback for lessons learnt that could help project staff to improve project implementation and management decision-making. Although PE looks also into the past, it is much more future-oriented.

– It ensures accountability to stakeholders, managers and donors by furnishing relevant and timely information on the degree to which project objectives have been met and how resources have been used.

PE DIFFERS FROM MORE CONVENTIONAL EVALUATIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

Conventional evaluations have been more donors driven. The donor is the key client, provides financial support and defines the evaluation work plans, while the participation of project stakeholders is minimal. In most cases the stakeholders play a passive role, providing information required by the evaluator(s) but not participating in the evaluation process itself.

Often the evaluations are carried out by external expert(s) more to fulfil donors management or accountability requirements than to respond to project needs.

In PE, the focus and the purpose of the evaluation change considerably. The emphasis is placed on the process as much as (in some cases even more) on the final output, i.e., the report. The purpose is not to fulfil bureaucratic requirements but also to develop capacities of stakeholders to assess their environment and to act on the basis of such an assessment.

The stakeholders do much more than providing information for external evaluator(s). They also decide on the evaluation work-plan, conduct researches, analyse findings and make recommendations. The evaluator(s) of conventional evaluations becomes more a facilitator in PE, animating workshops, guiding the process at critical moments and consolidating/finalising the report on the basis of the findings of the stakeholders.

PE also call into question the objectivity of scientific inquiry that only would provide valid information, the external experts holding the ultimate truth. PE recognises a wider range of knowledge, values and concerns (those of stakeholders) and acknowledge that these should guide the assessment of project performance. For his reason, PE is sometimes seen as less objective than other conventional methods.

Differences between PE and conventional evaluation approaches

Participatory Evaluation	Conventional Evaluation
Participants' focus and ownerships	Donors' focus and ownership
Broad range of stakeholders participate	Stakeholders often do not participate
Focus on learning	Focus on accountability
Flexible design	Predetermined design
Participatory methods	Formal methods
Outsiders as facilitators	Outsiders as evaluators

As a result of the active involvement of stakeholders in reflection, assessment and action, a sense of ownership is created, capacities are built, beneficiaries are empowered and lessons learnt are likely to be applied both in the field and at the management level, increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

PE may also have some disadvantages, related in particular with time and costs. If stakeholders have to be involved in a meaningful way, PE is likely to be more time-consuming than conventional evaluations, while additional costs are typically associated with expanded stakeholders involvement.

Pros and cons of PE and conventional evaluation approaches

Participatory evaluation	Traditional evaluation
Pros - Views and interests of all stakeholders inform the results - Recommendations are more likely to be implemented - Local partners and beneficiaries communities learn from the evaluation process - Lead to a closer mutual understanding between NGO and local actors involved	*Pros* - Quicker and make use of standardised methodology - Relevant to the issues raised in project design - Likely to produce quantifiable data and seen as more accountable - Do not require specific skills beyond the evaluation and technical skills
Cons - May not be possible to undertake due to the project framework - Need more resources, in terms of time and financial resources - Need additional skills for the evaluator - Can be less rigorous as for the measurement of achievements against planned objectives	*Cons* - Can be rigid in the design and simplistic in the judgement of cause-effect relationships - Seen as a form of external control by stakeholders - Results are likely to reflect the western values of the evaluator - More concerned with results than processes and cultural and social dynamics

The selection of relevant stakeholders is of vital importance in PE: the potential domination and misuse by some stakeholders to further their own interests are higher than in conventional approaches.

Some critical issues should be considered when planning and managing a PE. These include:

— Whether (all) evaluations should be PE and involve the beneficiaries. There seems to be a growing consensus among NGOs that there are limits to the extent to which it is possible to undertake PE involving the beneficiaries. It is sometimes too ambitious to hope to involve the beneficiaries in evaluation especially if they have not been involved in either appraisal or ongoing monitoring, and particularly if they have been involved in neither.

— The role that the stakeholders should play in the evaluation process. There is an important difference between PE – where

the stakeholders and beneficiaries are involved in the evaluation process – and seeking out the views and opinions of stakeholders as a necessary part of the evaluation process. Is seems that NGOs are in agreement mainly on the latter.

– The weight of beneficiaries' views. Although some NGOs affirm that the views of the beneficiaries should always take precedence over other views, a more commonly held view is that the opinions of the beneficiaries are extremely important but they should not necessarily be dominant.

6. Use of results of M&E

One of the main important purpose of M&E is to enable as many people as possible, within and outside the NGOs, to learn from what has been done with a view to improve future performance. Significant strategic and practical issues that have emerged from M&E (in terms of evaluation findings, methods used, and NGOs' own practices) have to be highlighted, discussed and disseminated.

However, improved recording and distribution of M&E results will not automatically lead to better performance. Lessons learnt from M&E have to be institutionalised so that they can be applied and have an impact both on the specific project and other future interventions and strategies. If this does not happen, the resources used in carrying out M&E will have been wasted, and the same mistakes are likely to be repeated in the future.

Specific systems for encouraging this should be developed and measures should be taken for making these systems effective in practice. In particular NGOs senior management needs to actively support the necessity of learning from experience, recognising that it may mean the allocation of specific resources for this purpose.

At the moment there are various factors that affect learning process from M&E activities within NGOs. These include:

– difficulties in dealing with failure, mainly because failure tends to lead to financial punishment. The link between M&E results and on-going funding tends to inhibit open assessment and the use of results;

- limited diffusion of an evaluation culture leading to the regular measurement of results as indicators for performance;
- weaknesses of structures, mainly related to the low level of standardisation of M&E practices and systems, staff turnover on the field, and "bureaucratic inertia";
- lack of ownership of evaluation findings and recommendations by those who should plan and/or implement future interventions.

6.1 Effective communication

Communication and information sharing is a critical issue for increasing the use of M&E results. Information flows within and between NGOs should be increased. At the moment information circulate mainly within regions (between project staff and co-ordination offices) and within the same geographical units, while information sharing is very limited between different area.

In this way, the value from M&E is far from being optimised. In fact, the full potential offered by M&E results and lessons learnt is only realised if knowledge gained is strategically communicated to influence decision-makers at various levels.

There is no unique way for developing effective communication strategy. By responding to some basic questions, more standardised communication practices can be developed:

- Who are the target audiences of M&E results?
- What information should be shared?
- When the information should be provided?
- How can each target audience best be reached?

The guidelines here provided respond to these fundamental questions and can be used for all the M&E activities carried out by NGOs:

- M&E results should be shared with those stakeholders who could benefit from lessons learnt. Local partners, whether they have been involved in M&E activities or not, are particularly concerned with this issue, and should be provided with feedback in order to increase their M&E skills and improve their design capacities.

- A selection of information for dissemination may be necessary: only relevant and useful information for target audiences should be shared, while all information should be recorded for possible consultation on a case-by-case basis.
- Information on monitoring results should be disseminated throughout the life of the project, and those on evaluation throughout the evaluation process, in order to inform audiences about what is being found and what directions are being taken.
- Information should be framed to be easily accessible, understandable and applicable. This may need sensitivity to local customs and languages.

The strengthening of effective communication practices is the basis for improving the use of M&E results. In this framework, two main elements should in particular be considered:
- the implementation of specific recommendations;
- the dissemination of findings and lessons learnt for future initiatives and organisational learning.

6.2 Implementation of specific recommendations

Recommendations of monitoring and mid-term evaluations offer the opportunity for introducing remedial actions into on-going projects, while recommendations of end-of-project or ex-post offer potential for bringing improvements on other projects and future initiatives.

During evaluation process, it will be the task of evaluation managers to make sure the quality of evaluation recommendations is up to standard, particularly from the point of view of brevity and clarity. Recommendations must always clearly indicate who should react to them (target audience) and in which timeframe.

Once the evaluation reports are approved, specific tools need to be provided to NGOs' managers, co-ordinators and project staff for encouraging them to apply M&E recommendations, and assure follow-up.

For this purpose, NGOs' managers should fill the table provided below for all evaluation reports and distribute it to all people concerned with planning and implementation of future initiatives.

Summary tables of recommendations

Recommendations (as stated in the evaluation report)	**Responsibility** (managers, co-ordinators, team leaders)	**Deadline** (after 3 months, 6 months, 1 year)
1.		
2.		

The table is based on a model used by the EC (fiche contradictoire)

Target audience of recommendations will be clearly identified and will be responsible for responding to them. NGOs' managers, in consultation with national/regional co-ordinators, will then decide the actions to be taken for applying the recommendations to new projects or next phases of projects being evaluated.

The national and/or regional co-ordinators will have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that approved recommendations of mid-term evaluations are effectively taken into account and incorporated into projects activities on the field. This is done to protect against heads of project turnovers that can occur during project life.

In case of end-of-projects or ex-post evaluations, recommendations should inform planning documents of future initiatives. There should be evidence in the project planning documentation that shows how the recommendations are incorporated into the new or re-formulated project.

Not all the recommendations, however, must or should be implemented. In this sense, a distinction must be made between recommendations of monitoring activities and recommendations from evaluation, especially if external experts carry them out.

The firsts focus on management aspects and come from internal personnel, who are supposed to have a deeper knowledge of the project being assessed. On the other side recommendations from evaluations bring external views based on what the evaluator has learnt during the evaluation process.

The evaluation manager can bring a broader and more strategic point of view that can be influenced by other sources of information or managerial constraints. However, this prerogative should not be used for prevent-

ing target audience from adopting the necessary measures recommended by evaluations when these provide evidence of their statements.

The following factors can be instrumental in limiting the value of evaluation:

- the evaluation results and recommendations have no applied value because of ill-conceived evaluation methodology;
- the evaluation results are not pragmatic or realistic giving the financial and timing constraints that would obstruct effective implementation;
- significant changes in the context occurred and made the evaluation irrelevant.

6.3 Dissemination of lessons learnt and information sharing

Feeding back lessons learnt is one of the most important stages of the evaluation process. Lessons learnt from the various stages of the project cycle must be fed into policy and ongoing planning processes to assist in making future project design and management activities more efficient and effective.

The dissemination of lessons learnt, as well as evaluation methodologies, is important for all evaluations, although results may be particular to projects in specific sectors or geographical areas, or more general with implications for NGOs' policies and strategies.

Effective dissemination practices must make sure that major findings are available and used for future activities. For this purpose, recording instruments and procedures must be in place in order to make relevant information available for NGOs' staff.

Lessons learnt database will be the primary tool for collecting and recording evaluation results at the institutional level. In this way, feedback from NGOs' projects should be provided to project planners, designers and implementers.

One person within the headquarters staff should be responsible for database maintenance and updating. Monitoring (both coming from the field and from monitoring visits) and evaluation reports, as well as executive summaries and table with recommendations, of each project will be entered into the database.

NGOs' managers and/or consultants in charge of planning of new projects should access this database and pick lessons relevant for their activities.

Information from M&E reports included in the database will provide a sound basis for summary conclusions and comparisons by NGOs managers. Beside the use for specific initiatives, the information can then also be used for drawing more general conclusions on policy and strategic issues.

Strategy for dissemination

	Target audience				
Means of dissemination	NGO's managers Desk officers	Co-ordinators Project staff	Other NGOs	Donors	Local partners
Monitoring reports	X	X			X
Evaluation reports	X	X	X	X	X
Exec. summaries/abstracts	X	X			
Web sites	X	X	X	X	X
Intranet	X				
Seminars/Workshops	X		X		

Other mechanisms for dissemination of lessons learnt include:

- distribution of evaluation reports (or an abbreviate format) to all national/regional co-ordinators, local partners and other stakeholders;
- improvement in the use of intranet information and documentation system and introduction of all M&E reports;
- publication of selected evaluation reports (or executive summaries) on the NGOs' web sites;
- organisation of seminars and workshops to discuss about lessons learnt and feedback mechanisms.

Checklist of action points to improve lessons learning and information sharing

Level	Possible actions
Evaluation managers	- Make sure the quality of evaluation outputs is up to standard, particularly for brevity and clarity - Fill the summary tables with recommendations and make sure they are adequately distributed - Consult the database on lessons learnt and apply evaluation results when formulating new projects or new phases of on-going projects - Establish a routine of briefing senior management on evaluation lessons learnt, and involve them in the communication of major findings
NGOs' senior staff	- Take steps to increase the space and incentives for learning within the NGO (both from M&E and other sources) - Recruit specialist staff where necessary to fill gaps, particularly in communication works
Responsible for communication	- Maintain updated the database with M&E reports and lessons learnt and make it available to all the staff - Make efforts to improve web sites and intranets with M&E results, recognising that ease of access and user-friendliness are key factors
National/regional co-ordinators	- Make sure that approved recommendations of mid-term evaluations are effectively taken into account and incorporated into projects activities on the field - Involve local partners in M&E works and lesson learning processes and push for more ownership and control by local stakeholders - Insist on being involved in evaluations right from the beginning of the process, as well as in receiving feedback from evaluation results

*DRN is a consulting firm specialized in the formulation, evaluation and management of development policies and programmes in areas characterized by widespread poverty phenomena and transition processes.

Glossary

ACTIVITIES

The actions that have to be undertaken to produce the results. They summarise what will be carried out during the project.

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

A graphic representation setting out the timing, sequence and duration of project activities. It can also be used to identify milestones for monitoring progress and to assign responsibility for achievement of milestones.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Obligation to demonstrate that work has been conducted in compliance with agreed rules and standards or to report fairly and accurately on performance results vis à vis mandated roles and/or plans. For instance, a report to parliament, to a board or a constituency answers to the accountability obligation.

ANALYSIS OF OBJECTIVES

Identification and verification of future desired benefits to which the beneficiaries attach priority. The output of an analysis of objectives is the *objective tree.*

ANALYSIS OF THE STRATEGIES

Critical assessment of the alternative ways of achieving objectives, and selection of one or more for inclusion in the proposed project.

APPRAISAL

Analysis of a proposed project to determine its merit and acceptability in accordance with established criteria, prior to decision of funding. It checks that the project is feasible against the situation on the ground and that the objectives set remain appropriate and that costs are reasonable.

ASSUMPTIONS

External factors which could affect the progress or success of the project, but on

which the project manger has no direct control. They represent the 4th column of the logframe matrix. An external factor is called *killing assumption* when it has a high probability of occurring, thus causing the failure of the project.

AUDIT

An assessment that determines to whether and to what extent the measures, processes, directives and organisational procedures conform to norms and criteria set out in advance.

BASELINE STUDY

The analysis describing the situation prior to receiving aid. It is used to determine the results and accomplishment, and serves as important reference for ex-post evaluation and progress monitoring.

BENEFICIARIES

The individuals, groups, or organisations, whether targeted or not, that ultimately benefit, directly or indirectly from a project/programme.

COHERENCE

Compliance with the policies, guidelines, priorities, and approaches set by an institution.

CONTROL

A verification that financial documents are exact and expenditures conform to norms and to authorisation (*financial control*); or a management function to determine if materials conform to technical specifications and to international norms (*technical control*).

CONTROL GROUP

A group selected to represent the conditions of the experimental group if they had not been exposed to a project. A control group is usually constituted in the framework of an impact evaluation.

COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS

A form of economic analysis that takes into account the benefits and costs in commensurable and actual monetary values and arrives at single index to determine the value of a project. The *financial cost-benefit analysis* is made from the perspective of the project; an economic cost-benefit analysis is made from the perspective of the entire economy of which the aid activity is part; *social cost benefit analysis* includes also distributional considerations.

COST-EFFECTIVENESS ANALYSIS

An economic or social cost-benefit analysis that quantifies benefits without translating them into monetary terms. This analysis allows one to compare alternative ways to accomplish one's objectives. It also allows one to select among alternative activities the one that will accomplish the objective at the least cost.

DAC EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criteria defined by the Development Aid Committee of OECD and used by the donor community to assess a project/programme performance. They are: Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability.

EFFECTS

Primary effects: the changes brought about by an assistance effort to accomplish the specific objective of the aid. *Direct effect*: The immediate costs and benefits of both the contributions to and the results of a project, without taking into consideration their effect on the economy. *Indirect effects*: the costs and benefits which are unleashed by the contributions to a project and by its results. *External effects*: the costs and benefits not taken into account in determining the expenditures and financial revenue of the aid programme. *Intangible effects*: cost and benefits, which are thought to be pertinent but which cannot be measured and which therefore, cannot be included in the economic analysis. These effects are taken into account by sociological analysis.

EVALUABILITY

The extent to which a project has been designed in such a way as to enable the evaluation of its outputs and impact.

EFFECTIVENESS

The degree of achievement of the planned specific objectives and to which extent the beneficiaries have received the planned benefits.

EFFICIENCY

The extent to which the project inputs were supplied and managed and activities organised in the most appropriate manner at the least cost to produce the necessary outputs.

EVALUATION

An assessment, as systematic and objective as possible, of an on-going or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and the fulfilment of objectives, developmental efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Evaluation may be of dif-

ferent kind according to:

– its timing: prior to action (*ex ante*), during it (*mid-term*), or after completion (*ex post*);
– its doer: the ones involved in the performed action itself (*self* or *internal*) or an external body or consultant (*external*), or a combination of both;
– its focus: on *accountability* (summative) or on *learning*, improving performance (formative);
– its trigger: evaluation defined, carried out by entities and persons free of the control of those responsible for the design and the implementation of the action (*independent*), or by entities involved in its management or its steering;

additional features:

– its driver: led by donor or partner (*donor-led, partner led*), by several authorities, donors (*joint*), along with stakeholders (*participatory*);
– its reach: when limited to one's performed activities (*self*).

EVALUATION FRAMEWORK STUDY

Assessment conducted at the starting up of the project to verify the conditions for allowing monitoring and evaluation of the project. It includes the revision of the data availability and eventual collection of baseline data; the final selection of the indicators; the agreement on the targets to be achieved by the selected indicators; the provision of the tools for data collection according to what agree as source of verification.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

It is an assessment conducted during the appraisal phase to verify whether the proposed project is well founded, and is likely to meet the needs of its intended target groups/beneficiaries. It should take into account all policy, technical, economic, financial, institutional, management, environmental, socio-cultural, gender-related aspects.

FEEDBACK

A management term which includes: organising evaluation findings to guide future aid programme decision; and establishing procedures and necessary measures to deal with weakness found during the M&E activities.

GENDER ANALYSIS

Assessment of the likely differences in the impacts of proposed policies, programmes or projects on women and men. It includes attention to: the different roles; the

differential access to and use of resources and their specific needs, interests and problems; and the barrier to the full and equitable participation of women and men in project activities and the equitable distribution of the benefits obtained.

HIERARCHY OF OBJECTIVE

A diagrammatic representation of the proposed project interventions, planned logically following a problem analysis, and showing a means to ends relationship. Its synonym is the Objective tree.

HORIZONTAL LOGIC

Indicates the relation between the resources and the results of a project or programme through identification of objectively verifiable indicators and means of verification for these indicators.

IMPACT

The effects of the project on target beneficiaries as well as its wider overall effect on larger numbers of people, within the sector or in a geographic area, in terms of technical, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. It relates to the relationship between the project's purpose and overall objectives.

INCEPTION PHASE

The period from the project start-up until the finalisation of the updating of the work-plan, Logframe Matrix and the evaluation framework study. It varies between one and three months and ends with a first project report.

INDICATOR

The measure which is used to demonstrate the change or the result of a programme.

INPUT

Financial, human and material resources required for programme/project implementation.

INTERVENTION LOGIC

The strategy underlying the project. It is the narrative description of the project at each of the four levels of the hierarchy of the objectives used in the logframe.

KEY INFORMANTS

People in a community, region, organisation, who, because of their position are able to provide information or insights on some aspects relevant to the project. These informants play a key role in evaluation, especially in qualitative evaluation, though it is important to bear in mind that they also provide a subjective/one-sided perspective. Therefore the evaluators will have to obtain the information

from a large number of key informants.

LESSON LEARNED

It is a general hypothesis based on the findings of one or more evaluations, but which is presumed to relate to a general principle that may apply more generally.

LOGICAL FRAMEWORK APPROACH (LFA)

A methodology for planning, managing and evaluating programmes and projects involving stakeholder analysis, problem analysis, analysis of objectives, analysis of strategies, preparation of the Logframe matrix and activities and resources schedule.

LOGFRAME MATRIX (LFM)

A two-dimensional table having four columns and four rows synthesising the intervention logic of a project.

MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MIS)

The creation through a well designed monitoring system of a regular feedback to management at the project and central level on all key aspects of a project.

MEANS

See inputs.

MILESTONES

They correspond to the process indicators. They are indication of short and medium-term objectives (usually activities) which facilitate the measurement of achievements throughout the project rather than just at the end. They also indicate times when decisions should be taken or an action should be finished.

MONITORING

A continuing observation function that uses systematic collection of relevant and selected data to provide management and the main stakeholders of a programme/project with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives as well as the process and impact.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

It explains why the project is important to the society in terms of longer term benefits to final beneficiaries and the wider benefits to other groups. It also helps to show how a programme fits into the regional/sectoral policies of the government/organisation concerned and of the donor community.

OBJECTIVE TREE

A diagrammatic representation of the situation in the future once problems have been remedied, following a problem analysis and showing a means to ends rela-

tionship.

OBJECTIVELY VERIFIABLE INDICATORS (OVI)

These are the indicators of the different level of objectives and represent the second column of the LFM. The OVI provide the basis for designing an appropriate monitoring system.

OUTCOME

Effects/changes in behaviour, institutions, economic circumstances that occur in order to have satisfied the project purpose. They are usually intangible, such as *the improved capacity to manage.*

OUTPUTS

Deliveries, products or services, of a project. They are usually tangible and are necessary to have the outcomes realised.

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

It refers to the involvement of the project participants in its design or its monitoring and evaluation. It is particularly suitable for process projects, but requires specific skills to be implemented and is more time consuming than other approaches. On the other side, the use of participatory approach increases sense of ownership and therefore potential sustainability of the project results.

PLANNING

The process through which overall objective and purpose of a programme/project are set, partners identified, inputs figured out, activities specified and scheduled, monitoring mechanisms defined, so that expected outputs and outcomes might be achieved timely.

PRE-CONDITIONS

Conditions that have to be met before the project can commence. Typically the existence of funds from the donor agency, or the approval of a specific policy/law by the government.

PROBLEM ANALYSIS

A structured investigation of the negative aspects of a situation in order to establish causes and their effects.

PROBLEM TREE

A diagrammatic representation of a negative situation, showing a cause-effect relationship. It is the visual result of a problem analysis.

PROJECT CYCLE

The sequence of stages involved in a project from the initial idea to its completion. A cycle includes six phases: programming; identification; appraisal (or design); financing; implementation; and evaluation.

PROJECT CYCLE MANAGEMENT (PCM)

A methodology for the preparation, implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes based on the logical framework approach.

PROJECT PURPOSE

It is the central objective of the project and represents what the project is expected to achieve by the end of the project and with the resources available. By achieving it the project contributes to the overall objective.

QUALITATIVE DATA

Data that use non-numeric information for description. They can be words, photographs and films, audio and recordings, artefacts.

QUALITATIVE METHODS

They belong to the social science tradition and are based on observation of people in their own territory, and interaction with them in their own language, on their own terms. Qualitative methods emphasise understanding reality as it is construed by the persons being studied. Most qualitative studies rely on descriptive rather numerical or statistical analysis. Typical products.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

Information expressed in the form of numbers. They may be ordinal or ratio.

QUANTITATIVE METHODS

They rely on a structured instrument to collect standardised information on a carefully selected sample of individuals, units, or events. The information is then analysed by statistical comparison between groups or conducted to a multivariate analysis.

RAPID APPRAISAL

Methods first developed in agriculture and rural development (where they are known as Rapid Rural Appraisal, RRA) to provide rapid and cost-effective means of assessing the conditions of a community or area at the time a project was planned. Since then, they have been extended to provide a rapid method of impact assessment and are now being used in other sectors such as health and nutrition. They are based on qualitative methods such as observation, semi-structured interviews. Currently one speaks about Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA),

which puts more focus on process and ownership of the participants.

RELEVANCE

The appropriateness of project design to problems to be solved (beneficiaries' needs, country needs) and based on the assumptions.

RESULTS

They are both the outputs and the outcomes of a project. In the EC terminology they represent the product of the activities undertaken, the combination of which achieve the purpose of the project.

SAMPLE

A number of people, households, communities, or other units that have been selected to estimate the characteristics of the population from which the units were drawn. The sample is generally used when carrying out impact evaluation. Sampling methods are:

- *Cluster sample.* Groups selected as blocks, communities, sector or other definable areas. Using cluster sample reduce the time and cost of data collection, though might lead to less precise statistical estimates.
- *Purposive sample.* Respondent selected according to characteristics of concern to a particular study. It is a very economical way to obtain information, but caution has to be used in making generalisation.
- *Random sample.* Each unit has an equal chance to be selected. Generalisation can be therefore made directly from the sample for the total population without introducing a bias.
- *Stratified sample.* Reduces the number of interviews required to achieve a required level of statistical precision in the estimation of population attributes. The primary units (households, individuals, etc) are classified in groups according to characteristics. For each stratum a sample is extracted. After the findings for each stratum have been analysed separately, through weighting it is possible to obtain an unbiased population estimate.

SECONDARY DATA

Data that already exist in the form of published reports or project files, which can be used for evaluation purposes.

SOURCE OF VERIFICATION

They represent the third column of the Logframe matrix and indicate where and in what form information on the achievement of the Overall Objective, the Pro-

ject Purpose and the Results can be found.

STAKEHOLDERS

Agencies, organisations, groups or individuals who have a direct, indirect stake or commitment in the programme/project design, implementation, benefits or ins its evaluation.

STAKEHOLDERS ANALYSIS

Analysis that involves: the identification of all stakeholder groups likely to be affected by the proposed intervention; the identification and analysis of their interest, problems, potentials, etc. The conclusions of this analysis are then integrated into the project design.

SUSTAINABILITY

Whether the benefits, effects generated by a project/programme continue after its termination. The extent to which the groups affected by the aid want to and can take charge themselves to continue accomplishing the project objectives.

SWOT ANALYSIS

Analysis on an organisation's Strengths, and Weaknesses, and the Opportunities and Threats that it faces. A tool that can be used during all phases of the project cycle.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The document that defines the tasks required of a contractor and indicates project background and objectives, planned activities, expected inputs and outputs, budget, timetables and job description.

TRIANGULATION

The systematic use and comparison of independent information and estimates from different methods of data collection. It is used to increase the degree of confidence in the findings of an evaluation.

VERTICAL LOGIC

It designates the casual relationships between on the one hand each level of a narrative summary (inputs-activities, activities-results, results-purpose, purpose-overall objective) and, on the other, the critical assumptions affecting these linkages.

WORKPLAN

The schedule that sets out the activities and resources necessary to achieve a project's results and purpose.

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Evaluation Office: http://peo.asiandevbank.org/

DAC – Development Assistance Committee

DAC Evaluation Group: http://www1.oecd.org/dac/Evaluation/index.htm

EU - European Union

EuropeAid – Evaluation Unit:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/evaluation/index.htm

IDB – Inter-American Development Bank

Office of Evaluation and Oversight: http://www.iadb.org/cont/evo/evo_eng.htm

IFAD – International Fund for Agricultural Development

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ILO – International Labour Organisation

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OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

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