



Editor's Note

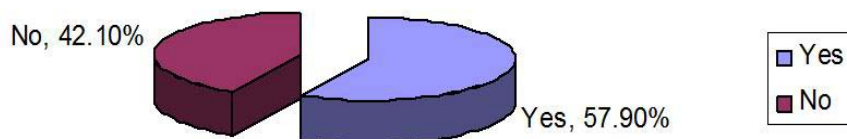
Implementation of Rights Responsive M&E Approaches Still Weak

The partnership between the Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) and the Ford Foundation has been instrumental in driving the human rights and gender equality agenda within the framework of project, planning, monitoring and evaluation in Africa. Apart from creating awareness on the importance of rights based approaches in programming within the continent, the initiative has generated a critical mass of M&E practitioners to drive this process well into the future.

We are, however not there yet, at least going by a recent study conducted by the AGDEN/Ford Foundation project, in respect of the practice of M&E in Africa. We appear to be just slightly past the half-way mark, especially when it comes to the actual implementation. No doubt, we have made reasonable strides but much more needs to be done; the momentum generated by the AGDEN/Ford Foundation initiative must be sustained beyond the life of the project.

In this edition we serialise the final part of The AGDEN/Ford Foundation research study which reports interesting findings with regards to the practice of M&E, human rights and gender equality programming on the continent. We also publish an interview with UNIFEM's regional evaluation specialist, Caspar Merkle, who provides a peek into a proposed AGDEN/UNIFEM project. Finally, we report some new developments of interest to the M&E fraternity in Africa. Enjoy!

Does the Monitoring system in your organisation incorporate elements of human rights and gender equality?



A graphic representation of whether or not respondents' monitoring systems integrate elements of human rights and gender equality.

Two out of every five operational monitoring and evaluation systems reported in Africa do not incorporate principles of human rights and gender equality, according to a recent study. And in those that do some integration, their application remains weak.

These findings are contained in a July 2010 study titled *'Human rights and gender equality in participatory monitoring and evaluation in Africa'*, by the AGDEN/Ford Foundation project research team led by Dr Edward Ontita. Ms Beatrice Nyamwamu acted as the assistant researcher for the East Africa research.

According to the study, 42 per cent of the respondents affirmed that monitoring systems in their organisations are yet to integrate elements of human rights and gender equality. Similar to the reports in previous volumes of AGDENews, the current study reveals that respondents familiarity and knowledge of key concepts in human rights and gender equality is slim. This hampers their application in evaluation.

"Up to 42 per cent of the respondents reported that their monitoring systems had no elements of human and women's rights. However, these systems must have been weak given

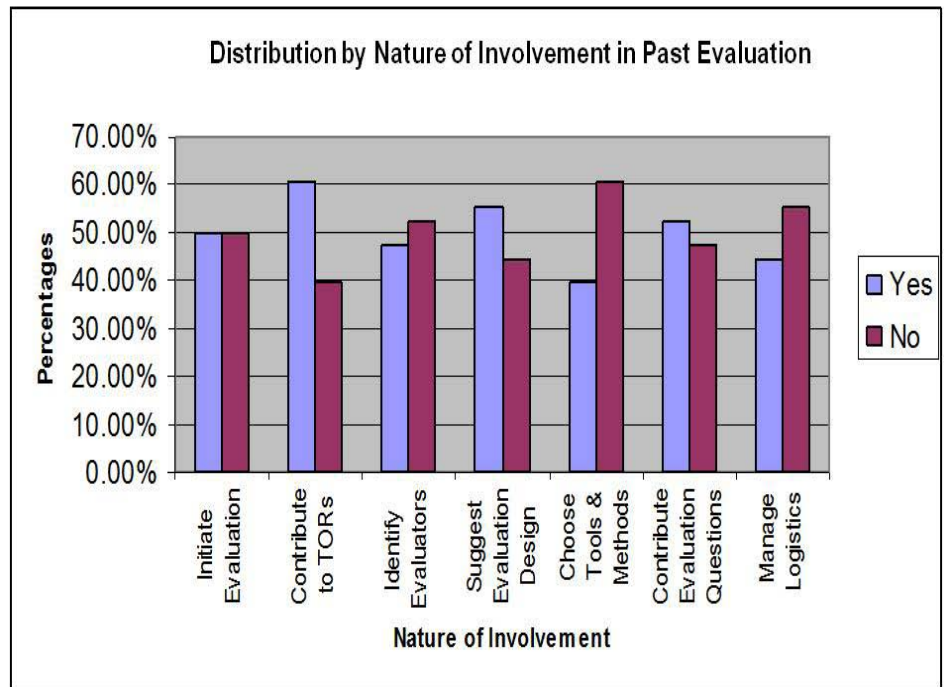
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the low familiarity with the concepts of M&E and PM&E reported by the respondents” said the report. This contrasts sharply with 97 per cent of respondents who want human rights M&E integrated in their programmes. This constitutes a huge endorsement of the AGDEN training for people working in development and human rights organisations in the region.

The study findings show that: equal numbers of respondents as claimed to have initiated evaluation within their organisations, also claimed to not having done so. Many respondents, 40 per cent - see figure on the right- reported not having contributed to choosing the evaluation tools and methods. Further training will definitely be helpful



The graph above depicts respondents' level of involvement in past evaluation activities.

“Up to 42 per cent of the respondents reported that their monitoring systems had no elements of human and women’s rights.... these systems must have been weak given the low familiarity to the concepts of M&E and PM&E reported by the respondents”

in improving the M&E discourse.

The research also reveals that a significant number of evaluations conducted on the continent have no elements of human rights and gender equality embedded within the Terms of Reference. For example, 45 per cent of respondents said evaluations that they conducted in the last one year or so did not have these elements.

Evaluations with elements or dimensions of human rights and gender equality were largely confined to issues

of: right of access to extension services, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, gender based violence, children’s rights, minority rights, as well as rights of people with disabilities.

This reality calls for more training for as many organisations as possible to ensure that human rights concepts are broadened, as well as understood and adequately applied in order to have better development outcomes.

The study recommends that such trainings be institutionalised at country levels in order to influence human rights practice. This could be done through partnerships with regional institutions such as a select group of universities in East Africa, Southern Africa and West Africa to tap regional resources in supporting the delivery of the training .

This is because the training that have been given to date have left out many participants who could have

benefited from such training on account of limited available spaces.

The study was conducted using face-to-face interviews, participatory action research and an online survey. A total of 51 respondents took part in the study.

“....a significant number of evaluation studies conducted in the continent have no elements of human rights and gender equality embedded within the Terms of Reference. For example, 45 per cent of respondents say evaluations that they conducted in the last one year or so did not have these elements”

UNIFEM's Regional Evaluation Expert Keen on Stronger Ties with AGDEN

Caspar Merkle also sheds light on a broad range of issues including collaboration with AGDEN

Tell us about yourself?

I work with UNIFEM as Regional Evaluation Specialist, based here in Nairobi. My role is to provide evaluation support to UNIFEM sub-regional and country offices in the Africa region. This involves establishing and strengthening of decentralised evaluation systems including providing technical advice on evaluations, strengthening evaluation capacities of UNIFEM staff and partners e.g. through training, supporting the formulation of M&E frameworks at programme level etc. I joined UNIFEM last year after having worked on M&E with other UN agencies on different issues such as methodologies for assessing the contribution of volunteering to development, evaluations and impact assessment for child labour programmes etc.

How would you describe the current status of monitoring and evaluation in Africa, especially within the context of development?

I can mainly speak of UNIFEM where increasingly more attention is being paid to M&E. This is because of the realization that good quality evaluations can help the organisation to learn from past experience and to contribute to more transparency and accountability. UNIFEM is investing in this area and there is a lot of creative space for developing and strengthening evaluation capacity initiatives, such as the partnership with AGDEN.

In your view, what do you think are the major challenges facing the practice of monitoring and Evaluation in Africa today?

I believe there is progress as can be seen in the creation of national evaluation associations, evaluation networks etc. across the Africa region. The demand for good quality M&E is certainly growing. But while it is relatively easy to develop results frameworks and indicators on paper,

In my view the challenges lie in creating an evaluation culture, in changing attitudes towards M&E, in taking away the fear that some people have when you start talking about evaluations. Very often – unfortunately – evaluations are still associated with audits and other investigation type of exercises. I think this is also because of the way many evaluations have been – and unfortunately are still being conducted: in a top-down, non-participatory way to mainly satisfy donor or reporting requirements.

How can the above challenges be addressed? By who?

I would say that the process of conducting evaluations, including the way evaluations are planned, very much determines the outcome and the ultimate utility of an evaluation. You can get an evaluation done in a very short period of time and with very little resources, but the likelihood that there is constructive space for people to contribute and learn from the process in such a scenario is probably limited. On the other hand, if you keep the process very open this may result in people's fatigue and frustration because it takes a lot of staff and partner's time, resources, etc. Ultimately it depends on why you are doing the evaluation in the first place, and what you expect to get out of the whole process.

UNIFEM was instrumental in the formation of AGDEN with the aim of infusing gender equality and human rights principles into the policy and practice of Monitoring and Evaluation in Africa. In your view, would you say there have been positive changes in this aspect?

Certainly yes. The fact that AGDEN has been established and there is now a dedicated network to work on evaluation from a gender equality perspective is a huge step forward. Still I would



Caspar Merkle, UNIFEM's Regional Evaluation Specialist

say there is room for strengthening AGDEN. I am specifically thinking of AGDEN's profile and strategic focus, of increasing the (active) membership base, and of boosting its reputation as a source of knowledge on evaluation from a gender equality and human rights perspective. For example, UNIFEM is in dire and constant need of evaluation consultants with such profile and AGDEN could be strategically positioned to support this area.

From your perspective, what does the future hold for the fruitful partnership between UNIFEM and AGDEN? Any immediate plans?

We are looking forward to the proposal development workshop and I believe this will provide an excellent opportunity for determining the strategy and focus of the new AGDEN-UNIFEM project. I am very excited that we are moving forward on this, and think the workshop is important for bringing everyone on the same page and ensuring a joint understanding on the way forward.

Final comments?

Thank you for this interview and I look forward to a close and fruitful partnership with AGDEN!

AGDEN FF Project

Extended

AGDEN's Rights in M&E project, originally due to end in July has been granted a 6 month no-cost extension. Consequently, the project will now come to a close in January, 2010.

This follows a fruitful meeting between the Team Leader who is also AGDEN's Vice chair, Dr Florence Etta and The Ford Foundation's Programme officer responsible for the project, Dr. Willy Mutunga- Representative of the Ford Foundation Office in East Africa.

The meeting took place immediately after the second Rights in M&E Workshop held in Nairobi in July, 2010. According to Dr Etta, the extension will allow AGDEN to finalise the toolkit which was one of the key outputs of the project.

Following the extension, AGDEN organised a 3-day residential re-write & revision workshop held in September, 2010. Writers of the toolkit spent 2 days reviewing the document. The writing and revision is expected to be completed in December.

Project Spawns a Virtual Community of Practice

'Jeremy' they call it; the new virtual community of practice devoted to Gender and Human Rights Responsive M&E. GeHRRReME which stands for Gender, Human Rights Responsive M&E is a product of the last workshop given in June 2010 in Nairobi as part of the AGDEN-Ford Foundation Project on Human Rights and Monitoring & Evaluation. Participants called for a virtual facility that would enable the continuation of the conversations that had been ignited by the workshop.

GeHRRReME is a joint effort by AGDEN & AfrEA supported by the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation of New York.

Eyes Set on 6th AfrEA Conference

Preparations for the 6th AfrEA conference have begun. This follows a public announcement of the conference, which constitutes a key milestone in the event. The Conference, tentatively scheduled for the 4th quarter of 2011, originally planned for Madagascar, is going to be held in Accra. The conference will focus on redefining development in a way that places the human well being at its core.

"Human rights and freedoms are to be enjoyed by all individuals regardless of their nationality, citizenship or station in life. There can be no true human dignity or freedom without human rights" said the announcement made by the AfrEA board. It builds on the 5th conference held in Cairo in 2009: 'Perspectives on Impact Evaluation: Approaches to assessing development effectiveness'. The conference sub themes will be constructed around questions some of which are;

- What are the rights and responsibilities of all primary evaluation stakeholders including duty bearers;
- How are rights and responsibility translated, upheld, protected, abused or fulfilled in complex or real life interventions and /or evaluations?
- How and to what extent do evaluation practice and information from evaluation impact on the rights discourse and vice versa?
- How can better evaluation strengthen the rights discourse, and situate rights and responsibility within different systems and/or levels of intervention.
- What kinds of mechanisms and systems are generated by and from evaluation practice that directly or indirectly affect the advancement of human rights?

Are you member of AfrEA? Have you declared your task team membership yet? Join one today! Email info@afrea.org

Wits to Host CLEAR

The University of Witwatersrand's Graduate School of Public and Development Management (PDM) will host the Regional Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR).

The University was among five institutions shortlisted from a list of 56 applicants. The list was further narrowed down to two institutions before the selection was finally made in a competitive process overseen by the CLEAR board.

CLEAR is a new global initiative to help developing countries strengthen their capacities in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and performance management (PM).

AGDEN and AfrEA congratulate all those involved in this success and look forward to a mutually rewarding partnership with the team at the Graduate School of Public and Development Management (PDM).

AGDEN @ the EES

AGDEN was visible at the European Evaluation Conference held in Prague in between October 4th & 8th offering one of 15 one-day pre-conference workshops in Gender & Rights Based M&E and sharing the AGDEN approach to M&E in a panel sponsored by UNIFEM.

Editorial Board

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