



Editors Note

Monitoring and Evaluation In Rights Work

As the ship of human rights and gender equality sails in the turbulent waters of development programming, it is important that crew members are well equipped to guide the vessel towards its destination. It is also important to determine what is required for the crew to steer the ship safely. So when the research team of the AGDEN Ford Foundation assessed the knowledge level of a selected group of M&E practitioners with specific regard to issues related to human rights and gender equality, the results were as enlightening as they were predictable.

Going by the findings of the assessment, it appears that despite these concepts being buzzwords, many in the M&E field have difficulty integrating them in their development programmes. We serialise these findings in this volume and subsequent editions with a view to identifying the gaps and how they may be addressed.

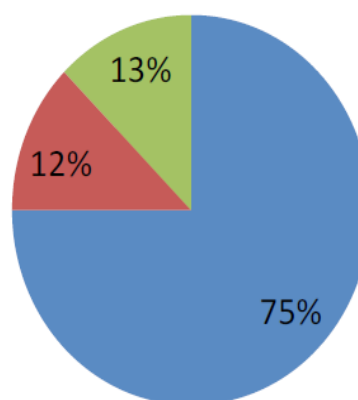
At some point, you may have wondered how did AGDEN come into being. Who were the pioneers? What did the network set out to achieve? How has it evolved over time? We will try to answer some these and other questions by publishing revealing interviews with some of the pioneers of AGDEN beginning with Letty Chiwara, currently with UNIFEM. She candidly speaks about her experiences with the Network since its inception.

Enjoy

Alfred

Should Human Rights be integrated into programme/project M&E?

■ Yes ■ Unsure ■ Not Answered



Monitoring and Evaluation practitioners in Africa want indicators on human rights and gender to be integrated into development programmes.

In a recent survey conducted by the Africa Gender Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN), about 75 per cent of the respondents felt that it was important for human rights to be integrated into Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) frameworks.

The survey, conducted in August 2009, gathered views from 46 M&E practitioners drawn from across the continent during the South African Monitoring and Evaluation (SAMEA) conference held in Johannesburg in August 2009. The survey was conducted as part of the AGDEN Ford Foundation project on human rights

and gender equality in monitoring and evaluation.

The survey found that most M&E practitioners in the continent are ill-equipped to realise this noble objective as reflected in a Participatory Action Research conducted among those who attended the AGDEN training workshop in Johannesburg, (see graph on pg 2). Findings also indicated that only 5 per cent of those who attended the SAMEA workshop had formal training on rights based approaches.

“This suggests that despite a willingness to engage in rights based approaches and the recognition that there is a role for such approaches in M&E, very few persons are equipped to engage with this’ the report said. **Continued pg 2**

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According to the survey, majority of the respondents believe that M&E is important for ensuring accountability (especially of government activities) in respecting the rights of all citizens.

They also feel that human rights reflect a core of our society and underpin the foundations of our humanity. As one respondent put it: *"Human rights are fundamental to the quality of life"*.

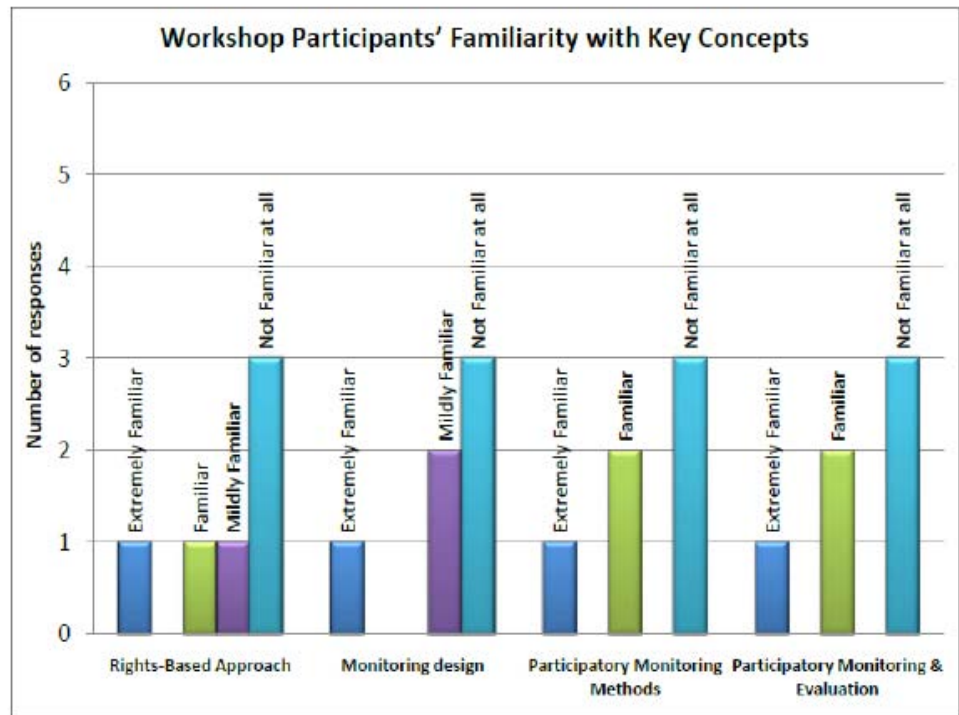
Another respondent pointed out that *"Inclusion of human rights into monitoring and evaluation gives credibility to the process" and so strengthens the value of evaluation findings.*

The respondents identified gender, data management, strategic planning, indicator development, Impact/Outcome evaluation as some of the weakest areas in monitoring and evaluation.

The research aimed at establishing the knowledge and understanding of participants with regards the concepts of human rights, gender and development. Although the findings cannot be generalised, it could be a microcosm of the M&E profession in Africa. Could it be that the M&E fraternity has been left behind as the pace of development shifts to accommodate the dimensions of human rights and gender equality?

It is also interesting to note that although the majority of the participants play a major role in monitoring projects and in human rights projects, they were not at all familiar with such concepts as 'gender & development', 'gender & development frameworks/approaches', 'gender audit' and 'gender mainstreaming'.

Although some of the participants indicated some understanding of concepts such as 'monitoring design', 'participatory monitoring methods', 'participatory monitoring & evaluation', it was still limited. During the workshop,



participants completed a questionnaire and a participatory exercise and the information collected from these was used to construct a general profile of the participants' self-reported knowledge.

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Despite participants indicating their familiarity with monitoring and evaluation as a concept, questions about the types of monitoring activities that take place in their organisations were not convincingly discussed.

"Often participants feel knowledgeable about certain issues at the start of a workshop but throughout the course of the workshop they

realise that their knowledge was deficient and that actually they did not know as much as they initially thought" said the workshop report.

Participants were also uncertain how to use such concepts in the planning of programmes or projects at their respective organisations. Perhaps more revealing was the fact that all the participants indicated that they had no previous formal training on monitoring and evaluation. The findings indicate the work that still needs to be done in order to generate a critical mass of M&E practitioners who not only understand the concepts but can also incorporate them in their respective work programmes.

On a different note, but perhaps more telling, it was also evident from the findings that the type of monitoring adopted is often shaped and mandated by reporting requirements. Thus, project officers and managers potentially become tied down with monitoring structures and processes that do not yield results that they find useful.

AGDEN'S Founder Traces the Origin of the Network

AGDENews talked to Letty Chiwara of UNIFEM and brings you excerpts of the interview

You were instrumental in the formation of AGDEN? What role did you play?

When I joined UNIFEM Africa Section in 2002, I was tasked with the responsibility of developing an Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Programme. In designing this programme, I came to learn of AfrEA – which had been set up with support from UNICEF and I thought AfrEA was going to be a strategic partner for UNIFEM to influence Evaluation from a Gender Perspective. The then Chief of Africa, Dr. Laketch Dirasse had the vision of setting up a Special Interest Group on Gender Responsive, Human Rights Based and Participatory approaches in Africa. So I took this vision up and brought this element of Engendering AfrEA through the Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Programme. It took me a while to come up with a name for this Network but finally I recommended the name “Africa Gender And Development Evaluators Network – AGDEN”. Like is always in the UN, I wanted a name that was going to be easy to remember and also easy to translate into an acronym. The idea of AGDEN was then brought to the AfrEA Conference which took place in Kenya – by my Dr. Laketch, who represented UNIFEM in that meeting and the then chair of AGDEN, Dr Zenda Ofir bought into the idea and AGDEN was accepted as one of the Special Interest Groups of AfrEA.

What was the thinking behind the formation of AGDEN?

The idea was that AGDEN would be the leader in providing expert evaluators who could bring a strong gender and human rights approach to evaluations in Africa. The expectation was that the Network would build the capacity of evaluators in Africa and also be a resource for gender responsive evaluators for the UN and other development partners. In addition

the Network would influence evaluation policy and practice in Africa from a gender and human rights perspective through their participation and contributions to AfrEA Conferences and other such fora. While UNIFEM had provided the initial funding for the setting up of the Network and initial training workshops for Network members, it was my expectation that the Network would become independent and grow exponentially and build strategic partnerships with other organizations including the donor community.

Has the Network lived up to the original vision/expectations?

To a large extent yes. The Network has indeed grown, is now registered, has secured partnerships and funding from a number of donors and Foundations and has built the capacity of its members to use gender and human rights based approaches and tools in evaluations. In addition they have been influential in dialogues on the gender dimensions of the aid effectiveness agenda and have actually contributed substantially to the development of gender sensitive indicators for the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Besides regular engagement and influence at the AfrEA Conference they have also participated and facilitated gender workshops in a number of regional and international conferences on evaluations – which has been quite impressive. A few such examples include their participation and contribution to the, 2008 Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness that was held in Ghana and the 2009 IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Association) Conference that was held in Johannesburg and whose theme was “*Getting to Results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development*”. They have also secured funding from other donors allowing them to set up a well functioning secretariat



Letty Chiwara, a founder member of AGDEN, currently with UNIFEM

based in Nairobi, Kenya and this is really a commendable achievement. However, what I think is still lacking is its capacity to pool together its experts in order to jointly bid for and therefore increase the opportunities for the Network to undertake evaluations on a large scale. While they have built their capacity to integrate gender and human rights in evaluations, they have not done much in strengthening members' capacity to write good bids/proposals and therefore they tend to lose out to evaluators from the North particularly from Canada and the US.

How would you describe your experiences with AGDEN so far?

I have attended a few of AGDEN's training workshops and meetings and found the membership to be very motivated and committed to the vision and mission of the organization. As a loose Network, they work on a voluntary basis but they take the time to work on proposals, share information through their email list and also to represent the Network in regional and global meetings. This has been very inspiring for me. I have also found the practice of rotating the leadership every two years as a good practice which promotes broader ownership.

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In your opinion, what do you think AGDEN should have done differently or should do differently?

One of the initiatives that AGDEN had agreed upon during the Niger AfrEA Conference where they held one of their Annual General Meetings, was that members were to pay some annual membership fee. This has not worked very well, partly because the process of collecting the fees is not easy when members are in different countries and generally in Africa the system of electronic banking is not general practice. This has been a major challenge for building the resource base of the Network. Funds allowing, AGDEN should strive to hold General Meetings that allow all the members to come together every 3 to 4 years at which time they can address issues of membership fees and also train members in different issues including proposal writing as I mentioned above. The second issue for consideration is for AGDEN members to share their experiences and possibly reports from the evaluations they are undertaking as individuals as a way of sharing knowledge. This could be done through the email list and also posted on their website.

Where do you expect to see AGDEN five years from Now?

I think AGDEN has the potential to build on their successes thus far and grow into a force to be reckoned with in Africa and beyond. I think AGDEN could consider becoming a Management Consulting Firm – providing cutting edge evaluation expertise, with a strong gender and human focus – and learn how similar institutions like UNIVERSALIA in Canada have managed to build their reputation beyond Canada. AGDEN could end up with membership beyond Africa and ensure that they are able to provide quality evaluations that bring out the gender and human rights aspect of development.

For comments on M&E, gender and human rights E-mail: admin@agden.org

AGDEN FF Project Closes in July

The AGDEN Ford Foundation project is running to the finish line. The project is poised to come to an end in July 2010. Project activities have now entered top gear to ensure full and complete delivery. To this end, all those involved in the project are now having to work extra-hard to deliver on their dockets. A small re-organisation has been undertaken especially with the research.

At a meeting to review project progress, three Ford Foundation Human Rights Programme Officers, Willy Mutunga, Joe Gitari and Nikki Naylor, expressed disappointment about the slow pace. They however sought and got assurances from the project Secretariat and team that the pace would be quickened. This explains the change of gear. Two additional consultants have been added to the team mainly to assure the timely completion and quality of the Toolkit; a significant project output. A much revised and improved toolkit would be used for the second workshop scheduled for June 2010 in Nairobi. Plans are already in top gear to host Egyptians, Nigerians and other East Africans to this continental workshop which is a direct project output.

Editorial Board

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Joint Report on Human Rights Released

It has been more than two years now since the start of the largest financial meltdown and global economic recession in over fifty years. How have our governments responded to this crisis in such a way as to uphold people's fundamental dignity and human rights?

The Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), the Center of Concern, Center for Economic and Social Rights (CESR), the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey (CWGL) and the International Network for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR-Net) jointly release a new report **Bringing Human Rights to Bear in Times of Crisis: A human rights analysis of government responses to the economic crisis**

The report aims to deepen our understanding of how governments have conducted themselves and how effective economic policies have been in defending and strengthening the enjoyment of human rights in a time of multiple and interlocking social and economic crises. As governments and international institutions begin to grow complacent, arguing that the worst of the crisis is over, we aim to bring civil society voices into the debate which can attest to a different reality—a reality of deepening unemployment, further disenfranchisement of the most vulnerable, the breakdown of social safety nets and protection systems and the associated increase in unpaid work done mostly by women, increasing hunger and limited policy space particularly for developing country governments to act take the necessary actions to avoid and prevent economic and social breakdown.

For more, download the report here: http://www.escr-net.org/usr_doc/HRResponsestoEconCrisis_Final.pdf