



Editors Note

Application of Rights Principles in M&E

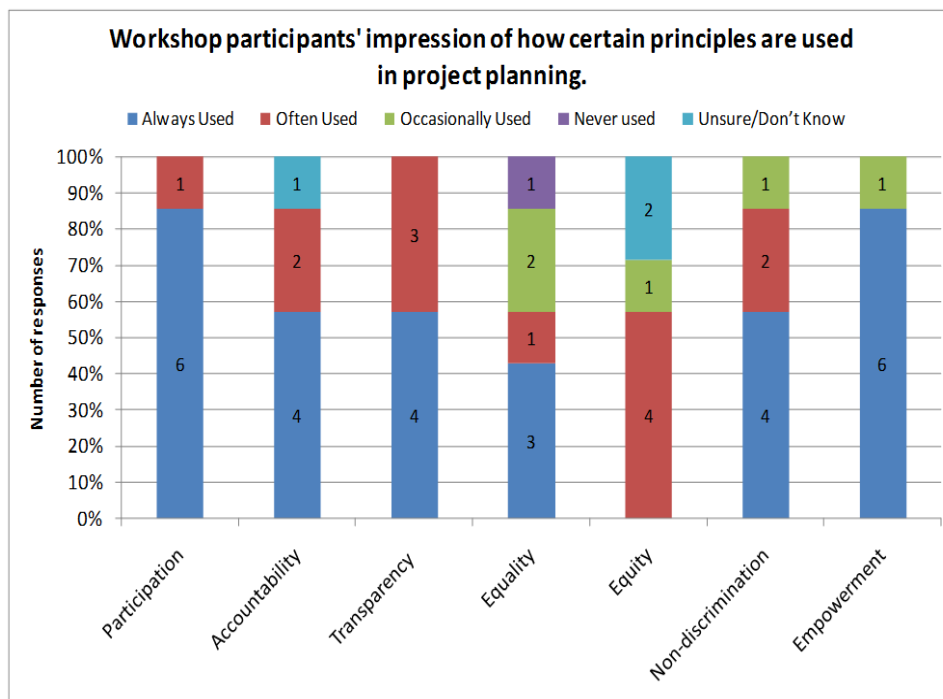
Albert Einstein once said: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts". So are principles of human rights and gender equality in relation to monitoring and evaluation of development: difficult to count but count a lot.

As the AGDEN Ford Foundation project enters its homestretch, human rights and gender equality principles are slowly emerging as the new frontier for monitoring and evaluation; offering new lenses for assessing development programmes. This raises both concern and optimism: Concern that a large section of practitioners in Africa are still poorly-equipped to deal with these new directions in their work; yet optimism that their application will provide the hitherto missing - but important - piece of the jigsaw that could lead to the desired transformation in development programming.

The aim of the AGDEN through the Ford Foundation funded project is to address this concern through capacity building and in due course create a critical mass of M&E professionals in the continent capable of integrating human rights and gender equality principles in all aspects of their work.

In this volume, we publish findings of a survey conducted by AGDEN that focuses on participatory principles and the status of their application. We also carry an interview with Zenda Ofir, who played a seminal role in the birthing of AGDEN.

Alfred



Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation is slowly but surely becoming the approach for implementing development projects. Participation is one of AGDEN's core values.

This is rooted in the belief that meaningful participation of key project partners is a fundamental pillar of the rights-based approach and the human rights perspective to development planning.

Other Principles such as in accountability, transparency, equality, equity, non-discrimination and empowerment are now being slowly but surely recognised as very important in project design and implementation if transformation as well as genuine and sustainable development is to be achieved.

A survey conducted by AGDEN among M&E practitioners in Africa indicates that although the majority of the M&E Practitioners feel that participatory principles are often incorporated into the project cycle; meaningful involvement during the implementation of project activities was rarely the case.

The survey was conducted among participants at the AGDEN Ford Foundation project workshop and the South African Monitoring and Evaluation (SAMEA) workshops held in Johannesburg in August 2009. Information was collected from participants using participatory action research, focus group discussions and questionnaires.

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Some of the participatory activities identified revolve around skills development, especially as this relates to skills required in support of the M&E function and processes e.g. during data collection.

Describing the nature of participation respondents indicated as follows; "If boundary partners were involved, they were most likely to be involved in the collection of M&E information, analysing and using M&E information, defining M&E indicators or in the designing of M&E tools" If one bears the profile of respondents in mind (more than 50% indicated they are M&E practitioners), it isn't surprising to find that most mentions were made about involving boundary partners in the M&E steps of the project cycle.

Other ways described by respondents in which participation has taken place in projects include;

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Dr. Edward Ontita (Left) AGDEN Ford Foundation Project Lead Researcher, East Africa Region and Enid Kaabunga (Right) Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation trainer during an AGDEN workshop reception in Nairobi.

"Drawing them into evaluation, training the evaluator to drive the project and sustain quality care." **Respondent employed at a University working with professional nurses in informal settlements and their organizations.**

"Meeting with CSOs and the networks representing them. Involving them in higher discussions where they can influence issues and actions. Working, researching & representing their needs, supplying civil society voices." **Respondent employed at a Non-Profit / NGO working with AIDS service organizations.**

In the "management of information and data required for all projects and NGO involvement" **Respondent Employed at Provincial Government.**

"Situational analysis, questionnaires by representative groups, Gap identification, Establishment of committees to; Plan, implement, monitor the programme." **Respondent**

employed at a University working with male and female semi-literate and orphan youth in higher education.

"We train them to use M&E, we gather feedback regularly from them to inform (workshop research groups) programme changes, use of M&E tools. We have provincial offices that offer direct support". **Respondent employed at a Non-Profit / NGO who works with NPO's, CBO's NGO's in order to build their capacity to deal with at risk youth.**

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AGDEN's Founding Catalyst Calls for More Focus and Action

Dr. Zenda Ofir shares her expectations and fears about AGDEN

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

I was the President of AfrEA at the time. We wanted to establish interest groups in specific areas and the focus on gender and development evaluation provided an ideal opportunity. Letty Chiwara from UNIFEM approached us to partner with them. We helped develop the idea, established a small group to help select AGDEN members based on strict criteria and launched AGDEN at an AfrEA/UNIFEM event in Pretoria.

What was the thinking behind the formation of AGDEN?

Each of us probably had slightly different emphases while sharing AGDEN's overall goal. I wanted to see AGDEN grow into a dynamic network of highly competent African evaluators who serve as resource persons, trainers, researchers, consultants and role models. I wanted them to be known in Africa and across the world as thought and practice leaders able to move the field of gender and development evaluation forward and make people aware of the evaluation expertise on the continent.

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

I am not sure as I have not kept track of all their activities. I have an 'outsider' perspective and without an evaluation of AGDEN there is little evidence on which to base my perceptions. I believe they have a strong focus on conference participation, which is good for the profile of the field, and on training, which is good as long as the level of training is excellent and based on cutting-edge knowledge. I am less certain of the extent to which potential clients regard them as a key source of information and a 'first port of call' on gender and development evaluation in Africa. This is an important indicator of success and I do not think they have that profile – but I would like to

be proven wrong! I remain extremely concerned that African evaluators generally do not publish. We forget that in order to influence evaluation and also development practice we need to be seen as *real* experts. Very, very few evaluators in Africa have that profile, and much of it comes from formal publishing as well as attracting at conferences and events the attention of influential policy makers and 'shapers' of practice among governments, donors and major NGOs (or BINGOs – big international NGOs). I would like to see evidence that AGDEN has been able to do that on a significant scale.

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

Having said that, I would like to see and hear more about AGDEN as I move around Africa. I want them to do what is possible to give *leadership* in the field. We tend to focus on 'capacity building' and in the process often neglect the important role of 'leadership'. African experts need to lead more, on the continent and in the world. This means - among others - attracting the best in Africa and collaborating with the best in the world. It means doing excellent work *and* having the political savvy to have a high profile among influential actors in the field of evaluation *as well as* development. This means more *strategic and focused* knowledge creation and sharing, collaboration and engagement.

Where do you see AGDEN/expect to see AGDEN five years from now?

AGDEN has an important, increasingly relevant mission. In my view they can add tremendous value to evaluation and to development on the continent by continuing to work to bring leading edge knowledge and practice to bear on development initiatives. I would be very happy if years from now AGDEN is known worldwide as an innovative group with very credible expertise in the field, who launches new initiatives,



Dr Zenda Ofir, Ex-AfrEA President and NONIE Steering Committee member

thinks in new ways, with members widely called upon on the continent and by donors and philanthropies for advice and thought leadership in influential initiatives and forums. They should also be well published in the formal and grey literature! I would therefore recommend that AGDEN has a thorough evaluation (external or self) of their performance (if they have not yet done so) and adjust if necessary – without 'over-planning' paralysis. There are many different types of networks and a good body of knowledge about how and why networks work or not, and under which circumstances. They have to be clear on what type of network is most suitable and realistic given current and emerging challenges, opportunities and resources – and manage it dynamically for 'continuous improvement and influence'.

Any other comments about the Network?

Networks are a very important type of 'organisation' today. We are all networked like never before. It is great that AGDEN is also part of a larger system and can link to other networks in the global evaluation and also development community. We should all make more use of the advantage that this offers, and also support initiatives like AGDEN. I want to congratulate and thank those who have contributed to AGDEN's successes to date. With the support of UNIFEM, Ford Foundation and others I see them grow beyond adolescence into an exciting phase of vibrant adulthood. I look forward to what will happen next!

AGDEN FF Workshop

Holds in Nairobi

A 'joint' workshop was held in Nairobi by the AGDEN Ford Foundation Rights in M&E project from Monday 14th until Wednesday 16th of June at the beautifully green Fairview Hotel in Nairobi. This workshop represents the final one in the Ford Foundation funded project intended to bring together human rights, women's rights and M&E. It was 'joint' because two previously planned workshops for Lagos and Cairo were put together and offered as one. The first in the series of workshops was held in Johannesburg in August 2009. One major difference between this workshop and the Johannesburg one was the length; instead of five days, the Nairobi workshop was given for three days as requested by the Ford Foundation Programme Officers at a crucial meeting in April. Most participants felt three days were inadequate to cover the workshop content.

The pre-workshop training needs assessment conducted by AGDEN revealed that participants were keen to learn more about participatory methods, human rights and gender equality as they relate to monitoring and evaluation. Most of the 35 participants stated that they hope and expect to tighten their understanding of monitoring and evaluation of human rights programming. Participants expressed the need to be introduced to the latest tools for gender analysis and be taken through the process of designing monitoring and evaluation plans and frameworks for human rights. This expectation is the reason why the Ford Foundation funded the project. The project unveiled the toolkit for Rights and Gender Responsive M&E at this workshop.

The workshop was oversubscribed and AGDEN is seriously considering offering a similar workshop in the near future.

A New M&E Outfit In Kenya?

Plans are at an advanced stage to register a new Monitoring and Evaluation outfit in Kenya.

A section of M&E professionals in Kenya have so resolved after long and unfruitful efforts to revitalise the Kenya Evaluation Association (KEA). The KEA is alleged to have become moribund and some intimate that it has long ceased to serve the interests of a majority of the M & E fraternity in the country. The decision was taken during a meeting of M&E professionals held on Friday 18th June at the offices of the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate (MED) of the Ministry of National Planning & Development at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre, Nairobi, Kenya.

The meeting was attended by 23 M&E professionals and practitioners included staff of the Ministry, the Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN), IDEAS and representatives of international organisations such as; PLAN, JICA, FAWE and HRR to mention a few.

Dr. Florence Etta, invited to grace the occasion gave a brief report of what AfrEA has been doing since April 2009 when the first Board was elected and distributed AfrEA membership policy and forms. Other guests at this historic meeting were; the Director of the M&E Directorate, Mr. Samson Machuka and his deputy, Mr. David Mwanzia and the CEO of Measure Africa - a major private evaluation provider in Kenya- Ms Maureen Wangati.

Dr Etta congratulated the meeting participants on their persistence and lauded the move to re-ignite the fire for M&E in the country, noting that Kenya holds a special place in the history of Evaluation in Africa for playing host to AfrEA in its early years.

UNIFEM Conducts Institutional Assessment of AGDEN

The Africa Gender & Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) hosted the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) on Thursday 24th June 2010.

The object of the auspicious visit was a long awaited institutional assessment. First planned early in 2009, the assessment is a pre-requisite for partnership and in this particular case continuing partnership. UNIFEM has been a long supporter and funder of AGDEN. In fact AGDEN's first flagship project the Paris Declaration and Aid effectiveness was funded by UNIFEM in 2007 and as Zenda points out in this volume of AGDENews, AGDEN was partly a creation of UNIFEM. This visit signals a new height and tempo in the relations between the two institutions.

Two UNIFEM officers, Caspar Merkle, Regional Evaluation Specialist (Africa) and Naomi Gatere, a Finance Consultant, visited the AGDEN Secretariat in Nairobi and were received by the full strength of the Secretariat staff of Lizette Kraft, Justin Mochama & Grace Wangechi. The Vice Chair of the Steering Committee, Florence Etta, was also on hand to welcome the visitors and lend a hand to the process. The two-hour process involved grilling, and examination of AGDEN policies, procedures and documents. At the end of the grueling process, the UNIFEM representatives, gave AGDEN the all clear, stating that they were pleased with the transparent and accountable manner in which the Secretariat was being run. AGDEN is looking to continue the very valuable and productive partnership with UNIFEM.

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