

Evaluation Unit Strategic Partnering (SP) and Resource Mobilization (RM) Strategic Plan: 2005-2010

1. Introduction

IDRC advocates partnerships for supporting the Centre's mandate, and increasing resources available to Southern researchers. The Evaluation Unit supports such partnerships and also seeks partnerships for joint learning, and sharing of IDRC experiences and approaches. IDRC employs three partnership modalities: co-funding¹, parallel funding², and knowledge sharing³.

Partnering is a dynamic process as relationships evolve over time. The potential for partnering of the Evaluation Unit is shaped by a number of factors including budgetary factors, staffing, trends in monitoring and evaluation in the development field, and the perceived quality and credibility of the Unit. Growing interest in innovative and use oriented approaches to monitoring and evaluation has increased both internal partnership demands on the Unit (from PI's and corporate projects) and external interest (from other donors and organizations).

The Centre's *Strategic Donor Framework*⁴ emphasizes concentrating partnership efforts "on a smaller number of key donors, building relationships, which go beyond individual co-funded projects." Though this framework is largely directed at PI level partnering it raises useful questions about what a strategic donor framework for the Evaluation Unit should look like. Across the Centre, like-mindedness and program fit are the over-riding

¹ **Co-funding** is a form of partnership in which one or more donor partners fund all or part of a project managed by IDRC. Partners can provide core funding to IDRC and/or to individual projects targeting specific institutions.

² **Parallel Funding** occurs when resources are allocated to a project that is co-initiated by IDRC but is not channeled through the Centre. This additional funding enables an expansion in project activities beyond what would have been possible with IDRC's contribution alone.

³ **Knowledge sharing and exchange** are important aspects of many partnerships. These exchanges can be formal or informal, and include workshops, consultations, visits, and publications.

⁴ *Strategic Donor Partnering Framework* (October 2002); http://intranet.idrc.ca/en/ev-45033-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

considerations for seeking or accepting to work with other donors and international agencies. However, the Evaluation Unit both has its own programming mandate and performs a support role for other programming Units and for corporate priorities. Thus the Evaluation Unit partnership strategy needs to reflect and balance these roles.

2. Background

Over the period 2000-2004, the Unit has seen a steady increase in its operating budget. Simultaneously, the Unit has experienced increasing trends in resource expansion both in terms of co- and parallel funding. Over the same period the Unit grew in size and scope through a series of term appointments. While most of the term appointments came to an end in 2004, expectations for the Unit remained high. From a programming perspective the 2000-2004 period saw two key shifts in emphasis:

1. from a focus on major innovation in methods to a focus on implementation and adjustments, and;
2. from using a highly opportunistic approach to creating a culture of evaluative thinking to consolidating a culture of evaluative thinking through the building of systems (notably systems without bureaucracy).

During this period the Unit engaged in two types of strategic partnerships: those that supported other IDRC partnerships, and those that supported building the evaluation function. These are both discussed below.

2.1 Evaluation Support to IDRC Partnerships

The IDRC partnership strategy identifies a number of core donors that are priority partners for the Centre. In its corporate support role, the Evaluation Unit has been involved in supporting such partnerships through involvement in programming, information sharing and exchange. For example, the Unit has actively shared materials on Outcome Mapping with numerous core donor partners. Similarly the policy study has generated interest from, and been presented to, various donor partners and other agencies (such as the Canadian International Development Agency, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council in Canada, and the Wellcome Trust in the U.K).

During 2000-2004 the Evaluation Unit also provided technical assistance and other support, in partnership with Centre programs, to a number of large externally funded projects with a significant monitoring and evaluation component. Though these partnerships were largely driven by the partnership priorities of other groups within the Centre they also promoted exploration and innovation in M&E among IDRC research partners and to strengthened IDRC program staff experience and capacity in M&E.

These activities also provided important field opportunities for the Unit to test and experiment with new methodologies and bring resources to the Unit that were used to provide additional evaluation support to the Centre.

The Evaluation Unit has earned an average of twenty percent (20%) of the operational credits* earned by Centre programs through such externally funded projects (usually projects of Program Initiatives (PIs) or Corporate Projects).

Evaluation Unit Operational Credits

Fiscal Year	Credit
04-05	\$32,779.66
03-04	8,170.81
02-03	23,063.03
01-02	23,718.88
00-01	28,870.63
Total	116,603.01

Examples of such projects included the Swayamsiddha women’s health and empowerment project in India, the SANFEC project in South Asia, and the NEPED project in Nagaland, India. Notably not all of these partnerships bring funds to the Unit but all provide non-monetary benefits to both the Unit and partner.

2.2 Partnerships in Support of Building the Evaluation Function

The Unit has also sought partnerships to directly support the Unit’s core work. For example, initial efforts to build an evaluation node in India explored partnership opportunities with a range of core bilateral donors. Interestingly, building this type of partnership with these traditional bilateral donors was not successful. In large part this did not reflect a lack of interest on the part of other donors but rather, that they did not have the funding mandate or appropriate funding modality to directly fund evaluation related programming. This was a useful learning.

The Unit has also sought intellectual partnerships rooted in mutual learning on evaluation approaches and innovation. Such partnerships have included a variety of partners, including both individuals and institutions. These have not been with traditional donor partners in large part because the monitoring and evaluation systems of more traditional

* Operational credits are funds credited back to the Unit involved after the Centre’s costs for administering an external grant have been taken into account. The percentage does not take into account operational credits outside programming Units of the Centre.

donor partners tend to be constrained to meet various accountability requirements. Given this, many such donors are limited in their flexibility and ability to innovate and experiment with new methods and approaches -- a core part of the EU's mandate. The Unit has had to look outside of the box to identify organizations which have a similar interest in use and learning oriented evaluation to find partners who can push our own thinking and learning around evaluation. Two examples of this are the past partnerships with Dr. Barry Kibel of the Pacific Institute on Research and Evaluation on the development of the Outcome Mapping methodology and with Dr. Michael Quinn Patton on corporate assessment and managing program performance.

The international evaluation community has been an important space to seek intellectual partnerships for the Unit. The Unit has made significant contributions to the field of evaluation through Outcome Mapping and Organizational Assessment, but also in its reputation for supporting the development of a learning culture in IDRC.

3.0 Future Partnering Focus

Building on past partnering efforts and learning, the Unit will engage in partnerships that:

1. Support Centre partnering objectives including through:
 - a. exchange and sharing of evaluation information as a part of building such partnerships, and;
 - b. providing technical support on specific activities.
2. Support the evaluation function of the Unit including through:
 - a. expanding the use of evaluation, and;
 - b. methods development and exploration.

The categories are discussed further below.

3.1 Support to Centre Partnering Objectives

The Unit will continue to respond to corporate requests to support Centre partnering through ongoing activities including presenting and sharing material and involvement in donor meetings and activities.

Providing technical support on specific activities will also continue in the upcoming strategy with the Unit attempting to keep in place one or several such partnerships in any given year. The Evaluation Unit will provide advisory services to such projects (rather than monitoring services, which remain the responsibility of the programming unit). Given the high resource demands on partnership building and the need to meet

programmatic, corporate, and administrative commitments, the Unit will attempt to prioritize partnership support to broader IDRC partnerships through a relative set of criteria including:

- Level of need / prioritization from other groups within the Centre;
- Degree to which evaluation support is not available from others (particularly Southern organizations / individuals);
- Potential for contribution to methodological development, testing, or engaging in innovative tools / approaches;
- Potential for contribution to capacity building (internal or external);
- Degree of interest / engagement in M&E from the research partners;
- Degree of interest among donors in use / learning oriented M&E;
- Range of flexibility among the donors involved in choice / use of M&E systems;
- Level of IDRC funding, level of donor funding, and degree of cost recovery (while not ruling out the importance for engagement in small but strategic activities).

3.2 Partnering Around the Evaluation Function

In the past the Unit has tended to focus on partnership efforts that support Centre, PI, or corporate projects. While these will remain important areas of work the Unit will also increasingly attempt to use partnerships to foster the Unit's core work and to promote innovation and learning. Specifically this would entail partnerships focused on expanding the use of evaluation, methods development, or some combination of both.

The Unit will promote evaluation methodologies developed by IDRC and its partners to encourage their use by a broad range of donors, international agencies, government departments and NGOs. This would include both methodologies developed largely by the Unit and those developed by other groups in the Centre and by Centre partners. Some examples of the latter include Gender Evaluation Methodologies for Internet and ICTs (GEM) (<http://www.apcwomen.org/gem>), participatory evaluation, methods and approaches for evaluating telecentres (http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9415-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html), and social analysis system (SAS) (<http://www.sas-pm.com>).

Seeking out partnerships with new and innovative partners will be pushed further in the upcoming strategy. The Unit is particularly interested in:

1. Identifying medium sized foundations who have a similar interest in program level evaluation;
2. Partnering with Universities in the North and South to share evaluation methods, approaches, and the findings from large strategic evaluations. The partnership

- goals of working with Universities would include influencing curriculum and encouraging graduate students to use, test, and further develop methodologies that the Unit, Centre, or Centre partners', have developed;
3. Building on partnerships that help enhance the profile of the Centre within the development evaluation community. This will include partnering with leaders and thinkers in the evaluation field with whom we could work on issues of importance to the Centre. For the Unit's approach to partnering with evaluation associations see Annex 1, and;
 4. Developing partnerships to support the professionalization of evaluation in the South. Such partnerships would encompass Southern-based organizations or networks (whether for-profit or not-for profit) that provide evaluation services to development and development research organizations. For more on the Unit's approach to partnering with such organizations see Annex 2.

Finally, the Unit will continue to seek proactive intellectual partnerships (with both individuals and institutions) to influence the development community, increase the profile of the Units work, disseminate or take methods to scale, increase networking, and expand evaluative thinking.

4.0 Conclusion

The intention of all evaluation partnerships will be to increase the capacity of Southern organizations and individuals to develop capacities and build networks that support their use of evaluation to improve the effectiveness of their research and their organizations.

There are numerous partnering opportunities for the Evaluation Unit and the team is keen to pursue strategic partnering as a core part of the current strategy. A key challenge is the importance of being targeted, particularly given limited human resources. This partnership strategy does not present a fixed workplan around partnering, given the importance of flexibility and responsiveness, but instead attempts to highlight some of the current partnership opportunities and thinking as the Unit moves ahead.

Annex 1: Approach to working with Evaluation Associations

Support to regional and global evaluation associations

The Evaluation Unit at IDRC strongly supports the need for increased evaluation capacity within the regions in which it operates. We therefore support the regional evaluation conferences and training events and wish to increase the opportunities for researchers in the South to obtain evaluation skills and experience as well as broaden their networks. We also seek to identify potential partners for carrying out evaluation consultation and training in the South. At the same time, the Centre does not wish to interfere in the governance of evaluation associations either through corporate membership or by influencing the agendas of conferences and training events. Rather we will support the approaches and decisions of regional and international evaluation associations that can help build evaluation capacity in the research community.

These two issues define the type of support and participation we will have with evaluation events in the regions in which the Centre works. Based on available resources, the Evaluation Unit will support the participation of IDRC-supported researchers who wish to take part in training at, or deliver papers at, evaluation events relevant to their interests and needs. We will support either individual participation or work substantively with groups seeking our collaboration on delivery of an activity. We will also encourage IDRC staff to attend and participate in evaluation conferences. We will ourselves participate to share our learning and learn from others. An additional element of our participation will be the identification of potential evaluators with whom we can work in the regions.

Annex 2: Partnerships for capacity building and professionalization of evaluation in the South

The Evaluation Unit has played, and will continue to play a role in supporting development research organizations to build their internal capacity in evaluation. In addition to this, the Unit is also exploring a range of means to support and strengthen the capacity of evaluation organizations or networks who are engaged in, or interested in, providing evaluation services for development and development research organizations.

The objective of such support is ***to promote the professionalization of evaluation in the South and in doing so to increase the range of evaluation support that development research organizations can draw upon*** from within their own regions. Doing so will also support the creation of professional opportunities for Southern researchers who are interested in working in the field of monitoring and evaluation.

The support that such organizations provide to development research organizations could take a variety of forms to reflect the diversity of areas in which evaluation and evaluative thinking is grounded. These could include for example: facilitating organizational development interventions, group processes, or strategic planning; conducting M&E training; providing technical assistance; implementing project/program evaluations, etc.

The evaluation organizations or networks eligible to partner with the Unit could be for-profit or not-for-profit as long as their missions complement IDRC's purpose and values.

The types of partnerships that the Evaluation Unit will engage in to support the development of such evaluation service organizations could take a variety of forms. For example, the Evaluation Unit will invest in organizational development to strengthen the capacity of these organizations to incorporate use and learning oriented M&E or particular M&E methodologies (e.g., outcome mapping, organizational assessment). Building these types of tools into the services they offer will then become a resource for development organizations, NGOs, and research institutes. Another example could involve intellectual partnering around the development of new and innovative monitoring and evaluation tools and methodologies. In such cases, though the partnership may take the shape of consultancy arrangements with partner organizations the tools and methodologies developed would always be non-proprietary and shared with the broader development community.

In such partnerships the investments made by the Evaluation Unit are intended to support a phase of increased capacity of and / or professionalization of such service organizations. However in all cases such partnership would include longer term planning for self-sufficiency for these organizations.

If you are interested in exploring a partnership with the Evaluation Unit, please contact evaluation@idrc.ca.