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Management response to Process Evaluation of 3ie

3ie staff and management welcome the process evaluation of 3ie, and thank the evaluation team for their thoughtful and thorough reflection on 3ie's first years. Many of the main recommendations are in accordance with our own thinking for 3ie's future direction, and will help shape our new strategy for 2014-17. Some recommendations have already been adopted by 3ie.

As we would expect in any long report dealing with the full range of 3ie's many activities, there are a few small points and inaccuracies with which we might take issue. However, in this response, we focus on the recommendations of the process evaluation, labelled in the report as the six elements in the 'outline for a revised strategy' in the report.

Element one: '3ie becomes the standard-setting body for impact evaluation and works to show how far the IE evidence being produced meets the standards it sets. As well as setting high standards for its own grantees, it would offer to certify studies funded elsewhere to the same standard. A sample of grants would be replicated, or independently re-analysed, as a matter of course. If funders back this approach, there is scope for a significant improvement in IE standards. Ideally, it will also reduce current debates around the validity of different IE efforts, something which is particularly unhelpful for policymakers.'

As recognized by the evaluation report, 3ie has already taken considerable steps in this direction. Grantees are guided by 3ie's Principles of Impact Evaluation, Impact Evaluation Practice and Human Subject Guidelines. Our site also has a page of additional useful resources, which includes 3ie material such as the impact evaluation glossary. And we contribute to moving forward conceptual boundaries through both the Journal of Development Effectiveness and the 3ie Working Paper series. In late 2011, we established 3ie's Impact Evaluation Services suite of programs, which are all designed to help improve the quality of all impact evaluations of development interventions. Impact Evaluation Services encompass some programmes that were already underway, such as our quality assurance services which provide direct assistance to agencies commissioning impact evaluations, as well as two new programmes: the Replication Programme and the Registry of International



Development Impact Evaluation. Our quality assurance services are already being used by some agencies to assure the quality of their studies. 3ie's replication programme, launched in 2012, has already commissioned replication of a number of studies, and will begin replication of our grants during the course of 2013.

But we do recognize the need for further improvements in the quality of impact evaluations to increase their policy relevance. 3ie will continue to refine and develop its standards, including areas such as ethical guidelines as well as methodological ones. We will also seek to support best practice impact evaluations and systematic reviews which may serve as an example to others.

One proposed aspect of our approach in coming years is to engage more sector experts in the use of impact evaluation methodologies. That is, rather than 'impact evaluation' being a specific field, mostly practised by economists, 3ie will promote the approach as one tool in the social science researchers' toolkit, to be used where appropriate by researchers from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds.

Element two: 3ie makes a concerted effort to communicate the message of theory-based evaluation. It would also add a sectoral dimension to its review processes and give greater weight to broader, non-statistical theory.

Theory-based impact evaluation is at the heart of 3ie's approach, and will be explicitly recognized as such in the new strategy. There have been considerable strides made in the use of a theory-based approach in recent years, and amongst impact evaluators 3ie has played an important part. 3ie will continue to promote the theory-based approach, and the associated use of mixed methods, through its review process, conceptual papers and by example from high quality, theory-based impact evaluators.

3ie has already adopted the practice of draft final reports being subject to independent external review by a sector expert from the country in which the study took place. For thematic windows we also draw on sector expertise in selecting which studies to fund.

Element three: 3ie reins back from its current focus on demonstrating policy impact and instead focuses on ensuring that the IEs it commissions are of sufficient quality to present to policymakers and are policy relevant.



3ie management believe that the difference regarding what 3ie actually does and what the evaluation team recommend we do is more semantic than real. 3ie seeks to make evidence available to policymakers in a form they can readily assimilate. 3ie does not engage in lobbying, nor does it encourage its grantees to do so.

However, in line with our vision statement of 'improving lives through impact evaluation' and, in particular, our mission to 'increase development effectiveness through better use of evidence in developing countries' 3ie management believe it is necessary for 3ie to be able to demonstrate that 3ie-funded studies have informed policy and programme decisions.

As 3ie moves into its second strategy period, management believes that attention to the use of evidence needs to increase in 3ie's work. To this end we will be exploring different ways of packaging evidence, including through the website, to make 3ie the 'evidence portal of choice' for policy makers.

The Policy Influence Plans produced by 3ie grantees, and regular updates on those plans as part of our [grantee reporting](#), are proving a useful source of information on grantee dissemination. Claims of policy influence are independently verified through the Policy Influence Monitoring Project.

Element four: 3ie will continue to develop the Policy Window and Thematic Window approaches and make TWs part of its core funding programme.

3ie management are strongly committed to the [Policy Window](#) approach, and hope to develop this approach further with Policy Windows focused on specific countries. 3ie management would welcome [Thematic Windows](#) financed through core funding, addressing questions identified by 3ie in consultation with Southern policymakers, which was part of the original vision for 3ie. We shall use the new strategy as a basis for seeking to expand funding for 3ie for such an approach to be possible. However, in the meantime, 3ie management and staff will seek to ensure that new thematic windows do indeed address priority concerns.

Element five: 3ie develops a membership strategy which centres on understanding the breadth of southern members' demands for impact evaluation evidence and providing a range of services those members need to realise that demand.



During 2012 the Deputy Director for Advancement and Impact Evaluation Services has been working on developing and more clearly articulating the set of member benefits. We also hosted a well-attended members' consultation in the margins of the October 2012 Board meeting, for those members in attendance at the Board meeting. The recommendations to management from the consultation demonstrate the membership to be emerging as an active constituency in the running of 3ie. Even before the October 2012 meeting, members have voiced a strong demand for peer learning, which we will begin to meet through two events scheduled in the first half of 2013. 3ie management staff will continue to work with 3ie Southern members to deliver and refine this package of member services.

Element six: 3ie develops a Strategy 2014 – 2017 along the lines described, and campaigns to win core funding for the public goods it will provide under the programme.

3ie's new strategy for 2014-2017 will be developed during 2013 following consultation with the Members and Board of Commissioners in April 2013. As outlined above, the new strategy will be informed by the elements proposed by the evaluation team.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "HN White".

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International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)