



Uganda pilot peer learning of 3ie members DRAFT Learning report March 4-7, 2013

This report is a summary of the feedback notes from the peer learning team and tries to take stock of what the team has learned during the first Uganda Evaluation Week hosted by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM). It reports back on key lessons, good practices shared, gaps and ways forward to boost evaluation use and practice in Uganda.

These observations and recommendations are based on a rapid review of Uganda's policy and practice in evaluation, and not on an in-depth analysis. The team therefore hopes that the comments resonate and are useful to the OPM and would welcome any questions, clarifications or additional comments. The learning report will be presented and discussed at the 5th Members conference in London in April, 2013.

This is the first pilot study tour as part of 3ie's voluntary peer learning mechanism which aims to learn from the evaluation practices of its members and strengthen their commitment to evidence informed policymaking.

Read more: www.3ieimpact.org/en/evaluation/c2e/

Opportunities and challenge for Uganda to produce and use evaluation

The peer learning team commends the OPM for showing commitment to evaluation and its ambitious evaluation agenda. The fact that the OPM is hosting this first evaluation week and that the Prime Minister opens the event and invites international partners to participate and learn from Uganda's evaluation policy and practice, is evidence in itself of its commitment to evaluate and learn.

Uganda appears as a continental leader on monitoring in Africa and has established a very ambitious framework for monitoring and evaluation. The Ugandan M&E system has advanced considerably over the last few years. Built on the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES), the new Evaluation Policy deepens the government-wide M&E system by further defining the key role of the OPM in driving evidence-based policy and programme decisions and engaging the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) in monitoring and evaluation.

The Uganda Government Evaluation Facility (GEF) was established in 2011 to address the paucity in rigorous evaluations of public policies and major public investments in Uganda. However, the institutional basis of the facility was recently narrowed as key donors suspended aid to the Government of Uganda and the OPM in particular.

Lessons and recommendations from the peer learning

On the demand side

Lesson 1: There is a clear commitment and leadership on monitoring, but there is a need to now further unpack and understand how the new M&E policy can be used to improve the delivery of essential services.

■ **A strong evidence based monitoring approach:** The Government produces Government Performance reports bi-annually, which are discussed at Cabinet retreats. These reports utilize monitoring data extensively, and top officials discuss their agencies' successes and areas for improvement. This is a very positive aspect of Uganda's approach to using evidence, based on monitoring information. However, there are areas for improvement (not unique to Uganda). The data are more robust in some sectors (education, health, and water and sanitation), but less strong in others.

Because monitoring is an essential backbone for evidence-based decisions and a key source of information for evaluations, **the peer learning team recommends that the OPM conduct a thorough review of the data systems of those agencies that have weaker data systems and develop an action plan to address the data gaps (including data quality).** While Uganda adopted some good practices in terms of liberalization of the media, and open access to data through its Right to Information Act and the recently launched OPM online evaluation database <http://gef.opm.go.ug/>, reliability and timeliness of government data remain an issue.

■ **An ambitious evaluation policy:** A new monitoring and evaluation policy has just been approved by the Cabinet and provides an ambitious agenda for evaluations. In taking

this agenda forward, it would be key to take into consideration the factors that enhance the use of evaluations. While the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) evaluation provides some evidence of use of evaluation findings, overall there is a limited use of evaluation.

The main challenges remain in the implementation of the new policy. Therefore, a first important step will be to unpack the M&E policy and orientate Parliament, Cabinet and other stakeholders on how it can be used.

■ **Prioritization and specificity of evaluation questions:** Are the right evaluation questions being asked? Identifying why those questions are being asked, who the specific stakeholders are, who would benefit from the answers to those questions, and how the findings will be used (the 'intentionality' of the evaluation), will help improve the likelihood of evaluation findings being utilized. More specific the evaluation questions are, more robust will be the evaluation designs (reviews of theories of change, implementation reviews, impact evaluations of outcomes, and so forth).

For instance in the case of Colombia, the National Planning Department (NPD) have developed a whole suite of tools and approaches based on the different level of questions, competencies required and stakeholders that need to be engaged.

Lesson 2: Need to create a space for engaging key policymakers and stakeholders around evaluation: First, there is a need for sensitising government officials on how evaluations can be a useful tool, and events like the Evaluation week and trainings provide the opportunity for doing this.

Most participants to the evaluation week also raised the importance of creating **a forum to engage all stakeholders and discuss evaluation findings, recommendations and implementation** which will help build ownership of key decision makers on evaluation findings. Both South Africa and Colombia shared examples of how they engage all key stakeholders throughout the evaluation, from the time where the evaluation is commissioned and designed till the dissemination of the findings.

This starts with further engagement of policymakers, programme staff and civil society in defining the evaluation purposes, questions, and approaches at the beginning of the evaluation. This approach would help to improve the evaluation design, process and ownership/political buy-in. **The Presidency of South Africa for example takes a very inclusive approach where evaluations are based on partnerships with departments & other stakeholders including the South African Evaluation Association SAMEA, and these are co-financed.** This approach is key to ensure ownership of the evaluation by other departments and stakeholders. Colombia holds technical meetings where stakeholders identify policymakers' needs, main bottlenecks, and gaps in evidence, which help prioritize the evaluation questions and inform the evaluation design.

Different stakeholders should also be engaged at the time of discussing the findings of the evaluation and crafting of evaluation recommendations. The Baraza mechanism where local officials have to account for what has and has not happened is currently being tested. Different stakeholders such as NGO forum are also members of the M&E committee, but **more proactive engagement with stakeholders throughout the evaluation cycle will enable the evaluation team to take into consideration feasibility, and relevance of the**

recommendations, which too will enhance use. Recommendations must also factor in cost benefits analyses, where recommendations have clear cost implications.

Lesson 3: Need of integrating evaluation with budgeting and planning: Use will be enhanced through better coordination of the evaluations with the planning and budgeting processes. This will enable recommendations to feed into budget decisions and programme planning. Therefore, it will be important to consider the questions that budgeting and planning officials may have. This is currently featured in the new draft M&E policy and will be important to implement.

In South Africa, the treasury is a part of the steering committee for evaluations, which provides additional incentives for them to ask their questions, get answers and use that evidences in budgetary allocations. Colombia is currently working in further integrating the system that monitors the goals set by the NDP and the follow up mechanism that tracks the investment plans set for each year.

The team also recommends to link quarterly performance monitoring with results monitoring. When the Ministry of Finance and Planning undertakes quarterly performance monitoring, it also provides an opportunity to conduct some results monitoring. For instance, if a local clinic was badly constructed, the monitoring team could also look at how this affected the quality and quantity of health service provided to the local community in the area?

Lesson 4: More investment in multi-pronged dissemination strategies and policy friendly messages: Having simplified and tailored messages, products and approaches for different audiences, provides additional incentives for decision makers to use the study findings. For instance, in South Africa each evaluation report includes a 1 page summary for policymakers, a 3 page executive summary providing more details on the study findings and policy implications and a 25 page report. They also develop customised communication material for different audiences such as Cabinet briefs for each of the evaluations. In terms of communications tools, Columbia also uses ‘technical briefs’, which summarizes the key elements of the intervention, evaluation methodology, results and recommendations into a 4-8 page report. All final reports also include an executive summary. The evaluation teams also make two different presentations; one for a technical audience and another targeting key ministries and sector managers. While all evaluations are now posted on OPM’s recently launched online database, evaluation results need to be more proactively disseminated to busy policymakers and practitioners who have limited time to review a 100 page long technical document.

Lesson 5: Tracking key implementation milestones and management responses to recommendations

Both Colombia and South Africa have shared their experience in terms of tracking and acting upon the evaluation findings. South African has been piloting a new template for “Improvement plans” which articulates the management response to priority evaluations and is monitored by the Cabinet and the Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation within the Presidency. The South Africa delegations will be sharing the new guidelines that are currently being developed. It would also be useful to link up the evaluation system with the Baraza process as mention in lesson 2.

On the supply side

Lesson 6: Budget needs to reflect the Government's commitment to evaluation. The key issue on the supply side, as several donors have closed their programmes, is the funding of the evaluations. The Government needs to show its commitment to finance its M&E agenda.

Lesson 7: Need to improve coordination of the OPM's M&E functions with the M&E functions of other departments including the National Planning Authority, and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development. The M&E network is highly fragmented across government with some apparent inefficiencies and overlapping M&E activities. A recent assessment of monitoring teams within government by the Ministry of Public Service indicates that at least twelve central government agencies have some role in conducting monitoring of public service provision, resulting in duplications of field visits and agencies not sharing their data, thus data quality and potential for economies of scale being reduced. This was presented as a clear barrier for the smooth implementation of M&E activities, which requires clear roles and responsibilities, as well as coordination for reporting.

Lesson 8: More focus on a broad based capacity development agenda: There is a limited pool of local evaluation consultants. Participants have raised the issue of limited technical capacity and lack of professional code of conduct. As part of this broad effort in capacity development, the following issues and recommendations were highlighted:

- **The need to strengthen civil society capacity in conducting and using evaluations.** Civil society and media should learn to advocate with evidence, so that the government respond or use the evidence. Baraza appears to be only one of the tools. This could be **in the form of short courses, a certification programme, but also mentoring and partnering.** **The NGO forum and the Uganda Evaluation Association would be important platforms to lead and take part in this effort. The peer learning team also advised the Uganda Evaluation Association to approach AfrEA and EVALPARTNERS to get additional support in strengthening the association and developing national standards and code of conducts.** The South African delegation also shared experiences with UEA and invited them to participate in the next SAMEA conference in September.
- The team also recommends the **OPM to support more the M&E capacity of other departments/ministries** so they can appreciate the need for more use of evidence in policymaking; and the **need to strengthen the oversight role of the Public Account Committee of the parliament. This would not be possible without investing additional money and capacity. The current M&E team of OPM has been reduced by more than half, and the capacity and resources allocated remain limited.**

Lesson 9: Develop national standards and guidelines: On the issue of ownership versus independence, the peer learning team stressed the fact that **the use of external consultants does not guarantee independence of the evaluation and that a more important factor was the rigor and quality of the methodology through use of steering committees or reference groups.** In Colombia, SINERGIA recently published three different guidelines on how to start and implement monitoring at regional and local levels; and the process and requirements for different types of evaluations.

The team **recommends strengthening the peer review mechanism. It also suggested improving definition of TORs for evaluation by doing thorough problem diagnostics and validating the TORs by consulting programme managers and experts. In addition to the guidelines, there needs to be a commitment to putting them into operation.**

Improvement of procurement procedures to increase the speed at which consultants are recruited is also needed. Evaluators reported delays of up to one year in the procurement of services.

About the peer learning

This was the first pilot peer learning of 3ie members. During the evaluation week, the peer-learning team reviewed a self-evaluation of the evaluation policy, the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) document, and other reports (e.g., the PEAP evaluation), listened to presentations on the new approach and the evaluations being conducted through the OPM's evaluation facility, met with various Government departments including (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Uganda Bureau of Statistics, the Media Centre) and visited some donor agencies (DfID, EU), some private sector consulting firms (IPC and REEV), NGOs (ACODE and NGO Forum), and a Baraza forum in the district of Jinga. The study tour team included the following organisations:

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List of interviewees

Mr. Gawayo Tegule from the Media Centre
Mr. Arthur, Mr. Onesmus, Ms. Brenda A and the Kampala team from the NGO ACODE
Mr. Arthur Larok from NGO Forum
Prof. Nuwagaba from REEV consult international and Makerere University
Prof. Turyamuhika from International Development Consultants
Dr Stefan Lock and Ms. Sybille Schmidt from the European Union office in Kampala
Mr. David Rider Smith from the Department for international Development office in Kampala

Press coverage of the Uganda Evaluation Week

New Vision: What will OPM do to ensure money is not stolen again?

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/192-blog-what-will-opm-do-to-ensure-money-is-not-stolen-again.aspx>

New Vision: Focus on wealth creation, Museveni tells ministers

<http://www.newvision.co.ug/news/640251-focus-on-wealth-creation-museveni-tells-ministers.html>

Chimreports: Mbabazi: Gov't Stamping Out Corruption In Ministries

<http://www.chimpreports.com/index.php/news/8584-prime-minister-opens-evaluation-week.html>

The Observer and AllAfrica.com title: Uganda: Non-Performing Ministries to Be Penalised - Bigirimana

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201303080048.html>

Uganda: Office of the Prime Minister Creates Website to Monitor Govt Ministries

<http://allafrica.com/stories/201303071356.html>