Developing Evaluation Capacity in ICTD

Test-driving Utilization-Focused Evaluation

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About UFE

“Utilization-Focused Evaluation (UFE) begins with the premise that evaluations should be judged by their utility and actual use.” (Patton, 2008: 37).

In UFE, evaluators facilitate a learning process with attention to how real people in the real world apply evaluation findings and experiences.

In designing a utilization-focused evaluation -- the attention is constantly on the intended use by intended users.
Premises of UFE
(Michael Quinn Patton, AEA 2008)

- No evaluation should go forward unless and until there are primary intended users who will use the information that can be produced.
- Primary intended users are involved in the process.
- Evaluation is part of initial program design - The primary intended users want information to help answer a question or questions.
- Evaluator’s role is to help intended users clarify their purpose and objectives.
- Make implications for use part of every decision throughout the evaluation – the driving force of the evaluation process.
Project partners
(all are research projects)

- **LIRNEasia** - a think tank to conduct policy and regulation research on ICT and infrastructure development in Asia, including the CPRSouth conference series.

- **PANACeA**: a network of Asian institutions collaborating for evidence-based e-health adoption and application.

- **ISIF** - the Information Society Innovation Fund is a grants program aimed at stimulating creative solutions to ICT development needs in the Asia Pacific region.

- **SIRCA** - the Strengthening Information Society Research Capacity program that identifies future research leaders in ICTD.

- The **DREAM IT ‘Mega Mongolia’** project - a countrywide research program on the inter-relationships of policy, innovation, and the socio-economic effects of ICT.
DECI Objectives

To provide technical assistance to researchers toward improving their evaluation knowledge and skills.

To introduce regional evaluation consultants to the concepts and practices of UFE through engagement in mentoring evaluations of ongoing ICTD projects.

To develop a UFE workshop curriculum and test it across different ICTD project settings.

To contribute towards the completion of UFE evaluations of designated PAN projects.

To develop an approach to M&E capacity development with possible uses in other regions or thematic areas.

To communicate the DECI findings in the form of a short Primer directed mainly at evaluation professionals.
UFE steps

1. Project / network readiness assessment.
2. Evaluator readiness and capability assessment.
3. Identification of primary intended users.
4. Situational analysis.
5. Identification of primary intended uses.
6. Focusing on evaluation.
7. Evaluation design.
8. Simulation of use.
10. Data analysis.
11. Facilitate use.
Structure & roles

DECI coaching & mentoring
- 2 co-PI’s (Canada)

Project coaching & mentoring
- 3 regional evaluation consultants (India)

Implementation of evaluations
- 1 contracted evaluator or delegated staff in each of the 5 projects
3 mentors & 5 projects
Drivers of key evaluation questions

- PROCESS ORIENTED: INPUTS / APPROACH / THEORY OF CHANGE
- OUTCOME ORIENTED: OUTPUTS, INTERIM RESULTS ACHIEVED/ EFFICIENCY
- IMPACT ORIENTED: VALUE OR CHANGE PRODUCED FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Key Distinction in all Cases: Organization in driver’s seat for Identifying KEQs
Evaluation Themes

SiRCA

- Organizational Goal: Build ICTD Research Capacity in Asia

ISSUE FACED

- Ensure High Quality, Influential Research Output

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

- Evaluation Led to Reforms in
- Grant Review Process
- Mentorship
- Conferences and Networking
- Funding Improvement
- Based on Organizational Changes Made
Evaluation Themes

ISIF

- Organizational Goal: Small Grants for Developing Innovative ICT Access and Applications

ISSUE FACED

- Document effectiveness in Attracting and Supporting Projects for Resource Mobilization

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

- Evaluation Led to
  - Resource Mobilization Strategy
  - Contributed to Development of new Global Innov. Fund
  - Marketing Improvement
  - Based on Data from Evaluation
  - Also used for Web Platform changes
Evaluation Themes

CPRsouth/LIRNEAsia

- Organizational Goal: Capacity Building of ICT Researchers/Annual Conference and Tutorials
- ISSUE FACED
  - Resource Mobilization
  - Sharpen Focus on Core Objectives

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

- Evaluation Led to
- Documented Value to Stakeholders
- Refocused Effort on Young Scholar Capacity Building
- Experimenting with Cost-Sharing with Stakeholders
Evaluation Themes

PANACeA

- **Organizational Goal**: Research for Developing e-Health Applications in 10 Asian Countries

- **ISSUE FACED**
  - Members of Research Network wanted to Improve Network Level Approaches and Support

**EVALUATION OUTCOMES**

- Evaluation Led to
  - Identification of Network Problems
  - Improved Research Selection Procedures
  - Improved Network Communications
Evaluation Themes

DREAM-IT

- Organizational Goal: Support Development Research to Empower All Mongolians through ICT
- Six Sub-Projects in Educ., Health, Environment, Governance
- ISSUE FACED:
  - Non-Delivery and Delays in Sub-Project Implementation

EVALUATION OUTCOMES

- Evaluation Led to:
  - Identified link of Non-Delivery to Project Complexities
  - Developed Improved Project Screening Guidelines – To ensure that Plans/Funds in Place to Ensure Execution and Results
Strategic advantages

✦ SELF-ANALYSIS AND USE OF FINDINGS SUPPORTED FUNDING AND MARKETING STRATEGIES

✦ FOUND MORE USEFUL THAN EXTERNAL EVALUATION

✦ WHEN UFE VALUE RECOGNIZED BY MANAGEMENT – USE OF EVALUATION RESULTS STARTED – EVEN BEFORE FINAL REPORT COMPLETED

✦ BUILT EVALUATION CAPACITY IN ORGANIZATION FOR FUTURE
What was most helpful in UFE…

- The process, which *build capacity* in the organizations
- The focus on USE
- The focus on USERS
- The 12 STEPS defined
- The participatory and flexible approach.
What was most challenging:

- Early stages of engaging the primary users
- Size primary user group
- Staff turnover, late hiring of evaluator
- The “aha moment” came late
- Not quick and dirty
- Narrowing Key Evaluation Questions
- Simulation (Step 8) – a hard pill to swallow
Conditions, enabling factors:

- Funder allowed grantees the option to do UFE
- All the organizations needed to document value for sustainability of funding
- Mentorship offer: hand-holding throughout
- Leadership and clarity of purpose; the level of commitment of project managers was key
- Allocating funds and personnel was a requirement
Take home lessons

- Donor and institutional readiness
- Leadership within organization: informed buy-in
- Mentorship – apprenticeship
- Introduce as a research exercise
http://evaluationinpractice.wordpress.com