DPRN THEMATIC MEETING REPORT 2006

Measuring results in development

Partner van ondernemende mensen

CERES

Development Policy Review Network

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Contents

Report of the DPRN thematic meeting 2006
'Measuring results in development'

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Introduction

The Development Policy Review Network (DPRN) is a platform for development experts, practitioners and policymakers that organises regional and thematic meetings with a view to bridging the gap between the different groups dealing with international development issues and development cooperation. In 2005, a first cycle of expert meetings was organised for 13 world regions at which scientists, policymakers and practitioners exchanged views, knowledge and experiences in order to increase synergy. The meetings provided a platform to meet each other, find out about each other's activities and discuss relevant developments and issues in the various regions. In addition to these regionally-based meetings, the DPRN also organises thematic seminars and workshops on topical issues, normally during the CERES Summer School that is held in June each year. In 2005, the thematic meeting was on 'The Millennium Development Goals as a challenge for scientists and development practitioners´. This meeting resulted in a policy brief and inventory of MDG-related expertise in the Netherlands and Belgium that was used by the Ministry of Development Cooperation and had been the subject of publicity through the New York conference on the MDGs that was held in September 2005.

The 2006 thematic meeting on 'Measuring results in development' again deals with a topical issue. In current development practice, 'results' are crucial. Funding agencies, the Dutch parliament and the media expect more transparency as regards the output, effects and impact of 'all those millions spent on development'. Measuring results has also become a major issue in other policy domains, such as health care and education. However, measuring results is controversial in policy circles and scientific circles alike. The questions are what can be measured and how? At what levels? With what confidence? And within what timeframes? Does the emphasis on results not create an enormous bureaucracy? Does an emphasis on result measurement mask the importance of the processes actually resulting in

[1] With input from DPRN Task Force members Ton Dietz and Jan Donner, the student reporters Maarten Johannes Kuipers, Katherine Miles, Judith Westeneng, Annica Blok, Anne van Lakerveld and Brigitte Stolk, and participants Bert Noordgraaf (ICCO) and Lia van Wesenbeeck (SOW, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam). Language correction by Howard Turner.

development? Recent reports examine these issues from different perspectives. The 2006 DPRN thematic meeting was meant to discuss and weigh the various viewpoints.
The meeting started with a series of short introductions on various reports (read: viewpoints) dealing with result measurement in international cooperation. These reports were brought together and made available in advance on the DPRN website (http://www.DPRN.nl under 'Publications'). The introductions were followed by five working groups which generated more in-depth discussion of the various viewpoints (see Appendix 1 for the full programme). This report presents a summary of presentations and the debate.

Plenary morning session

Dr Jan Donner, President of the Royal Tropical Institute and Chair of the DPRN Task Force, welcomed the participants and expressed pleasure at the fact that the DPRN meetings are attracting more and more interest. It is clear that the DPRN meetings fulfil a need.

According to Donner, 'measuring results in development' is a hot topic as witnessed by the many papers and documents that have recently been written on this subject (again: see http://www.DPRN.nl under 'Publications'). In his view, the question is not *whether* measuring the results of development work is necessary, since measuring results, reporting, accountability and evaluations are part of any well-managed and well-structured process, needed to reflect on past performance and strengths and weaknesses and to monitor change. The point is, however, the *quality* of each of the tools that are being applied during the management process – from start to finish. Accountability and evaluations will only be as good as the quality of all the other management tools in use in the process under review, such as policies, terms of reference, tender documents and budgets. The message Donner gave to the participants was:

- Measuring results in development is important and a worthwhile topic to discuss; the tools in use should be refined so that they are as effective as they can be;
- 'Measuring results' and the associated management tools are receiving disproportionate attention when compared with the management tools that are being used in other phases of development activities and projects;
- The old adage 'garbage in, garbage out' applies to the management of development cooperation and thus to the management of change as well. It is therefore important to discuss the relevance and the quality of measuring results as part of a holistic management approach.

Having been closely involved in the writing of the evaluation report on the results of bilateral development cooperation by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, entitled '*Resultaten in ontwikkeling*' (Results in development), **Mr Pim van der Male** of the Directorate Effectiveness and Quality (DEK) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that three topics of this evaluation are interesting to share with the participants of this thematic meeting. In the first place, the evaluation concentrated on concrete results (outcomes and impacts) with a view to improving effectiveness and to increasing accountability *vis-à-vis* the partner countries and Dutch society. Not so much attention was paid to the evaluation of processes, mainly because they are hard to measure. Secondly, no attention was paid to the question of attribution – that is whether results can be attributed to the interventions of the Ministry. As Mr Maarten Brouwer of the same department clarified later, when a question from the audience was raised on this topic, the Ministry has studied the changes in the 36 partner countries involved and whether these align with the objectives that were set. However, the Ministry did not try to establish a causal link between the two, since this is too complex. Finally, the purpose of this evaluation was to learn from the findings instead of judging the work that has been carried out. This fits the objective of transforming the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into a learning organisation. Unfortunately, the Ministry has received hardly any feedback on the report since its publication in November 2005.

In the second presentation, **Ms Gemma Crijns** – who was a researcher for the Dijkstal commission on '*Draagvlak en Effectiviteit Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*' (Support and Effectiveness of Development Cooperation) – clarified the report of the Dijkstal Commission, which was subject to a lot of misinterpretations after its publication (see Appendix 3-1 for the PowerPoint presentation). The Dijkstal commission has never said that 'measuring results is useless or nonsense' or that 'development organisations should be trusted on their blue or brown eyes'. Instead, the commission has been clear about the need for development organisations to be accountable to their donors (the government, the public), meaning that what can be measured should be measured. However, the commission had concluded that measuring results in terms of *outcome and impact* is not a useful instrument for providing accountability or for decision-making on the allocation of funds, and that it does not lead to a sound opinion on the effectiveness of development cooperation The commission came to this conclusion after having encountered a lot of methodological shortcomings in evaluations, related to attribution, aggregation, the short time cycle, and the objectives of 'monitoring and verification' or 'learning'. As a result, evaluations tend to lead to 'paper realities' and to disproportionate costs when compared to their benefits (providing insight into the effectiveness of development interventions). Furthermore, a focus on measuring results means running the risk that development cooperation focus on measurable activities and that dealing with complex issues is consequently avoided. Based on the view that evaluations should be a part of the organisation and not some far-off objective, the commission recommended that organisations be obliged to publish their results (*resultaatsverplichting*) at the level of output and be obliged to do their utmost (*inspanningsverplichting*) to make clear what the outcomes and effects are. A third recommendation, which referred to a return to trust in the proven professionalism of organisations, was met with scepticism. According to Prof. Dr Ton Dietz, a possible danger related to proven professionalism is that no attention is paid to the work that has been carried out by a particular organisation.

The third speaker, **Prof. Dr Jan Willem Gunning,** challenged the view that everyone agrees that measuring results is desirable (see Appendix 3-2 for the PowerPoint presentation). Some are of the opinion that good intentions is what matters (the 'rock star view'), while there are others who do not even want to be properly informed because this complicates the decision-making process (the 'Yes, Minister view'). Gunning strongly disagrees with the Dijkstal commission when it says that measuring results is unsuitable as an instrument for accountability due to methodological problems like attribution, aggregation and poor data quality. Instead he advocates the Statistical Impact Evaluation (SIE) In order to find out what works and how effectiveness can be improved (the 'learning view') and to analyse whether aid succeeds (the 'accountability view'). In the SIE method, treatment and control groups are compared so that the effect of the intervention can be measured (double blind testing). Gunning explained that the techniques used to carry out SIE are already well established, and that they are being applied in various sectors of development work such as the evaluation of social safety nets, enrolment programmes for the poor and primary school interventions. In the Netherlands, for example, the Bernard van Leer Foundation and International Child Support already use the method in an education setting. What is needed is good baseline data, intervention histories and impact variables (for instance poverty indices, cholera incidence and enrolment figures). Gunning concluded that the feasibility of SIE is not the issue, but that the challenge is to measure effectiveness beyond the project level for a sector or country as a whole.

Prof. Dr **Ton Dietz** gave the final presentation, in which he highlighted a number of recommendations formulated in the evaluation of the theme-based co-financing programme (TMF) (see Appendix 3-3 for an extended summary of these recommendations and http://www.tmf-evaluatie.nl for the complete TMF evaluation reports). Dietz stressed that this evaluation is a process analysis and not an output evaluation (for which it would be too early any way, as one of the participants remarked). Although the results of this evaluation were formally published in April this year, there were informal contacts with the Ministry prior to its publication. As a result of these contacts, the recommendations have put much more emphasis on the development of good and coherent policy theories, which show past performances and predict the future of the work in the new co-financing system (*Medefinancieringsstelsel* – MFS). Dietz also presented some of the other recommendations during his presentation, for example:

- To cherish and further strengthen the width and depths of the non-governmental sector involved in international development supported by the Netherlands;
- When poverty is the key element, measuring should focus accordingly on poverty reduction;
- Give NGOs and their partners adequate financial and organisational flexibility to develop their capabilities as learning organisations;
- Goals cannot be reached in two or three years, so longer subsidy arrangements should be developed;
- Enhance the quality of pioneering monitoring & evaluation;
- Learning capability should be present in the whole chain;
- Finally, the time has come to start a dedicated long-term research programme with a typology-driven selection of countries which should involve Dutch and Southern research institutions.

After these four presentations, several other issues where raised by the audience during a short **debate**. One concerned the problem of finding reliable data in developing countries. Although the speakers agreed that it is problematic to obtain reliable data, Van der Male emphasised the need to use local data systems in order to improve quality. Gunning added that techniques, like household surveys, are already available to overcome this problem.

Another topic that was discussed concerned the alignment of evaluation procedures and methodologies. Dietz believed this to be a naïve idea and impossible because there is no standard methodology for evaluation. A lot of evaluation systems are still under development and debate on the various approaches is desirable in order to improve them.

Gunning argued that money should be put into a 'common pool' from which evaluations are then paid for. This would allow the recipient countries to play a more important role in evaluations, which should not be the monopoly of donors. For example, when education in Tanzania is evaluated, the Tanzanian Ministry of Education could be made responsible for the evaluation and then share the results with donors and civil society. The current trend is to involve more and more African governments in evaluations. In relation to this, Van der Male had already highlighted efforts by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to encourage the involvement of local civil society in evaluations studies.

Dr Otto Hospes (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) wondered whether the SIE method advocated by Gunning could be the answer to the methodological shortcomings that the Dijkstal Commission had indicated. Dietz seriously doubted whether SIE is generally applicable to evaluate development work. Although this is possible in some sectors, such as health care (epidemiological data), education and water projects, it is more difficult to apply in more complicated fields. Both Dietz and Gunning agreed that attempts should be made to apply SIE in these 'easier' sectors first, in order to assess its relevance.

Another issue that was raised concerned the costs associated with the application of the SIE method. Dietz expressed the fear that this method may become extremely expensive (because of the need for highly paid experts capable of using it) if it is the only tool available. Gunning, in turn, strongly disagreed with this opinion, since the costs are determined primarily by the collection of data. If this is done from the very beginning (as should be the case for any other evaluation anyway), it would not be that costly. The extra work of the SIE involves the statistical processing of the acquired data, which is not that expensive.

A final issue that was raised in the debate concerned one of the recommendations of the Dijkstal report, namely how to assess the professionalism of an organisation. Crijns remarked that ISO procedures are not enough. Governments can also use the OECD/DAC criteria to assess each other. The professionalism of a specific department should be a point of debate within the organisation. The criteria used for this is a point that merits attention.

At the end of the debate the participants dispersed to the working group of their choice and reconvened at five o'clock to attend the second plenary session.

Working groups

Report Working Group 1
Measuring Results: What are the limits?

Chair: Dr Jan Donner
Speakers: Ms Gemma Crijns, Mr Maarten Brouwer, Prof. Dr Jan Willem Gunning
Reporters: Dr Jan Donner and Ms Katherine Miles, with input from the speakers

This session opened with statements by each of speakers, based on the presentations that were held in the plenary session. Based on these statements, two topics were selected for further discussion:

1. Data: availability and collection
The working group agreed that data collection is a precondition for measuring results. Data collection management must be structured from the start of any activity. The availability of data need not be a problem since often there is too much data. The problem is the rather poor quality of the data and the lack of specific data which means a lot of the available data remains unusable and unanalysed.

Good baseline data is a prerequisite and is needed to define what data has to be collected to measure results and development. Brouwer emphasised the need to use existing data collection systems, in particular routine data systems. Doing so would allow capacity strengthening to be integrated (mainstreamed) into data collection. Specific additional data should be collected in ways which cause as little burden as possible, usually as survey data. It has to be possible to use data for aggregation purposes, to support decision-making processes.

While discussing the measurement of impact of interventions, it was noted that not only the overall objective or end targets have to be assessed, but also the intermediate goals. Brouwer, supported by Gunning, firmly disagreed with the latter, arguing that development is not a linear and predictable process. He stated that measuring results should focus on the relationship between the main objectives of the intervention and the outcomes. These objectives should be defined beforehand, in order to prevent that the data collected from becoming a by-product which is unrelated to the planned interventions.

It was noted, though, that assigning results to a particular activity remains difficult due to external influences and ‘black holes’ in the development process. Statistical methods can be used to overcome this problem to some extent, but qualitative analysis and informal methods need to be applied in result measurement as well. However, the various methods should be seen as complementary and not as substitutes.

it was suggested that the logical framework approach could be a useful tool for analytical purposes as it makes the assumptions explicit. However, it is not a very helpful tool when it comes to measuring results, as the logical chain would then become a description of perceived realities. It was noted that such an approach would become subject to increased 'hunger' for data at sublevel objectives, ending up in paper realities and overstressed data collection.

A recurrent discussion relates to the costs of measuring results (see the above report of the plenary morning session). This discussion led to the statement that smaller organisations are often ill-equipped for rigorous data collection as required by donors. Questions were raised about the tendency to involve larger organisations, ignoring the smaller grassroots groups which are less well equipped for measuring results. Rather than to be excluded from projects, smaller organisations should organise the necessary critical mass to overcome this problem, for instance by combining efforts. It was felt that this could be an incentive for smaller organisations to adapt in terms of building capacity for measuring results and for scaling up their work, so that they can comply with the 'rules of the game'.

Domestic (recipient) needs should be the primary motivator for the types of data to be collected and this is a point of domestic accountability. It was argued that data collection systems which are part of the development activity should be integrated into wider sectoral systems in recipient countries with a view to maintaining consistency. Some of the participants criticised donors for having an excessively narrowly perspective on data collection, and for often ignoring its political impact. It was agreed that data collection techniques should not be imposed on recipients, but discussed with them instead.

2. Attribution: technically and politically

In a discussion on how to measure the impact of interventions, it was noted that 'attribution' must be defined at both a political and technical level. Brouwer stated that, in the ***technical*** sense of attribution, added value could be established by mapping *ex ante* cause and effect chains, identifying the 'black holes' in these chains and employing tools for qualitative analysis as a way to improve learning and understanding. This allows for a better planning of interventions, including the baseline data and causal chains, so that performance can be measured using the substantive elements of statistical evidence and qualitative analysis.

A representative of Oxfam Novib challenged the cause and effect view of interventions as being too simplistic for complex societies, claiming that a focus on predefined results will lead to things being missed and that not everything can be predicted, for example 9/11 and its knock-on effects. Such events illustrate that it is helpful to review all successes annually, even the unplanned ones. Gunning agreed that 9/11 was a good example of attribution in the ***political*** sense and of why statistical impact evaluations are needed since such techniques isolate the effect of interventions from changes due to other factors. Precisely in a situation such as that following 9/11, a simple before/after comparison would be highly misleading. Nonetheless, this kind of attribution has to be separated from the technical one because causality can apply in the opposite direction as well. For example, the activity's outcomes may be better than expected. However, rather than being attributable to the organisation's intervention they may have been due to unusually good weather or buoyant financial markets.

In response to Oxfam Novib's argument against focusing on a predefined set of results, a representative of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam stated that it is unethical to speak about success if you have achieved goals other than those predefined with donors prior to the activity. This point was reinforced by another participant who stated that if an organisation has a legitimate reason for not meeting its predefined objectives, then it should be made explicit rather than glossed over. Crijns voiced disagreement with the comment about organisations being unethical if they announce good news, but said that they should explain the background to developments and events to donors because that can improve development cooperation. Brouwer raised the issue of an overcrowded 'charimarket' which provides strong incentives to hide the bad news and promote the good.

The session finished with Brouwer addressing a question posed by a member of the audience who asked what has changed in the debate over the last 10 years. In his view, development cooperation has moved away from implementation as the core business and towards analysis and monitoring. Operating at a distance has led to the identification of new needs. Whereas showing outputs as results satisfies the need for providing accountability for operational processes, it is not satisfactory when it comes to providing accountability for analysis and monitoring. The current demands for results caused a shift from outputs to outcomes and impact – a task for which many organisations are not well-equipped. Carefully planned impact evaluations constitute an important tool to provide data at outcome and impact level, the latter preferably in terms of plausibility.

The discussions of this working group were summarised using the following three statements:

1. Measuring results requires data collection at the beginning, middle and during a project and not only afterwards.
2. Organisations need to structure their own critical mass to measure results and mobilise support if they lack the capacity to organise an adequate evaluation.
3. It is important to define attribution at a political and technical level. Objectives should be defined beforehand and evaluation should be carried out in relation to these objectives.

Report Working Group 2
Integrating monitoring, evaluation and learning from co-financing and thematic co-financing (TMF) agencies

Chair: Prof. Dr Bert Helmsing
Speakers: Dr Sjoerd Zanen (MDF Training and Consultancy) and Mr Jim Woodhill (Wageningen International) and Dr Paul Engel (ECDPM)
Reporter: Ms Judith Westeneng

In this working group two evaluations formed the starting point for a discussion about Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E) and learning. The first one is an evaluation of the theme-based co-financing system (TMF), while the other discussion was based on the experiences of the External Reference (or peer review) Group evaluation of the MBN (*Mede Financierings Breed)* Joint Programme Evaluation of the six co-financing organisations.

Key Lessons from the cross-cutting monitoring and evaluation (M & E) study (TMF evaluation)
Dr Sjoerd Zanen, MDF Training and Consultancies, and Mr Jim Woodhill, Wageningen International (see Appendix 3-4 for PowerPoint presentation)

The entire TMF evaluation consisted of seven thematic evaluations and two cross-cutting studies, one of which concerned monitoring (the regular collection and analysis of information) and evaluation (the periodic assessment of the overall value and progress of an initiative). This study dealt with questions about the quality of present M & E systems, the factors that could improve the systems of TMF organisations and the extent to which organisations are, or could become, a learning organisation. A participatory approach was applied with a self-evaluation, workshops, surveys and interviews being the most important methods used. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also included in the research.

What is M & E about? A few remarks:
- Results and impact are managed with a view to (1) finding lasting and effective operations; (2) creating a learning environment – which is mostly seen as a separate part rather than being integrated in the whole system; and (3) guiding the (project) strategy. The latter aspect of planning is usually found to be the weakest. The M & E system applies to all three aspects.
- An M & E system should fulfil five objectives: (1) Accountability, (2) Supporting operational management, (3) Supporting strategic management, (4) Knowledge creation, and (5) Empowerment. The question is on what purpose organisations should focus.
- Four questions apply when studying the results: (1) *What* – what has been achieved; (2) *Why*: why has it been successful or not; (3) *So what*: what are the implications; and (4) *Now what*: what can be improved. In most organisations M & E is limited to the first question, which means that it is no learning organisation.

The general conclusions of the TMF cross-cutting study on M & E and learning were:
- There is a high level of awareness about M&E and there are a lot of good practices;
- There is a wide diversity in M & E systems;
- The outcome and impact level remain a difficult part of M & E;
- There is little change in project strategy as a result of M & E;
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gets a very 'watered' down perspective from the current reporting structure.

The speakers presented the following recommendations:
- Make the M & E principles and expectations clear;
- Develop M & E capacity;
- Invest in M & E and learning;
- Develop the donor-recipient relationship;
- Encourage strategic change;

- Improve considerably the monitoring in the Ministry.

Issues emerging from MBN Joint Programme Evaluations
Dr Paul Engel, European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM) and the External Reference Group of the MBN (Medefinanciering Breed Netwerk) evaluation (see Appendix 3-5 for PowerPoint presentation)

Engel was part of the external reference group, and as such did not do the evaluation himself.

Which results should be measured?
- A well-defined policy or intervention theory defines levels and chains of outcomes and hence, the types of results that may be expected to occur.
- Different routes of accountability influence the choice of results to be measured. The question that needs to be asked first is, 'to whom do we have to be accountable?'
- There are also different learning routes (*e.g.* for policymakers, staff, management).

Which results can be measured?
- The higher the level and the further down the chain (*i.e.* closer to the target groups) results are measured, the more complex and time-consuming and energy-consuming the evaluation is.
- As a consequence, preconditions and methodological issues weigh heavily on the feasibility and the usefulness of measurement attempts.
- The more complex a measuring problem is the more important stakeholder consultation becomes in order to achieve a balanced assessment and to remain cost-effective.
- Measuring the un-measurable: how to identify unexpected results as a measure of innovation and learning. Harvesting indicators from real life stories is a tool that can be useful.

Central elements in the presentation were:
1. *Policy theory*. Organisations need a good policy theory which then influences the relationship with the partners and enables the organisation to create a good programme together with the partners. This, in turn, makes it easier to understand the results. Without a policy theory, it is not possible to carry out a good Monitoring & Evaluation (M & E).
2. *Capacity for M & E* (*e.g.* good methodologies). Jointly implementing Programme Evaluations is a good way for development organisations to exchange experiences, to compare and learn from each other's practices and to learn how to manage consultants properly for M & E.
3. The M & E systems can be allocated to the categories 'internal' and 'external'. The internal M & E system refers to the way M & E is integrated in an organisation. Often there are all kinds of things going on unconsciously, that are actually part of the internal M & E system, but which are not recognised as such. The link should be made with the partners' – often informal – M & E systems as well. Small, simple things can be included (*e.g.* talking over a cup of coffee about work). The advantage of external M & E is the

independence of the evaluators and the possibility of exchanging experiences between NGOs and of therefore learning from each other.

Discussion

Besides what has been said in the presentations (and mentioned in the summary below), several additional remarks were made:

- In the TMF evaluation it was concluded that the outcome level receives too little attention: most M & E shift from output directly to impact;
- The way impact is measured is (often) too complex and hence, not cost effective;
- What is the ideal percentage of the budget to be spent on M & E? The TMF evaluation team believes the ideal percentage is 5-10%. However, as was highlighted by one of the participants, M & E costs are part of the overhead costs and organisations are bound to a fixed percentage;
- The need to be flexible: indicators vary from place to place;
- Will the use of local indicators result in M & E being less uniform in the future? It can be argued that diversity is good for the learning process;
- M&E should be an iterative process so that it can be used as a learning tool.
- A focus on learning is not optional. It is required to obtain reliable information from insiders. The main challenge is to implement it in all layers of an organisation;
- Dare to share! There is a trend to share more.

Summary

The most important lesson is that a focus on learning really makes the difference. Six other important points made were the following:

1. A good planning phase and policy theory is the basis of M & E.
2. There are several advantages to joint evaluations. If trust is developed, joint evaluations are an important and handy tool.
3. There is a difference between internal and external M & E systems.
4. There is already a lot going on with regard to M & E, but some of it is not recognised as being part of M & E.
5. It is important to develop the capacity of organisations to carry out their own research and evaluations. In this, learning to manage the evaluation process and consultants is important.
6. It is important to create a system that is increasingly based on joint knowledge.

Report Working Group 3

Measuring results from economic development, agricultural, environmental and rural development projects, including the challenges of gender integration

Chair: Prof. Dr Ton Dietz
Speakers: Mr Cor Wattel, Mr Arend Jan van Bodegom and Ms Edith van Walsum
Reporter: Ms Annica Blok

Working Group 3 consisted of three presentations dealing with evaluations concerning microfinance, agricultural and environmental development projects and the challenge of gender integration, respectively. The latter two were part of the Thematic Co-financing (TMF) evaluation that was carried out in the first months of 2006.

Impact and social performance in microfinance: changing approaches
Mr Cor Wattel, Terrafina
(see Appendix 3- 6 for PowerPoint presentation)

Mr Wattel is coordinator of Terrafina – a joint microfinance initiative of ICCO, Oikocredit and the Rabobank Foundation in rural Africa set up in 2005. Terrafina is active in West Africa (Mali and Burkina Faso), the Horn of Africa (Ethiopia) and the Great Lakes region (particularly Rwanda). Wattel spoke about two ways of evaluating microfinance: impact assessment and improving practice.

A. Proving impact
Experience with impact assessment in micro finance has shown that it is prone to various difficulties. It is complex and demanding, there are attribution problems (can the effect be ascribed to the microfinance programme) and it is costly. In addition, impact assessments have very little influence on the operations and performance of microfinance institutions because they are too small in number and the reports are not easily accessible and readable for practitioners. Finally, microfinance can have multidimensional impacts, such as employment and empowerment, which are not all easy to assess. Because of these hurdles there is a trend towards sectoral impact assessment at country level, instead of individual impact assessment per microfinance project. Furthermore, there is a trend towards improving practice through the use of the social performance concept.

B. Improving practice
The Social Performance concept is gaining in importance. It is understood as the effective translation of an institution's social mission into practice in terms of actions, corrective measures and outcomes. In other words, it is about how policy and mission are translated into practice and about how the daily work is monitored and improved.
Wattel highlighted three ways of applying the Social Performance concept:
a. Social Performance management (used internally by microfinance institutions)
b. Social Performance reporting (by microfinance institutions to the outside world)
c. Social Performance rating (by external rating agencies)

Social Performance management
In Social Performance management, the Imp-Act's Pathway approach is applied as a framework for monitoring and evaluation. The Imp-Act Pathway follows the whole chain from intent and design (mission, goals, design, product and service range), via intervention (*e.g.* products and services; human resources) to results (target groups reached and needs that are met) and change (*e.g.* have the lives of the clients been improved; have opportunities for communities increased?). Wattel noted that the idea of including a change in the assessment is subject to debate because of the measurement problems associated with it. The Imp-Act's Pathway is, however, preferred to impact assessment because it is a management approach that follows the whole chain and includes a 'feedback loop' and a

variety of other tools. The underlying assumption of this approach is that improvement in social performance leads to improvement in economic performance and the positioning of the microfinance institution.
After tests have been carried out with 10-20 microfinance institutions between 2003 and 2005, the Social Performance management approach is now being 'scaled up' through regional hubs which are linked to microfinance networks in the South. Several training models have been developed based on the tests.

Social Performance reporting
Several efforts are being made to develop a common minimum set of Social Performance indicators for reporting on Social Performance. Actors involved in this effort include the International Task Force on Social Performance (consisting of researchers, microfinance institutions, donors and rating agencies) and the Netherlands Micro Finance Platform.

Social Performance rating
Six or seven external rating agencies are increasingly working together to develop a common rating framework that includes financial indicators, calibration of various microfinance models and standardised scores. The link with the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is being explored.

Wattel concluded that:
- There is a trend towards being more selective and strategic in 'proving impact';
- There is a trend towards a systems approach in 'improving performance', including social performance management, reporting and rating;
- Proving impact is like a 'building under construction'.

Questions and answers
Q: What is the definition of 'social mission' in the description of Social Performance?
A: Social mission refers to the social dimension of the microfinance institution's mission, such as the target client and the desired changes in the lives of people, including Corporate Social Responsibility. The working hypothesis is that one looks at an organisation's social statement and whether the organisation adheres to it. There are no general tools for this since they are still under development.

Q: Monitoring and assessment are expensive. Has one ever thought of using indicators that organisations can use themselves? This might also be very stimulating.
A: This idea is being picked up, but only to a certain degree. Accounting is usually not left to microfinance organisations. However, the data collected by them is being used in the feedback provided to them so that they know where they stand.

Q: The studies seem to be of an introvert nature. They are restricted to the microfinance institutions and their clients. This is disputable, as external factors may have a considerable influence. Microfinance institutions form too small a circle. Would it not be better to examine the issue on a larger scale and broaden the scope?

A: Is it so introvert? Half of the people involved seem to think so and that microfinance institutions behave like a small industry. However, their links are extending, for instance to banks and NGOs. Relating to a larger scale will surely improve assessment.

Q: What is the desired impact of microfinance?
A: Impact has many dimensions which can be categorised into two main groups:
1. At the individual level, impacts refer to, for instance, increased income, employment and empowerment. In other words: poverty reduction.
2. At the community level, the impact is of a more qualitative nature.

Q: How do you deal with the merger of African and European views of Social Performance? Are there general norms?
A: Assessment should be time and location specific, which means that it needs to be qualitative as well. A lot of steering and reflection customising is needed for each separate case. However, assessment is often limited to indicators that are less influenced by *e.g.* culture. These are ‘key indicators’, which do not cover the full scale.

It was concluded that, alongside the methods of monitoring and evaluations of the development sector, business tools are available as well. Although they are different, they could still be used for some segments of the development sector.

Poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation
Dr Arend Jan van Bodegom, Wageningen International, coordinator of the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation (see Appendix 3-7 for PowerPoint presentation)

Van Bodegom first discussed the types of evaluation that all exist between the Classic Evaluation, with passive stakeholders and an (assumed) mono-centric government, and Responsive Evaluation, with active stakeholders and (assumed) pluri-centric governance.

Van Bodegom stressed the importance of an enabling environment (*i.e.* external factors) for the success of organisations to generate a win-win situation in poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation. Examples of external factors are the arrangements within the country, such as power relations, the law and the availability of technology. Before starting interventions it is important to make an assessment of the enabling environment. Such an assessment might also provide an indication of how much effort in terms of money and time would be needed to generate the desired win-win situation.

When it comes to the environment, the DAC (Development Assistance Committee) guidelines for poverty reduction are very important. They are better than the MDGs, which are too unspecified. The DAC guidelines cover a wide range of aspects of poverty and thus provide a better basis for monitoring, at least for the environment. Moreover, the TMF strategies often do not cover a 5th DAC dimension of poverty, namely the capacity of people to deal with external shocks. This is frequently an important direct or indirect result of environmental programmes and projects but is not always explicitly taken into account when monitoring how the poor are helped.

In the TMF biodiversity programme projects eligible for funding should combine biodiversity conservation with direct poverty alleviation, civil society building or lobbying. The TMF evaluation on biodiversity concluded that programmes which combine activities in all these three fields seem to be most promising. In relation to lobbying, the critical question is whether policy change will improve the situation of the target groups. If in 10 years time the groups would be able to speak for themselves – which would be real 'empowerment' – then the answer is 'yes'; if not then the answer is 'no, biodiversity conservation is not sustainable.'

There are four main challenges to devising a monitoring system, all of which are crucial to make it work. For instance, it has to be acceptable for the local stakeholders, which means that it should be clear to them 'what's in it for them'. But it should also be acceptable to donors, the implementing organisation and local staff.

Based on his experience with the evaluation of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation in thematic co-financing, Van Bodegom finally presented several recommendations for improved monitoring and evaluation. The most important of these are (in that order):
- The DAC guidelines should be used for monitoring and evaluation, specifically for environmental activities; and
- Monitoring and evaluation should always be gender specific.

The challenges to gender mainstreaming
Ms Edith van Walsum, Voices and Choices, member of the Gender Study team of the TMF Evaluation (see Appendix 3-8 for PowerPoint presentation)

Van Walsum outlined Dutch gender policies and programmes as a context for the gender study. Since Women and Development first featured on the agenda as a policy theme in 1975, the Dutch Government has followed a two-track strategy: women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. Women's empowerment happens through the support of women's organisations while gender mainstreaming emphasises the cross-cutting nature of gender: it has to be embedded in each and every development activity.

The focus of the gender study was on women's empowerment. All the other study teams were supposed to assess the extent to which gender mainstreaming is happening within the context of their theme. According to the gender study team it would have been better if gender mainstreaming had been studied as a crosscutting issue in the TMF evaluation, like Monitoring and Evaluation and Added Value. As things stand, the picture emerging from the different studies is somewhat scattered. On the basis of the gender study, no specific observations can be made on gender mainstreaming in the context of TMF. However, some general observations have been made about the policy context in which both the women's empowerment component and the gender mainstreaming component of the Dutch policy are becoming eroded.

Due to the reorganisation of foreign policy and funding strategies for development, less attention and money has gone directly to gender-specific issues. The main challenge in the past years has been how to ensure that gender equality becomes embedded in new policy instruments and new policy themes.

The gender mainstreaming policy has not been updated since the end of the 1990s. Currently gender mainstreaming is spread over all the thematic areas in the TMF programme. The result is that it is a 'nobody's baby'. There is no specific policy or group working on gender mainstreaming. This policy context is crucial when thinking about how to set up a monitoring and evaluation system.

The assumption seems to be that gender mainstreaming – after 25 years – has been more or less accomplished and that no special policy instruments are needed anymore to ensure that gender mainstreaming remains 'on stream'. Unfortunately, this assumption has not been tested in the TMF evaluation.

The gender study has assessed the performance of three women's organisations. All three have been evaluated positively. However, the main concern that emerged from this study is that, if no corrections are made soon, Netherlands Development Cooperation will no longer feature a gender policy. Two of the three organisations studied are not eligible for follow-up funding as they are non-Dutch organisations (which is representative for the portfolio of gender organisations in TMF). The exclusion of non-Dutch organisations from the MFS funding system (*'medefinancieringsstelsel')* therefore has a disastrous effect on the gender programme as there are very few Dutch organisations with a women empowerment agenda that are eligible for MFS funding.

The conclusion is that it takes just three years to destroy a solid gender policy based on a strong international reputation built up over 25 years.

Q: the last two speakers have mainly spoken on (the lack of) policymaking, instead of evaluation and assessment, why is this?

Van Walsum: In spite of evaluations showing positive results, the erosion of the Dutch gender policy continues. It raises questions about the relevance of doing gender evaluations in a context that does not give importance to gender.

Van Bodegom: When it comes to biodiversity conservation, people demand that sustainability and development go hand in hand. However, as yet there is no relevant policy (*i.e.* this needs to be done first, before evaluation is possible).

It was concluded that monitoring and evaluation only serve learning if policies are continuous. The volatility of policy destroys ongoing learning processes.

Report Working Group 4
Measuring results in human rights, women's rights, peace building and social development projects.

Chair: Mr Wilco de Jonge (Press Now)
Speakers: Prof. Dr Willem van Genugten (Tiburg University), Ms Lida Zuidberg (Eos Concult), Prof. Dr Gerd Junne (Universiteit van Amsterdam) and Dr Jan Boessenkool (Utrecht University)
Reporter: Ms Anne van Lakerveld

In this work group, four speakers briefly described their experiences with the theme-based co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation in their field, after which there was time for questions and discussion.

A human rights-based approach to development
Prof. Dr Willem van Genugten, Tilburg University, coordinator of the TMF sub-evaluation of human rights

Van Genugten did not go into detail regarding his evaluation but instead addressed a few key points. His research involved four Dutch organisations and focused on their relations with African NGOs with respect to human rights.

Van Genugten concluded that all organisations scored well as regards clarity and effectiveness of the proposed objectives. Moreover, the report looked at what it meant for the Dutch organisations to work in an African context and addressed the capacity to learn of all actors in the development chain, either starting at the government or grass-root level. Van Genugten added that, in this case, it was easier to approach the chain from the government level due to issues related to accessibility.

Van Genugten stated that measuring the real effects of activities is difficult, which implies that one cannot provide the desired maximum clarity as regards the effects of development interventions. Output or results that can be measured do not necessarily represent reality because it is difficult to evaluate whether outcomes are the result of specific activities pursued by the organisations under evaluation. Furthermore, in the case of human rights, the African partner organisations had many contacts with other NGOs, which made it impossible to determine whether certain outcomes were due to specific activities of the Dutch organisations. According to Van Genugten, it is of utmost importance to invest in an enabling environment for human rights. In addition, psychological elements are at least as important as the concrete practice of human rights organisations.

On a more negative note, the time span of the evaluation was too short to evaluate the human rights issue and the effect on poverty alleviation. It would have been better to take the long term into account as well and to invest in it in order to promote the sustainability of activities.

The TMF Gender study: results for whom?
Ms Lida Zuidberg, EOS Consult, member of the TMF sub-evaluation of gender
(see Appendix 3-9 for PowerPoint presentation)
Zuidberg's' point of departure was the importance of acknowledging who the results of the evaluation are for and how these results influence the outcome of the overall evaluation exercise. In her presentation, Zuidberg addressed headlines and results from the study.

The main problem facing the study was the fact that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue in the Dutch policy for development cooperation, which means that it is interwoven with a number of other policy fields. Therefore, in the opinion of EOS Consult, the gender sub-evaluation should have been designed as a crosscutting study (like for example monitoring and evaluation). The Dutch gender policy - and therefore also the TMF evaluation - follows a two-track strategy with two main policy objectives for gender equality: mainstreaming gender equality and the empowerment of women. The gender study specifically dealt with the women's empowerment component of the TMF gender programme, whereas gender mainstreaming was assigned to all the sub-studies. EOS Consult is of the opinion that separation of the two tracks in the evaluation is a missed opportunity from a methodological point of view.

The gender study looks at outcomes in the form of behavioural changes of actors at all levels. At the level of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Women and Development division), the main outcomes were related to problems originating in the abolishment of the Women's Fund in 2003 and the Ministry's decision of 2005 to exclude international organisations from TMF (and MFS) funding. This has had a major impact on funding of women's organisations around the world. Funds for gender equality decreased and international organisations were not eligible for funding anymore. This resulted in a policy paradox between the globally recognised needs and diminishing international support.

The gender study involved one Dutch and two international organisations that were scoring well on effectiveness and efficiency. TMF funding is enabling the survival of these organisations that all specialise in women's human rights.

The Women and Development division (DSI/ER) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has little influence on policy and funding. However, a new lobby by civil society organisations has emerged from this current situation urging for continued support for women's empowerment all over the world.

The TMF evaluation of peace building
Prof. Dr Gerd Junne, University of Amsterdam, Coordinator of the TMF sub-evaluation of peace building
(see Appendix 3-10 for PowerPoint presentation)

Several publications on evaluating conflict transformation programmes and post-war reconstruction have raised the question of what makes a project successful and have advocated a participatory evaluation. The peace building evaluation team would have preferred such a participatory approach, but this was not a suitable framework due to time constraints.

Junne also addressed ten handicaps the research team ran into, most of which were due to the fact that the research revolved around evaluating peace building activities which were focused on something that is not there (peace) and has no tangible results. It is difficult to address this issue on a micro-scale by looking at organisations' activities as conflict is a macro phenomenon with a lot of different factors influencing the process. Individual projects therefore need to be placed in a broader context. It is impossible to say anything about the impact of an individual peace building project and take that project as the unit of analysis. The actors are 'too small' to bring about measurable change at the macro level.

Six TMF organisations were evaluated, involving a number of different countries (Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan). The evaluation took place on three levels: that of the organisation, the co-financing organisation and the embassy. The evaluation also looked at learning capacities since the capacity to learn from experience, and the flexibility to adjust behaviour as a response to this learning, are a way of ensuring that efficient and effective work will continue in the future.

Finally, Junne pointed out the risk of increased interaction between divided groups as a result of peace building activities and stated that this could eventually lead to another eruption of conflict.

The theme-based (TMF) sub-evaluation of HIV/Aids
Dr Jan Boessenkool, Utrecht University, Coordinator of the TMF sub-evaluation of HIV/Aids

Boessenkool presented his conclusions concerning the evaluation of the HIV/Aids aid chain and the measuring of results.

In most of the evaluated cases, a top-down perspective dominates. Local expertise is not included in planning activities and embassies do not know about the TMF programme and are not aware of the different organisations and their activities. As a result, there is hardly any transfer of knowledge. In his evaluation Boessenkool made it clear that he wondered whether there was any willingness or qualities which can be learned from one another and whether there is room for financial manoeuvre. In this respect there are some positive examples from abroad, *e.g.* from Great Britain where systems are geared towards learning and people from the South are involved in the activities. However, these organisations no longer receive funds from the Dutch government.

In the HIV/Aids report, Boessenkool and his team looked at the aid chain, and specifically at the power relations within the chain, and concluded that the different causes ascribed to a certain problem by different organisations make it difficult for them to communicate solutions to each other. The contradictory interests and power relations determine what happens with respect to HIV/Aids. The language used by development cooperation organisations does not actually address what is going on.

Evaluation should be about learning about what happens at the lowest level, but at the moment it is mainly an instrument used to hold organisations accountable. What is missing is a focus on the lower level. This is nothing new, but hardly anything is being done to change this. In response to a request during the discussion to elaborate on this issue, Boessenkool explained that there are very persistent unequal power relations between the North and the South.

In addition, Boessenkool focused on quantitative versus qualitative research. Figures and numbers are not difficult to obtain. However, it is difficult to know, on the basis of figures alone, what really happens to the target population and whether those who need it most are reached.

Discussion
The most important issues that came up in the discussion were the following.

Firstly, throughout the presentations it became clear that all the reports had taken a (slightly) different evaluation approach. This was because all researchers were free to chose their own approach and because there was minimal exchange between researchers in terms of countries and organisations (although there were two study days for the teams). Also, there was very little exchange between the teams concerned with the various studies, except for the HIV/Aids and gender study teams that did cooperate. The fact that, on the basis of the introductions, all the evaluations seemed to be different also had to do with the fact that each presenter applied his or her own interpretation of the task.

The issue of measuring activities and results was also discussed. It is difficult to indicate clearly what such an evaluation should be based on because, if only tangible results can be measured, some important activities might be excluded from funding because the results are not measurable. Activities in themselves can be just as important as their results and funding should be focused on the creation of an enabling environment for different activities to develop. Evaluation can then focus more on the organisations' goals and their knowledge about other organisations with potentially conflicting goals and on the rationale behind the choices that organisations make. The ministry did not use a yardstick since they do not know what the right thing is and how to judge others. A better distinction would be between doing the right thing and doing things right. Another important aspect for evaluation is the learning space which is created and whether organisations have a good reason (rationale) or 'policy theory' to do what they did.

There was some debate on whether or not organisations are interested in being evaluated. The evaluators felt they are often not that interested, but participants in the working group did not agree. Most organisations are very interested but, due to communication differences between the North and the South, it was often difficult to ask for and analyse the effects of cooperation. In addition, in some cases (*e.g.* empowerment), evaluating a project is often just as expensive as implementing it. This resulted in the advice to include funds for evaluation in funding applications in order to attach equal importance to both project implementation and evaluation.

Report Working Group 5
Measuring the results of campaigning for MDG 8 on developing a global partnership for development and of advocacy and lobby activities of the co-financing agencies and their partner organisations

Chair: Dr Henri Jorritsma
Speakers: Dr Otto Hospes, Dr Tjalling Dijkstra
Reporter: Ms Brigitte Stolk

Measuring the results of campaigning for MDG8 is a complex challenge. Development partners experience problems with regard to reporting on progress. They face attribution problems based on difficulties experienced when their activities are evaluated. Furthermore, there seems to be a need for alternative indicators. During this workshop the participants explored possibilities for improving monitoring and measuring. Some additional indicators were also presented. The workshop started with a short introduction by Dijkstra, after which Hospes shared some of his thoughts on measuring the results of campaigning for MDG 8 and of lobbying by Dutch co-financing organisations (CFOs) and partners in the field of fair and economic sustainable development. These two introductions were followed by a discussion.

Measuring the results of campaigning for MDG8 on developing a global partnership for development
Dr Tjalling Dijkstra, Coherence Unit of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Dijkstra started by saying that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have been developed in the context of the United Nations (UN). The goals and targets have been formulated in a political ‘give and take’ constellation. They are based on political feasibility rather than on a scientific dialogue. In addition, the MDGs’ main focus is on social sectors rather than on economic development. As a consequence, there is a certain bias towards social targets.

The indicators used to measure progress with regard to the MDGs have also been identified within this same power field and have two main characteristics. First, they are input and output oriented (and not impact oriented, with the exception of MDG 1). Second, the indicators measure progress at national level, which is relatively easy (on the condition that reliable national statistics are available), but at the same time is subject to certain limitations because it does not show geographical, ethnic and other differences within countries. MDG 8 targets may not coincide with specified national donor policies. For example, Target 14 addresses the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states. Dutch development policy does not have a specific policy for such countries and deals with them like any other developing and potential partner country. Furthermore, some UN members' sensitivity towards such issues as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and condoms in relation to AIDS prevention have co-shaped the formulation of the established targets and indicators. Dijkstra explained that formulating the indicators was a 'struggle'. They are also subject to ongoing discussions. For instance, in the outcome document of the UN Summit of September 2005, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights were mentioned for the first time in relation to the MDGs, which is quite a breakthrough. Although they have their limitations, the targets and indicators are important.

Four groups of indicators have been distinguished which can be used to monitor and measure results of MDG 8 (*i.e.* to develop a global partnership for development). These are (1) indicators related to official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries; (2) indicators related to market access to developed countries; (3) indicators related to the debt sustainability of developing countries; and (4) some other indicators (*e.g.* access to affordable essential drugs). The first and third indicators are input indicators and the second one can be regarded as a gross outcome indicator.

Hospes questioned whether the above mentioned indicators help us to judge whether and when an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system has been realised. He also questioned whether these indicators can help us to judge how and why we are approaching the realisation of such a system, or otherwise, and, last but not least, he questioned whether these are the best indicators in the context of global partnerships for development.

Alternative indicators could be developed, such as the proportion of ODA spent on lobbying and advocacy by civil society organisations in the field of sustainable and fair economic development and fair trade. Furthermore, now that recent policy debates have shifted to non-tariff trade barriers, alternative indicators could be formulated to measure progress in terms of market access. In Hospes' eyes, a great deal can be gained from a better formulation of the indicators.

Hospes suggested that the MDG indicators seem to be 'cut in marble stone' and seem to be based on an exclusive notion of global partnership. According to him, the missing link is outcome indicators. In his eyes, judging MDG 8 implies looking at campaigns and negotiations of governments and NGOs, their effectiveness and the institutional context, and the power struggles and decision-making processes that may explain possible limited effectiveness. He commented that:

1. To determine whether results have been realised we need indicators; and
2. To assess results, we need insights into institutional positions, negotiation processes and the preparation of these processes, as they may help us to understand why and how expected results have (not) been realised.

After presenting these thoughts, Hospes highlighted some difficult issues and cases with regard to measuring results. One of the issues concerns the difficulty of assessing the Minister for Development Cooperation and its Coherence Unit. He asked the question, 'If the EU has the exclusive competence in the field of trade and claims to speak with one voice at the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference or if the Dutch Minister of Economic affairs presents the Netherlands policy position on trade at weekly meetings of the European Commission, how then can we assess the efforts of the Minister for Development Cooperation or the Coherence Unit directed at improved market access or strengthening trade capacity for developing countries?'

Discussion

This question was taken up by the other participants during the discussion. A civil society representative stressed that the strategic dimension is missing. The Ministers' position is not given or static. It is her task to operate strategically. She should negotiate with the Minister of Economic Affairs to strengthen the position of Development Cooperation. Dijkstra confirmed that this is indeed being done. The bottom line of this argument is that evaluators should not only look at the results of a Ministers' development policy, but also at her lobby plan and the extent to which she has operated strategically. The difficulty is that lobbying is a politically sensitive issue. A Minister does not make her lobby plan public (nor does a lobbying NGO). Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate a ministers' strategic performance.

Advocacy and lobby activities of the co-financing agencies and their partner organisations
Dr Otto Hospes, Inspection Development Cooperation and Policy Evaluation (IOB)
(see Appendix 3-11 for PowerPoint presentation)

At the moment, Hospes is leading an IOB evaluation on policy influencing by Dutch CFOs and their partners. A key question relating to this evaluation is whether lobby targets have adapted international trade agreements, codes of conduct, environmental and social criteria to Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) protocols as proposed by Dutch CFOs, partner organisations or coalition parties. Hospes underlined the difficulties of measuring the effect of lobbying on policy change. Within this IOB evaluation, the questions on policy influence have focussed on different phases preceding the possible adaptation of proposed policies. By doing so, the evaluation team was able to determine what phase of policy influencing was successful and whether the proposed change of policy indeed took place. Hospes raised an interesting point with regard to measuring results. According to him, the key question is whether *measuring* results is the same as *judging* results. He said, 'Of course we can compare expected results with actual results but how should we judge the difference?' Dijkstra furthermore underlined that one should not sit back once a policy change has been made. There must be continuous attention for the actual implementation of new and changed policies.

Despite the difficulties he mentioned, Hospes underlined that this does not free ourselves from measuring results. He emphasised that more attention should be paid to mapping institutional positions and negotiation processes. He explained that starting tail-end (measuring results) and then moving towards the middle (mapping positions and processes) may help us unravel the beginning, that is find out what analysis was done before the financial and non-financial input was provided?

The questions that can be posed with regard to this *ex ante* analysis are:

1. Did the CFO, its partner organisation or coalition partner develop a clear understanding of the complexity and scope of reaching agreements involving government or the private

sector, given the distinctive features of the commodity and commodity market at stake? Or did they try to gain this understanding whilst lobbying?
2. Was analysis conducted of the lobby power, lobby strategies and 'vulnerable' parts of the authority or company at which the lobby of CFO or partner is directed?
3. Was contextual analysis done of (power) relationships between companies–government–media?

Hospes explained that, if there appears to be a relationship between *ex ante* analysis and actual results, we may then have alternative indicators or hypotheses at hand to assess CFOs and partner organisations.

Discussion

During the discussion the importance of such an *ex ante* analysis (or again: policy theory) was emphasised. A CSO representative explained that sometimes an intervention has a positive outcome, while on other occasions the same intervention does not generate the same positive results. Apparently, the results of an intervention depend on a wide array of interdependent factors. The point was made that measuring should not only focus on progress made on long-term targets, but that attention should also be paid to the process of achieving these targets. Therefore, a stepwise approach is required based on assessing intermediary results. Judging performance should be more process-related. Since process results are so-called 'soft' results, it has been questioned how realistic this approach is. The costs of such an intensive form of evaluation can be high. Nevertheless, there is consensus on the importance of an *ex ante* analysis as a prerequisite for measuring results.

The attribution problem is one of the main challenges encountered while measuring results. Dijkstra provided an example which illustrates this problem. During WTO negotiations, West African cotton-producing countries succeeded in getting cotton included on the agenda as a separate issue. It was agreed that the agriculture negotiations should pay special attention to cotton. The Netherlands supported this initiative by financing international NGOs that helped the cotton-producing countries to formulate their case. When it comes to assessing the performance of the Policy Coherence Unit (PCU), the difficulty arises of how to prove that change occurred as a result of the contribution of the PCU's project team on cotton. After all, other international actors worked on the same issue at the same time. To assess the Policy Coherence Unit's performance, evaluators asked the question, 'What was the Policy Coherence Unit's contribution in the case of the WTO cotton dossier?' In the evaluation it was concluded that, since there have been so many factors that contributed to cotton being put on the WTO Doha agenda, it could not be said with certainty that the results could be attributed to the efforts of the PCU project team. During the discussion, CSOs said that they face similar difficulties with regard to attribution. This underlines the complexity that one faces when measuring results related to MDG 8.

Another difficulty is encountered when measuring results related to MDGs. Dijkstra explained that countries have to report on how their ODA addresses the different MDGs and Targets. It is difficult to translate the results into a clear overview or chart which reflects how ODA contributes to the different MDGs. In practice this reporting is partly based on assumptions, such as the one that general budget support is directly related to MDG 1. In addition, one of the participants stressed that for many developing countries there are no reliable statistics. Despite the lack of adequate information on progress on the MDGs, these countries have still published progress reports. As becomes clear from these examples, monitoring and measuring is a challenge. Moreover, as Dijkstra underlined, the focus is on input and output measuring only. ‘We have not even arrived at outcome and impact measuring’, he stated.

In the same way that the Dutch government has to report on progress on the MDGs to the international community, the Dutch Civil Society has to report its progress on the MDGs to its own government. Civil Society Organisations are ‘not amused’ that they have to produce detailed reports on progress made in relation to the MDGs. The government’s demands with regard to reporting are believed to be unrealistic. Dijkstra stressed that the Ministry for Development Cooperation is a learning organisation and he encourages civil society organisation to continue the dialogue on this matter with the Ministry.

The workshop led to the formulation of several recommendations to improve monitoring and measuring progress on MDG 8. The speakers and other participants advocated a broadening from input and output indicators towards outcome and progress indicators. It was also considered important to look at different phases passed through on the way to achieving the MDGs, which implies that intermediate assessments are necessary as well. Furthermore, the importance of *ex ante* and context analyses was highlighted, whereby evaluations should make clear how organisations adjust their activities to the information gained from these analyses. In this way, the input and activities can be better evaluated. In addition, one should not only look at policy change, but also at the way in which policy has been influenced. Attention should be paid to mapping institutional positions and negotiation processes. In other words, evaluations should also be concerned with the strategic dimension of performance (taking the costs involved into account).

Plenary closing session: back to the future

In the plenary closing session, five rapporteurs summarised the main findings of their respective working groups as follows:

Working group 1 – Measuring results: what are the limits? by Ms. Gemma Crijns

1. It is important to measure results from the beginning, and not only at the end when all the work has been done;
2. Organisations need to structure their critical mass in order to be able to measure results. If an organisation is too small to organise an accurate evaluation, they should mobilise support to do so;
3. It is important to define attribution beforehand in relation to the objectives.

Working group 2 – Integrating monitoring, evaluation and learning from co-financing and thematic agencies, by Dr Paul Engel

This working group generated one statement and six topical issues. The statement was: a focus on learning really makes a difference.

The following six topical issues were identified and discussed:
1. Good planning and policy is the basis of good measuring;
2. The merit of joint evaluations by different co-financers;
3. There is a difference between internal versus external evaluations. External evaluations have been improved a lot through good internal evaluation systems;
4. There is already a lot of awareness on internal evaluations among organisations;
5. The capacity of organisations to carry out their own evaluations should be developed further;
6. It is important to create more joint knowledge systems.

Working group 3 – Measuring results from economic development, agricultural, environmental and rural development projects, including the challenges of gender integration, by Mr Cor Wattel
The third working group discussed the evaluations of micro-finance, biodiversity and gender projects, from which two statements were derived:
1. Monitoring and evaluation only serve learning if policies are continuous. The volatility of policy destroys ongoing learning processes.
2. Alongside the methods of monitoring and evaluations of the development sector, business tools are also available. The fact that they are different does not mean they could not also be used for some segments of the development sector.

Working group 4 – Measuring results in human rights, women's rights, peace building and social development projects, by Prof. Dr Willem van Genugten
1. One can measure processes and output, but not the real effects. Besides, it may not be possible to attribute these effects to the donor who has financed the intervention.
2. The risk associated with talking too much about measuring is that the Ministry may decide to spend money on measurable activities only.
3. Evaluation is very difficult because it deals with such a complex matter.
4. In the end, evaluation is not about physics (and proven causality), so arguments should be put on the table that make the intervention plausible.

Working group 5 – Measuring the results of campaigning for MDG8 on developing a global partnership for development and of advocacy and lobby activists of the co-financing agencies and their partner organisations, by Dr Otto Hospes
The working group has discussed the MDG8 on trade and development in particular and concluded that:
1. The set indicators are not good enough, but now they are in place they should be used accordingly;
2. Intermediate assessments are necessary as well;
3. There is a need for process evaluation as well for as context analysis;
4. Both process and product evaluations should be in place.

Appendix 1 – Programme

12.30 – 13.00

- **Arrival of the participants and registration – Hall A-Building Roetersstraat 15, Amsterdam**

13.00 – 14.30

- **Plenary session – Room A-B**

13.00 – 13.10	Welcome address by Dr Jan Donner, President of the Royal Tropical Institute and Chairman of the DPRN Task Force
13.10 – 13.20	*Measuring results in development: the approach of the Directorate Effectiveness and Quality (Ministry of Foreign Affairs)* Mr Pim van der Male of the Directorate Effectiveness and Quality (DEK), Ministry of Foreign Affairs
13.20 – 13.30	*Avoid paper tigers: have confidence in the development sector* Ms Gemma Crijns, researcher for the Dijkstal commission on 'Draagvlak en Effectiviteit Ontwikkelingssamenwerking'
13.30 – 13.40	*Measurement of results: a must for adequate learning and accountability* Prof. Dr Jan Willem Gunning, Vrije Univeristeit Amsterdam and Amsterdam Institute for International Development (AIID)
13.40 – 13.50	*Recommendations from the evaluation of thematic co-financing (TMF)* Prof. Dr Ton Dietz, Universiteit van Amsterdam and CERES Research School
13.50 – 14.30	Discussion

14.30 – 15.00

- **Coffee / Tea – Hall A-Building**

15.00 – 17.00

- **Working groups**

1. Measuring results: what are the limits? – Room A4.06

A debate between Ms Gemma Crijns, representing the Dijkstal commission, Mr Maarten Brouwer of the Directorate Effectiveness and Quality (DEK) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Prof. Dr Jan Willem Gunning, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

2. Integrating monitoring, evaluation and learning from co-financing and thematic co-financing (TMF) agencies – Room A 3.05

A debate based on research carried out in the period 2003-2006. With the participation of Mr Sjoerd Zanen (MDF Training and Consultancy) and Jim Woodhill (Wageningen International), who are involved in the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of monitoring and evaluation, and Dr Paul Engel of ECDPM and the External Reference Group of the MBN (Medefinanciering Breed Netwerk) evaluation.

3. Measuring results from economic development, agricultural, environmental and rural development projects, including the challenges of gender integration – Room A 4.04
With presentations by Mr Cor Wattel (ICCO), involved in impact assessment of micro-financing, Mr Arend-Jan van Bodegom (Wageningen International), coordinator of the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation, and Ms Edith van Walsum (Voices and Choices), involved in the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of gender.

4. Measuring results in human rights, women's rights, peace building and social development projects – Room A-D
With the participation of Prof. Dr Willem van Genugten (Tilburg University), coordinator of the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of human rights; Ms Lida Zuidberg (Eosconsult), involved in the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of gender, Prof. Dr Gerd Junne (Universiteit van Amsterdam), coordinator of the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of peace building; and Dr Jan Boessenkool (Utrecht University), coordinator of the thematic co-financing (TMF) sub-evaluation of HIV/Aids.

5. Measuring results of campaigning for MDG8 on developing a global partnership for development and of advocacy and lobby activities of the co-financing agencies and their partner organisations – Room A1.02
With the participation of Dr Tjalling Dijkstra of the Coherence Unit of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Dr Otto Hospes of the Inspection Development Cooperation and Policy Evaluation (IOB).

17.00 – 17.30

- **Plenary session: Back to the future – Room A-B**
  Working groups representatives present 1-2 statements on evaluation and result measurement in development; discussion.

17.30 – 18.30

- **Drinks – Hall A-building**

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Appendix 3 – Power Point Presentations

3-1 'Trust in a vulnerable sector'. Findings of the Dijkstal Commission

By Gemma Crijns

“Trust in a vulnerable sector?”
Commissie Dijkstal

DPRN: Measuring results in development
28 June 2006

What the commission did not say:

- Measuring results is useless or nonsense
- That there is no need for development organisations to be accountable
- Trust the development organisations on their blue or brown eyes

What the commission did say:

- Development organisations have to be accountable to their donors (government, public).

But that

- Measurement of results at the level of *outcome and impact* is not a useful instrument for accountability nor for decision making on allocation of funds.

Because

There are serious **methodological problems** with regard to measuring results at the level of *outcome and impact* (attribution, aggregation, short time cycle, objective of 'monitoring and verification' or 'learning') →

Leading to

a.o.

- the creation of 'paper realities'
- cost vs benefit
- adverse effects on decision making avoidance of complex issues and preference for measurable activities →

Reason why

Due to the methodological limits

measurement of results will not lead to a sound opinion on the effectiveness of development cooperation.

Recommendation

! Organise accountability and assessment of the organisation (re allocation of funds) at the level of the organisation itself !

Assess level of organisational professionalism:

a.o.

- ‘good governance’
- quality of management procedures
- transparancy in reporting/ independent audits and verification

Points of departure and outcome

- At the level of output:
  →‘resultaatsverplichting’
- At the level of outcome and effect:
  → ‘inspanningsverplichting’
- Return to ‘trust’ in ‘proved professionalism’

3-2 Measuring results: a must for learning and accountability

By Jan Willem Gunning

Measuring Results: a Must for Learning and Accountability

Jan Willem Gunning
Free University, Amsterdam

Measuring Results in Development
Amsterdam, June 28, 2006

1

Measuring results: necessary? desirable? Four views

- The **Learning** view

  Results of impact evaluation necessary to improve effectiveness: finding out what works

- The **Accountability** view

  If you have no idea whether aid succeeds (say in terms of the MDGs) there is no justification for it

2

Four views…

- The **Rock Star** view

  Something must be done. Anything.
  Whether it works or not.

  Bono

- The **"Yes, Minister"** view

  There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.

  J.M. Keynes

3

Public Health

- Equally muddled until well into the 19th century
- John Snow's pump handle (1854)
- Health interventions should be evidence based
- Double blind testing, randomisation

4

Development

- Less evidence based
- Less recognition of professionalism (Bono)
- Most evaluations focus on process rather than on impact
- Usually methodologically very weak (before/after)
- Resistance to rigorous testing: "we don't really need that, perhaps it is too difficult, .."

5

The Dijkstal Commission: if it is difficult then don't do it

- Methodological problems ..

  Attribution
  Aggregation
  Lags
  Data quality

- .. so measuring results unsuitable as instrument for accountability

6

If you don't read academic papers ..

- Just read newspapers (e.g. *De Volkskrant*, the main source of articles for the Dijkstal Commission) ..
- .. but not too selectively. Here is one they missed:

Hulp is te testen, als een medicijn

headline, *De Volkskrant*, 25 maart 2005

7

Statistical Impact Evaluation

- Compare *treatment* and *control* group
- Randomisation very desirable, but not essential (regression, propensity score matching ..)
- Applications in many areas, e.g. evaluation of labor market policies (*Melkertbanen*)
- Development: not only *can* it be done, it *has* been done (including by NGOs). Feasibility is well established.

8

Statistical Impact evaluation ..

- Examples in development:
  - evaluation of social safety nets
  - enrolment programs for the poor
  - women empowerment groups
  - comparing primary school interventions
  - protecting social sectors during the Asian crisis
- Dutch NGO's at the forefront: International Child Support (primary schools in Kenya), Bernard van Leer
- Evaluation at what level: project, sector, country (general budget support)?

9

Data: where did you start? what did you do?

- Baseline data
- Intervention histories (often *not* known)
- Impact variables (poverty, enrolment, cholera incidence ..)

10

Conclusion

- Results must be measured: learning, accountability
- Implications for monitoring: baseline, intervention history, impact variables
- Feasibility is *not* the issue
- Challenge is to measure effectiveness at higher levels

11

3-3 Evaluation of the theme-based co-financing programme (TMF) of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Synthesis report

By Ton Dietz

Information about process and output

The Steering Committee of the Evaluation of the TMF Programme consisted of Prof. Dr Arie de Ruijter (Chair), Prof. Dr Ton Dietz (first author), Dr Els van Dongen, Prof. Dr Bert Helmsing (second author) and Dr Peter Knorringa.

The TMF evaluation was facilitated by Berenschot: Danielle Puma, Sophieke Kappers, Marieke de Wal and Jacob Wiersma.

The TMF evaluation was based on research by nine research teams (with team leaders):

- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing Programme (TMF) Expert study: Peacebuilding. Team leader: Gerd Junne, Triple L BV;
- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing Programme (TMF) Expert Study: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Development. Team leader: Willem van Genugten, University of Tilburg/IVA;
- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing (TMF) Programme: Biodiversity Conservation and Poverty Alleviation. Team leader: Arend Jan van Bodegom, Wageningen International (formerly IAC);
- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing Programme: Final Report of the study on Communication. Team leader: Paul Sijssens, CDP, Utrecht, in collaboration with Pauka & de Groot;
- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-Financing Programme (TMF), Expert Study: HIV/AIDS. Team leader: Jan Boessenkool, Management and Communication Research Centre; Utrecht University;
- Evaluation of the Theme-Based Co-financing Programme, Expert study: economic development. Volume I: Main research findings, conclusions and recommendations; Volume II: sub-reports of TMF-organisations and their partner-organisations; a) Woord en Daad, b) South-North Federation Project Globalising Trade Justice, and c) International Development Enterprises. Team Leader: Frans van Gerwen, MDF Training and Consultancy Ede in consultation with CDP Utrecht;
- Evaluation of the Theme-Based Co-financing Programme, Expert Study: Gender. Volume I main report. Team Leader: Lida Zuidberg, EOS Consult Chaam;
- Evaluation of the Theme-Based Co-financing Programme, Cross-cutting Study : Monitoring & Evaluation 'Put Practice into Learning and Learning into Practice'. Team leaders: Hans Rijneveld, MDF Training and Consultancy Ede and Jim Woodhill, Wageningen International;
- Evaluation of the Theme-based Co-financing Programme, Cross-cutting Study: The added value of TMF. Includes four country reports, on Vietnam, Nicaragua, Ghama and Uganda. Team leader: Lau Schulpen, CIDIN, Nijmegen.

The evaluation was further based on consultations with the Advisory Board of the TMF Platform which consists of: Jan Gruiters (Pax Christi), Jan Lock (Woord en Daad), Lem van

Eupen (RNTC), Peter Hermes (NIZA), Wilco de Jonge (Press Now), Sjef Langeveld (Both Ends) and with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (co-ordinated by Dirk-Jan Koch) under the responsibility of DSI-MIJ (Leni Buisman).

For results: see www.tmf-evaluatie.nl

Recommendations	
I	• Cherish and further strengthen the width and depth of the non-governmental sector involved in international development supported by the Netherlands. • TMF-funded organisations show that civilateral relationships are valuable, relevant and effective institutions for international cooperation, with specific and important functions besides bilateral and multilateral relationships. The Netherlands is very well positioned to play a leading role in global civil society development
II	• Further develop good and coherent policy theories. • It should enable context-specific support and evaluation of the NGO sector, and the development of adequate typologies to do so.
III	• Stimulate the focus of theme-specific NGOs on poverty reduction impact of their activities and put more emphasis on specific gender sensitivity. • In sectors like environment and communication a dual approach of mainstreaming gender and specific gender programmes is still very much necessary. • Start the preparation of a new MFS round (>2010) by becoming more specific about theme-and context-specific objectives.
IV	• Give NGOs and their partners adequate financial and organisational flexibility to develop their capabilities as learning organisations, and to respond to changing circumstances. • Objectives should be a combination of content and process, and with attention for external and for internal targets. • Between 10 and 15% of all funds should be set aside for learning, capacity development, and organisational costs.
V	• Develop more long-term subsidy arrangements. • Do so in line with other lessons learned in Dutch development co-operation, e.g., with 16 years as time horizon and 4-year phases as funding periods.
VI	• NGOs should further develop their M&E capability and use those as learning organisations. • Funding agencies should demand more and better emphasis from subsidised NGOs and their partners on M&E, and on learning. • The sector should make more systematic use of this information, and use it for sector-wide learning but acknowledge the fact that M&E needs context and sector specificity (see II). • Put specific emphasis on learning from best practices with regard to lobby and advocacy indicators of success.
VII	• Put more emphasis on learning capabilities within the Ministry. • A clear mandate to DSI/MY to do so for the civilateral sector.

	• The appointment of a knowledge manager within DSI. • More continuity of staff and better handing-over institutions. • A good link of DSI/MY with DEK, IOB, DCO/OC (research programme) and the other directorates. • Within the thematic directorates more systematic attention for thematic policy dialogue, and involvement of the relevant NGOs. • A more active role of Netherlands Embassies, a.o. in organising regional and local thematic policy dialogues. • The sector should be more pro-active towards Ministry and Embassies.
VIII	• Create more synergy in the sector. • Partos should become a 'knowledge hub'. • Start the new IS Academy for Civil Society between DSI/MY and CIDIN as soon as possible and stimulate its function as a broad, national facility. • Enable the development of a virtual information portal on civil society organizations in the Netherlands, their activities and expertise.
IX	• Enable better institutional cross-fertilisation of support to civil society in the Netherlands and at European and global levels (e.g. MFS with SALIN, LINKIS, SNV, PSO, NCDO etc., and with Civitas and other international platforms).
X	• Support a wider coverage among the Dutch population. • Stimulate more involvement of the private sector, and of diaspora communities.
XI	• Start preparations for a major ex-post impact evaluation in 2012, covering the civilateral sector, with a focus on the four rounds of TMF funding, MFS funding and SALIN funding.
XII	• Start a dedicated long-term research programme on Dutch-funded NGO support. • Use a typology-driven selection of countries. • Do it as a joint activity of the Ministry, Partos, the IS Academy and WOTRO, and involve Civicus. • Link it to the knowledge and research strategy of DSI/MY and other MFA Departments. • Involve Dutch and Southern research institutions in each of the country-specific research sub-programmes. • Organise annual civilateral research workshops and two major conferences about MDGs, Governance and Civil society (2010 and 2015).

3-4 Key lessons from the cross-cutting monitoring and evaluation study of the TMF evaluation

By Sjoerd Zanen and Jim Woodhill

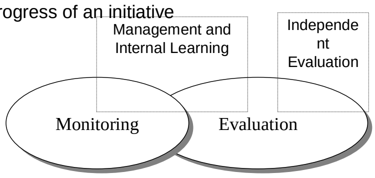
Key Lessons from the Cross-Cutting M&E Study (TMF Evaluation)

MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

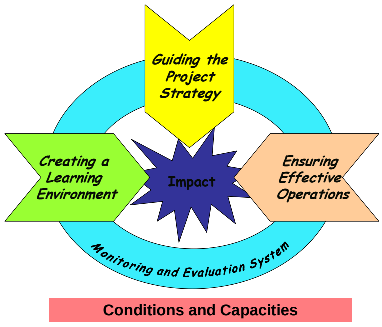
Definitions: monitoring and evaluation

- Monitoring:
  - the regular collection and analysis of information
- Evaluation:
  - periodic assessment of the overall value and progress of an initiative



MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

Managing for Results and Impact



Adapted from IFAD 2002

MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

Purposes of M&E

- *Accountability – in all directions!*
- *Supporting strategic management*
- *Supporting operational management*
- *Empowerment*
- *Knowledge creation*

MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

M&E Made Simple

- What
  - (has succeeded or failed)
- Why
  - (have we had success or failure)
- So what
  - (what are the implications for the project)
- Now What
  - (What action will we now

MDF/Wageningen International (IAC)

General Conclusions

- High level of awareness about M&E and many good practices
- Wide diversity
- The outcome and impact level remains difficult
- Little change in project strategy as a result of M&E
- DGIS gets a very 'watered' down perspective from the current reporting structure

Reflections from Evaluation

- Impact dilemma
- Logframe – yes but
  - – The outcome issue
- Understanding and feedback along the whole M&E chain
- A focus on learning makes the difference
  - – Information on 'why'
- Learning and accountability
- Participation, ownership and trust

Key recommendations

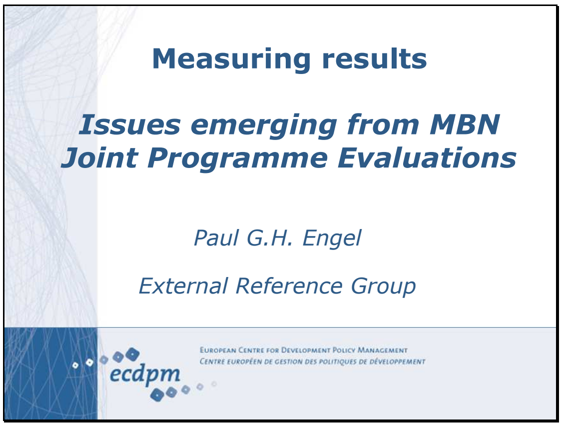
- Make M&E principles and expectations clear
- Develop M&E capacity
- Invest in M&E and learning
- Developing the donor / recipient relationship
- Encourage strategic change

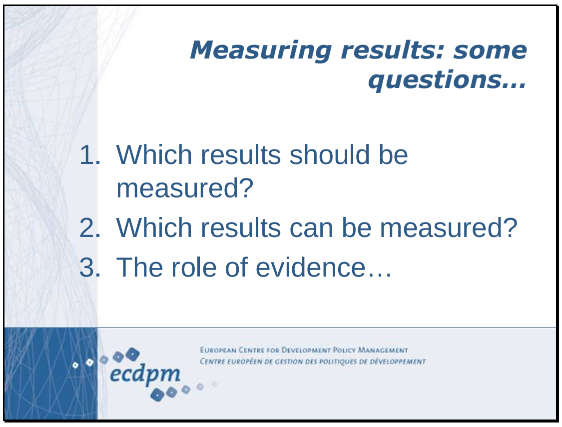
Today's Questions

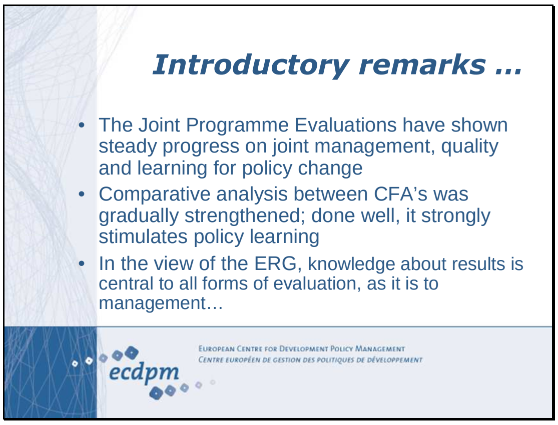
- What can be measured?
- Focus on qualitative or quantitative results?
- Results and bureaucracy?
- Process or results?

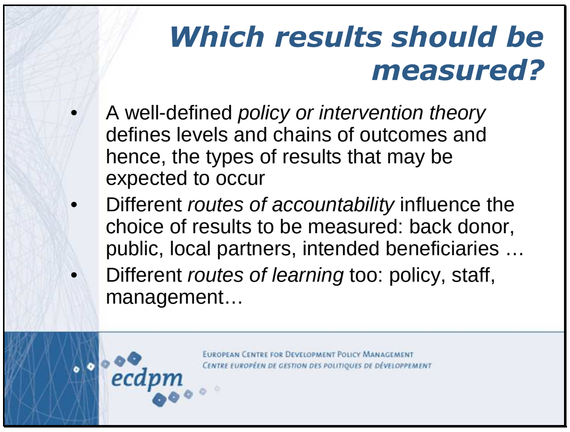
3-5 Issues emerging from MBN Joint Programme Evaluations

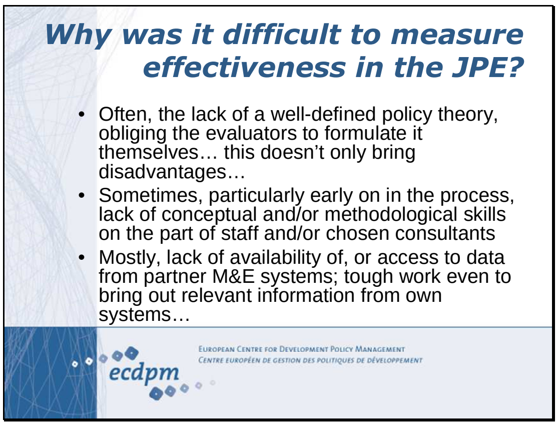
By Paul Engel

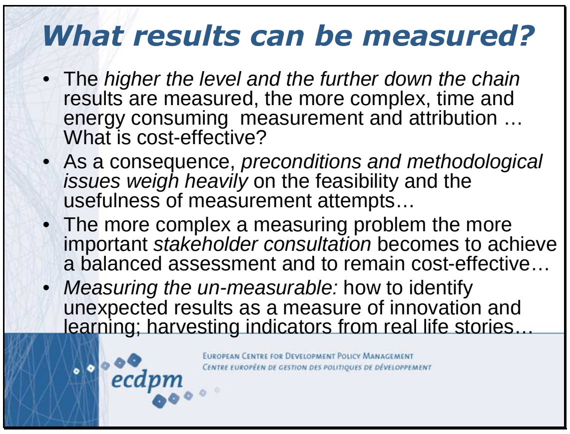


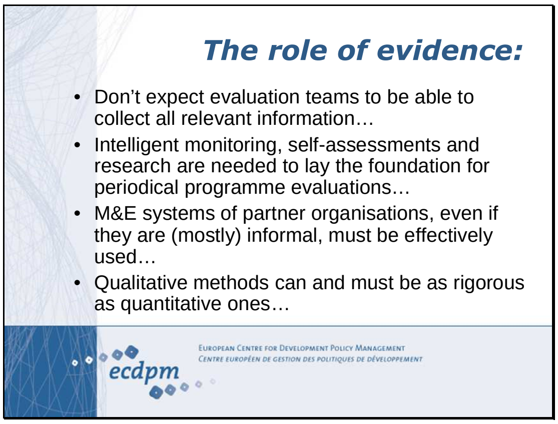


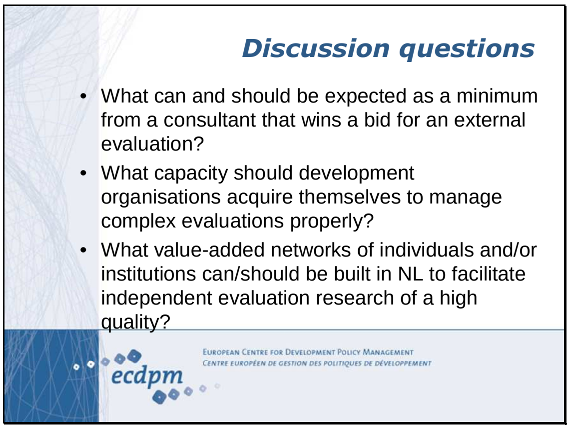









The role of evidence:
• Don't expect evaluation teams to be able to collect all relevant information…
• Intelligent monitoring, self-assessments and research are needed to lay the foundation for periodical programme evaluations…
• M&E systems of partner organisations, even if they are (mostly) informal, must be effectively used…
• Qualitative methods can and must be as rigorous as quantitative ones…
ecdpm
European Centre for Development Policy Management
Centre européen de gestion des politiques de développement


Discussion questions
• What can and should be expected as a minimum from a consultant that wins a bid for an external evaluation?
• What capacity should development organisations acquire themselves to manage complex evaluations properly?
• What value-added networks of individuals and/or institutions can/should be built in NL to facilitate independent evaluation research of a high quality?
ecdpm
European Centre for Development Policy Management
Centre européen de gestion des politiques de développement

3-6 Impact and social performance in microfinance

By Cor Wattel

Impact & social performance in microfinance

Changing approaches

Cor Wattel,
programme coordinator Terrafina

Terrafina
Rural Microfinance in Africa

About Terrafina

- Support to Rural Microfinance in Africa
- Started in 2005
- Partnership programme of ICCO, Oikocredit and Rabobank Foundation
- Focus on capacity building / bottom of the market / rural areas
- 3 regions: West (Mali, Burkina), Horn (Ethiopia), Great Lakes (Rwanda)

2 dimensions

A. Proving impact
B. Improving practice

A. Proving impact

Experience with impact assessments (IA) in microfinance:

- Complex & demanding
- Multidimensional
- Attribution problem
- High cost
- Very little influence on MFI operations & performance

Therefore:

- Trend towards sectoral IA (country), rather than individual IA per MFI
- Increasing emphasis on improving practice

B. Improving practice

Social performance concept

SP = effective translation of an institution's social mission into practice (actions, corrective measures, outcomes)

Social performance

1. SP management (MFI internal)
2. SP reporting (MFI to outside world)
3. SP rating (external rating agency)

B.1 Social performance management: Imp-Act's Pathway Approach

Intent & design	Intervention	Results	Change
Mission Goals Objectives System design Product & Service range	Systems dev. & use Product & service dev & delivery Human resources	Reaching target clients Meeting clients' needs re capacities	Improve lives of poor clients Widen opportu-nities for commun-ities

(B.1) SPM Pathway approach

- Management approach
- Feedback loop
- Include "change" or not?
- Variety of tools can be applied
- Hypothesis: improvement in SP leads to improvement in economic performance and MFI's positioning

(B.1) SPM: from testing to upscaling

- Tests carried out with 10-20 MFIs (2003-2005)
- Training modules developed
- Upscaling through regional hubs, linked to MF networks in the South

B.2 SP reporting

Efforts underway to develop a common / minimum set of social performance indicators:

- International Task Force on Social Performance (researchers, MFIs, donors, rating agencies)
- Netherlands' Platform Microfinance

Links to MixMarket system for registration of financial & social performance of MFIs (work in progress)

B.3 SP rating

- Increasing convergence among MF rating agencies about SP dimension (including it in financial ratings,common framework)
- Work to be done (indicators framework, calibration for different MF models, cater to different users (MFIs, donors, investors), scoring / weighing/ benchmarking)
- 6-7 specialised MF rating agencies, link with GRI explored

In short

- Trend to be more selective and strategic in \`proving impact\`
- Trend towards systems approach in \`improving performance\`: social performance management, reporting _ rating
- \`Building under construction´

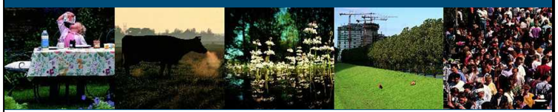
3-7 TMF Evaluation Lot 3: Poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation

By Arend Jan van Bodegom

TMF Evaluation Lot 3

"Poverty Alleviation and Biodiversity Conservation"

Arend Jan van Bodegom



WAGENINGEN UR

Types of evaluation

Classic evaluation	*Learning evaluation*	Responsive evaluation
Accountability/responsibility	←→	Learning for improvement
Government (mono-centric)	←→	Governance (pluri-centric)
Framework: formal policy goals	←→	Framework developed with stakeholders
Distance, objective	←→	Involved
Stakeholders passive	←→	Stakeholders active

WAGENINGEN UR

Importance of conducive environment

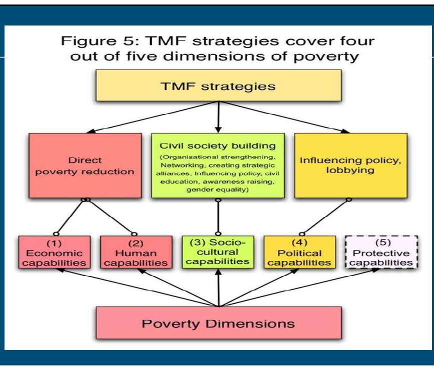
- Elements that determine to which degree organisations are able to generate win-win situations in poverty alleviation-biodiversity conservation s not the baseline
- Impact of actions may vary considerably
- Consequently input to generate positive results may vary in time and money input
  - Important for monitoring system
  - Important for donor
- Analysis of conducive environment ('appraisal')is necessary before starting actions

WAGENINGEN UR

DAC Guidelines

- 5 dimensions: economic, human, socio-cultural, political and protective dimensions
- Widely accepted
- Better than MDGs: these are too unspecified for the environment
- Basis for monitoring system
- Basis for intervention strategies
- Compare with TMF strategies:
  - Direct Poverty Alleviation
  - Civil society Building
  - Policy influencing

WAGENINGEN UR



WAGENINGEN UR

Provisional impact: Direct poverty alleviation

- Increased welfare: access to water, schools, health services
- Nature-based enterprises: employment, direct income, pride and self confidence
- Not all activities have generated benefits yet

WAGENINGEN UR

Provisional impact Civil society building/organisational strengthening

- Support 'internal alliance' in the consortium
- 'promote integrating Poverty Alleviation in environmental organisations
- Improve M&E
- Make experiences available to all: learn!
- Often directed towards own organisation, less on target group below national level

WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life

Provisional impact Policy influencing

- Meetings in NL: stakeholders and DGIS
- International: e.g. CITES and CBD
- Country level: ministries, local level
- Each organisation seemed to have its own niche
- Critical question: does the change of policy lead to improvement of the life of the target groups?

WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life

M&E: What did we see?

- TMF intervention strategies as basis. Than define for each strategy and for 'environment' one or two site specific criteria and indicators – 'participatory'
- Make inventories of economic situations. Group them into the 5 DAC dimensions, and try to make sense out of it. – not yet implemented
- Monitoring at community level
- M&E systems not gender specific and not yet at household level

WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life

Challenge: device a monitoring system that is:

- acceptable for the donor
- acceptable for the (international) implementing NGO
- acceptable for local staff
- acceptable for local stakeholders

WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life

Recommendations

- Make analysis of conducive environment
- Use DAC as basis for M&E, especially for environmental activities: explore the protective capabilities!
- Take for each dimension a limited, site specific number of indicators
- Be gender specific
- If M&E is also to be a learning tool, then flexibility is a prerequisite from donor and implementing org.
- Participation of target group is also necessary
- Work together in development of M&E and in Poverty-biodiversity linkages as NGOs and donors, because the final answers are not yet there
- Measuring impact on poverty alleviation will improve the profile of the environmental movement!

WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life

3-8 TMF Evaluation: The challenges of gender mainstreaming

By Edith van Walsum

TMF Evaluation:

The challenges of gender mainstreaming

by Edith van Walsum, member of the Gender Study team

The Dutch Gender Policy and Programme

- **Since 1975:** Two-track strategy
  Women's Empowerment AND Gender Mainstreaming
  Both approaches mutually reinforce each-other
- **1990:** Women & development became one of the spearheads of development cooperation
- **1995:** Increased emphasis on macro-economic policies, women and armed conflict, reproductive rights
- Beijing conference > GoN committed Dfl 45 million for women's fund to support civil society organisations involved with women's empowerment.
- **1996:** Reorganisation foreign policy > major gender challenges: how to ensure that gender equality gets embedded in new policy instruments and new policy themes.

Funding strategies

- GoN has supported civil society organisations involved with W&D **since 1986**.
- Funds increased from Dfl 2 million in 1986 to Dfl 45 million (Euro 20 million) in **1996 – 2002**.
- Women's Fund abolished in **2002**.
- **Since 2002** women's organisations have to compete for funds with many other themes and organisations in the TMF Programme. In total 5 million Euro have gone to nine women's organisations, six of them international organisations not based in NL (less than 2 % of total TMF funds).
- The decision to no longer allocate TMF grants to organisations not based in NL directly and seriously affects policy operationalisation of DSI-VR.

What happened to gender meanstreaming?

- Anno 2006 there is no clear understanding of where we are in the process of gender mainstreaming
- No explicit gender policy – no benchmarks – lack of adequate monitoring instruments
- Since 2002 no specific gender equality objectives formulated by MFA, no more monitoring and progress reports
- Delegation to Embassies: no more coherent approach
- Gender as a crosscutting theme in SWA:?
- Gender mainstreaming in the TMF Programme: whose responsibility?
- Gender mainstreaming as a crosscutting theme in the TMF evaluation: what are the lessons learned?

Scope of the gender study in the TMF evaluation:

Organisations with focus on women's empowerment (reflecting the policy focus of DSI-VR):

- Mama Cash
- IWRAW AP
- Femmes Afrique Solidarité

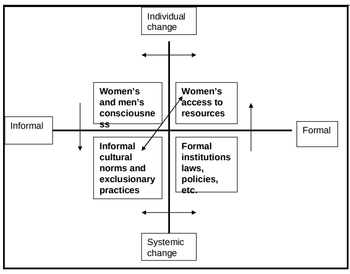
Gender mainstreaming was to be addressed in all the other studies

Challenge 1: The assumptions

- Gender mainstreaming is well under way
- The mutual reinforcement between women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming is happening

Result: In the TMF Programme evaluation gender mainstreaming has not been addressed as a cross-cutting issue.

Challenge 2: Understanding gender mainstreaming



Source : Aruna Rao & David Kelleher

Challenge 3: Linking women's empowerment to gender mainstreaming

Findings from the gender study:

TMF organisations' work on women's empowerment inextricably linked with other TMF themes:

- Human rights
- Peace and security
- Reproductive health / HIV-AIDS

BUT:

Less obvious connection with

- Economic Development
- Agriculture & Environment

Challenge 4: Taking the lessons learned from the gender study forward

- Question: Where is the political will to take the results of the gender study seriously?
- An example: The story of IWRAW AP.

3-9 The gender study: Results for whom?

By Lida Zuidberg

for equal opportunities and strength
EOS Consult

TMF GENDER STUDY

Results for whom?

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Inconsistent overall design of TMF evaluation

- Gender equality is crosscutting policy with two tracks: mainstreaming and empowerment
- Gender study evaluation should have been a crosscutting study looking into both tracks
- Gender study covers only policy track of women's empowerment (= funded through W&D desk)
- Gender mainstreaming policy has not been systematically evaluated

METHODOLOGY

RESULTS =

changes in behaviour and relationships of actors at all levels

- ministry
- recipient organisation
- members, clients and partners
- beneficiaries

EXPERIENCE

Ministry Women and Development division

- analysis of collected information pointed already at major conclusions and recommendations
- approach differs from civil society / women's movement
- under TMF modality: no power, no resources, no dialogue
- within small space relevant choices for allocation to international women's rights organisations
- exclusion of international organisations is fatal

POLICY PARADOX

- Decreasing commitment to gender policy in the government, the ministry and in Dutch civil society, on the one hand
- Globalisation and international developments lead to growing awareness of violation of women's rights on the other
- Netherlands has lost its pioneering, pro-active role among western donors

TMF GRANTEES

- Sample included two international network organisations and one Dutch organisation Focus is on women's rights in various sectors: peace-building; violence; sexual identity, fundraising and capacity-building
- Local, national and international coverage
- Combine practice with lobbying and advocacy

Relevance

- High relevance for women's rights initiatives in international and national context
- Mama cash: innovative and integrative (rights do not stand on their own)
- FAS, IWRAW-AP: skilled and professional advocacy for women's human rights (CEDAW, peace, reproductive rights)

Effectiveness and efficiency

- Women's organisations are small and smart in raising funds
- Mama Cash:
  - grants reach poor rural and urban women's initiatives
  - women's funds successful in raising funds, but not in grant-making
- IWRAW-AP and FAS:
  - Succeed in linking national advocacy for women's rights to international levels

TMF funding

- DGIS funding was decisive for creation and survival of organisation
- Women's human rights organisations cannot survive without institutional funding
- DGIS funding to international lobby and advocacy organisations is highly relevant for women's empowerment

Future

- Decision of ministry to exclude international organisations from TMF/MFS funding is not based on analysis of reality
- SALIN is no alternative (limited, selective)
- DSI-VR (now ER) has to revise its strategies and position in DGIS
- Decreased government commitment raises more lobbying from civil society for alternative resources

3-10 TMF sub-evaluation peace building

By Gerd Junne

Gerd Junne
28 June 2006

President Uganda and LRA willing to engage in Peace Talks: Pax Christi mediator

Wednesday 17 May 2006

Ugandese president Museveni and LRA commandant Kony willing to negotiate about peace in North Uganda

Peace movement Pax Christi Netherlands plays a mediating role

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What is success?

- If mediation had not been successful, would it have been a bad project?
- If the peace talks will not be successful, is it going to be a bad project after all?
- If a peace agreement will be achieved, but violated later, will it then be a bad project?

Designing for Results:
Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs

Search for Common Ground
Cheyanne Church and Mark M. Rogers
2006

Sultan Barakat, Margaret Chard, Richard Jones

Attributing Value: evaluating success and failure in post-war reconstruction

Third World Quarterly, vol 26, 4/5 June 2005

- Plead for participatory evaluation

PCIA (Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment)

- More for “conflict sensitive” development projects rather than peacebuilding initiatives
- Not one coherent methodology, but a whole spectrum of tools and questions
- Little attention for concrete indicators for measuring the impact of interventions

Competing methodologies

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA)	Community-based Monitoring and Evaluation System (MES)	Outcome Mapping (IDRC)
Impact on macro peace process, participatory approach	Improvements of interaction between ethnic groups	Observable behavioral changes within partners' sphere

10 specific handicaps

1. Results not tangible.
2. Results take the form of something *not occurring.*
3. Attribution problem.
4. Relation between *micro*-input and *macro*-outcome.
5. Long term change.
6. Dialectical process.
7. Conflicts over-determined.
8. Causes of conflict change during conflict.
9. Young field – methods still tested.
10. Heterogenity of projecs.

Utstein Study (2004)

Towards A Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding

It is not only difficult, but impossible to say anything about the impact of individual peacebuilding projects: "Whether their impact is positive depends not on the project itself and cannot be identified by looking at the project."

The author pleads for an analysis of the impact of *strategically linked* interventions across the peacebuilding palette, carried out by governments or NGOs over a significant period of time.

Do individual projects fit into a broader peacebuilding strategy for a specific country or region which is pursued by a broad range of actors ?

What did we look at

- The evaluation mechanisms in place (intern, extern)
- The monitoring mechanisms in place
- The formulation of own success criteria
- Embeddedness in the analysis of causes of conflict and comprehensive peace strategies
- Discussion with partners about criteria
- Coordination with third parties
- Learning ability, adaptation of strategies
- Time, mechanisms/routines, antennas
- Participation in networks ….

Concrete indicators

(measuring output and outcome rather than impact)

- Global network: regional agenda's produced
- Partnerships with local organisations
- Publications in media, uses of websites
- Participants in events
- New funds raised
- Number of requests for information/consultation
- Inclusion into local curricula
- Increased interaction between divided groups

3-11 From tail-end to body and head

By Otto Hospes

From tail-end to body and head

Some thoughts on measuring results of
- campaigning for MDG 8
- lobbying by Dutch CFOs and partners in the field of fair and sustainable economic development

Are the MDG-indicators helpful to determine whether, when, to what extent, how and why MDG 8 or TG 12 has been realized?

- Proportion of ODA spent on LDCs or basic social services = input indicator
- Debt relief (if and when paid from ODA) = input indicator
- Average tariffs of developed countries = rough outcome indicator

Wanted: better indicators?

- Alternative input indicator:
  - Proportion of ODA spent on lobby and advocacy by CFOs and partners on sustainable and fair economic development?
- Alternative outcome indicators:
  - Commodity-specific indicators?
  - Indicators on non-tariff trade barriers?
  - Indicators on partnership, adoption of open and transparent decision-making, and rule-setting?

Bottom line

1. To determine *whether* results have been realized (scoring), we need indicators.
2. To judge results, we need insights into institutional positions, negotiation processes and the preparation of these processes, as these may help us to understand *why and how* expected results have (not) been realized.

Uneasy questions and difficult cases (1)

- How to judge the effectiveness of the Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation in negotiations on coherence dossiers, *given* her institutional position and mandate in interdepartmental and international policy-making on trade and development?

Uneasy questions and difficult cases (2)

- How to judge the effectiveness of a small NGO to influence the investment policy of an international soy company and to halt ecological degradation and human rights violations, *given* that this company has a campaign budget which is hundred times bigger than the one of the small NGO, the media are afraid of publishing articles of this NGO, and the government wants the NGO to keep quiet.

From tail-end to body and head

- Develop and use better indicators to *measure* results (tail-end)
- Map institutional positions and negotiaton processes (the body, the digestion) to *judge* results
- Seek whether there is a relationship between ex-ante analysis (the head) and actual results

Thank you for your attention

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