

# National Evaluation Capacity in Uganda

By  
Margaret Kakande  
President  
**Uganda, Evaluation Association**

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## **Overview of the Evaluation effort**

Policy makers in Uganda are for evidence based decision making. There is a quest for implementing successful programmes that have proven to work. This makes evaluation critical as it is the only mechanism through which the policy makers can be assured of what works and why. However, evaluation practice has been rather weak in government as most focus has been on monitoring. With the advent of management for results practice, there is now a renewed desire to strengthen the evaluative capacity at all levels.

Evaluation activities, in Uganda are within various institutions. The impact evaluations are since recently the responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister, the overseer of government business. However, in the past there were incidences where Civil Society (CSO) conducted impact evaluations for their policy advocacy work. For example CSO conducted an impact evaluation of the structural adjustment policies of liberalization, privatization and civil service reform. On the other hand, research and academic institutions have also been evaluating policy impacts as part of their routine operations.

The Office of the Prime Minister has a directorate of Monitoring and Evaluation. This Directorate is supposed to coordinate national evaluation activities although actual evaluations are at times conducted by independent Consultants. There also efforts to have some directorate staff engaged in evaluations in collaborative efforts with other institutions<sup>1</sup>.

Appendix 1 gives an organizational chart showing the relationships between the evaluation institutions

The evaluations at the lower project cycle level (mid-term evaluations; and ex-ante evaluations) have been conducted by varying relevant institutions where the programmes are being implemented. In the same breath, many sector programmes have had post-evaluations at the end conducted by independent consultants.

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<sup>1</sup> The staff are planning to conduct an evaluation of the impact of resettlement of internally displaced persons in northern Uganda. This is in collaboration with staff from the Economic Policy Research Centre; the Uganda Bureau of Statistics and others.

The National evaluation activities have been largely funded by donors. However, the demand for the evaluations has been mainly from the national government.

### **The nature of the evaluations and scope**

Evaluations in Uganda range from policy, programme to project evaluations at national, sector and project level. The volumes of these evaluations are also inversely proportional to the levels with most evaluations at the project level and least for policies. This has been mainly attributed to the fact that evaluations become more complex as one moves from project, programme to policy. This may be a reflection of the evaluation capacity constraints among the country evaluators.

In Uganda, there are three levels of evaluations:

- Ex-ante evaluation to predict what will work and the socio-economic frameworks within which this will occur. This was aimed at mitigating the negative effects for enhanced effectiveness of implementation of new policies. A few of these have been done for policies that are deemed very controversial, for example the land use policy. This was a Poverty and Social Impact (PSIA) study conducted as a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Lands; Ministry of Finance; and the Economic Policy Research Centre.

This study that took 6 months constituted of statistical analysis of the national data sets, as well as a participatory consultation of a representative sample of the beneficiary communities.

The study findings were primarily used by the Ministry of Lands in finalizing the National Land Use Policy.

The ex-ante evaluations are focused mainly on the assumptions and risks that have to be minimized for effective implementation. In a way these assessments test the programme theory underlying the policy or programme design. The ex ante evaluations were for policy planning.

- Mid-Term Evaluations of various programmes have been conducted within the implementing institutions by independent consultants. These are mainly sector level evaluations that have been conducted for the donor funded programmes.

The mid-term evaluations last between 3 weeks to months depending on the size and complexity of the programme or project being evaluated. The results are for management purposes to inform future operations of the programme of project in question with a view to improving programmes and service delivery.

The mid term evaluations usually entail an assessment of programme or project management; review of achievements and challenges; an examination of issues of efficiency, relevance and sustainability. So to a large extent the evaluations are focused

on the activities, processes, products/outputs, organizational performance, and to a limited extent service delivery.

- Impact Evaluations have been conducted for national policies and programmes; as well as sector programmes and projects.

The major national evaluation was that of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP, 1997-2007) that doubled as Uganda's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The evaluation of the ten year programme was aimed at assessing the effectiveness, and relevance of the national strategies in fostering pro-poor growth.

The national evaluation focused on impacts, outcomes and service delivery, with some reflection on the activities and processes. The exercise that lasted more than 6 months was aimed at informing government's shift from the PEAP to a five year National Development Plan.

## **The Use of Evaluations**

As has been noted, there have been few national policy evaluations. The main users have been both the government and development partners. There were demand driven evaluations, usually with a purpose of informing policy shifts.

The national PEAP evaluation, for example was for the policy makers that included the Presidency, the cabinet, the Parliament, and the planning technocrats.

For ownership and use of findings, the key stakeholders were consulted at the design stage for the evaluation. In other words the key stakeholders agreed on the Terms of Reference for the evaluation.

To ensure objectivity and credibility of the results, the evaluation was commissioned to a reputable independent evaluation consultancy firm. However, the coordination of the evaluation was undertaken by the government evaluation agency, the Office of the Prime Minister. The coordinating agency was assisted by a multi-stakeholder steering committee that supervised the evaluation and also provided quality control services.

The evaluation report was published and widely circulated. In addition summary thematic reports were also produced for the specialized readers. A summary version of the report was also prepared. There was a national launch for the reports that were later shared through internet.

With the practice of management for results, various stakeholders are appreciating the value for evaluation and there is increasing demand. The biggest challenge is that of funding coupled with the weak evaluation capacity in-country. Another problem is that of timelines. Evaluation studies need ample time which may not synchronize with the policy making processes.

## Influence of Evaluation Results

At the national level, there have been two major influences of evaluation studies, on policy decisions in Uganda. However at the sectoral and programme levels many decisions have been based on both the midterm as well as post- evaluations. This paper gives some detail on the two national policy influences.

- (i) In Uganda, Government implemented structural adjustment policies from the late 80's to the early 1990s. There was good economic growth (ranging between 5-6 % per annum) but the population was complaining about the rampant poverty within the households. There was a lot of critique from the civil society who argued that Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were irrelevant policies that were actually detrimental to poor countries. The government was debating abandoning the stringent economic management stance that was being followed.

However, following the analysis of cross-sectional poverty data that was prepared in collaboration with the World Bank and the Statistics Department, for the period 1992-1999, it was clear that income poverty had sharply declined. This was a clear pointer that prudent economic management may not be sufficient but was a pre-requisite to sustained poverty reduction. This evaluative work informed the Uganda government's decision to hold on the economic policies that were being pursued at the time, and not abandon them for some other trials. This was the genesis of Uganda government's quest for evidence based decision making.

- (ii) The second major influence was a result of the evaluation of the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. The findings of the evaluation showed that the country fell short of various goals because of **poor implementation**, resulting from weak monitoring and supervision of public programmes. To this effect, government has stepped up its monitoring efforts by creating new Units<sup>2</sup>, where deemed necessary.

## The Development of technical expertise and know-how

Monitoring and evaluation in Uganda is conducted by a wide range of skilled personnel. These include economists; statisticians; accountants; auditors and other social scientists. Majority of these professions are mainly monitors with limited advanced evaluation skills. An evaluation capacity assessment conducted<sup>3</sup> by the Uganda Evaluation Association (UEA) in 2003, ascertained that the individuals performing monitoring and evaluation activities had varying capacities. Many had some rudimentary research skill (48%), and basic monitoring and evaluation techniques (24%). However, few (3%) had the requisite skills for advanced impact evaluations. In addition the individuals with

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<sup>2</sup> Among these is the Budget Monitoring and Accountability Unit, within the Ministry of Finance that is focusing on implementation monitoring or outputs operational monitoring.

<sup>3</sup> The assessment was conducted for 49 members (UEA), working in government; parastatals, private sector and NGOs.

quantitative data collection skills were only 3% while only 4% could carry out quantitative data analysis. For the qualitative data collection and analysis, a dismal 2% had the expertise. Although this was a small sample it gave an indication of the expertise that Uganda had among the practicing monitoring and evaluation officials.

It was also noted that many evaluators had been involved in project evaluations (43%); as only 16% had participated in programme evaluations while **none** had done a policy evaluation. It was clear that the limited evaluation at the program and policy levels were partly a reflection of the limited capacity to undertake these complex analyses.

It was also clear that, other qualified personnel to manage systems for data collection, storage and dissemination; management information systems, financial information systems etc. were in adequate supply. For instance, the Makerere University (Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics (ISAE); Faculty of Economics and Management (FEMA), Institute of Information technology) do offer training in data collection; quantitative analysis, and dissemination. On the other hand various University departments train students in research methodology. However, the adequate supply of support personnel cannot translate into a critical mass of “professional evaluators “for Uganda.

Although there is no explicit strategy for training in monitoring and evaluation of public managers, the Uganda Management Institute<sup>4</sup> (UMI), offers a short course on monitoring and evaluation. This course provides basic knowledge on the subject.

In terms of existing evaluation capacity within government, it varies across ministries and departments. However, as was noted earlier, it is the national policy evaluations that are most complex and would therefore call for advanced evaluation skills. These are the skills that are most lacking in government. Since the Office of the Prime Minister is responsible for these evaluations, to larger extent this capacity has to be built there.

As an independent Institution, the Uganda Evaluation Association was formed in 2002, to promote the practice, use, quality and ethics of monitoring and evaluation in Uganda’s development process. The main objectives of the Association among others are to:

1. Build capacity for evaluation through formal and informal training skills exchange, and other avenues that support professional development
2. Create a national network to facilitate sharing and exchange of up to date literature, methods, procedures and practical evaluation frameworks among evaluators
3. Promote professionalism in evaluation by defining standards and guidelines to evaluation practice.

As a first step, the Association has established a collaborative initiative with the Uganda Christian University aimed at designing a comprehensive skills training package.

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<sup>4</sup> UMI is the institute that trains public managers

## **Conclusion**

There is a quest for evidence based decision making in general and evaluation in particular in government. The evaluation practice is still limited at the national level partly due to capacity constraints. However, there are efforts to foster professionalism within the evaluation fraternity that will need international support.

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# Appendix1. The National Integrated M&E Framework

