

An Update on Evaluation in the Latin American and Caribbean Region

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This short paper updates the evaluation scene in the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) region. Specifically, it covers four aspects of that scene: (1) evidence on the growing number of job opportunities for evaluators in the region, (2) news about national-level evaluation organizations, (3) professional development courses available in 2005, and (4) the internal evaluation system supported by the Brazilian federal government.

1. Work opportunities for evaluators in LAC

There is an increasing number of job postings being advertised in three major LAC evaluation discussions lists—RELAC (Latin American and the Caribbean Evaluation Network), PREVAL (Program for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean), and the Brazilian Evaluation Network. Just in the past three months, at least eleven job postings have been advertised. Ten of them were procurements for external program evaluators and one was a search for a full-time coordinator of monitoring and evaluation. Government agencies and nonprofit organizations (NGOs, foundations, and institutes) were the two main clients offering such opportunities. It is interesting to notice the broad range of areas covered by such announcements, including education, environment, child labor, agriculture, and socioeconomic development.

Such augmentation in the number of job postings announced in these evaluation lists can be considered in two ways: it is not only an increase in the existing market for professional evaluators in the region, but also a general indicator that local evaluators are being sought to fill the available positions. Table 1 presents some additional details on the job positions advertised.

Table 1. Employment Opportunities in LAC

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Client</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Description</i>
Government	Ministry of Education—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Assess intermediary results of methodology of Active School Program—improving the quality of public schools
	Ministry of Education—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Develop evaluation methodology to assess strategic planning of education secretaries within the FUNDESCOLA Project
	Ministry of Education—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Independent evaluation of GESTAR I Program—improving quality of Math and Language education
	Brazilian Environmental and natural Resources Institute—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Evaluation of projects related to the Promising Initiatives Component of the Pro-Várzea Program in the Amazon region
	Fideicomisos Instituidos en Relación con la Agricultura (FIRA)—Mexican Government	Evaluation consultant	Evaluation of Mexican government programs in livelihood/agriculture.
Nonprofits	World Vision—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Develop monitoring system based on Logic Model for a social-economic development program
	Acción Sin Fronteras (ASF)—Peru	Coordinator for Monitoring and Evaluation	Provide leadership and manage all activities related to monitoring and evaluation within ASF
	Instituto Avaliação—Brazil	Evaluation consultant	Evaluation of projects in the area of race-ethnicity and education
Private	Killefit Consult—Colombia	Evaluation consultants	Several evaluations of projects in the area of environment and rural development in LAC countries
	Juárez and Associates—USA	Evaluation consultants	Technical assistance in monitoring and evaluation of international education initiative to combat child labor in Latin American and other countries
Development Agency	OIT—International Labor Organization	Evaluation consultant	External final evaluation of program for eradicating child labor in Guatemala

2. LAC Evaluation Organizations

Since November 2004, one new national evaluation organization was formed and three others are taking the initial steps towards their official creation. The Nicaraguan Monitoring and Evaluation Network (RENICSE) became the fifth organization officially created in the region, joining Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica and Peru. Bolivia, Chile and Venezuela have already started consistent efforts to create their evaluation networks. RELAC, PREVAL, and the UNICEF continue to play important roles in the establishment of national organizations.

While searching for information to write this update, I came across some references to an evaluation association in Argentina, the “Asociación Argentina de Evaluación,” including a training course they are providing (see “Evaluation Training” below for details). At the closing of this issue of the journal I had not received any additional detail regarding the organization from the provided contact person—María Isabel Andrés (mandal@mecon.gov.ar). We hope to have some more to report on the Argentinean Evaluation Association in the next issue of JMDE.

The following are some short news items about the existing national evaluation organizations in the region.

Brazil: The Brazilian Evaluation Network has now about 300 members divided among its five state chapters in Bahia, Minas Gerais, Pernambuco, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo. The Network maintains a website (www.avaliabrasil.org.br) and a discussion list (ReBraMA-subscribe@yahoogrupos.com.br). The most recent

activity promoted by the Network was an evaluation seminar involving professionals working in the social development area during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (Brazil) in January 2005. For more information about this organization contact Rogério Silva (rrsilva@fonte.org.br).

Colombia: The Colombian Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network (SIPSE) has its headquarters in Cali at the San Buenaventura University and consists of professionals working in academia, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, international cooperation agencies, and grassroots organizations. SIPSE has as its main goal applying planning, monitoring, evaluation and systematization approaches as a way to foster participative democracy. The programs of the two national events organized by SIPSE can be found at consorcio@consorcio.org.co. For more information about SIPSE contact Gloria Vela (gvela@cable.net.co).

Costa Rica: Costa Rica hosts the Central American Evaluation Association (ACE)—the first formal evaluation organization created in LAC. ACE has recently launched its first newsletter (<http://www.geolatina.org/ace>) and is regaining space as a major reference for the region. More information about ACE can be obtained by contacting Welmer Ramos (ramosacu@racsa.co.cr) or Ana Laura Ibaja Jiménez (sisube@racsa.co.cr).

Nicaragua: The Nicaraguan Monitoring and Evaluation Network (RENICSE) has hosted three meetings and is working towards defining its vision, mission, and strategic objectives. Eduardo Centeno Cruz (ecenteno@ibw.com.ni) can provide further details about RENICSE.

Peru: The Peruvian Monitoring and Evaluation Network has developed its annual plan for 2005. It works via a coordinating committee that rotates every six months

charged with fostering participation and articulations for accomplishing the annual plan. The Network has an active electronic discussion list. Additional information on the Network's activities and accomplishments can be provided by Emma Retondo (rotondoemma@yahoo.com.ar).

RELAC: The Latin American and the Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network (RELAC) had its first international conference in Lima, Peru, in October 2004. The conference had 142 participants from 22 countries. A Coordination Committee for RELAC was formed with the support of representatives from 16 countries that already have or are in their way to create national evaluation organizations. A preliminary plan of action for 2005 was approved that include: (i) defining operational norms, (ii) defining strategies for establishing alliances, (iii) designing communication and support strategies for new national organizations, and (iv) establishing working groups (e.g., evaluation standards, systematizing, public policy, and capacity building). A CD-Rom with all the material presented at the Conference, including videos, as well as the strategic planning for RELAC will soon be available upon request at: preval3@desco.org.pe. For additional information on RELAC contact one of the members of the coordination committee: Consuelo Ballesteros—South Cone (consueloballesteros@vtr.net), Gloria Vela—Colombia (gvela@cable.net.co), Welmer Ramos—Central America (ramosacu@racsa.co.cr), Luis Soberón—Peru (lsober@terra.com.pe), Rogerio Silva—Brazil (rrsilva@fonte.org.br), Marco Segone (msegone@unicef.org), Ada Ocampo (ada.ocampo@undp.org), Emma Rotondo (rotondoemma@yahoo.com.ar), and Oscar Jara (oscar.jara@alforja.or.cr)

3. Evaluation training

The availability of a number of on-line evaluation courses in Spanish is probably the most interesting fact regarding evaluation training in LAC not covered in the last issue of JMDE. At least three institutions are offering such courses in 2005:

(1) In Argentina, the University Nacional del Litoral and the Center for Development and Technological Technical Assistance Centro for Public Organizations (TOP) are offering an on-line certification course in Outcome and Impact Evaluation of Public Organizations and Programs. More information at: www.top.org.ar/curso_virt6.htm

(2) PROGRESO Social Projects, Management, and Resources, a Peruvian nonprofit organization, is offering an on-line course in Qualitative Methods for Evaluation. Access their website for additional information: www.progreso-peru.org

(3) The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is offering a series of four on-line courses covering: (i) Logic Models for Project Design, (ii) Project Monitoring and Evaluation, (iii) Evaluation of Environment Impact, and (iv) Institutional Analysis. The courses have two quite attractive features. They are free of charge and are available year around. For details access: www.iadb.org/int/rtc/ecourses/esp/index.htm

Some courses not covered in the October 2004 JMDE issue include:

The [Brazilian Ministry of Social Development](#), the National School of Public Administration and the National School of Public Health in association with the Institute of Social Studies, (The Netherlands) are offering a certification course on Evaluation of Social Programs targeting primarily public administrators. March to June 2005 in Brasilia, DF, Brazil.

The [Center for Studies in Economic Development](#) (CEDE)—University of Los Andes in Bogotá, Colombia is offering a specialization course in Social Evaluation of Projects.

The [Latin American Institute for Social and Economic Planning](#) (ILPES) will be offering at least three short-term evaluation courses in 2005: (i) Use of Socioeconomic Indicators to Evaluate the Impact of Poverty Reduction Program—July 2005, Cartagena de Indias, Colombia; (ii) Logic Model, Monitoring and Evaluation—Aug/Sep 2005, Antigua, Guatemala; (iii) Planning and Evaluation of Public Investments Projects—Oct 2005, Santiago, Chile.

The Argentinean Evaluation Association (AAE) will be offering a year-long (March-December 2005) specialization course on project identification, elaboration, and evaluation as part of the Capacity Building Program of the Secretary of Economic Policy of the Argentinean Government. For details contact María Isabel Andrés (mandal@mecon.gov.ar).

4. Evaluation within the Brazilian federal government

The Brazilian government under the leadership of the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management has taken important steps towards the development of an evaluation culture within the public administration system. Important efforts have been made in the direction of establishing internal evaluation strategies for all federal programs under the umbrella of the federal Pluri-Annual Plan (PPA) for 2004-2007. An evaluation manual has been produced offering a framework to orient all program managers to assess their efforts as a way to improve their practices. The idea is to establish a flexible monitoring system with the input from the different ministries

External evaluations of four major federal programs are expected to be implemented in 2005. Studies to develop a more participative evaluation system within the federal sphere are underway. The government is also trying to learn from other countries' experiences—a group of staff members recently visited the US, Canada and the United Kingdom. An evaluation seminar, open to the public and including the participation of evaluation specialists from Canada, was organized to share lessons learned from such visits.

The advances produced in this area in Brazil are unquestionable and show a clear interest in promoting long-lasting changes. Hopefully such efforts will culminate in the establishment of an independent evaluation agency, on the model of the American General Accounting Office (GAO) that will be able to provide candid accounts of the merit, relevance, and significance of the federally funded programs. Such evaluations will help strengthen government's accountability as well as provide quality information to help decision makers make better use of the scarce resources available.

Additional information regarding the work done by the Brazilian Ministry of Planning can be obtained from Andreia Rodrigues dos Santos (andrea.santos@planejamento.gov.br).

Final Note

I would like to thank the many people that provided me with key information to develop this update: Ana Laura Ibaja Jiménez (Costa Rica), Andréia Rodrigues dos Santos (Brazil), Eduardo Centeno Cruz (Nicaragua), Emma Rottondo (Peru), Gloria Vela (Colombia), Rogério Renato Silva (Brazil), and Welmer Ramos (Costa Rica).

If you have additional information or corrections on any of the topics covered by this article or by the [previous one](#), or if you want to send additional contributions regarding evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean please do not hesitate to contact me at Thomaz.Chianca@wmich.edu.