

Program Evaluation Development in the Newly Independent States¹

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This paper provides a general overview of the development of program evaluation in CIS countries. We start by telling a story that describes how evaluation appeared in the scene, how it developed and who the key players were in its development. We discuss the issue of demand for and supply of evaluation services. In the conclusion, we describe our view of the stages in the emergence of evaluation in the CIS and the perspective of each. The four stages we identify are: “An External Phenomenon” (1991–1995), “Initiation” (1996–2000), “Assimilation” (2000–2004), and “Implementation” (2005 to the present).

The only difficulty in writing an overview of this kind is the diversity of laws and governmental structures in our various countries. After some consideration, we decided

not to describe each country’s particular circumstances, but rather to present a general picture of what is happening with several illustrative examples. For example, we use the term “government” without going deeply into the differences between municipal and state governmental structures. This kind of diversity is critical for some countries but unimportant for others.

Another limitation that we must acknowledge is the fact that our survey is not exhaustive. We did not have information about the development of program evaluation in all the countries of the CIS and our examples are drawn only from the countries whose specific information we possess.

The Beginnings

The development of program evaluation as a profession started simultaneously with the appearance of foreign donors at the beginning of 1990s. Evaluation was “imported” together with the project approach as one of the management functions of foreign organizations. These organizations carried out monitoring and evaluation of the financial and technical or humanitarian support programs and projects they had funded. This work was done either by the staff of donor organizations (typically monitoring) or by experienced foreign external evaluators. Thus, the first people to become acquainted with program evaluation were staff members in the local offices of foreign organizations such as the United Nations, international development agencies, and foundations, and, soon after, staff members of the local recipients of foreign grants. The majority of recipients of these first grants were social, educational and healthcare-related NGOs, but governmental structures at different levels and small and medium-sized businesses also received grants.

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In the early 90s, the large foreign NGOs that managed the projects and programs funded by foreign donors, played a significant role in the development of program evaluation, not least because these NGOs were using monitoring and evaluation techniques in their own activities and were being evaluated by external consultants hired by the foreign donors.

By the second half of the 90s, the project approach had been thoroughly studied by the region's NGOs; their representatives had participated in training courses and gained practical experience. The dynamism of this process varied from country to country, with the development of program evaluation proceeding faster in some countries and slower in others. Nevertheless, though the rate of development differed from country to country, the stages of development are very much alike. We discuss this further below.

Training

NGOs moved into a stage of professionalizing and deepening knowledge in response to specific "narrow" issues. Training programs were modified to meet the needs of particular situations. Local NGOs wanted to develop a clear understanding of which models were most effective and why. In 1996, one of the first evaluation seminars in the CIS was organized for NGO representatives in Russia. This first seminar in Russia was initiated by the Russian Office of the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF-Russia) with the support of DFID and the involvement of British specialists as trainers.²

In 1997, the Russian Office of the American NGO, World Learning, organized a long-term training course on evaluation for a group of Russian experts in Moscow with the support of USAID. [Do you think that we'd better say what 'experts' implies in this context?***] The course included an introductory seminar, a

practical project evaluation task, and a final seminar for analyzing the trainees' work. American specialists were invited as trainees and program writers³. In the same year, a similar training course was organized by the Siberian Social Initiatives Support Center (Novosibirsk) to which Russian specialists were invited as trainers.⁴

By the end of the 90s similar seminars were offered in other CIS countries. We can mention here Counterpart Creative Center in Ukraine; Azerbaijan office of the American NGO ISAR in Azerbaijan; HORIZONTY Foundation in Georgia; AED⁵ in Kazakhstan; Eurasia Foundation in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.⁶ In 2000, Russian Community Development Institute⁷ with the support of USAID and American specialists⁸ carried out training for Russian resource centers' representatives. The British organization INTRAC carried out a range of training courses in evaluation in the Central Asia in 2000 and involved local evaluation specialists into evaluating their own programs in their regions. In 2004, the Community Development Institute⁹ was supported by "Eurasia" Foundation to train a group of specialists in Uzbekistan.

The end of 1990s and the beginning of 2000s was characterized by local NGOs' internal evaluation training, sometimes held with the involvement of foreign specialists. We should highlight the partnership project¹⁰ of the British organization INTRAC and the Russian Trainers and Consultants Association known as INTERTRAINING, aimed at developing and

² Evaluation Trust

³ Management Systems International

⁴ Process Consulting Company, Russia

⁵ Academy for Educational Development, USA

⁶ All of the above mentioned seminars were carried out by the Process Consulting Company. In Ukraine – in cooperation with Evaluation Trust, UK

⁷ At that time – NGO Support Center

⁸ Management Systems International

⁹ Former NGO Support Center, Moscow

¹⁰ The Project received a grant from CAF-Russia with the support of DFID.

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disseminating methodologies for training evaluation. Currently, the Russian NGO “Training-Center Golubka” conducts a few training courses on program evaluation and training evaluation in Russia and other CIS countries; World Learning, with the support of USAID organizes training in Armenia¹¹; “Eurasia” Foundation conducts training in Uzbekistan¹²; and the Community Development Institute conducts training in Central Russia. The Association of Civil Society Development Centers in Kyrgyzstan and the Kazakhstan Office of the American organization “Counterpart International” also organize evaluation training.¹³

In contrast, the Counterpart Creative Center is developing its own program and conducts a training series in Ukraine. This approach is also used by the Horizonty Foundation (Georgia), the Siberian Social Initiatives Support Center (Russia), the NGO “Zhalgas-Counterpart” (Kazakhstan), and several other NGOs in the CIS. As a result of these training courses, groups of local specialists form and become involved into program and project evaluation. Their first clients are often the structures that organized their training.

A project of the Siberian Support Center of Social Initiatives, funded by TACIS, was the beginning a new stage in the development of evaluation. The project trained the representatives of municipal and local government together with the community representatives and was implemented in cooperation with the London School of Economics. The growing interest of governmental structures is a new trend in evaluation development. This project was the

first to introduce the so-called “participatory”¹⁴ approach to evaluating social programs funded by the local municipal budgets.

During the past 5 to 6 years, higher education institutions have begun to include program evaluation as a new discipline in their programs for NGO managers. There are as yet only a few programs of this kind but their number is growing steadily. The first and only “Program and Project Evaluation” course in the region has been offered by the Moscow Community Development Institute since 2003. The Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences was the first to introduce the course “Evaluating Program and Project Effectiveness” into its full-time tuition program in 2004. The Moscow State University “Higher School of Economics” has taught evaluation in the context of governmental policy analysis since 2004; the Governmental Management Academy (Kiev) has offered a similar course since 2001. Senior courses at the American University of Central Asia (AUCA) now include evaluation in Kyrgyzstan. The master’s degree program at the School of Social Work of the Kiev-Mogilyansk Academy and the Certificate Program of the NGO Institute of Ukrainian Catholic University in Lvov also include program evaluation.

Publications

There are few publications in Russian or the other languages of the region and the demand for them exceeds the supply. Articles on monitoring and evaluation are nevertheless regularly published (and disseminated free of charge to members) in the electronic newsletter and on the website of the International Program Evaluation Network¹⁵ and in the free electronic newsletter of Process Consulting Company.¹⁶

¹¹ Management Systems International and Community Development Institute

¹² NGO Support Center

¹³ Conducted by Process Consulting Company

¹⁴ Participatory approach presupposes the active involvement of all stakeholders, not only evaluators into the evaluation process

¹⁵ www.eval-net.org

¹⁶ <http://processconsulting.ru/registration.shtml>

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A wide range of publications is offered by the Russian foundation “Urban Economics Institute” and the foundation’s Website¹⁷ contains a complete catalogue of publications for sale to the public. International organizations have issued a few materials in Russian, including J. Baker Evaluating Project Impact on Poverty¹⁸ and Glossary of Management for Results and Evaluation Terms.¹⁹ The book by C. Weiss, *Evaluation: Methods for Studying Programs and Policies*, was translated into Ukrainian and published in Ukraine in 2000. Books and manuals on evaluation for organizations working in specific areas, e.g., HIV/AIDS, are also beginning to appear.

In 2003, the NGO Support Center issued a series of lectures entitled Program and Project Evaluation. This book was created principally for students in correspondence courses offered by the Community Development Institute²⁰ (Moscow) and is not available for purchase. In 2005, the Institute of Community Development (Almaty) published a collection of articles on impact evaluation.²¹ The issue was dedicated to the annual conference of the International Program Evaluation Network (IPEN) mentioned above. In the same year, Process Consulting Company published the book Program and Project Evaluation that can be easily purchased by anyone interested.²²

Research and Development of the Core Body of Knowledge

Meanwhile, the region is accumulating practical experience and getting acquainted with theoretical materials on evaluation developed

abroad. The latter resources are not easily available for everyone because of language barriers and limited access to the modern literature in evaluation. Local evaluators are mostly involved in monitoring and evaluation of specific projects or circumstances. They have not yet made any significant contribution to the discipline’s development.

Demand and Supply

Through the mid-1990s, foreign donors’ needs for program and project evaluation services were mainly met by foreign evaluators. By the end of 1990s, however, local specialists and organizations capable of conducting evaluations at a very high professional level were available in almost all of the countries of the CIS. The most important factor in this professional development was that local specialists were invited by foreign donors to participate in evaluations, both under the supervision of foreign experts, and, for the first time, on their own. This practical work made it possible for many local specialists to gain invaluable experience.

The first evaluation clients of these local specialists were USAID, DFID, TACIS, UNDP, HIVOS, and the Soros Foundation. Large foreign NGOs and their Russian offices also started hiring local evaluators in the second half of the 1990s, among them American organizations like IREX, ISAR, Counterpart, and Save the Children, and the United Kingdom’s Charities Aid Foundation. It naturally takes time and effort for foreign donors to gain confidence in new practitioners, no matter how experienced, and many foreign donors still maintain a cautious attitude toward new local specialists. We acknowledge Eurasia Foundation for providing systemic support for local evaluation capacity development and for involving local evaluation specialists from Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia.

¹⁷http://www.urbanecomomics.ru/texts.php?folder_id=94&mat_id=41

¹⁸ World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org/>

¹⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/22/61/31650813.pdf>

²⁰<http://www.ngo.org.ru/ngoicb/course6/cls0/CourseT OC.html>

²¹ <http://www.idc.nursat.kz/gb.php?lang=&page=4>

²² http://processconsulting.ru/news_arc.shtml

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At the end of the 1990s, governmental structures began to demonstrate interest in program evaluation. In Russia, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan this followed the adoption of laws and regulations governing competitive bidding for government contracts for social programmes and municipal grants. The Siberian Support Center for Social Initiatives, for example, took an active part in introducing program evaluation by helping local and municipal governments in their region. Moscow's Institute for Urban Economics also made a significant contribution in this area. In Kazakhstan, a new law governing conduct of social programme was adopted in 2005, and this year (2006), a methodology for local project evaluation developed by the Kazakh NGO "Institute of Cooperation for Development" is being introduced by the Ministry of Culture, Information and Sports.

In Ukraine and Russia, where administrative reforms emphasize management for results, governmental structures are increasingly interested in evaluation as an important new management tool.

A new use for evaluation has appeared with the development of corporate charities. Large corporations have begun to include charitable programs in their long-term strategies for social responsibility. Important questions requiring the tools of evaluation arise in this connection: how do we decide our priorities for charitable investment; how do we evaluate the efficiency of our charitable programs; and how do we measure the impact of these programs on a company's core business?

Professional Communities

In our region (the CIS) nowadays, communities of program evaluators are creating professional networks and associations at the national level. Because the International Program Evaluation Network works throughout the region, it does not compete with the new national groups or duplicate their functions. Its purpose is rather to

provide informational resources to support the development of these national networks and their cooperation with each other.

IPEN does not intend to become an international professional association but rather an effective tool for cooperation and communication among national associations in its region.

IPEN's activity is completely non-commercial. The Network remains neutral towards any evaluation specialist or organization: it does not advertise evaluation services, does not provide them, and does not promote evaluators or the organizations that they represent.

A board of trustees provides for the strategic management of the Network and board members provide resources to support the operation of the Network. It proved crucial that all trustees be organizations rather than individuals in order to sustain the necessary level of Board activity. In 2000 there were five organizations on the board representing Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. In 2005 an organization from Kazakhstan joined the board and the UNICEF Regional Office for CEE/CIS in Geneva accepted IPEN's invitation to become a board member. This UNICEF-IPEN cooperation is an important sign of recognition that acknowledges an informal network whose activities are aligned with UNICEF's efforts to develop local evaluation capacity. UNICEF's support of the IPEN annual conference in 2005 and this joint publication are products of this new cooperative relationship.

The Uzbekistan Evaluation Network²³ was created in 2005 with the support of Eurasia Foundation. Its mission is to increase the professional level of local evaluation specialists and to promote evaluation as a management tool for increasing the effectiveness of social

²³ <http://evaluation.freenet.uz>

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programs and projects implemented in Uzbekistan.

According to our data, two other professional evaluation networks are in the process of being created in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. A “Young Evaluators’ Network” is being created in Moldova with the support of UNICEF.

Stages of Program Evaluation Development in the Region

In light of the information presented above, we have identified the following four stages in the development of evaluation in the CIS:

1991–1995 “An External Phenomenon”—Evaluation is carried out only by foreign donors and is viewed by staff members of local organizations as an “external phenomenon,” brought from abroad, with very little to do with the processes presently at work in the region.

1996–2000 “Initiation”—There is a growing interest in evaluation accompanied by rapid dissemination of the information about it through training courses.

2000–2004 “Assimilation”—The region’s first professional organization (IPEN) is created to more deeply introduce evaluation into NGOs’ activities. There is an increase in evaluation services provided by organizations and independent specialists in local markets and increased recognition of local specialists by both local and international clients. Nevertheless, promotion of evaluation at this stage faces serious difficulties and there is little local demand for evaluation services.

2005–the present “Implementation”—While it is very hard to name a stage that one has just begun, we point out

this stage because of the sharp increase of the interest in evaluation among governmental and business organizations in many countries of the region. Though it was born in the non-commercial sector, the function of evaluation is gradually migrating into the commercial sector. National social programs at least declare the necessity of monitoring and evaluation, e.g., some include a system of indicators for their evaluation. Regional authorities that fund social projects have begun to include evaluation in their grant program cycles. Business organizations that carry out charitable programs conduct internal evaluations. Local charitable foundations and foundations of local communities also evaluate their programs.

For the most part, only foreign donors required evaluation services; local organizations are only just beginning to consider the use of evaluation as an effective management tool. But the introduction of the system of managing for results in governmental structures creates the basis for a growing demand by local agencies and departments.

Today we can state unequivocally that there are qualified professional evaluators in the region, though their number and the number of specialized consulting organizations remains small. The market for evaluation services is undeveloped and the number of qualified evaluators (on the average across the region) still exceeds the demand for external program evaluation. The CIS has an important opportunity to capitalize on two of the region’s unique features to expand the use of evaluation, namely the use of Russian as a working language and the ease of travel afforded by visa-free regimes between many CIS countries. This is why we consider regional specialists to be an important resource for use in countries beyond the evaluators’ own country of residence.

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Though in some countries, such as Azerbaijan, where local specialists do not yet actively promote themselves as evaluators, the demand for evaluation services and training exceeds the existing supply, in most countries in the region the correlation of demand and supply remains relatively equal.

Future Prospects

An actively working, growing and developing International Program Evaluation Network will remain a critical factor in the development of evaluation in the region.

Several factors illustrate the vitality and sustainability of the network. It holds conferences annually, publishes a newsletter four times a year, and supports a website and an email listserv. It supports the creation of national and regional communities of evaluators. The Board of Trustees is made up of sustainable organizations and minimum fixed payments from participating organizations guarantee the Network's financial sustainability. UNICEF's presence on the Board contributes to IPEN sustainability as well as its reputation.

In the near future, the region's principal evaluation clients will still be foreign donor organizations. Local evaluation capacity development will continue to depend on their policy of involving local specialists into tenders for evaluation. The pace of growth in the use of evaluation however, may well depend on how successfully local specialists promote their evaluation services and whether they will act collaboratively.

Some countries may experience growth of their government's interest in evaluation in general and in evaluation training for government staff in particular. Countries where evaluation developed more slowly than in the whole region may at least experience increased interest in evaluation just because "their neighbors have it."

In the next few years, institutions of higher education in the region can be expected to

include evaluation modules in relevant degree programs.

The following factors could promote the development of evaluation in the region:

- Specialized introductory and informational programs on the use and importance of evaluation
- Evaluation training programs and schools at the national level
- Local organizations that can become leaders and coordinators of the evaluation development
- Creation of evaluation associations and/or networks

One of the clearest needs is for developing and publishing available handbooks, methodological recommendations, and other literature on evaluation in Russian and the other languages of the region.

International Program Evaluation Network²⁴

The International Program Evaluation Network was the first professional evaluation community in the region. It was created in 2000 by five national organizations—three Russian, one Ukrainian, and one Georgian—as an informal community of people working in the field of evaluation or interested in the subject of evaluation. IPEN now includes 131 individual members from 13 countries. Together with its partners in the CIS, IPEN has conducted six annual international conferences: three in Russia (2000²⁵, 2002²⁶, 2003²⁷), one in Ukraine (2004²⁸), one in Kazakhstan (2005²⁹) and one in Georgia

²⁴ www.eval-net.org

²⁵ Novosibirsk, in partnership with Siberian Center for Social Initiatives Support (SCSIS)

²⁶ Sochi, in cooperation with South Regional Resource Center (SRRC)

²⁷ Moscow

²⁸ Kiev, in cooperation with Counterpart Creative Center

²⁹ Almaty, in partnership with Association of Civil Society Development (ACSD) and Institute of Development for Cooperation

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(2006³⁰). In 2001, SCSIS carried out the first School of Program Evaluation with IPEN as its partner. The next IPEN conference will take place in Moscow, Russia in September 2007. Moscow Higher School of Economics and Process Consulting Company will be the regional partners of IPEN.

IPEN's mission is to promote the professional development of evaluation specialists and to develop the evaluation function in the former USSR. IPEN's goal (until the year 2008) is to form a sustainable system to provide network members with quality information on various aspects of program evaluation.

The Network disseminates the following information:

- International news
- News from the former USSR
- Information about companies that specialize in evaluation in the regions
- Information about training and professional development possibilities, upcoming seminars and conferences
- Job opportunities for evaluators
- Publications on regional evaluation experiences
- Digests and translations of foreign evaluation publications
- Evaluation methods and toolkits

Information is published and disseminated on the IPEN website, in electronic newsletters, e-mail listserv, and in "round table" discussions and conferences.

Membership in IPEN is free of charge and open to any individual who agrees with the Network's principles and goals and who is ready to follow the professional principles for evaluators adopted by IPEN. Prospective members provide information on an appropriate form and formally accept the IPEN principles. No other requirements are possible and any network member can quit the network

without any additional conditions. All members receive:

- The Program Monitoring and Evaluation Newsletter (quarterly)
- Timely information (through the mailing list)
- The possibility of sending information to all IPEN members (through the mailing list)
- The ability to update their personal information online

³⁰ Tbilisi, in cooperation with HORIZONTI Foundation