

Impact Evaluation for Development: Principles for Action

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“The authors of this paper come from a variety of perspectives. As scholars, practitioners, and commissioners of evaluation in development, research and philanthropy, our thematic interests, disciplines, geographic locale, and experiences may differ but we share a fundamental belief that evaluative knowledge has the potential to contribute to positive social change.

We know that the full potential of evaluation is not always (or even often) realized in international development and philanthropy. There are many reasons for this – some to do with a lack of capacity, some methodological, some due to power imbalances, and some the result of prevailing incentive structures. Evaluation, like development, needs to be an open and dynamic enterprise. Some of the current trends in evaluation, especially in impact evaluation in international development, limit unnecessarily the range of approaches to assessing the impact of development initiatives.

We believe that impact evaluation needs to draw from a diverse range of approaches if it is to be useful in a wide range of development contexts, rigorous, feasible, credible, and ethical.

Developed with support from the Rockefeller Foundation this article is a contribution to ongoing global and regional discussions about ways of realizing the potential of impact evaluation to improve development and strengthening our commitment to work towards it.”

Patricia Rogers is Professor of Public Sector Evaluation at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Australia. Her work focuses on credible and useful evaluation methods, approaches and systems for complicated and complex programs and policies.

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Sarah Earl is Senior Program Specialist in the Evaluation Unit at the International Development Research Centre (Canada). Her interest is ensuring that evaluation and research realize their full potential to contribute to positive social change.

Fred Carden is Director of Evaluation at the International Development Research Centre (Canada). His particular expertise is in the development and adaptation of evaluation methodology for the evaluation of development research.

Zenda Ofir is an international evaluation specialist, past President of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), former board member of the American Evaluation Association and the NONIE Steering Committee, and evaluation advisor to a variety of international organizations.

Nancy MacPherson is the Managing Director for Evaluation at the Rockefeller Foundation based in New York. The Foundation’s Evaluation Office aims to strengthen evaluative practice in philanthropy and development by supporting rigorous, innovative and context appropriate approaches to evaluation

and learning.

Tags

1. Guides
2. impact evaluation
3. principles

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