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Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

Quality Assurance



Beneficiary Assessment

an institutional perspective: work in progress

Capitalization Workshop Learning event BA 30.9.2013



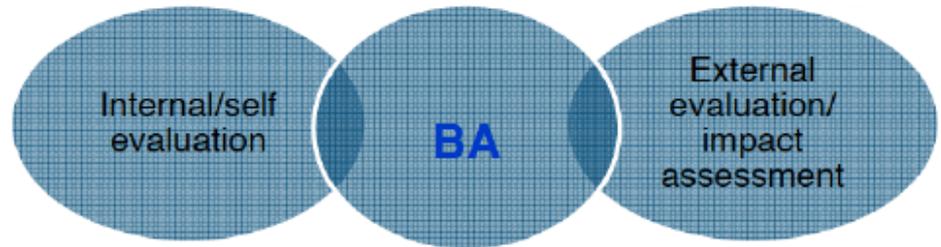
CONTEXT & BACKGROUND



Key Elements of BA

Beneficiary assessment is an evaluation approach to enhance learning, responsiveness, relevance and effectiveness by emphasising the **fair representation of beneficiary perspectives in identifying and analyzing project and programme results** (outputs, outcomes and if possible impacts). It is distinct from 'normal review evaluation' that relies on external expert views, and self-evaluations that reflect staff views.

Although BA can encompass a diversity of practice, **BA has three essential ingredients – participation, learning and responsiveness**. Therefore, **at minimum, any BA exercise must seek to better understand different groups of peoples' perspectives** on programme relevance and results to learn about effectiveness. **Learning should lead to responses** that improve SDC's and its partners' support for citizens' development initiatives.



insider view	Beneficiaries/clients views	outsider view
accountability: inwards/self	upward (donor) & downward (beneficiaries) accountability	upward accountability (funds, outcomes) mostly to donor
process	process	(short) exercise
bottom up	bottom up	top down
more bias	less bias? positive bias? perceived objectivity	less bias (?) perceived objectivity



Projectable change



Complex unpredictable change



BA nothing new!

- Robert Chambers « Whose Reality Counts », 1997, PRA, PLA
- WB *Voices of the Poor* 2000, UNDP *Choices for the Poor* 2001
- SDC CS review: *Views of the Poor (03, Tanzania, 05 Pakistan)*,
- BA in WB, Lawrence F. Salmen, 1995
- BA in SDC/IC : *Pasolac, Atica, 2003-2006, ICIPE Kenya 2010*

BA have not been used sufficiently in the past (isolated initiatives)
Are things changing?

- More recently, BA as a priority of SDC QA
 - Review + BA SAHA Madagascar 2012
 - BA in WatSan Consortium: Nepal, Ethiopia, ... , GESTOR Bolivia
 - BA Lebanon tbc, Bangladesh, Mozambique 2014
- Trainings
 - LE BA (January 2013), How To Note BA, => [ressources web page](#)
 - Latin America regional LE oct.2013,



Promoting BA: why is BA not used more frequently in SDC?

■ Findings

- BA not on the radar screen: Knowledge, know how, status ...
- Dealing with long results / partner chain, SDC support very distant from ultimate beneficiaries => « dissolved influence »
- Dealing with high number of beneficiaries
- Multidonor programs, is BA a Swiss specialty? how to convince others?
- For program officer involved in BA, highly rewarding !

■ Implications

- respond to challenges with documented experiences from BA:
 - FAQ: Added value? Costs? Time?
 - Anecdotal, subjective, biased..
- Continue to promote and support BA in practice and organize training based on examples

What are other donors doing in similar topics?

■ DfID: *Beneficiary Participation in Monitoring (BPM)*

- Focus on project performance and monitoring
- Mandatory to answer the following question in annual review: what direct feedback collected from beneficiaries about results? what does this tell us about the project's performance?
- emerging practice CoP on BPM in practice, UK based NGOs engaged
- importance of closing the feedback loop: 4 pilots

■ Swedish Sida: *Reality checks*

- in depth research, longitudinal qualitative study (5 years), focus on listening people and immersion



SDC RATIONALE WITH BA



Why BA matters from a poverty /vulnerability perspective?

- Progress in fighting poverty / vulnerability / exclusion are ultimately improvement experienced by poor people in their lives ... at some point we have to ask them!
- Reflective practice: program are based on impact hypothesis that need to be checked over time, this can be done from different viewpoints : external experts, government officials, staff ... but also « primary stakeholders »
- Empowerment: people telling what is important from their perspective, when they are listened and when this eventually influences program closing the feedback loop, is empowering.
- It also sets a basis for future participatory development processes



Why BA matters from a results perspective?

- BA fits with SDC approach to results orientation:
 - steering decisions based on understanding contribution to country development progress ...
 - ... focusing on outcome at organization / population level ...
 - ... based on plausible synthesis integrating information from different sources (perspectives) and nature (qualitative, quantitative)
- ➔ BA provides direct feedback from development processes, can provide powerful insights in different contribution to change – among which SDC supported programs – to be triangulated with other data and helps to understand the meaning of numbers

- BA fits with SDC values and profile, feeding policy dialogue from first hand information

- Asking citizens is a commonplace in domestic service provision assesement!!



BA at project / program level

- Each phase: end of phase report (EPR) is compulsory
- Three main types of evaluation may either feed EPR or answer questions from EPR: External Review, BA, Self Evaluation
- According to the situation and needs at the end of a phase, an ER, a BA and / or a SE - or a combination of them - will best fit the purpose (but need to be planned carefully!)
- External review should be done each 2-3 phases
 - Currently nearly all phases, quality should improve
 - Expected: less reviews but of higher quality



BA at cooperation strategy level

■ Possible uses

- as an element of a **special study**, for example integrated in the monitoring or the evaluation of a **particular program in the domain portfolio**
- in **joint evaluation**: multi-donor program, sector reforms, etc. and if possible: country led !
- as an **element of the CS evaluation**

■ Main added value

- BA helps to improve **quality and interpretation** of data: to identify meanings and significance from the perspective of primary stakeholders
- When using **fields of observation** (qualitative indicators), BA brings citizen / user views in the multi-stakeholder perspective while monitoring
- BA is a **learning process** for all involved partners and fits with the logic of progressive improvement in MCS – CS – AR



BA and CS Monitoring in fragile contexts

- Checking 'hypothesis of change' of an intervention (project), who is reached / excluded, **perception of people on change and change due to what** are crucial info in conflict affected contexts
- **BA alternative source** of data when no or no reliable data available
- As **civil society** is important for SDC in fragile situation, BA has a high potential as a source for MCS in such situation



THANK YOU !