



# **When Will We Ever Learn?**

## **Improving Lives through Impact Evaluation**

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# Good impact evaluations:

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- start in the program design phase
- are designed *with* policymakers & managers
- include external actors
- focus on measuring impact
- document context, process and operations
- address enduring questions
- are selective and strategic

# Common experiences:

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- Ex-post approach (researchers)
  - Oops, we don't have the right data
- Project cycle approach (managers)
  - Oops, we don't have enough \$ or time
- Wishy-washy results (policymakers)
  - Oops, we don't really know what works

# How it could be:

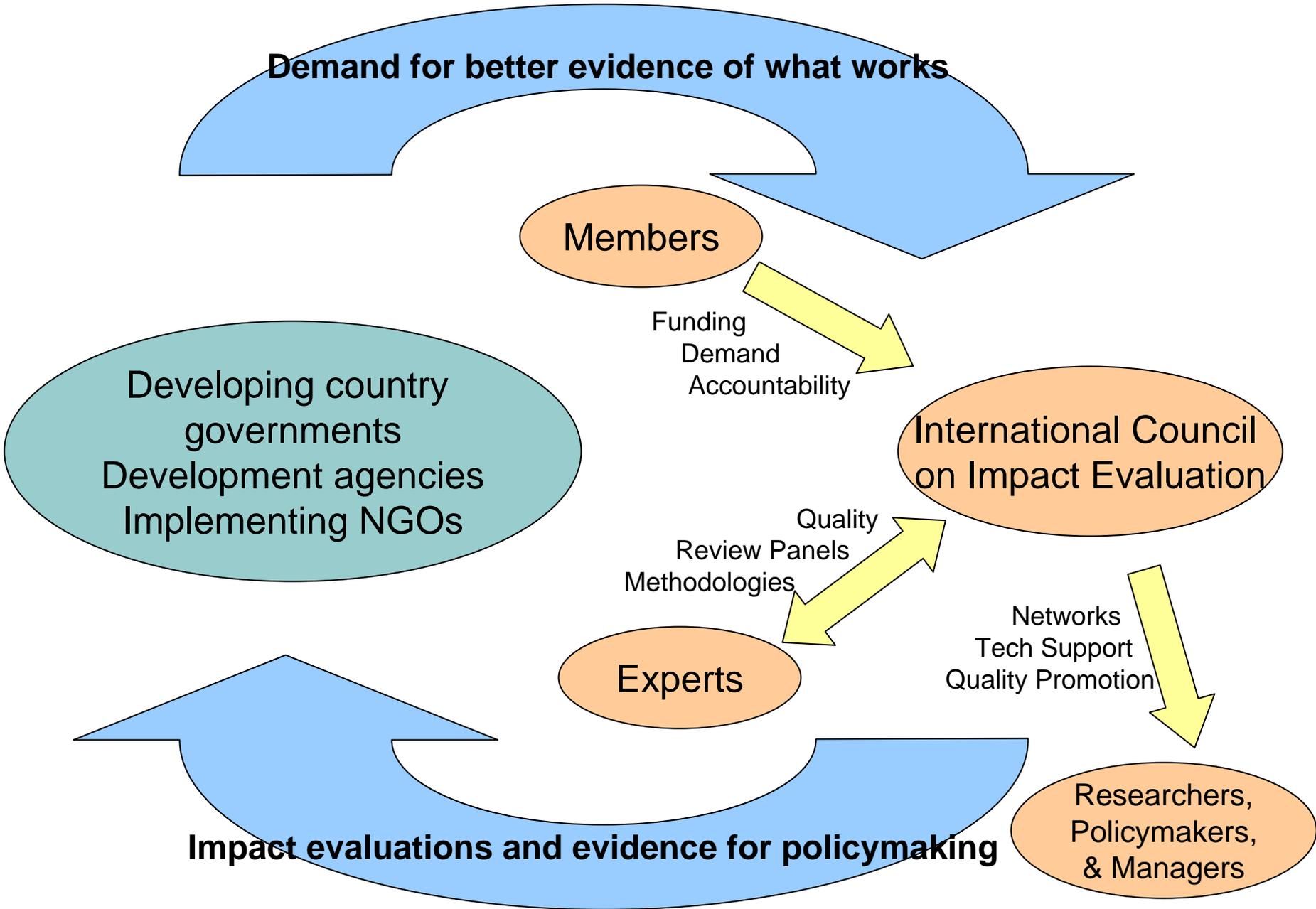
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- *Split* impact evaluation process from program approval and implementation so it can be:
  - selective
  - concentrate financial & technical resources
  - perceived as independent & credible
  
- *Link* impact evaluation process to program design so:
  - questions will be relevant
  - data collection will be appropriate
  - conclusions can be rigorous

# Recommendations

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- Ministries, Agencies, NGOs should do more of what they can do and are doing
- Collective effort to corral the good intentions:
  - Identify enduring questions
  - Promote strong standards
  - Provide an independent review process
  - Target assistance for design
  - Dedicate funds for impact evaluation



# The Imperative to Do Something

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- Everyone recognizes it's a problem but there's inertia
- “Who will bell the cat?”
- Confluence of interest, urgency, and support from major foundations and agencies might make it a reality!



# Appendix

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## Individual efforts will get us part of the way

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- Reinforcing existing efforts will help reduce the evaluation gap.
- Individual agencies can:
  - Strengthen their overall monitoring and evaluation systems
  - Dedicate resources to impact evaluation
  - Ensure collaboration between policymakers, project managers, and evaluation experts
  - Improve standards for evidence
  - Facilitate access to and use of knowledge
  - Building capacity in developing countries to conduct rigorous evaluations

# Collective efforts are necessary

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- Collective commitments are needed to assure sufficient investments in closing the evaluation gap.
  
- Only a collective initiative can:
  - Overcome the lack of incentives to conduct impact evaluations
  - Mobilize and appropriately channels new funds
  - Act strategically where the most can be learned for the global good

# Functions of a collective initiative

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## *Core Functions*

- Establish quality standards for rigorous evaluations
- Administer reviews for evaluation designs & studies
- Identify priority topics
- Provide grants for impact evaluation design

## *Other Functions*

- Organize and disseminate information
- Build capacity to produce, interpret and use knowledge
- Create a directory of researchers
- Communication and public education
- Administer new funds for impact evaluations

# What would a collective effort look like?

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An entity is needed to implement a collective initiative to satisfy these aims:

- High standards of technical quality
- Independence and legitimacy
- Operational efficiency
- International leadership
- Ability to mobilize additional resources for impact evaluation

# Funding options

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- Members co-finance core functions through dues reflecting differences in scale and financial resources
- Stakeholders negotiate a common agreement on apportioning and paying for services
- Financing of impact evaluations
  - Members can commit to finance their own impact evaluations that address questions of common interest and enduring importance
  - Members can contribute additional funds to the collective entity to finance impact evaluations

# Institutional options

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The council can be constituted in many different forms, ultimately to be decided upon by the stakeholders, for example:

- **An interagency committee** where members appoint staff to act as liaisons
- **A special program** within an existing organization where members elect a supervisory committee
- **An independent organization** governed by an elected Board with a secretariat responsible for execution

# Potential Impact

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- Tackle incentive problems for sustainable production of good impact evaluations
- Engage & support developing countries in producing good impact evaluations
- Improve international evidence base for social development policy
- Make aid dollars and domestic social spending more effective

# Next steps

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- Capstone meeting with stakeholders and potential members in Bellagio to establish principles and commitments (June)
- Design and implement an agreement