



When Will We Ever Learn?

Improving Lives through Impact Evaluation

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Good impact evaluations:

- 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:

- 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

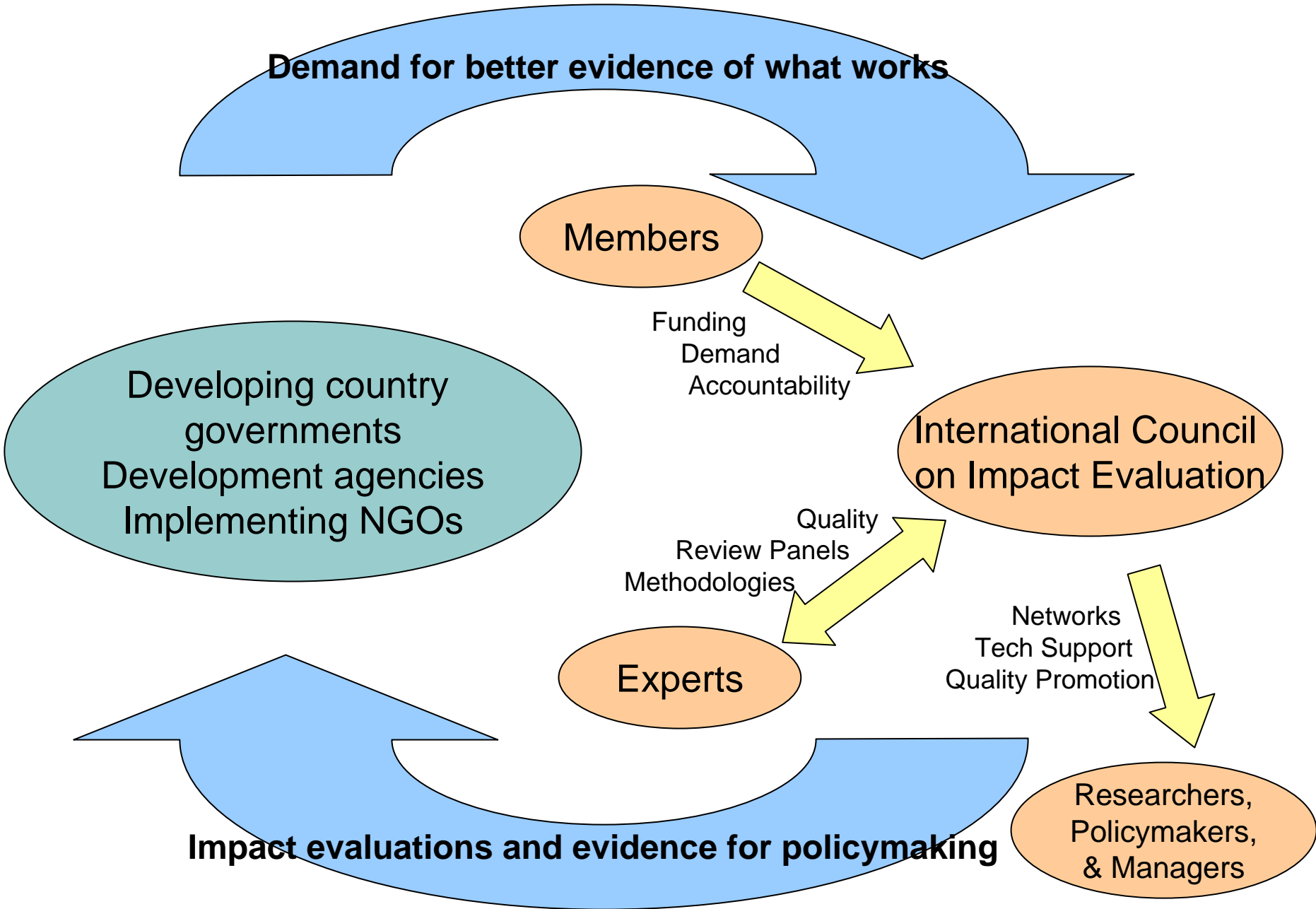
How it could be:

- *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

- 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

- 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

Individual efforts will get us part of the way

- 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

- 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

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?

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

- 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

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

- 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

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