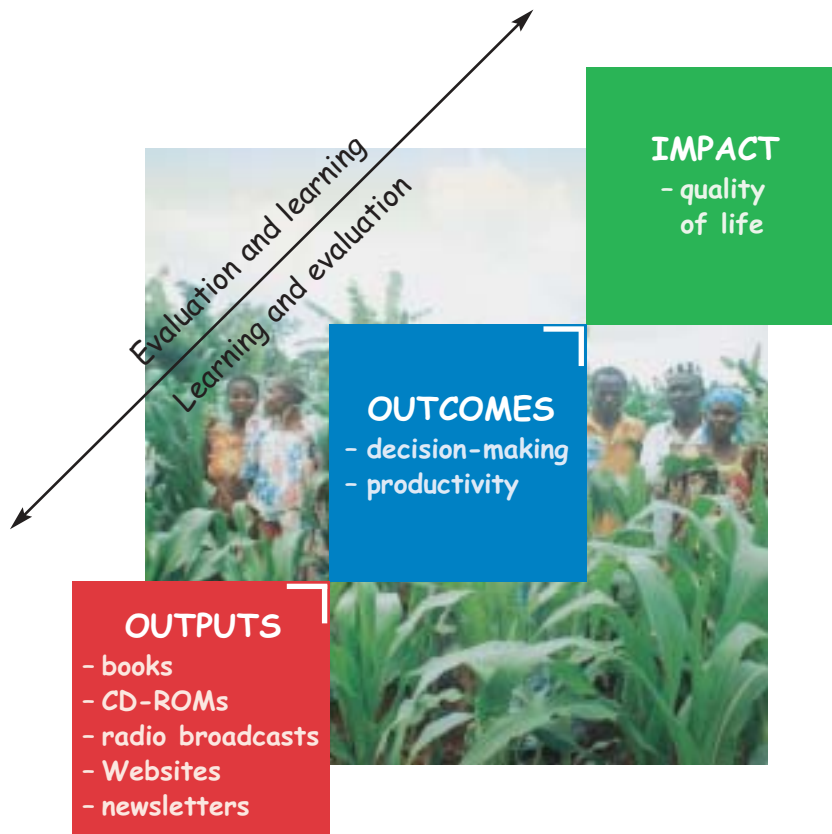


Assessing the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services

Summary report and recommendations of a technical consultation



Assessing the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services

Summary report and recommendations of
a CTA/IICD/LEAP-IMPACT technical consultation

Bonn, Germany, 9–12 October 2001

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) was established in 1983 under the Lomé Convention between the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) Group of States and the European Union Member States. Since 2000, it has operated within the framework of the ACP-EC Cotonou Agreement. CTA's tasks are to develop and provide services that improve access to information for agricultural and rural development, and to strengthen the capacity of ACP countries to produce, acquire, exchange and utilise information in this area. CTA's programmes are organised around four principal themes: developing information management and partnership strategies needed for policy formulation and implementation; promoting contact and exchange of experience; providing ACP partners with information on demand; and strengthening their information and communication capacities.

The International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) assists developing countries to realise locally owned sustainable development by harnessing the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs). The driving force behind IICD activities is that local 'change agents' themselves identify and develop proposals for realistic ICT applications – local ownership forms the essential basis for sustainable socio-economic development. Acting as a catalyst, IICD's three-pronged strategy is delivered mainly through a series of integrated Country Programmes. First, IICD facilitates ICT Roundtable Processes in selected developing countries, where local stakeholders identify and formulate ICT-supported policies and projects based on local needs. Second, working with training partners in each country, Capacity Development activities are organised to develop the skills and other capacities identified by the local partners. Third, IICD draws on its global network to provide information and advice to its local partners, as well as fostering local information exchange networks on the use of ICTs for development. The best practices and lessons learned are documented and disseminated internationally through a Knowledge Sharing programme. In support of these activities, IICD invests in the development of partnerships with public, private and non-profit organisations, thus mobilising knowledge and resources needed by IICD and its local partners. Country Programmes are currently being implemented in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Jamaica, Mali, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

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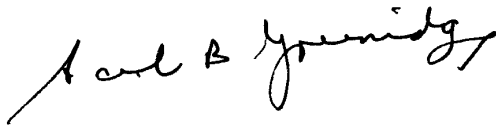
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Foreword

Over the 18 years of its existence, CTA has faced a conundrum in determining the effectiveness of its agricultural information services. On one hand, its experience has been that agricultural information services and products appear to be relevant and well appreciated by users. On the other, it is very difficult to ascertain the exact manner in which the services have benefited the recipients. Consequently, measuring the effects of information services at the level of the ultimate beneficiaries (i.e., the farmers) can be a hit-and-miss affair. At the same time, annual in-depth evaluations of the same project are costly.

Faced with the dual challenges of methodological limitations and the high cost of in-depth evaluations, the Centre decided about 5 years ago to fund research activities aimed at developing practical and cost-effective evaluation methods that address the issues of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact. This investment has been pursued through various channels, most notably the establishment of an impact assessment project, which was inaugurated at a workshop held in The Netherlands in January 1998.

The CTA/IICD/LEAP-IMPACT technical consultation represents another step in this process and provides an excellent opportunity to facilitate the development and use of practical, cost-effective methods for evaluating the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services. A key recommendation of the workshop was the need for a paradigm shift in which organisations become less control-oriented and the required parallel shift towards organisations which are learning organisations, promoting new ways of thinking about evaluation and impact assessment.



Carl B. Greenidge
Director, CTA

Introduction

Objectives of the inter-agency technical consultation

In October 2001, CTA and IICD, in collaboration with Bellanet, FAKT, GTZ, ISNAR and KIT, organised a technical consultation on 'Assessing the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services' in Bonn, Germany. The workshop was attended by 42 participants and guest panellists from 10 ACP countries, the European Union, Canada and some local, regional and international organisations. Although the participants were drawn mainly from the agricultural information services sector, there were also representatives of the environment and health sectors. This reflected the organisers' aim of broadening the workshop discussions and fostering a cross-fertilisation of ideas.

The main objective of the consultation was to facilitate the development and use of practical and cost-effective methods for evaluating the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services. The more specific objectives, or *expected outputs*, were to:

- clarify evaluation concepts and terminology in the context of information for development activities (Output 1);
- draw up an inventory of evaluation frameworks and methods indicating the relative strengths and weaknesses of the various tools (Output 2);
- develop guidelines on 'best practices' for evaluating the performance and impact of information products and services (Output 3);
- illustrate the applicability of the 'best practice' guidelines to specific categories of information projects and services, such as publishing, training in information management, communication services and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Output 4);
- identify clearly defined approaches among partner organisations for supporting the development and refinement of specific evaluation tools (Output 5);
- publish and disseminate proceedings through print and electronic media (Output 6).

Workshop presentations

An outline of the workshop programme presented by Dr Ibrahim Khadar (CTA) gave an insight into the development of the programme based on the main objective and on the debates in the Steering Committee on the orientation of the workshop. The expectations (outputs) were highlighted, and attention was drawn to the following points:

- gender and North-South representation at the workshop;
- specific roles for participants during the workshop, including chairpersons, rapporteurs and moderators;
- guest appearance of the panellists;
- limited time allowed for presentations.

Welcome addresses were given by Professor Modupe Akande (Obafemi Owolowo University, Nigeria), Mr Carl Greenidge (Director, CTA), Ms Lisette Gast, on behalf of Mr Jac Stienen (Managing Director, IICD) and Dr Hans-Joachim de Haas (Head, Division of Rural Development, BMZ). The speakers stressed the increasingly important role of information and knowledge as a force for change and of information technologies which facilitate knowledge sharing throughout the world. The challenge for many organisations operating in this field, therefore, was how to manage information effectively and in a way that meets the needs of those targeted.

The panel discussion addressed the question ‘Can measuring results produce results?’ The panel members were Dr Paul Engel (Director, ECDPM), Ms Anriette Esterhuysen (Executive Director, Association for Progressive Communications), Mr Thomas Kuby (Senior Evaluation Expert, GTZ) and Mr Greenidge. The discussion spanned a wide range of topics and also served to expose the participants to the current thinking on evaluation in development agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The participants’ questions included:

- Which evaluation methods should be applied at the different levels of intervention (project, programme, institution)?
- How sensitive is evaluation to the local environment?
- What are the expectations relating to impact assessment?
- From whose point of view are impact assessments conducted?

- Who are the audiences of impact assessments?
- In the interpretation of the results of such assessments, which itself requires considerable skill, what elements should be considered in order to minimise error?

The LEAP-IMPACT community of practice, set up in June 2001 by the Steering Committee, was introduced by Mr Shady Kanfi (Bellanet). About a month before the technical consultation there had been a three-stage e-consultation, managed by Ms Sarah Cummings (KIT), which enabled the participants to communicate through the LEAP-IMPACT workspace. The e-consultation established that the participants came from diverse backgrounds and institutions, and had a wide variety of expertise on this subject, ranging from entrants to experts. The level of participation was high, with most participants indicating how much they were looking forward to learning and sharing experiences, as well as laying the groundwork for future networking and institutional collaboration.

The lead paper on the 'Characteristics and role of agricultural information' presented by Professor Kingo Mchombu (University of Namibia) illustrated the vital role that information and knowledge play in promoting agricultural development. Given the low recognition and priority of information services and products in many developing countries, decision-makers were therefore challenged to demonstrate the impact of information so that more resources could be devoted to creating, managing and disseminating information. The other lead paper, 'Principles of evaluation' presented by Dr Adiel Mbabu (ASARECA), went one step further, calling on evaluators to use evaluations as a basis for better project management and to promote longer-term institutional structures, processes and culture which would potentially deliver longer-term impact. Dr Mbabu pointed out, however, that a proper evaluation can be conducted only if the position along the transformational path is known and the right questions are asked, consistent with the appropriate level of aggregation and the timeframe.

The paper on 'Evaluation concepts and terminology' presented by Dr Khadar looked at some of the concepts and terms currently employed by evaluation specialists and consultants. It noted that many of the key evaluation terms have more than one meaning, and that more than one term can be applied to the same concept. Furthermore, very little has been done to develop the definitions of those terms that apply specifically to information products and services. There is therefore a need for consensus on key concepts and terms so that they can be coherently and consistently employed. The paper on 'Evaluation frameworks' by Ms Cummings also pointed to the need to understand the various evaluation frameworks that have been formulated. It noted that terms such as 'evaluation framework', 'logical framework', 'philosophical framework'

and 'conceptual framework' are often used interchangeably. There is a wide range of frameworks which can be used in evaluations, but it is impossible to find a 'one-size-fits-all' solution. Various evaluation frameworks need to be examined and the appropriate elements used according to the institutional context.

Three case studies were presented from Trinidad and Tobago (Mr Bruce Lauckner, CARDI), Kenya (Mrs Jane Kanyunyuzi-Asaba, CABI) and Nigeria (Professor Emmanuel Lufadeju, Lufarmco Investment Co.). The first study involved developing a methodology for measuring the impact of a newsletter and a training seminar in Trinidad and Tobago. The second focused on connectivity in Africa (Ethiopia, Uganda and Zambia), the main purposes being to assess the use, benefits and constraints of electronic communication, and to test the appropriateness of methods for assessing the impact of electronic communication on development. The third paper assessed CTA's DORA programme in Nigeria. The case studies illustrated the usefulness of monitoring and evaluation studies, as well as the need to commit adequate resources to these studies, to involve all relevant stakeholders prior to a study, to understand the environment before embarking on a study, and to allow longer timeframes for evaluation studies.

The focus of the meeting shifted when the participants were introduced to the case study method, as this gave them the opportunity to put what they had learned into practice. The session was moderated by Dr Byron Mook (ISNAR) and involved looking at seven factors which help in identifying 'smart' practices: identification of actors; objectives; indicators; 'logic model'; SWOT analysis; finding a champion; and being realistic (for more information, refer to the CTA Working Document 8025, *Evaluating Information: A Letter to a Project Manager*). Later, a hypothetical case was used to encourage the participants to develop different approaches that could be used in evaluating such a case.

Other presentations at the workshop included the after-dinner speech by Professor Michel Menou (City University, London), which looked at various aspects of impact assessment, and assessments of the workshop by Dr Khadar, Mr Nathan Ducastel (IICD), Mr Kanfi, Dr Petra Feil (independent consultant) and Dr Andreas Springer-Heinze (GTZ). Mrs Karen Batjes-Sinclair (workshop editor) presented an orientation note on the publication and dissemination of the proceedings and other publications resulting from the consultation, and Mr Kanfi and Ms Cummings presented a review of opportunities for future collaboration.

Working Group discussions

The Working Group themes were derived from the panel discussion, the plenary presentations and the ‘buzz’ groups. The ‘buzz’ groups had been organised in order to give the participants an opportunity to discuss and identify critical areas of concern that they would like to see addressed during the workshop. The Working Group themes were:

- perception of evaluation and impact concepts;
- design, content and subject of an evaluation;
- stakeholder involvement in the design of an evaluation;
- evaluation framework and method;
- use of evaluation results.

A separate Working Group addressed each theme, and was asked to indicate the most important conceptual issues and practical issues.

The Working Group reports were presented in a plenary session, facilitating further discussion.

Theme 1: Perception of evaluation and impact concepts

Theoretical aspects of impact assessment

Impact assessment is part of the process of evaluation. In evaluating the impact of a given project, it is necessary to be aware that impact is generated through a hierarchy or sequence (cascade) of processes or stages over time (short and long term) at different levels of aggregation, from project level to sectoral (policy) level. At project level, often in the short term, it may be possible only to measure output. Over time, however, project output may lead to intermediate impact at programme level, and to a final impact at sectoral (policy) level.

Towards a practical application

- In practical terms, impact assessment can mean different things to different people. It should therefore be defined within a given context and in relation to a given

product or service. Having said that, evaluating impact is feasible only when some time has elapsed after project completion or after the achievement of some project output. There is no single method for evaluating impact; rather, there is a variety of quantitative and/or qualitative methods which can be applied, depending on the context, product or service in question.

- There was much debate about different donors using different means to evaluate projects. It emerged, however, that the differences among donors derived more from differences in reporting than from differences in the principles applied in the evaluations.
- Often, projects are set up without any thought for the need to evaluate their progress or impact. To ensure sustainability of the impact of a project, evaluation should be planned as an integral part of the project design, and should not be regarded as a consequence of the project.

Theme 2: Design, content and subject of an evaluation

Conceptual issues

Evaluation and learning are different types of activities. *Evaluations* have traditionally tended to be donor-driven and controlled. The requirements of administrative control, however, often block learning processes instead of stimulating them. The design and methods used to foster learning differ from those for evaluation. *Learning* tends to build on the facilitation of self-evaluation, creating ownership. Learning *should* therefore take precedence over evaluation.

The control elements within donor and project recipient organisations can be tied into the learning process, if the organisations so wish.

Crucial factors in determining the worth of an evaluation study are that it should:

- be part of a learning cycle;
- take account of the context and the *wider* development objective;
- include an outline of factors/considerations necessary for further impact (otherwise, it is likely to be merely a fulfilment of formal requirements).

The mechanisms and procedures for allocating donor funds are too rigid, bureaucratic and control-oriented. Efforts should be made to advocate greater flexibility, greater

readiness to take advantage of opportunities and more support for a long-term development process.

Practical issues

Information services are broad in scope and can have unpredictable uses. In order to circumvent this, it is necessary to:

- explore the full range of uses and implications of information services, including unexpected benefits;
- rely on the expression of demand for the services.

There is a tension/contradiction between short-term services and long-term effects. It is important not to pretend that the contradiction can be resolved, but instead move to a learning paradigm.

Theme 3: Stakeholder involvement in the design of an evaluation

Three factors were singled out as influencing the design of evaluations:

- people;
- content;
- environment.

People

From the outset of a project there should be a good understanding and definition of all the terms related to the concepts of stakeholders, partners and owners (i.e., actors, strategic partners, clients, beneficiaries, etc.). Roles, expectations, power relationships, ownership and goals should also be clarified. Questions pertinent to this process include:

- Who are the stakeholders? Beneficiaries? Actors?
- How do you identify the stakeholders?
- What is their role?
- When do you think about them?

- What is the ‘value-base’ of the project, (e.g., is it donor-driven? North-South?)
 - Who is driving it?
 - What ideology influences it?
- Key stakeholders and their values shape an evaluation. Do they have an influence on sustainability?

Content

Content here refers to language used and socio-cultural context. Terminology, culture and varying perspectives all shape the way in which an evaluation is designed. Stakeholders should therefore be included at the outset and must be part of the process of the whole project. Evaluations should therefore:

- take into account the cultural context;
- have an ethnographic approach;
- push for better initial project design in identifying and including stakeholders.

This can be done by:

- putting together a multidisciplinary team of specialists and stakeholders (internal and external) so as to:
 - define the parameters of an evaluation, its goals, objectives, beneficiaries, etc.;
 - design the evaluation as a team;
 - benefit from the many perspectives;
 - draw stakeholders into the design;
 - overcome problems of language and culture.
- continuous feedback, which is often not only cost-effective but also a good way of including stakeholders in the evaluation process; a large impact study is not always necessary or possible.

Environment

Environment in this context refers to the information flow pattern. An information product should enhance existing ways of using information. End-users (stakeholders) should therefore also be seen as producers and disseminators of information.

Promoting the effective involvement of stakeholders requires hands-on, face-to-face data collection in the field. Organising face-to-face meetings, using the telephone and

setting up focus groups are excellent ways of encouraging the involvement of people. Questionnaires (requiring self-completion) are sometimes not a good way to get stakeholder participation. Additional ways of ensuring stakeholder participation are:

- allocating adequate resources aimed specifically at stakeholder participation;
- allowing for the feedback of results to stakeholders;
- making tangible benefits to stakeholders clear;
- clearly indicating future plans, next steps, etc.;
- facilitating links and knowledge-sharing between stakeholder groups.

Theme 4: Evaluation framework and method

The cost of an evaluation should have a bearing on the approach used in the evaluation. Evaluations are often costly exercises, sometimes exceeding the cost of the project itself. In order to reduce these costs, the actors involved should be equipped with the skills required to conduct evaluations.

Three elements were identified as necessary in determining the method to be used in an evaluation:

- framework;
- indicators;
- data collection.

Framework

A question that dominated discussions in the workshop was whether or not a single framework could be used to evaluate and assess the impact of agricultural services and products. Should the framework used be control-based or learning-oriented? For a number of reasons it was considered that no single framework was appropriate. A more appropriate or useful approach, perhaps, was to draw on a combination of frameworks. The choice of framework(s) would depend on:

- the timeframe of the evaluation;
- the key elements identified.

It is important that the timeframe be determined before rushing to use a model(s). This requires conducting a needs assessment, initially. During the planning phase, clear objectives need to be developed and linked to the different indicators as well as to a timeline chart.

A point worth noting is that if planners carry out an evaluation on their own, the evaluation strategy is control-based, but if stakeholders are involved in the planning process then the learning process will be used.

Indicators

It is often difficult to find appropriate tools for measuring the impact of projects focusing on information products and services, as the data collected are often not very meaningful. One way to address this is to measure different levels of the transformation process, which refers to the different stages necessary to cause impact (i.e., inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact).

Both qualitative and quantitative indicators can be used. Important factors to be considered, however, include the validity and reliability of the indicators used, and the question of attribution.

Validity and reliability

Evaluation methods are considered valid (if the right thing is being measured) and reliable (if it is being measured in the right way) if they measure what they are supposed to measure. An important issue, therefore, is whether or not the correct tool is being used. For example, if a questionnaire survey is being conducted, the main concern would be to ascertain whether the correct questions are being asked; it could be that the questions being asked do not give the answers that are needed in order to conduct the evaluation. Other issues that need to be addressed include: Are the right things being measured? What are the results attributable to? What is the effect of a non-response?

Superimposing timeframes should help to differentiate between different types of objectives (i.e., outputs, outcomes and impact), as well as to identify the various indicators.

Attribution

The problem of attribution is of particular concern. How can one be sure that the changes observed are directly related to the project that is being evaluated? Often, an agreement is made to measure X, but it is not possible to do so at that particular point in time. Adopting the transformational path allows one to measure the right parameters

at the right time. If the information activity is not linked to the project actors, then it is not possible to measure or demonstrate the impact. This again highlights the need to further develop partnerships with other organisations at the implementation or impact levels.

Data collection

If the data collected are not considered reliable or of good quality, the whole evaluation process will be brought into question and the results of the evaluation will not be used by those the evaluation was meant for. Thus, the need to use reliable sampling techniques and appropriate instruments for qualitative and quantitative assessment cannot be overemphasised.

Theme 5: Use of evaluation results

Evaluation is essential to a learning organisation. It is part of the process of planning and implementation. The user of evaluation results is the project or organisation, not the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries benefit from the changes in the project brought about by the evaluation, but they should have an input into the evaluation process.

The stakeholders/partners have an equal power relationship but different roles. The differentiation between funders, managers, implementers and beneficiaries will help to clarify processes and identify tensions and results.

Push for a change in thinking

- Different parties use evaluations for different purposes. Some donors use evaluations for accountability purposes. Did the project spend the money correctly? Were the targets met? And so on. Instead, these organisations should be learning from the results of the evaluation.
- Differentiate between the different roles of the various stakeholders.
- There is a need to think beyond the timeframe of the project. It is desirable that the organisation has a future orientation. The user community at the end of a project is often different from the one at the beginning.
- See the whole project cycle – do not look at the evaluation alone.

General discussion of the Working Group themes

Evaluation is often seen by the recipients of donor funds as a means of control by the funding agencies. This perception is probably inextricably linked to the notion that information is power. Organisations on the receiving end, however, need to move beyond this, and lobby for a change in donor attitudes. They need to push for a share in the information and decision-making process by all the stakeholders, so as to facilitate a better understanding on all sides. This is more true than ever now, given the increasing recognition by funding agencies of the need to learn from the evaluation process as well as to know the context in which the evaluation process takes place.

Other issues discussed included the following:

- the relationship between control-based and learning-oriented evaluation should be remembered; evaluators should not be inclined towards control, while those being evaluated should not be inclined to see themselves as being controlled by donors;
- there is a need to be proactive and to use evaluation as a management tool;
- it is important not to put too great a premium on evaluation for learning to the detriment of management; rather, management should inspire learning;
- the perception that performance assessment has very little to do with learning is often linked with who is managing the evaluation process. The concept of the learning evaluation, however, involves developing a relationship and should be built into the assessment.

Conclusions

The broader picture

- The workshop participants came from different backgrounds and had different expectations, and thus were unlikely to identify one evaluation method which would satisfy their needs. There was, however, a general appreciation of the complexity of the problem and a recognition that a range of methods and approaches is needed to fit specific situations. The technical consultation served to highlight the importance of evaluations and impact studies taking all actors and complexities into consideration.
- Placing evaluations in the management and political context is a prerequisite for the selection of appropriate methods.
- It is important to take the bigger picture into account and to be aware of the concepts and terms used and of their different meanings in different contexts.

Evaluations within the project cycle

- Ensure that planning for an evaluation starts at the outset of the project.
- Arguments and evidence are needed to convince people to incorporate evaluations from the planning stage as a continuous process.
- An evaluation should not be seen as a project in itself, but rather as an essential activity in any information-oriented project.

Frameworks and methods

- General frameworks ought to be provided for different types of information products and services. There is, however, a variety of sound alternative approaches to evaluations.
- There is still a need for tools and practical examples (Output 4).

- Stakeholders and target groups ('the people') should be involved from the start of the evaluation.
- Ensure that the information is relevant and valid.

Impact

- Impact ideals are not achievable, and compromise is therefore necessary.
- Using outputs as indicators of impact is questionable. A clear distinction needs to be made between input, output, outcome and impact.

Recommendations

Framework

- The inventory on evaluation frameworks presented at the workshop should be revisited and reviewed, and additional frameworks added to it.
- Given the specific nature of the agricultural sector, more work needs to be carried out to determine whether a minimum set of requirements can be developed for this area or if a specific evaluation framework is needed.
- More work should be done on standardising the existing evaluation frameworks by discipline, and on harmonising them.
- The content of evaluation frameworks is rich, with different frameworks suited to the analysis of different conditions. The frameworks should therefore serve as road maps to help practitioners define hierarchies of objectives (e.g., goals, purposes, outputs, activities, etc.) all in the context of time and space.

Resource materials

- The new ideas generated by the workshop need to be made known and transformed into information for use by all practitioners. There is a need for further collaboration among participants to produce publications and other resource materials. Active participation in the form of comments and contributions to publications and co-publications should be encouraged.
- Based on the workshop deliberations, a group statement should be developed, presented in the workshop report and posted on the LEAP-IMPACT Website (www.bellanet.org/leap/impact/).
- A workshop synthesis report should be produced for use as a resource book by practitioners. This will involve drawing on evaluation experts and practitioners. The report should highlight the need to identify ‘smart’ practices and include:
 - abridged versions of the workshop papers;
 - key discussions and conclusions;
 - institutional experiences (successes and failures).

- A glossary of the terms used in evaluation studies should be developed and, as time goes on, added to (ideally, using the LEAP-IMPACT workspace), so that it can be used as a common source for future reference.

General

- Collaboration among the participants should continue, using the LEAP-IMPACT workspace to promote future activities and exchanges of resource materials (*see Annexes*).
- Avoid using evaluation as an end-product; instead, always refer again and again to the initial planning phase and the implementation phase.
- Use all possible channels of communication, the organisations represented and personal networks for the rapid dissemination of the workshop results.
- There is a need to find ways of facilitating the shift from control evaluation to learning processes and of acquiring knowledge on new/alternative ways of evaluating and thinking about evaluation and impact assessment. Initially, this must take place within the organisations represented at the workshop. To facilitate this process/approach, participants need to start by negotiating change in their own working environment.
- It is important that the momentum is not lost and the relevant organisational changes made. CTA should link individuals who can influence top management and assist organisations with making the shift from control-based to learning-oriented evaluation.
- A follow-up meeting should be planned to review the changes and decide on future action.

Annexes

Annex 1: Future LEAP-IMPACT collaboration

“We are all involved and we are part of the LEAP-IMPACT community. The group of organisers came together on what is the vision and what is the current thinking on evaluation. We would like now to invite all the participants and practitioners to take the lead and to plan together future actions” (Shady Kanfi, Bellanet).

Future collaboration will include the following steps:

- an e-newsletter on major issues and activities will be produced to keep participants abreast of recent developments in the field;
- the CTA-supported inventory/bibliography of frameworks will be made public on the LEAP-IMPACT workspace;
- the workshop report will be posted on the LEAP-IMPACT workspace;
- the Website will continue to be interactive, enabling users to add interesting links or documents;
- the on-line discussion will continue, preferably with more e-conferences;
- an interactive glossary of terms should be added to the LEAP-IMPACT workspace;
- in 6 months time there will be a check on promises and expectations, and on future plans;
- the possibility of including individuals in the LEAP-IMPACT network who lack access to the Internet will be explored;
- some ACP members noted that they had difficulties with downloading documents from the Internet and this affected their ability to assess documents in the workspace; alternative ways of ensuring that these members have access to documents will be investigated.
- the contact person will be Ms Sarah Cummings.

Annex 2: Assessment of the workshop

An evaluation of the workshop was carried out in two parts, focusing on:

- the achievements of the workshop in relation to the expected outputs (*see* Introduction);
- an evaluation from the perspective of the participants.

Workshop achievements

Towards the end of the workshop an analysis was done to determine whether or not Outputs 1–4 were achieved. It was not possible to measure whether Outputs 5–6 had been achieved at the time of presentation, given the nature of these outputs.

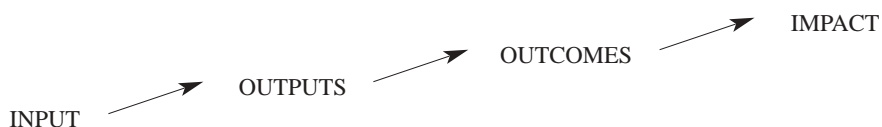
Output 1: Clarification of evaluation concepts and terminology

The participants were now more confident about the term ‘evaluation’ and called for a separation of the phrases ‘evaluation for learning’ and ‘evaluation for control/accountability’ purposes. Depending on the objective of the evaluation, one of these concepts should receive less attention than the other.

Other terms and processes that had now become clearer to the group included ‘performance’ and the transformation of ‘inputs’ into ‘outputs’ and ‘outcomes’, and ultimately ‘impact’.

Output 2: Inventory of evaluation frameworks and methods

It was recognised by all participants that no institution would use only one framework for all its evaluation activities. A widely used evaluation model, however, may look like this:



A basic component that should be incorporated into every evaluation model is the appropriate time framework.

Output 3: Guidelines for ‘best practices’

Although the development of guidelines for ‘best practices’ was one of the workshop objectives, the term ‘smart’ practices was preferred by participants, who generally accepted that there are no best practices. What is required instead is a compilation of ‘smart’ practices.

In addition, there was good feedback from the participants on the guidelines featured in the CTA Working Document 8025, *Evaluating Information: A Letter to a Project Manager*. The points identified as needing to be expanded upon or amended within the next year were:

- structure;
- validation;
- ownership;
- giving priority to performance assessment.

Output 4: Illustration of the applicability of best-practice guidelines

Given the outcome in Output 3, an illustration of the applicability of ‘best practices’ was not provided. A useful strategy put forward instead was to apply specific ‘smart’ practices to specific information products or services, and thus avoid the sort of generalised, uninformative conclusions that can apply to any product anywhere.

Workshop evaluation

Four members of the Steering Committee formed the evaluation team and interviewed 30 participants. All the participants were asked two questions: What have you found useful and positive in the workshop? What have you found negative about the workshop? A brief analysis of the questions relating to the participants’ expectations of the workshop was also conducted.

- *Expectations.* The participants considered that their personal and organisational reasons for participating in the workshop was to obtain information (‘recipes’/‘instructions’) to guide them in their practical work. Seven participants said that they were interested in improving their own work, and hoped to gain a better understanding of theoretical and conceptual issues and to get as many different perspectives as possible. Twelve participants valued the learning experience gained from each other and the knowledge and experiences shared. They also emphasised the need to improve communication within the group and to transform the group into a subject-related community/network.
- *Positive aspects.* The interviewees thought that the participants in the workshop had been well chosen and that there was a good balance between theory and practice in the workshop programme. There was also excellent interaction and collaboration among the participants. The participants valued the diverse disciplinary background of the people at the workshop.
- *Negative aspects.* The negative aspects identified included the following:
 - more emphasis on theoretical issues was needed;
 - the Working Group discussions lacked structure and tended to be dominated by the stronger voices. The participants did not always take up the ideas and approaches presented in the Working Groups; for example, some participants felt that the results from the sessions on Wednesday did not contribute to a shared understanding;
 - time constraints did not always allow for in-depth discussions.
- *Main conclusions.*
 - the framework used by the workshop evaluation team received positive feedback. It showed the need for interaction and consultation among the stakeholders involved;
 - the workshop discussions would have been more beneficial had the guest panellists stayed during the whole workshop and thus contributed to these discussions.

Annex 3: Michel Menou's 12 rules of impact assessment

At the workshop reception, Professor Michael Menou was specially honoured by his peers for his outstanding work in the field of information and communication. The following list of useful pointers on impact assessment was taken from the after-dinner speech Professor Menou gave at the start of the workshop:

- impact should be clearly defined, and all the steps leading to it clearly and distinctly named;
- impact is a lasting transformation in people's ability to cope;
- impact is a process which should be treated as such;
- the input into this process is a complex combination of many factors;
- conditions and circumstances are as important as 'voluntary' factors, not the least of which is luck. The question is not 'What works?' but 'What are the conditions under which X or Y work?';
- impact should be appraised by the beneficiaries and from their perspective;
- ambivalence is at the core of impact phenomena; both positive and negative aspects must remain linked together;
- assessing impact can only be a continuing process from 'long before' to 'long after';
- a variety of methods and perspectives should be used concurrently when studying impact;
- for a funding agency or operator, a good programme should be a programme that has a positive impact in the eyes of the beneficiaries;
- impact assessment should be a collective, participatory and continuing learning process among all stakeholders, rather than the pseudo management tool that it is too often;
- people are the centrepiece of concern and analysis in impact assessment.

Annex 4: Workshop programme

Tuesday 9 October

9.00–9.30	Registration of participants
9.30–10.15	OPENING PLENARY SESSION Welcome addresses <i>M. Akande (Chairperson), C. Greenidge (CTA), L. Gast (on behalf of IICD) and H.-J. de Haas (on behalf of BMZ)</i>
	PLENARY SESSION Chairperson: I. Khadar; Rapporteur: Y.G. Medhine
11.00–11.20	Introduction to LEAP-IMPACT and an overview of the e-consultation <i>S. Kanfi and S. Cummings</i>
11.20–12.30	Panel discussion on ‘Can measuring results produce results?’ <i>C. Greenidge (CTA), P. Engel (ECDPM), T. Kuby (GTZ) and A. Esterhuysen (Association for Progressive Communications)</i>
	PLENARY SESSION Chairperson: A. Springer-Heinze; Rapporteur: N. Ducastel
14.00–14.20	Presentation of the Workshop Programme <i>I. Khadar</i>
14.20–14.40	Characteristics and role of agricultural information <i>K. Mchombu</i>
14.40–15.00	Principles of evaluation <i>A. Mbabu</i>
15.00–15.30	Discussion
	PLENARY SESSION Chairperson: J. Flanagan; Rapporteur: M. Hagenaaars
16.00–16.20	Case study on newsletter/training impact <i>B. Lauckner</i>
16.20–16.40	Case study on impact of ICTs <i>J.F. Kanyunyuzi-Asaba</i>

16.40–17.00 Discussion

18.00 Reception

Wednesday 10 October

PLENARY SESSION

Chairperson: S. Kanfi; Rapporteur: C. Kalume

9.00–9.20 Case study on impact of CTA's book donation scheme
E. Lufadeju

9.20–10.00 Discussion

10.00–10.15 Evaluation frameworks
S. Cummings

10.15–10.30 Evaluation concepts and terminology
I. Khadar

PLENARY SESSION

Moderator: Petra Feil

11.00–11.30 Discussion

11.30–12.00 Presentation of themes for Working Groups and creation of Working Groups

14.00–15.30 WORKING GROUP SESSION

PLENARY SESSION

Chairperson: M. Menou; Rapporteur: J. Adupa

16.00–17.00 Presentation of Working Group reports

Thursday 11 October

PLENARY SESSION

Moderator: B. Mook; Rapporteur: A. Hewlitt

9.00–9.30 Issues related to identifying 'smart practices'

9.30–9.45 Discussion

9.45–10.00	Introduction to the case study method
10.00–10.30	Reading of a hypothetical case (individual)
	WORKING GROUP SESSION
11.00–12.00	Discussion of the hypothetical case (in small groups)
	PLENARY SESSION
12.00–12.45	Discussion of the hypothetical case
14.00–18.00	Field visits

Friday 12 October

	PLENARY SESSION Moderator: P. Feil
9.00–9.30	Outputs/achievements of the workshop <i>I. Khadar</i>
9.30–10.20	Conclusions <i>M. Redecker</i>
10.20–11.00	Publication and dissemination of workshop results <i>K. Batjes-Sinclair</i>
11.30–11.45	Review of opportunities for future collaboration <i>S. Kanfi and S. Cummings</i>
11.45–12.00	Presentation of workshop evaluation results <i>N. Ducastel, P. Feil, S. Kanfi and A. Springer-Heinze</i>
12.00–12.30	Closing remarks <i>M. Redecker, J. Flanagan and K. Mchombu</i>

Annex 5: List of participants

(* *Partial attendance*; ** *Steering Committee member*)

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Annex 6: List of papers presented at the workshop

1. *Cummings, S.* An e-consultation on 'Assessing the performance and impact of agricultural information products and services'.
2. *Cummings, S.* Evaluation frameworks.
3. *Kanyunyuzi-Asaba, J.* Connectivity in Africa: use, benefits and constraints of electronic communication.
4. *Khadar, I.* Evaluation concepts and terminology.
5. *Lauckner, B. and Singh, R.* Assessing the impact of information emanating from a newsletter and a training seminar.
6. *Lufadeju, E.* Dissemination of reference books on agriculture (DORA).
7. *Mbabu, A.* Principles of evaluation.
8. *Mchombu, K.* Characteristics and role of agricultural information.
9. *Mook, B.* Evaluating information: a letter to a project manager. (Reproduced as CTA Working Document 8025, CTA, The Netherlands).

Acronyms

ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ARIS	Agricultural Research Information Service
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
BMZ	Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung
CABI	CAB International
CARDI	Caribbean Agricultural Research and Development Institute
CORAF	Conférence des responsables de recherche agronomique africains
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
DORA	Dissemination of Reference Books on Agriculture (CTA)
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EIARD	European Initiative on Agricultural Research for Development
FAKT	Fördergesellschaft für Angepasste Techniken
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
IAR&T	Institute of Agricultural Research and Training
ICTs	Information and communication technologies
IDS	Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex
IICD	International Institute for Communication and Development
ISNAR	International Service for National Agricultural Research
KACE	Kenya Agricultural Commodity Exchange
KIT	Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Institute for the Tropics)
LEAP	Learning and Evaluation Action Program
NARO	National Agricultural Research Organisation
WAICENT	World Agricultural Information Centre (FAO)
ZADI	Zentralstelle für Agrardokumentation und Information

