

# 10 Principles to Ensure successful Use of Evaluations

„Use of evaluation results and processes does not come automatically. It must be planned and cultivated throughout the evaluation process.“<sup>1</sup>

What must SDC staff commissioning an evaluation – and those conducting it – do in order for the evaluation results to be implemented successfully?

## 1. Lay the groundwork:

A forward-looking and transparent evaluation planning along with consultations on the project with those involved help to dissipate resistance, enhance ownership, and foster the willingness to implement. Even in the planning phase, the evaluation's aim and benefits must already be clear to all participants.

## 2. Work to get across the notion that change is possible and promote a willingness to make improvements:

Without the ability and willingness to take action, no change is possible. Hidden agendas, lack of adaptability, an unfavorable constellation of political circumstances, latent conflicts, and muddled situations can make implementation impossible a priori. It can, therefore, be a good idea to take it upon oneself to conduct a situation analysis ahead of an evaluation so as to clarify the available scope of action, the willingness to change, and the range of interests of those involved. In this way, unexpected negative consequences can also better be anticipated.

## 3. Clarify and seek to include the expectations of the decision-makers:

If evaluation results are relevant for the decision-makers and rendered available in a timely manner, they have good chances of being accepted. For this reason, the objectives of an evaluation should coincide with the expectations of the decision-makers, and the evaluation timetable should be in alignment with the forthcoming decision-making processes (the rule of „timeliness“).

## 4. Implant the project at the competent level of management and with the political decision-makers:

If there is no management backing for the objectives of an evaluation, for its results, and for the recommendations, then the implementation efforts of the stakeholders will be for naught. Commitment to implementation is enhanced when the hierarchical superiors have taken a stand in this respect. Especially in the case of projects bearing a relation to domestic politics, it is indispensable that the management assume the crucial role of raising the awareness of the decision-makers and politicians concerned. The benefits of an evaluation are enhanced whenever a relationship can be established to a higher political priority or when a new strategy course is about to be set.

## 5. Draw in the stakeholders:

If the stakeholders take up a defensive position, the results of the evaluation are likely to be rejected. When formulating the key questions of the evaluation, it is well to seek a balance between issues open to criticism and those which highlight the positive.

**6. Transparently introduce the competencies and credibility of the evaluators to those involved:**

The selection of evaluators is vested with crucial importance. The results of an evaluation will be taken into consideration more seriously if those concerned perceive the evaluators as credible, independent, and competent experts. It makes good sense to draw the parties concerned into the selection of evaluators, for instance when discussions are taking place on selection criteria.

**7. Present the results of an evaluation in a language which is appropriate and understandable to those concerned:**

„It's not so much what you say, as how you say it“. The results of an evaluation should be communicated in a manner which is comprehensible to those being addressed and adapted to their culture.

**8. Ensure that those concerned are able to discuss the recommendations:**

If those involved are enabled to debate the results of an evaluation phase by phase, their readiness to implement the evaluation recommendations will be bolstered. This process is in effect a veritable learning process for which sufficient time should be allowed. The draft evaluation report should be discussed with all of those concerned so as to provide them with the opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings and to fill in any gaps, thus enabling them to join together in supporting the final results. As a

final step in the evaluation process, those involved should make known their position on the recommendations which have emerged in the evaluation, putting it down in written form. In so doing, they should not only record who will change what, when, and how, but also which recommendations will not be implemented along with an explanation of why. In stating their own position on these recommendations, the competent level of management in turn enhances their binding character.

**9. Ensuring things are understandable will help make them credible:**

The conclusions must be based on sound reasoning so that those concerned can understand and appreciate them. The evaluation report must be designed in such a way that the results, conclusions, and recommendations – although clearly distinguished from each other – display a logical structural relationship.

**10. Formulate the recommendations in a clear and realistic manner:**

The recommendations should be unambiguous and clearly targeted to those involved as well as commensurate with their hierarchical level and specific competencies. Brevity and precision enhance clarity.

<sup>1</sup>Horton, Douglas et al, 2003: Evaluating Capacity Development: Experiences from Research and Development Organizations around the World. ISBN 92-9118-069-6. p. 119.

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