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Leaving a footprint

Stories of Evaluations that Made a Difference

FOREWORD
by Bob Wiliams

editorial UNSJ

Rodriguez Bilella, Pablo
Leaving a Footprint: Stories of Evaluation that Made a Difference / Pablo Rodríguez Bilella; Esteban Tapella. - 1a ed. - San Juan : Editorial UNSJ, 2018.
186 p. ; 21 x 23 cm.

ISBN 978-987-3984-77-8

1. Evaluation. 2. Política. I. Tapella, Esteban II. Título
CDD 320

LEAVING A FOOTPRINT: EVALUATION STORIES THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE
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This book is the result of the research project "Evaluation of Public Policies in Argentina and Latin America: Analysis of the Facilitating Factors of its Demand, Use and Adoption of Results", carried out by the PETAS (Programa de Estudios del Trabajo, el Ambiente y la Sociedad), Instituto de Investigaciones Socioeconómicas, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad Nacional de San Juan, Argentina.

This publication was supported and financed by:

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GERMAN INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION

Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

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Acknowledgements

This publication is the result of work from many people who contributed their resources and willingness in different ways. The National University of San Juan (UNSJ) funded two research projects that became the foundation of this publication. The National Scientific and Technical Research Council (Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas, CONICET) provided academic support to both projects. The German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) contributed through editing and printing of this book. As part of our research programme, our colleagues, Vanesa Castro, Cecilia Luna and María Alejandra Lucero, played a key role in conducting and analysing the interviews that led to the development of a large portion of the evaluation stories presented here. María Clara Graffigna and Ana Clara Bustelo contributed with their professionalism and passion in designing the layout and illustrating the book. We are particularly grateful to all those interviewed for allowing us to recount these stories in which they are portrayed.

We wish to express our gratitude to Mike Hendrix, Martha McGuire, Jim Rugh, Bonnie Koenig, Jane Davidson, Cristina Casado, Karen Russon and Julia Patricia Carobonado for revisiting the English version of the book. We aslo wish to extend special thanks to Bob William for doing the English proofreding and the foreword of this publication.

Foreword

For many in the English speaking world, Central and South America is that place you travelled around in your early 20s; cheap, fun, ancient and slightly mysterious. Somewhere you always meant to go back to but never quite made it. The reality is that it is also bracingly modern, strikingly diverse and nurtures unique intellectual traditions little known and barely understood outside the Spanish and Portuguese speaking worlds.

Within the evaluation field, translation tends to go one way – from English to Spanish or Portuguese. So while in Central and South America much is known about North American and European evaluation theories and practices, not much has travelled the opposite direction. And that is our loss. We are missing the experience and insights of evaluators working with 600 million people; taking Latin American concepts and blending them with those from other parts of the world. This book gives voice to that experience.

But this is much more than a collection of *historias latinas*. There

is an orientation here that informs issues that go to the heart of current evaluation debates; how do we handle complexity, ensure usefulness and gain legitimacy. In other words, Latin American's can teach us a few things that we need to know.

How? To make some massive generalisations, the English speaking world – or perhaps more accurately Anglo American culture – tends to simplify the complex; whereas in Latin America life is more accepting and skilled at navigating complexity as complexity. Secondly individual responsibility to the collective social good bear heavier in Latin America, the notion of 'independence' personally or professionally is not such an obsession. And finally legitimacy is awarded by working towards broader issues of social justice - the core of liberation theology. That an intervention works is nice, and the fact that evaluation is used is fine but legitimacy is awarded if both actually improve people's lives? Usefulness trumps use.

What do I mean by usefulness trumps use? For years we Anglo-American evaluators have worried about how to get our evaluations used; the evaluation literature abounds with stories of use. But today we are frequently asked make our evaluations useful. There has been a shift in emphasis from the technical matter of getting our evaluations used to the social process of ensuring that our evaluations are useful. And that poses the ethical challenge of deciding to whom it should be useful. As befits this ethically based social justice orientation, this book indeed pushes beyond the immediate impacts of evaluation use and asks us to consider the more long term ideas of evaluation usefulness to social goals. Finally someone is addressing the question "what ought to be the consequences of an evaluation?" In the authors' own words,

"[...] the ultimate reason for evaluation is to contribute to this social betterment or impact. This includes, but at the same time goes beyond the mere use of evaluation results that change policies or programmes. In this way, the use of evaluation per se stops being evaluations' final objective, since it aims at changes that promote improvements in people's lives. The stories illustrate how evaluation itself has this potential to produce a positive impact in people's lives."

So this book is for you both if you are curious to read about places you visited in the past and even more so if you are wanting to engage with the forces that will determine the future of our evaluation craft.

Bob Williams

Introduction

Recognising Evaluation Traces

Evaluation is the systematic process of assessment and critical analysis of projects, programmes, policies, or other types of social interventions. For that purpose, evaluations (a) apply methodologies aimed at assessing whether the design, management, and results produced are consistent with what had originally been anticipated; (b) assess whether the actions carried out were suitable in order to produce the desired changes, identifying contextual factors that had bearing on the results; and (c) obtain evidence that backs up the evaluative judgement.

Evaluation practice does not follow a unique method, but includes a range of methodological strategies, scopes and audiences (authorities, extension workers, intermediate technicians, mass media, NGOs and citizens in general). Its results provide material for decision making, contribute to the learning of teams and organisations

and increases knowledge of the problems that are the focus of public action.

> Evaluation is the systematic process of assessment and critical analysis of projects, programmes, policies, or other types of social interventions

The interest in evaluation of public policies and development interventions in general has grown significantly in the last fifteen years. This phenomenon is reflected in the range of theories and methodologies, the increase of national evaluation policies in countries from all continents, the increasing institutionalisation of evaluation and the emergence of different initiatives oriented towards professionalising this practice. The relevance of evaluation is a global reality in which the interests and the actions of the main international development agencies, networks and regional evaluation associations, foundations and non-governmental organisations, different State agencies, and the academics converge.

Together with increased interest in evaluation, the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals presents a turning point in evaluation theory and practice. In this context, there is commitment to building a new set of priorities for evaluation on a global scale from 2016 to 2030. This aims at reducing the gap between the evaluation community (supply) and the policy making community –executive and legislative powers, together with organisations and social actors – (demand). Giving civil society an opportunity to participate actively is a way of ensuring that evaluations will not only have to meet the users' needs but evaluation will also meet quality standards[1] based on credible evidence.

> There is not sufficient literature in regard to the fundamental matter of evaluation quality

However, the literature about evaluation quality is scarce. In the pursuit of bridging the gap between theory and practice, or between resources invested in evaluation and its use, this publication aims to gather and analyse a collection of stories about evaluations in Latin America and the Caribbean that have left a trace, and made a difference.[2] Analysis of the evaluation stories led to identification of factors that facilitate valuable evaluation and contribute to the body of knowledge of evaluations aimed at social betterment; meaning evaluations that have a positive impact on people's lives.

From this perspective, the ultimate reason for evaluation is to contribute to this *social betterment*[3] or impact. This includes, but at the same time goes beyond the mere use of evaluation results that change policies or programmes. In this way, the use of evaluation per se stops being evaluations' final objective, since it aims at changes that promote improvements in people's lives. The stories illustrate how evaluation itself has this potential to produce a positive impact in people's lives.

The request for evaluation stories was issued through multiple forums and social networking sites. Consent from the evaluation or evaluation team, together with the political officer in

charge of the policy or intervention was required. Seven stories were selected from the region.

1. Qualitative Evaluation of the Oportunidades Programme (Mexico).

2. Process and Impact of Youth Participation in Territorial Development in Santa Catalina Valley (Peru).

3. The Story of a (de)Constructed Road (Colombia).

4. Evaluation of the Safe and Family Centred Maternity Hospitals Initiative –MSCF- (Argentina).

5. Roving Caregivers Program (Saint Lucía, Caribe).

6. The Selfevaluation Process in the National University of Lanús -UNLa- (Argentina).

7. Participatory Evaluation of the Cancer Care and Prevention Programme in Valle de la Estrella (Costa Rica).

This introduction seeks to describe the elements that facilitate and characterise an evaluation that makes an impact. These elements cannot be seen as written in stone, they should be taken as a starting point in order to understand how and why evaluations can become a turning point.

Evaluation can have a transformative impact on the lives of the users of the programmes and policies by giving them a space for their voice and their expression, contributing to their inclusion in decision-makers' mental models. This situation is enhanced in themanycaseswheredecision-makers do not have a close connection to the reality of program beneficiaries, not knowing their needs or contexts. The story of qualitative evaluation of the programme Progresa / Oportunidades (México) illustrates how evaluation identified language barriers that prevented very poor natives from benefiting from a money transfer programme. Changes to the program

allowed communication in local languages, which greatly improved the ability of people to understand the programme's requirements (such as children's regular school attendance) and therefore, be able to benefit from the money transfer the programme offered.

Recently programmes and development policies designed to improve people's lives are expected to be based on credible evidence. However, there is not one single way of generating believable and convincing information, given that what is 'believable' depends on the situation and on the specific actors. In some cases, the key is to assess the programme results using an approach that helps the process to be perceived as methodologically rigorous. In other situations, a believable evaluation entails understanding the perspectives of the most relevant actors in the intervention (as in the case of the Safe and Family-Centred Maternity Hospitals Initiative, in Argentina), whereas in others evaluations credibility was achieved through the active participation of the users in the evaluation process (e.g. the participatory evaluation experience in the cancer prevention and care programme in Valle de la Estrella in Costa Rica).

> The use as an end in itself stopped being evaluation's final objective but was aimed at making the changes it promoted to produce improvements in people's lives

In the cases described here, the technical ability and competence of the evaluation team was highly significant. Without that technical rigour there would have been no guarantee that the evaluation would benefit anyone. For example, in the evaluation of the Mexican programme, the key factor was the evaluators' anthropological approach, whereas in the evaluation of the UNICEF programme in Argentina, the interdisciplinary nature of the evaluation team was very important. Beyond the technical rigour, communication of the evaluation results to the various relevant actors involved is becoming increasingly important. Communication draws attention to the type of report used, adapting language to different audiences and generating learned lessons that fall within the ability of the organisations' abilities to respond.

Linked to this, there appears a recurrent tension in evaluation programmes. Evaluators often try to keep a certain distance from the evaluated programme in order to protect their independence. However this increases the possibility that the evaluation becomes distant and irrelevant for those who need to act on the results. The closeness of the evaluators to the evaluated programme and its actors gives opportunities to make a difference through the use of the evaluation processes. This recognises that the benefits and impacts of evaluation emerge as much —or even more— from how an evaluation is carried out (usefulness of the process) as much as in relation to its findings (usefulness of its results).[4] This situation is illustrated in the self-evaluation process of the National University of Lanús (UNLa), with the involvement of the university community, which allowed democratic access to information, innovative interaction, discussion and debate, as well

as strengthening abilities of the participants.

The evaluation stories revealed in the project illustrate the value of a positive approach.[5] They emphasize the evidence of what works and/or might work and is worthy of being continued, enlarged or modified. This can be contrasted with evaluations that are focused mainly on the technical problems and deficiencies present in most interventions. This type of approach has been shown to be highly relevant in getting beyond defensive and suspicious attitudes, and instead promoting a constructive focus on possible solutions. For example, the evaluation of the initiative Strengthening the Abilities of Indigenous Women to Set up and Have a Bearing on the Implementation of Public Policies (Colombia) validated many of the approaches adopted, and indicated the potential that could be developed by having an additional training to the objectives outlined originally in the project. In addition to that, in evaluations with a positive approach, evaluators usually develop a close relationship with the actors of the intervention, understanding them and supporting them. The evaluators' task in these cases is not limited to indicating what to be modified. Many times local actors regard this as evaluators demonstrating 'commitment' to the project and its future.

Participation of the actors in the collection and use of the evaluation data is a powerful way of including users and beneficiaries. This allows participants to get involved and understand the data better. An evaluation characterised by a collaborative approach leads participants to take responsibility for the evaluation and then for the change and transformation that follows. In this way, active participation in the

evaluation process helps to develop better understanding of evaluation and contributes to commitment and use. This is illustrated by the participatory evaluation in Costa Rica, in which regional technical teams were involved and deeply interested in getting to know how the evaluated program worked in their area. In contrast, the higher authorities limited their participation to approving the evaluation. In this way, recommendations at regional and local levels were applied soon after the evaluation finished, whereas general recommendations —dependent upon the higher authorities— have not yet been applied.

Clearly, the more participatory the evaluation is, the more necessary it is to ensure the willingness and motivation of the most relevant actors in the intervention (beneficiaries, local technicians, officers) in order to promote the impact of the evaluation and for it to make a difference. This motivation is less notable when the actors play merely an advisory role. Their relevance clearly decreases if they ignore the central questions of the evaluation effort. For example, in some cases of experimental or quasi-experimental evaluation designs in which the opinion or the perspective of the actors is secondary to other components (their behaviour, the impact of vaccines or diets on their body, etc.), the role of the participants is limited to answering questions and allowing the evaluator to carry out some measurements. However, this does not always prevent the evaluation from making an impact on the people's quality of life. Referring to the evaluation of the UNICEF programme in Argentina, direct users were not involved in the evaluation, yet this did not stop the evaluation from having an impact. In the cases

explicitly participatory (as in the self-evaluation of the UNLa in Argentina and the evaluation cases in Costa Rica and Perú), the actors-beneficiaries had a say in the formulation of the central questions and decisions in the evaluation design.

> Evaluations with this positive approach are usually described with characteristics that show there was support, empathy and closeness attitudes towards the actors of the intervention

The willingness and motivation of the organisation and the actors of the programme to carry out an evaluation are also key factors that help the evaluation make a difference and have an impact. This is usually called 'political willingness' since it refers to the higher management levels of the organisation where the initial foundation for the development of the evaluation occurs. This factor is highly important and was part of all the analysed evaluation cases that were assessed as making an impact.

Participation in evaluation processes requires the willingness of the evaluators to adopt approaches that allow people's active involvement and participation. The thought that most evaluations are carried out in order to fulfil accountability requirements is very common. In such instances the final report is too often merely stored on a shelf (or hard drive) and the programme continues unaltered. However, in evaluations that make a difference it is always possible to find an actor or group of actors truly interested in making the most of

the learning that evaluations can provide. These evaluations are valued as positive since they allow users to make appropriate decisions to achieve meaningful changes in the intervention. In the story of the evaluation of the Caregiver programme in Saint Lucia island, the commitment to the use of the evaluation helped the process make a difference in people's lives. In that experience, the 'personal factor' — understood as the presence of an individual or group of identifiable individuals who are personally concerned with the evaluation and its ability to improve people's lives— worked as the main driver for the use and impact of the evaluation.

The description of an internal evaluation or self-evaluation as participatory depends not only in its final aim but also of the involvement of the actors-participants. When an internal evaluation is participatory, it faces an important challenge when configuring evaluation teams, because in becoming evaluators team members must go beyond their normal organisational roles. This challenge entails developing evaluation skills that allow reasonable levels of competency in the team responsible for the participatory evaluation.

The evaluation story in Peru indicates how the evaluation team was developed over an extended period of time, and supported by a range of stakeholders. The evaluation story in Costa Rica shows that, without being a strictly speaking self-evaluation, it had the key components of a participatory evaluation. Having a limited time frame for the training of the team members resulted in certain limitations during the evaluation process. The key factors to be taken into account when developing the skills of evaluation team members are time, the content to be taught

(relevant to the specific evaluation task they have to carry out), support and supervision by one or more experienced evaluators, as well as applying skills people already have.

> The evaluations that leave a footprint require evaluation 'champions'. That is to say, people who care deeply for the affected families and communities, who are capable of having influence on those who have authority to make decisions and encourage necessary changes

At the early stages of the evaluation, most of the beneficiaries of the intervention as well as the actors who implement the programmes (field technicians, officers in charge of the implementation, etc.) tend to consider evaluation from a point of view of control and accountability. Generally, the start of an evaluation process does not create excitement or expectations connected to the learning dimension. In the evaluations that made a difference, the situation changes when the evaluator or evaluation team are able to show through their words and actions that evaluation has the potential to improve programs, overcoming narrow views connected with monitoring and control, accountability, rewards and sanctions. The evaluation story in Colombia illustrates the way in which indigenous women were invited to participate in the evaluation. They were invited for a talk or chat with the intention of 'lowering anxiety', without explicitly mentioning that they were being involved in an evaluation process; this was made clear soon after the women arrived.

The impact of an evaluation can be increased by having champions able to influence those who make key decisions and necessary changes. It is usual that the people who have real authority to make decisions are external to the programme and have not participated in the evaluation process. Thus, even though the programme staff as well as the directors who took part in the evaluation are committed to improving the programme, other interested parties need to be convinced that the changes are necessary. The champions in the evaluation stories were people who cared deeply for the affected families and communities, and at the same time had an influence on people who were able to make decisions, playing a fundamental role so that the changes could take place. In the example of the evaluation of the Progresa / Oportunidades programme (Mexico), that role was played by an actor who believed in the potential of the evaluation effort, and facilitated the implementation of some of the suggested recommendations.

Leave Nothing But Your Footprints

It was difficult to find evaluation cases relevant and at the same time approachable for this study making the selection of evaluation stories particularly challenging. It was extremely difficult to have access to evaluations whose main actors (officers, administrators, evaluators) considered that the evaluation had made a (positive) difference. This could be because most evaluators tend to distance themselves from the impact of their evaluation, once the

final report has been submitted. This is a paradoxical situation, because often evaluators are not willing to do the self-reflection and assessment as to whether an evaluation made a difference. What they want their clients to pursue is too often not what they tend to do in their evaluation practice, stating that they have no control over the use of evaluation findings. Only a small fraction of the evaluation stories initially selected for the project were able to show a clear connection between the evaluation and the benefits for the people derived from it. Generally, evaluators do not go into detail on how their work can have a positive impact on people's lives. They assume that their responsibility and tasks do not extend beyond selecting the appropriate methodology or method capable of influencing decision-making.

In the global neoliberal context, evaluation runs the risk of becoming another service which gives answers wanted by those who pay for it. Evaluations tend to concentrate excessively on efficiency, effectiveness and measurable results on a short-term basis, rather than contributing to democratic, transformative and participative purposes that the evaluation community holds as central. 'Speaking the truth to power' may be naive and insufficient if the inherent political nature of evaluation is not recognised. This entails extending the focus of action of the evaluation to contribute to public good, broadening its interest towards medium and long-term results, to unexpected consequences of development interventions and investigating the causes of some social problems that programmes and policies aim to deal with. Giving evidence to the subjects of the political intervention entails 'speaking truth to the powerless',[6] considering them as legitimate stakeholders in the

evaluation results and aiming at their empowerment to speak for themselves and act for their own benefit. Developing strategies for that is a rich field for evaluators, as the evaluations that made a difference have shown.

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1. See in this regard the "Evaluation Standards for Latin America and the Caribbean", developed participatively by the ReLAC (the Latin American Evaluation, Monitoring and Systematization Network), FOCEVAL and DEval.

2. This publication deepens the work produced for the Latin American and the Caribbean regions in the context of the project "Evaluations that Make a Difference: Stories from Around the World", carried out by an international team led by Burt Perrin and financed by the EvalPartners initiative. The production of this project can be consulted in the following link: https://evaluationstories.wordpress.com/

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4. Cousins, J. Bradley, Elizabeth Whitmore, and Lyn M Shulha. 2013. "Arguments for a Common Set of Principles for Collaborative Inquiry in Evaluation". *American Journal of Evaluation* 34 (1): 7–22.

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Stories of Evaluation

If you Don’t Ask, you Won’t See it!

Qualitative Evaluation of the Oportunidades Programme (Mexico)

Contemplating the indigenous women of the Sierra Tarahurama, a mountain area in the state of Chihuahua in northern Mexico, evokes bucolic scenes from the time of the Spanish conquest. These communities have maintained themselves for centuries far from cities, clustered in small villages and scattered family groups, cultivating a few seasonal crops and raising chickens, goats, and cattle. Almost all live in poverty, and in many cases they are semi-nomadic.

Access to the Sierra Tarahurama is difficult. Sometimes it takes several days to reach the settlements.

The programme aims at nothing less than breaking the seemingly endless cycle of poverty that typifies many rural communities

It is therefore quite difficult to make contact with them to interview and select candidate families for the *Programa de Desarrollo Humano Oportunidades* (Human Development Opportunities Programme, hereafter referred to as *Oportunidades*).[1] But

the effort is well worth it because the programme is quite remarkable.

This programme, implemented in Mexico since 1997, aims at nothing less than breaking the seemingly endless cycle of poverty that typifies many rural communities. It does so by using a conditional cash transfer (CCT) approach, where families are provided with payments that are conditional upon undertaking certain activities, such as ensuring regular attendance of their children in school or obtaining certain health services. These incentives assist in the achievement of higher standards of education, health, and nutrition, and also provide necessary support to the people of the Sierra Tarahumara to undertake economic activities that enable them to increase their family income and quality of life.

The indigenous communities were among the intended beneficiaries of the programme since its inception, and they also participated in their evaluations from 1999 to 2006. But although these evaluations confirmed that indigenous people were effectively participating in the programme, it was unclear if they were achieving the stated objectives in terms of health, education, and ultimately, economic performance. According to Mercedes Gonzalez de la Rocha, anthropologist and head of the qualitative impact evaluation of *Oportunidades*, the absence of a clear focus on indigenous communities had left a blind spot in the programme's knowledge base. Or as she puts it, *If you don't ask, you won't see it!*.

This statement constituted a starting point for raising the influence of an ethnicityvariableinthenewqualitative evaluation to be conducted in 2008. By then, the programme had a decade of experience in implementation in Mexico, which allowed for a thorough

evaluation. Evaluators designed a strategy for field work comprising eleven indigenous intercultural regions in the states of Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca, and Sonora. In each location, the programme's coverage and operations were analysed. The evaluation identified the main obstacles to programme implementation with particular attention to the relationship between the extensionists (*promotores)* and the women representing the indigenous communities, the *vocales.*

What they found was quite unexpected: there were serious communication problems with language. Virtually none of the *promotores* and only a few of the *vocales* were bilingual. Although the programme had been operating since 1997 with more impact in indigenous areas than in non-indigenous areas (as had been documented by previous evaluations), the important problem of communication had not been sufficiently addressed. For instance, the evaluation found that young indigenous women – most of whom were bilingual, although their Spanish was often limited – did not accurately understand the *Oportunidades* employees and the technical information they provided. This situation was exacerbated in the case of elderly women, who spoke no Spanish at all. The *promotores* assigned to the region did their best to overcome the language barrier, but the results were unsatisfactory.

In some areas, the majority of indigenous women did not understand what the programme was for. They couldn't understand what good it did to spend hours listening to medical specialists who spoke about issues they did not understand in a language they could barely comprehend. Sometimes the information that was being communicated even conflicted with their traditional customs. For example, when indigenous women participated in training on the importance of a physical examination for possible breast cancer, it was clear that the idea of a stranger touching them in their private parts made them very uncomfortable. These women do not even undress in front of their husbands! Thus, a practice intended to save their lives was totally unacceptable for cultural reasons.

The evaluation found that although the programme's coverage had improved in some indigenous areas, in the Sierra Tarahurama, a whopping 30% of the population remained outside the programme. It was clear that the lack of access to health services and education was brought about by the problem of monolingual families who could not benefit from the written and oral information conveyed by *Oportunidades* staff members to the women.

The evaluation identified the main obstacles to programme implementation with particular attention to the relationship between the extensionists and the women representing the indigenous communities

It was urgent to take measures to solve this serious problem, and Oportunidades did just that. The qualitative evaluation suggested that bilingual promotores be recruited from indigenous youth alumni so as to contribute to better communications and smoother operations in indigenous communities. This arrangement also led to a further

positive impact by providing jobs and wages to the young in their own living space, allowing them to share the learning they had acquired right there in their own communities.

The then general coordinator of *Oportunidades*, Dr Salvador Escobedo, recalls:

We managed to make the change in rules of operation to include bilingual extensionists, and that was the first step. Then in parallel we ran a training programme with the National Institute of Indigenous Languages (INALI) in order to generate a mechanism to evaluate the indigenous youths we wanted to hire as extensionists who speak an indigenous language. We have sought to work with the 13 most spoken languages such as Tzotzil, Maya, and Totonac.

To do this, INALI began training a group of 15 young men and women with diplomas as trainers of social programmes in indigenous languages. They were the first to reach the remotest areas of the country to carry the voice of the programme to where it was most needed.

> The evaluation suggested that bilingual promotores be recruited from indigenous youth alumni so as to contribute to better communications and smoother operations in indigenous

Says Escobedo, *The project trained 350 promotores in order to achieve almost total coverage of the monolingual indigenous populations in Yucatan,*

Oaxaca, Chiapas, Jalisco, and the Sierra Tarahumara. By the time I left the programme, we had trained a total of 250 extensionists, and awaited evaluation on the success of this implementation.

> The evaluation pointed out the inefficient (and even absurd) survey of each household to assess whether or not it was eligible for the programme

The process of bringing bilingual *promotores* into the programme unfolded steadily over the next 2 years. As their understanding increased about the importance of sending their children to school, feeding them properly, and learning how to use resources, indigenous women became increasingly willing to participate and interact with the *promotores* and with each other. In some areas they even formed groups for early child education. The role played by the qualitative evaluation with its remit to address the marginalisation caused by monolingualism was key to this transformation.

Another important aspect that was pointed out by the qualitative evaluation of 2008 concerned the inefficient (and even absurd) survey of each household to assess whether or not it was eligible for the programme. In the case of the communities of the Sierra Tarahumara, this was redundant because every household was unquestionably poor – not to mention the difficulty and cost of getting there just to conduct the survey.

Escobedo, who understood the realities of indigenous communities in Mexico, supported the proposals arising from the qualitative evaluation that were eventually endorsed by the president.

The first step was to convince *Oportunidades* collaborators such as government officials and international organisations like the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank of the need to change the rules for coverage in isolated areas. That involved a major challenge for the programme managers because, beyond being convinced of the real value of this recommendation, they needed to effect those changes without appearing to refute the spirit of *Oportunidades*, which was historically focused on the poor while requiring certain conditionalities of the beneficiaries such as health checks and school attendance.

In late 2011 and early 2012, a severe drought hit the Sierra Tarahumara. Rumours were rife about indigenous people committing suicide for lack of food, although these were subsequently found to be false. Dr Iliana Yaschine, former director of evaluation of the programme from 2002 to 2006, who coordinated a study documenting the work of *Oportunidades* in the Sierra Tarahumara during the drought crisis, recalls:

That report was published in a Chihuahua newspaper and generated an immediate response from the federal government, which decided to intervene in various regions with the Secretary of Social Development. It was then that they communicated the decision that Oportunidades should intervene to solve the problem precisely in the area of the Sierra Tarahumara.

The important mobilisation and attention to the area made it possible to detect 8,000 families (40,000

indigenous people) who had been dropped from the programme because they had not fulfilled such co-responsibilities as sending children to school or attending health talks. The figure was worrisome, and returning these people to the programme would be difficult, if not impossible, given the rules of operation. Reaffirming this contention, Escobedo asserted:

The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank opposed eliminating the requirement of the co-responsibilities in these areas, in part because they would undermine the programme, thus generating a new programme. That´s the reason why it could not be done overnight. It is sad and painful, but very real.

However, given the magnitude of the problem in the context of the severe drought affecting indigenous people in the Sierra Tarahumara, the situation was resolved after the intervention of the President Felipe Calderón himself, who ordered the immediate reinstatement of 8,000 families. This was accomplished by integrating the reinstatement to the Food Support Program, a transfer programme that did not require the fulfillment of co-responsibilities that was also operated by *Oportunidades*. The indigenous promotores brought the good news to their communities, while a renewed training of bilingual extensionists was encouraged to address immediately the indigenous families.

The rules of the Oportunidades programme were changed to implement the strategy of full coverage as it had been recommended by the qualitative evaluation

In addition, the rules of the Oportunidades programme were changed to implement the strategy of full coverage (as it had been recommended by the qualitative evaluation). This allowed incorporating families into the programme from small and distant locations without undertaking a home survey. This change helped broaden the programme's coverage and, in addition to the reincorporation of the families mentioned above, it made serving the entire indigenous population of the Sierra Tarahumara possible.

The history of the qualitative evaluation shows the relevance of cultural sensitivity to the evaluation of social projects

According to Yaschine:
Without the qualitative evaluation, it would have been impossible to make that change, even with the drought crisis. That is my perception. I observed the implementation of this decision in the field at a time of crisis. Special efforts were made to deploy support for the affected families, not at the household level but in the care centres where groceries were delivered. I remember what the qualitative evaluation said on this subject, and how that had prompted the changes during the crisis.

The findings and recommendations of the qualitative evaluation in the indigenous communities provided crucial information for decision-making. Managers made changes that impacted the participants of the programme directly. In the case of the bilingual *promotores*, the evaluation noted a dimension of cultural adaptation that had been neglected in the original design of the programme, and once it was incorporated the benefits were obvious.

The history of the qualitative evaluation shows the relevance of cultural sensitivity to the evaluation of social projects. In the words of Gonzalez de la Rocha: *If you don't ask, you won't see it!*

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1. The name of this programme, originally called Progresa, was later changed to Oportunidades, and still later to Prospera, the name by which it is known today. In this report we use the second name since that was in use during the evaluation.

Interviewed:
Mercedes González de la Rocha and Agustín Escobar Latapí were co-authors of this story, and directed the external qualitative evaluation of the Oportunidades Programme, making the recommendations that lead to great improvements in the lives of the beneficiaries.
Iliana Yaschine was the Evaluation Director in the Oportunidades Programme from 2002 to 2006.
Salvador Escobedo (Director of the programme at that time) provided valuable ideas for this story.

Writers:
Pablo Rodríguez Bilella and Omar Zevallos.

Giving Account and Becoming Fully Aware of the Account

Process and Impact of Youth Participation in Territorial Development in Santa Catalina Valley
(Peru)

Santa Catalina Valley is an extensive area in La Libertad region, in North Peru, whose capital is the renowned city of Trujillo. This region has been an important agricultural area for fruit and vegetable farming since pre-Columbian times, nowadays having a significant growth in the tourist sector. Thousands of visitors are usually drawn by its restaurants, mini zoos and country houses, making the most of the modern paved access roads in order to visit Poroto, Laredo and Simbal districts. These rural areas have historically undergone an increasing emigration of its young population, in addition to a context of poverty which explains the emergence of different development NGOs in the region.

These rural areas have historically undergone an increasing emigration of its young population, in addition to a context of poverty

Towards the middle of the first decade of this century, these NGOs had the possibility to bring together their efforts, integrating even governmental and academic actors as part of the Integrated Group Project initiative, a proposal made by the Kellogg Foundation Latin America. This proposal was developed towards the end of the 90s, trying to go beyond the thematic approaches focused on health and nutrition that the foundation had developed before, now moving towards others of a highly territorial nature. The initiative's main purpose was to break the intergenerational circle of poverty by working with young people, developing their individual and group abilities, and at the same time having an influence in their local context so that it could enhance their development. In this way, all proposals backed by financing and technical guidance would be submitted in an alliance of organisations: local council, ministries, grassroot organisations, private actors, NGOs, etc. The initiative was developed in the most critical areas of the region: Central America, North-East of Brazil, and the Andean Region (Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru). In the Santa Catalina Valley region, four NGOs agreed to submit a proposal and to start working on a project (CEPEDAS Norte, MINKA, CIPS, Sara Lafosse, CEPROCUT[1]), together with the National University of Trujillo and some local governments. This involved the first challenge, bringing together different organisations and people from different backgrounds, and different intervention objectives in order to work towards a common goal. The project that resulted included the Poroto, Simbal and Laredo districts, in which organisations, institutions, town halls and Irrigation Board of Users participated. This work was developed in the period between 2005 and 2009, the key of this work being the evaluation component.

As a whole, the initiative aimed at promoting business organisations or networks in order to encourage workers' cooperatives

The project was developed in two consecutive stages named respectively 'Building Local Development Together' and 'Strengthening Local Development Processes in Santa Catalina Valley'. As a whole, and as the interviewed actors remember, the initiative aimed at promoting business organisations or networks in order to encourage the emergence of workers' cooperatives. Their purpose was to go beyond the scattering of each producer in their own plot of land and the typical problems that arise: being prisoners of informal intermediaries or financial services, as well as the absence of access to technology transfer services. In order to evaluate progress in these projects, the 'Evaluation Team' was created, who received training technical guidance from the development NGO called DESCO together with monitors and coaches from the Kellogg Foundation.

The Kellogg Foundation team had created a general Theory of Change for the Integrated Group Project initiative, which was taken as reference and adapted in each region through a group of consultants and coaches who worked with the organisations in project implementation. In Santa Catalina Valley, this theory was regularly updated, showing the evolution which reflected the support of local linking strategies between different organisations (social capital), the different opportunities for income generation (economic capital), as well as the development of educational

and leadership opportunities for young people (human capital). In this respect, Federico Tenorio —member of the CEDEPAS NGO— gave his opinion:

The Theory of Change was improved and refined as a product of four years of work. There was a preliminary idea of the Theory of Change at the beginning, we were thrilled about this and along the way it was adjusted; what we wrote at the end was much more accurate and precise than what we had at the beginning. We always highlight that the Theory of Change worked very well for this field and it depended on the level of participation of the local actors (young people).

With the support of the regional NGOs involved in the project, young people of Santa Catalina Valley were gathered in business groups or networks. Many of these networks were oriented towards small cattle and vegetable farming, and the groups consisted of 10 to 15 producers, including young people and adults, who got together to exchange information and produce as a group, generate shared learning and gain an economy of scale for the purchase and sale of consumables products. Other networks worked by linking themselves to a bigger business sector, for example: linking small carpentry business to supply for constructors or ports, or in the growing tourist sector of the region. The work with youth leaders entailed creating 40 youth organisations, promoting their leadership roles in topics of political incidence, social awareness activities and actions of cultural promotion. Susana Shoaie, from the Kellogg Foundation, was linked to the first stages of the project in the Andean region, giving her support in the development of the Theory of Change, and she said the following:

This was a large and complex project consisting of two stages. Each of these stages lasted two years and were both funded by Kellogg. It involved a cultural change in young people's view, from rebellious and problematic to being the agents of change, believing that in this way young people can have a positive impact in their own lives, their families' and their communities. Likewise, it involved the local organisation's commitment by supporting these initiatives.

The work with youth leaders involved creating 40 youth organisations promoting their leadership roles in topics of political incidence, social awareness activities and actions of cultural promotion

Evaluation in Process

The general evaluation of the Integrated Group Project initiative started to develop from the creation of the project itself, starting from the logic model production and the construction of the evaluation matrix and their corresponding instruments. The complex initiative entailed a complex evaluation, with relevant efforts as regards the baseline configuration, design and data processing. It was agreed that the evaluation nature of the initiative, apart from contributing to the subregion and Latin America, should adopt a profile highly focused on its usefulness locally.

To give support to the evaluation process in the Andean region, the NGO called Desco was brought in and it chose to implement a capacity development process for the evaluation, virtually at the beginning of the project. The main motivation for implementing this process was to develop those abilities to enable local actors to carry out their own evaluations directly in the future. In each of the territories where the Integrated Group Project was developed, evaluation groups or teams were created with whom an evaluation training programme was carried out. This involved attending a year-long evaluation course in Lima and their follow-up in the field for two more years.

The main motivation aimed at developing evaluation abilities, so that the local actor could carry out their own evaluations directly in the future

In Santa Catalina Valley, members from different participating support organisations were selected to be part of the evaluation group, creating the team coordinated by Dr Esther Ramírez, from the Trujillo University, and the participation of Luciana Alfaro (CEDEPAS), Cecilia Montenegro (CEPROCUT), Sonia Mendoza (MINKA), Marco Luján from the Laredo Local Council and Nelly Aliaga (Ministry of Agriculture), as well as other members from the NGOs who were included throughout the years. Together with the team and other members of the local teams —who made up an audience of 90 people—, Desco began the evaluation training course. The course is remembered by the evaluation team members from Santa Catalina Valley as a 'training and practical course', given that what they learned in the training was immediately put into practice. Esther Ramirez shared her memories of this moment:

It was an interesting work group, the work involved carrying out an evaluation with a new approach, which gave us some results while we were implementing it. It was an evaluation where we had to give an account, but starting with becoming fully aware of what to account for, give an account of what was going on. Becoming fully aware of learning was the most important part of the evaluation. Trying to achieve learning and growth in every member of the different teams we were working with, while at the same time making decisions about the project. The idea was not simply to evaluate the impact but also the process itself, based on the results and according to the different project components.

Marco Luján, civil servant of the Laredo Local Council, contributes with some details about this process:

In the first place, there was screening to create the team. We did a test, and our CVs were evaluated. It was interesting because, if I remember correctly, there were 22 institutions who had been asked to be included in the evaluation, from which only six were selected. So, it was a very demanding process considering the selection process we went through. Then we went through a training process in Lima; it was a year-long and consisted in theoretical lessons during a whole week and later applying what we had learnt in the field.

The idea was not simply to evaluate the impact but the process itself, based on the results and according to the different components

After the baseline of the project was elaborated, the team scheduled their actions in such a way that every three

months they would meet and receive the evaluation reports from each of the institutions involved in the initiative. Based on those reports and guided by the idea that the evaluation should help strengthening the human capital, the evaluation team carried out field visits and worked with the technical teams, as well as the people involved in the project,. Esther Ramírez remembers the way the work took place:

In the field visits, based on the reports, technical teams were asked to show us a typical activity, which we knew they had already done. We worked with farmers, cattle breeders, artisans, carpenters, school teachers, and we also worked with young people and observed in the field if the work reported to the management team was being accomplished. We chose, for example, an activity X, and observed how they carried out this activity from start to finish, keeping their accounts, following the guidelines stipulated by the management team.

The evaluation team little by little generated an evaluation culture in which, based on the technical reports received and their discussions in meetings with different actors, they would carry out field visits and meetings with the head officers of the implementation teams and with the targeted population. They were clearly interested in allowing some space to hold interviews in depth so that they would help to overcome the control or accountability viewpoint ('we didn't go to the field to check if everything was working nicely, and that it was arranged to look in a certain way because the evaluation team was coming'), The evaluation was trying to contribute to continuous improvement to the work being carried out. Federico Tenorio commented about it:

In CEDEPAS, we have a lot of experience with different projects and we have been through many evaluations where there was a strong control and vigilance, that is to say, a police type of evaluation. In this case, the evaluation proposed was more like a learning process. This was achieved, through a participatory process, drawing important lessons for everybody, for the Local Council, the producers and their leaders.

The members of the evaluation team understood each other and took over the task as an internal evaluation team, whereas the external evaluation would be carried out by hired consultants

Given that the members of the evaluation team were part of the organisations directly involved in the project implementation, they understood each other and took over the task as an internal evaluation team.[2] In turn, the internal nature of the evaluation team, comprising members of the organisations implementing the project, resulted initially in some tension as well as learning. Its members remember that in this way:

Esther Ramírez: *At the beginning, each organisation instructed their representatives: 'You have to stand up for our work,' 'You have to make sure we do well' But the idea was not to do well in the exam, but realise that what we need to work well and that those who are working in the project can grow.*

Marco Luján: *So, when you had to evaluate your own organisation, many*

times you wanted to show the best aspect, but all of your team mates told you: 'We need to be objective, we need to show what we find. And where you haven't made progress, show why there hasn't been any progress and look to how that can be improved.' That was a learned lesson, that the evaluation team was so empowered that it risked becoming the ugly duckling of the project. Sometimes the rest of the participating organisations did not think well of us because when we met every three months to submit the project evaluation, and observed that the progress was not enough in accordance with the schedule we had presented ... Then there was some friction, that was overcome little by little; but the meetings were heated. It is about learning a lesson because the fact that you are evaluating yourself often means you are more demanding.

Susana Sohaie gives an additional perspective with respect to this topic from the initiative's management:

Not all organisations experienced it in the same way, but many of them did deem it as an opportunity in many respects and they stamped their own seal to their involvement

For us, the work that these teams carried out was foreign to the image of external evaluation. There were some organisations that were eager for their own staff to be trained in evaluation and made the most out of it. For others it meant a bigger workload and looked at it as something imposed on them, Besides they regarded it as an external evaluation but with local resources! (laughs). Not all organisations experienced it in the same way, but many of them did deem it as an opportunity in many respects and they stamped their own seal to their involvement.

In reference to the objective of developing evaluation abilities, the experience of the evaluation team in Santa Catalina Valley has also been fruitful. To that effect, Molvina Zeballos says:

In Santa Catalina Valley it is worth it to highlight how the evaluation team included members of the local government in this evaluation process. As a result, in different territories of the Andean region, abilities were developed, Many of the team members are dedicated to evaluation now, some of them are consultants, and others replicated some evaluations.

The importance of the use of evaluation was emphasised throughout the training implementation process

Marcos Luján, linked to a local government of the territory, also gives a review of some of these learning experiences:

An important aspect is that a part of this methodology was included by local governments in the oversight committees in relation to participatory budgets. These committees oversee that everything that is budgeted for is executed in an effective manner. In that case there was an interesting methodology: a brochure was used, and I understand that this format is still used to evaluate public investment projects. From the point of view of the evaluation and the actors, they have taken on board the methodology and have become leaders. The development of abilities that was included in the evaluation process contributed with an image systematisation methodology which was so useful, practical and didactic that I still use it and I have taken it on board.

For me, someone who has been working in public organisations, it was very important to get to know the NGOs and their work, this had an impact on me.

The importance of evaluation use was emphasised throughout the training and implementation process. It was understood that once the information had been processed and the results discussed, the fundamental question that evaluators and people who implement the project had to ask was how they were going to use it. In order to modify (or reinforce) certain processes evaluators had to find specific methods and approaches through which the direct participants, as well as the local authorities, could use the findings and assessments. This recurring emphasis on use is highlighted by different actors of the evaluation who strongly integrated the notion of outcome as going beyond the outputs developed.

At the level of the general initiative, it turned out to be an additional challenge to communicate the evaluation results to the Kellogg Foundation management. Whereas the local actors considered that the participatory instruments and strategies helped to indicate the changes that appeared —in their consolidation or in their emergence— there appeared larger difficulties to show to Kellogg the cultural and process changes. Together with that, changes in the institutional context generated additional difficulties for using the evaluation, just as Susana Sohaie mentions:

Something happened: the foundation had a change in management during this period. The new management had a different approach for the intervention, focusing on childhood —the origin of the foundation—, that is why some changes had to be made as regards the theme

and geography. It happened in different organisations, not only in Kellogg, who started to reduce their international commitments. Towards the years 2007-2008, the Kellogg Foundation decided to concentrate in Mexico and other areas of Central America: areas with a greater link to the USA.

The Evaluation Capacity as a Result

As soon as the project and the final instances of the evaluation finished, Kellogg Foundation moved away from the Andean area. Some of the experiences seemed to need longer to make progress in their consolidation, especially since they were focused in the work with young people, who because of their age, were defining their own lives, looking for new opportunities, and prioritising their education many times outside the territory, reducing their level of participation. However, there were young people who found in the proposal a very valid alternative for their social and economic development; they started with a small amount of capital, reached a notable diversification, and still participate in the cooperative efforts until the present. As regards the training of leaders by developing new perspectives in local political processes, the results were less effective than expected.

The internal evaluation in the Andean region adopted a participative and collaborative nature with the actors

Different from other regions where the Integrated Group Project was implemented, the internal evaluation in the Andean region adopted a participatory and collaborative nature with the actors, combining the internal evaluation with the external consultancy. The participants in this project consider the independence that each evaluation team had as valuable and positive, so that it allowed them to deepen and include their own elements over the minimal required in the general evaluation of the region. Members of the evaluation team have tended to recall the emphasis that the evaluation had in the growth and strengthening of the evaluation capacities of each of the organisations, expressed in the idea that 'the project has finished, but the organisations and the people continue'.

In the formulation of development projects, evaluation always tends to have its own space, even has its own budget funds. But local organisations and NGOs do not always have the capacity needed to implement those evaluation processes. In that way, one of the greatest benefits of evaluation in the Integrated Group Project initiative in the Andean region was improving the evaluation capacities in the territories where it was implemented, from a learning perspective, through the processes, the empowering of all the actors involved and the use of the results for continuous improvement.

1. CEDEPAS: Centro Ecuménico de Promoción y Acción Social Norte; MINKA: Centro de investigación. Estudio y Promoción del Desarrollo, Centro Lafosse: Centro de investigación and Promoción Social Sara Lafosse.

2. In contrast the external evaluation would be carried out by consultants hired by the Kellogg Foundation for that purpose.

Interviewees:
Molvina Zeballos, Federico Tenorio, Susana Shoaie, Marco Luján, Esther Ramírez, Cecilia Montenegro Salgado.

Writers:
Vanesa Castro and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella.

Indigenous Women, Territoriality and Evaluation

The Story of a (de)Constructed Road (Colombia)

Over the last century, Latin American women have unitedly spoken out as a means to resolve their ancestral struggles. One example are the indigenous women organisations in Colombia, who know what they want and have a defined road towards achieving their goal.

First and foremost, their struggle focuses on land entitlement or, as they refer to it, land restitution. Their displacement resulted from an armed conflict in which almost 70% of the indigenous population was removed from their ancestral lands —a process which has, in recent years, started to be reversed but still needs to consolidate. Second, their struggle aims at restoring the rights of the victims of armed conflict, with special attention given to those who have disappeared– especially women. Third, this struggle reasserts indigenous women's rights, in light of a history of systematic rapes, forced disappearances, and murders. This is how their struggle focuses on land, restoration of their land rights, the people who disappeared (husbands, brothers, and fathers). This last struggles takes into consideration

gender-based violence against women in femicide cases, not only external but also accounting for strong sexist patterns found within the indigenous movement. They are indigenous, they are poor, and they are women – an ethnic, socioeconomic and gender triad of vulnerabilities.

> The process of the struggle of indigenous women in Colombia must pay attention to three different fronts, for which they have been generating different alliances and communications

In this way, the process of the struggle of indigenous women in Colombia must pay attention to three different fronts, for which they have been generating different alliances and communications. One of the organisations that has accompanied their processes is a development NGO called MUNDUBAT, originally centred on the Colombian indigenous movement, and more recently focused on indigenous women's organisations. Its presence facilitated a response to a European Union request for proposals (RFP) focused on human rights. A key element aimed to include different-level organisations who embrace diversity of ethnicities and indigenous cultures, among them aboriginal cultures such as the Emberá-Chamí, Emberá-Katío, Dóbida, Tule, Zenú and Nasa. The National Indigenous Organisation of Colombia (Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia – ONIC), is a national group comprised of 43 regional and local branches, which include local authorities and associated *cabildos* (councils). At the regional level, the Indigenous Organisation of Antioquia (Organización Indígena de Antioquia - OIA) stands out; whereas at a local level, the Association of Indigenous Councils of Northern Cauca (Asociación de Cabildos del Norte del Cauca - ACIN)is worth mentioning.

These organisations have a relevant trajectory of fighting for indigenous women's rights. ACIN has a long history working for women's rights, starting in 2007 with a Family and Women Programme, aimed at making women aware of their general situation, promoting their organisation and training in order to consolidate their ethnic identity and their political participation as agents of transformation. In 2003, OIA started working by creating awareness on gender inequality in Antioquian communities, developing the Gender, Generation and Family Programme (which was responsible for managing the evaluated project). This programme is being overseen by 165 local councils and its objective is to achieve equality, helping women run their own government through statute regulation of women political participation organisation in the councils, boards, and offices. Finally, ONIC has a Women's Office, which is where the evaluated intervention is carried out.

> Three indigenous organisations developed a project with the objective that women be recognised as development agents in the context of the Colombian armed conflict

The three indigenous organisations mentioned above participated actively in the intervention together with the NGO called MUNDUBAT. Between 2013 and 2014, they developed a project funded by the European Union, with the objective of recognizing indigenous women as development agents within the context of the Colombian armed conflict. In this way, their actions were oriented towards strengthening their abilities to set up and influence the implementation of local, regional, and national public policies. The project had three components: (a) Education, aimed at training indigenous women on their rights, so that they cannot only influence in their local communities but also influence the regional and national levels; (b) Impact, which aimed at lobbying the women's rights arena; (c) Awareness, with the purpose of making indigenous women's work known outside their organisations.

An Evaluation: An Ally

A year after the project began – and in line with the sponsor's (European Union) guidelines, a mid-term evaluation was required to make adjustments to the project's implementation and boost its efficiency. The design of the evaluation process was agreed with the organisations involved. As part of this process, MUNDUBAT, playing the role of evaluation manager, coordinated meetings with the three indigenous organisations linked to the project to review and give feedback on the methodology of the evaluation and the results as they were being generated. The evaluation team was led by Jenny Luz Mayta Navarro, a young Spanish evaluator with experience working in the Latin American region. This is how she remembers this experience:

It was our first time working as a team which consisted of two people, a local

person who worked on human rights in Colombia and knew of the indigenous women's movement and me. We had had three meetings through Skype with the leaders —organisation coordinators— in preparation for the fieldwork stage. There was previous knowledge of the methodology and some guidelines had been given regarding the field work and all that was going to carried out. So, the field work consisted first of having an assembly, to which the representative leaders were summoned, for which we prepared a PowerPoint presentation they could see in a friendly and fun way —given that many of them were illiterate— so that they could get to know us through a motivating and dynamic engagement process. We applied a qualitative methodology with participatory workshops in each section where they were intervening. We organised focus groups, some in depth-interviews and also some semi-structured interviews with the indigenous leader authorities.

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For all the organisations involved in the initiative, the mid-term evaluation was generally a new experience for them. In past, some of the organisations had been through auditing and control on handling received donations, but this time the evaluation entailed field visits and meetings with different indigenous grassroots women. Mónica Yalanda Chilo, member of ACIN, shared her impressions of the evaluation:

As a women's organisation, we hadn't had an evaluation, it was our first time. At first, the leaders, and ourselves, were scared because we didn't know what it was going to be like. We didn't say to the grassroots women that it was an evaluation because when they hear those words, they tend to get scared. We told them that they were invited to a meeting, that's all. We held the first meeting in a context different than the territory, but we held the rest here in the territory. We told them that we were going to meet and that a lady was just going to ask some questions because if we had told them that they were coming to do an evaluation, they surely wouldn't have participated.

Some of the participants remembered a monitoring experience carried out a couple of years ago by an English expert who visited the area for four days, held meetings with them and made a battery of very specific questions oriented towards the financed project under consideration. Once the field visit was finished, he kindly said goodbye to the interviewed candidates and they never heard from him again or saw his report. This first experience was considered invasive, which provided additional motivation for the evaluation team to include a fun and engaging participatory aspect to break away from the feeling that they were extracting information.

Moreover, a very important point that the participants brought to the evaluators' attention was that in the previous evaluation, as well as other preceding monitoring and evaluation experiences, the external actors —whether they were donors or evaluators— who had approached them did not understood the following concepts, as expressed in the participants owns words: 'We are

not a project; we are a process'. They suggested that this idea has always been very clear for the indigenous women organisations from Colombia: they are going through a process and one or more projects contribute to this process, but the heart belongs to the struggle process that defines them.

"We are not a project; we are a process" The indigenous women organisations from Colombia are in a struggle process to which they contribute with one or more projects

Amelicia Santacruz, member of OIA, Indigenous Organisation of Antioquia, remembers and strongly appreciates the evaluators' intentions by visiting women directly in their territory:

Jenny, as an evaluator, wanted to go to the communities. She visited the communities so that the project was more transparent. Many things can be said from the office or the desk, but she wanted to get in, observe and listen directly to the voices of indigenous women.

The previous working experience of the evaluators with the women's organisation of the region favoured these in-depth dialogues with the project participants. As one of the participants said:

It was mostly a dialogue, a conversation between women. It was an enjoyable moment that allowed us to chat just as we indigenous women like to do, telling each other things. It wasn't like an evaluation of someone who asks and then writes; this was a conversation. She followed her methodology, her questions, she had prepared it very well, but she made us feel that we could trust

her to be able to talk, which is one the biggest difficulties indigenous women have, talking. But as I was saying, it was a space that generated trust and allowed us to confide in her about what is happening to us and how the project has helped us.

Overcoming centuries of silence is a hard and long task and it should be placed in the context of an educational and empowering process

The fact that indigenous grassroots women took to the floor is an explicit empowering purpose of the different organisational stages involved in the project. Overcoming centuries of silence is a hard and long task and it should be placed in the context of an educational and empowering process just like the women's organisations involved in the initiative encouraged them to do. The evaluators were able to articulate this evaluation to this dynamic, getting closer, in this way, to the reality of the organisations involved in this intervention.

The different sessions were carried out with lively dynamics that promoted dialogue and reflection over the actions accomplished in the context of the project. In turn, towards the end of each session, a short evaluation process was carried out, highlighting satisfactory aspects of the day as well as others that could be adjusted for the next meeting. Jenny Luz mentions some characteristics of the evaluation approach:

We included their rituals because they perform a ritual in every meeting. Then we decided that in each of the workshops on the different days we would perform a ritual and they would guide it. They have their own protocols and these formalities are very common for them. We all decided to include these elements because it was a way of giving the evaluation a context. We also set up commissions so that they could participate, one of them dedicated to environment, another to materials, another group wrote an account of what happened every day and the leader in charge coordinated. This wasn't planned, it came up from the meetings and I think it was an element of success. We reduced our action considerably to basically becoming facilitators.

The different accounts repeatedly highlighted the notion of trust that existed between the group of women and the evaluator. For example, Amelicia shared the following with us:

If there hadn't been any trust, which allowed the women to speak and express what they felt, the evaluation wouldn't have had the effects that it did. Grassroots women placed a lot of trust in Jenny, they see her as an ally, as one of the members of the group, she has kept directly in touch with us. And I think that this is good because one tries to be able to give their best and what this type of evaluations allow is to be better, because it helps to know what is good and be able to make it excellent and turn the bad things into good. And I believe that they were very clear, very straightforward and said everything they had to say.

Recommendations for improvement were made to the intervention and a reflection about them was carried out with the organisations

Once the field work was finished, a meeting for reporting results was held and a timeline was made marking the main project landmarks and identifying its strengths and weaknesses. This is how recommendations for improvement were made in regards to the intervention and a reflection about them was carried out with the organisations, defining improvement plans to boost the intervention's efficiency during the rest of the implementation of the project.

The Significance of the Evaluation

The mid-term evaluation described here was carried out after the first year of the initiative development and shortly before the elaboration and submission of a second project that would give continuity to the one evaluated here. In this sense, the contributions presented by the evaluation for the different actors involved in the proposal indicated that the project objectives were being accomplished; moreover, at the same time it was possible to identify some weaknesses in that process, which the next project proposed to overcome.

By indicating the need of a better registry, monitoring, and systematisation of the ongoing experience, the evaluation stage favoured the emergence of a new evaluation culture

The evaluation made specific contributions to the MUNDUBAT training model. These contributions were very welcomed, and entailed the adoption of a new educational strategy, planning with an educational logic process, with materials designed for indigenous women. This made an impact not only in MUNDUBAT, but also in the indigenous women organisations, who in the same evaluation process deepened and understood concepts within the context of their own projects, such as what is the purpose of indicators, how to build a logic model framework, etc. In this way, the evaluation itself became an instance of capacity training in project managing. The evaluator made some comments about those aspects:

We found that there weren't any training plans. The training courses were disorganised; they were conducted but they weren't generating an effect on indigenous women. We made a clear recommendation about making a training plan adapted to each ethnic group, taking into consideration their specific cultural elements. They included this in the second stage which has already started, and they are tailoring training plans for each indigenous group, adapting them to their context and their worldview, and giving them a process view.

Apart from the specific and programmatic indications given by the evaluation, the organisation leaders strongly highlighted the emphasis made on listening to grassroots women together with the fact that they were able to express their viewpoint. In this sense, the women's identification towards their achievements and difficulties in the initiative implementation was so valuable because it allowed to redirect some actions, doing it from the viewpoint of the women participating in the project.

By indicating the need for a better registry, monitoring, and systematisation of the ongoing experience, the mid-evaluation

stage favoured the emergence of a new evaluation culture within the organisations. As a result of insisting to adopt registry procedures, other formats were developed that would allow accounting for the activities and their impact, making progress to include participatory monitoring as part of new projects. Thus, some processes focused on strengthening their abilities in monitoring techniques took place, scheduling training workshops adapted to what each organisation does. It is particularly valuable that indigenous organisations have pondered the importance of evaluating their processes, not considering it as a requirement for their donors, but for the usefulness it has for them. Mónica illustrates that as follows:

We already have templates to be able to do a follow-up and to evaluate, because if we don't evaluate we don't know how we are doing. We have already included this dynamic, we carry out an evaluation every fifteen days, we look at the schedule, and the activities and then we evaluate, monitoring the activities that are taking place; it's a dynamic that we already have in place. Therefore, this has allowed us to evaluate all the activities that are carried out, and then we monitor them. Besides, we are used to speaking but we are not used to writing as much. So, many activities have been carried out, and we obtained many results, but when it came the time to express and write them, we didn't have anything, we needed to be more aware of what we were doing and describe it. Another recommendation is that we didn't have any statistics, we are not very efficient in that aspect, and we need to improve in that area.

The intervention presented as a 'project' entailed a direct articulation, if not an overlap, with the activities the organisations were already working on. Understanding the organised in-

digenous women is understanding that the cooperation projects are the vehicles they use to address their struggle. The idea that 'this is our struggle, and with the project we are doing this' is always present in their discourse. When the projects end, they will continue working, organising massive demonstrations, also supporting the Colombian national movement of indigenous peasant's recognition, without leaving aside their own demands, making emphasis on women's issues, and generating meeting places at a local, national and Latin American level.

The evaluation showed weaknesses in articulation with the indigenous organisation at national level, given the amount of bureaucracy of the organisation. The effects identified at a department and local level helped to highlight those levels in the new proposal, which turned out to be the winner of a three-year agreement.

The evaluation was clearly participatory, it uncovered some weaknesses in the design of the project and articulated elements essential for the development and submission of a new project/agreement

The mid-term evaluation was clearly participatory; it uncovered some weaknesses in the design of the project and articulated elements essential for the development and submission of a new project/agreement. In turn, the same evaluation process —together with the corresponding recommendations— favoured the emergence of practices in the organisations that aimed towards an institutionalised evaluation culture. The relationships component, highly positive in this case of the indigenous women and the evaluator, supported the evaluation's development and shaped the recommendations conceived from the viewpoint of the initiative's participants.

The general impression for the evaluator of the evaluation experience is summarised as follows:

This is one of the evaluations that has been most satisfactory because I was able to see how useful an evaluation (and its results) can be for an organisation. Most of the recommendations given were accepted and implemented. This has been crucial for me, so this is what I highlight.

Interviewees:
Jenny Luz Maita Navarro, Amelicia Santacruz, Mónica Yalanda Chilo, Arantza Larizgoita.

Writers:
Cecilia Luna, Vanesa Castro and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella.

Local Knowledge and Institutional Actors

Evaluation of the Safe and Family Centred Maternity Hospitals Initiative
-MSCF- (Argentina)

Two foreign evaluators flew from Buenos Aires to an inland province in Argentina, where they were carrying out interviews as part of the evaluation of the Safe and Family-Centred Maternity Hospitals programme. After this visit, they were flying to three more provinces in order to complete their assessment of the programme in action. During the flight, the evaluators shared their initial impressions after the meetings carried out in the offices of the programme of UNICEF Argentina in Buenos Aires. After taking a quiet moment to reflect upon and organise their thoughts, they continued their intense conversation for a few hours before conducting new interviews and visits. The initial contact and the first approximation to the programme carried out on previous days had confirmed their initial impression: the programme deserved (and needed) to be addressed in an evaluation considered from the complexity viewpoint.

The two evaluators were part of the interdisciplinary team created to conduct an evaluation of the Safe and Family Centred Maternity Hospitals

programme. A midwife was included on the team as an institutional management analyst. She was convinced that respecting the needs of the mother during childbirth brings benefits as opposed to an institutionalised birth. The evaluators also contributed their special approach from a gender perspective. One of them even had experience as manager of a public programme in Chile that included men during childbirth. As an evaluation team, each of the members had their own story, their experience, their special motivation with the area, as well as their evaluation skills.

As foreigners, the evaluators were surprised at UNICEF Argentina's autonomous handling of their budget. It gave shape to a very interesting evaluation scenario. It entailed evaluating a program financed by an external agency that they were accountable to and, based on their conclusions, had to decide the sustainability of the program. In this case, the same agency which financed the programme also worked with the national authorities and province authorities or NGOs. Moreover, it had their own resources. In this way, the agency was a key spokesperson as regards the evaluation and its results.

> The Safe and Family Centred Maternity Hospitals Initiative (SFCM) was the result of the main line of work in the Health area of UNICEF Argentina between 2010 and 2015, strongly focused in working with infant and maternal mortality

The Safe and Family-Centred Maternity Hospitals Initiative (known as SFCM) was the result of the primary work in the Health Area of UNICEF Argentina between 2010 and 2015, which was strongly focused on working with infant and maternal mortality. The programme had been implemented in 10 provinces in the country, those with the biggest maternal mortality problems and other relevant social indicators. The focus was on services that assisted more than 1000 deliveries a year. In an agreement with the provincial authorities a series of training interventions were developed and implemented directly in the maternity units. These programmes focused on particular players in the health system: nurses, obstetric physicians, paediatricians and people of management level in the institutions and provinces.

Furthermore, the programme carried out communication campaigns aimed at the general public, such as, 'The Premature Baby Week', as well as fundraising and business negotiations.

> UNICEF reached agreements with the Health ministries at provincial level.The provincial government would choose which devices they would adopt

While most activities were related to training, a high percentage of UNICEF funds were used for constructing and adapting residences so that mothers could stay close to their children while they were hospitalised. Some aspects of the programme were discussed by one of the evaluators as follows:

For the multidisciplinary team in charge of UNICEF, it was hard to get the political legitimacy in order to promote

the project as a public policy, but they finally did it. It was then, when UNICEF reached agreements with the provincial governments and ministries of Health at the provincial level, that the programmes were implemented for one or two years. The provincial governments could choose which of these programmes they would adopt. This allowed for different ways of generating change in the culture and functioning of the maternity units, while at the same time implementing security measures, handling of patients in hospitals, training civil servants, and even changes in the care of newborns. They collaborated with the Health ministries at provincial level, who worked directly with UNICEF, as an extended management team to move the programs forward.

At the end of the cooperation agreement between UNICEF Argentina and the different collaborators, an external evaluation would be carried out, resulting in two possibilities; either ending the intervention or opening a new cooperation framework. The process of understanding the programme started by reading its justification and methods, conducting interviews with its designers and people in charge of the programs (who carried out support actions for the implementation), together with the interviews conducted in the Argentine Ministry of Health. After that, the evaluators travelled to the places in which the programme was applied having discovered two important findings: on one side, that the designers and managers of the programme were a team with wide knowledge not only in the health policy field but also in an academic field. This was the reason why the programme had a wide, clearly structured theoretical framework in the sections of its introduction and objectives. On the other side, the evaluators found that the justification

provided for the programme was very different from the programme's approach. The evaluator commented on this:

The SFCM programme had a significant research background, something that was odd compared to the projects we traditionally had to evaluate, where the justification was related more to a social assessment, related to statistics. The dialogue led us to another conceptualisation, to other views, to say 'Ok, this is justified by scientific studies'. It was innovative and new, it was a challenge for us to chat with this different conceptualisation of a public programme, very well justified from a scientific analysis.

The evaluators found the SFCM programme difficult to understand due to designers' approach. In order to understand it they had to engage in a constructive dialogue with the designers but this time from the health sciences or health workers' approach, which is different -up to a certain point- from the social or political sciences approach. The evaluators remember the following:

Their language was not the typical used in social development or in cooperation for development, that is why at the beginning, the conversation did not flow easily, it was not really clear what they really wanted us to evaluate. The implementation team felt that UNICEF's role was basically to take this conceptualisation and its cultural dimension to the maternity units with a focus on rights and childbirth where the needs of the mother are respected. Basically, the proposal was focused on favouring this cultural change and that is why a series of interventions that could help those changes ought be put in place. Therefore, the essence of the proposal and it was clear to the team who implemented those devices because they were passionately involved, but looking from an external point of view, not only the conceptualisation, but also the implementation were hard to understand.

The SFCM programme had a significant research background, something that was odd compared to the projects we traditionally had to evaluate

A key aspect of the evaluation was visiting the field in the provinces to meet the actors in the areas where the programme was still being implemented. Beginning with a series of criteria given by the evaluators, in dialogue with the programme's central team, and considering the logistic aspects, a visit plan was agreed with four of the provinces and their maternity units, with the clear objective of reflecting diversity. These activities were during some exceptional circumstances such as administrative change in UNICEF Argentina, and at the same time the end of the political campaign for presidential and governors' elections in Argentina. The evaluators recall:

It was a very challenging analysis, with interviews, observation with guidelines; it was methodologically challenging. The evaluation was very hard work because nothing was obvious, the approach of the project was different in each of the provinces. It was a combination of things that made the evaluation process very dynamic, we had to include not only traditional interviews but also surveys, as well as observation with guidelines in order to see what had been implemented, what had been said that was going to be implemented and also to look for more subjective aspects that were more difficult to analyse. In each of the provinces we interviewed the

provincial Minister of Health or another person with authority in the Public Health System and people in charge of the maternity programme. After that we directly visited maternity units. In the maternity units, we interviewed obstetric teams and also teams who cared for the newborns.

A key aspect of the evaluation was visiting the field in the provinces to meet the actors of the territories where the programme was still being implemented

On top of that, a questionnaire was sent in to a database of people who had been part of the programme throughout the years. This allowed information to be collected regarding the way in which participants evaluated the quality of the service they had received, how useful it had been, how much of it they applied, and what new things were being done in their own practice.

The institutional actors remember and highlight the emphasis on dialogue in the interaction time with the evaluators as valuable

The institutional actors, in the provinces, as well as in the UNICEF Argentina team, remember and highlight as valuable the emphasis on dialogue with the evaluators. Different meetings and sessions promoted an insightful and reflective atmosphere, allowing time for discovering strengths and weaknesses in the design and the implementation of the SFCM initiative. The project's

implementation team remembered the following:

By talking to the evaluators, we were able to visualise what we had already observed as a team: it was very likely that one of the mistakes the SFCM working proposal had was choosing infant and maternal mortality as an indicator, because during the programme, infant as well as maternal mortality went down in the whole country. And we need to recognise that there were other actors working as well, such as the Ministry of Health in many of the same places the programme took place, aiming at specific actions that have an impact on mortality, and to which UNICEF often contributed. So, the evaluators clarified that we hadn't started from an experimental design, neither could they do that, we needed to think in terms of the Theory of Change. The issue was that we hadn't known the Theory of Change explicitly before all the initiatives were organised.

The absence of the Theory of Change, together with the programme's inherent complexity, entailed a challenge for the evaluation. This consisted of understanding what was the problem to be solved and how, highlighted by the differences in terms and approaches that were found between a more conceptual approach not only in the design but in the implementation. In one of the provinces visited by the evaluators, the technicians in charge of the programme remembered the following aspects in the fieldwork:

In that moment, they interviewed professionals at management level, and then visited some maternity wards that were following the Safe and Family Centred Maternity Hospitals model as well as visiting a hospital that had not incorporated the model. It seemed interesting from the viewpoint of comparing those institutions that had already been working for five years, with others that simply did not follow the model and had not worked on it either. This evaluation was nothing like some audits where we go through some issues on the go and they give you some suggestions, in this case, they let us talk and said nothing. The contributions of the evaluators were sent in after their visit in the evaluation report.

> A key element of the evaluation process was to reconstruct the internal logic that unified the actions carried out in the five-year initiative, reconstructing it with elements that had already been thought and elaborated

In a dialogue with the national management team, the evaluators suggested articulating the programme's proposal as a Theory of Change, which would finally help to generate a policy on childbirth and linked with maternal mortality and emotional problems. The Theory of Change linked together the desired changes with the strategies necessary to bring about those changes.

The evaluation dialogue indicated that there was indeed an implicit Theory of Change as well as a Logical Framework. Consequently the key element of the evaluation process was to reconstruct the internal logic that unified the actions carried out in the five-year initiative with elements that had already been thought and elaborated. The institutional actors of UNICEF Argentina, close to the SFCM initiative, highlighted that different types of contributions were involved:

The evaluation went beyond showing or indicating everything that we already knew. That is to say, it showed and

revealed aspects that we had already seen in the programme implementation itself, and it also contributed with a lot of new aspects. I had recently joined the organisation, that is why this evaluation was a very good summary of the implementation of my work in this area. It also generated a change in the office and in the implementation team by indicating inefficient aspects, when we thought things were OK. It gave a critical view on everything that had been carried out, the good things and the bad things.

At a provincial level, other components of the evaluation were highlighted as valuable contributions:

What clearly emerged from the audit, or at least what I highlighted as the most in the five-year period of the implementation of the project, is that maybe the mistake was not engaging the organisational culture of the institutions. In our province, for example, the results of the institutional diagnosis were obtained after half of the project had been implemented. However, that involved some self-criticism on the part of the people from UNICEF: what we first needed to approach was have an initial diagnosis of the organisational culture. In fact, we considered that realisation as the most important learning we had. In all maternity units we approached inside our province since then, we started by making a diagnosis of the organisational culture, and let people know what this is about, for them to observe how they are working, inside the team. From then onwards, we follow the rest of the SFCM steps, but that was a sine qua non requirement.

The recommendations made by the evaluation organised the work under the new cooperation framework between UNICEF Argentina and the national government. This acted as a road map for the actions that followed, expanding the programme and giving it more **legitimacy** in the guidelines to follow. Particularly for UNICEF, the recommendations became relevant due to their institutional requirement to follow-up to the programme. This requires UNICEF to give an account of the responses provided for each and every one of recommendations. At the end of every year, each of the national offices must report which actions have been carried out, in order to do a follow-up of the recommendations that UNICEF is in charge of or can influence.[1]

> The evaluation aimed at making the intervention model more specific through different mechanisms with measurable results, and adjusting objectives to be reflected in some work guidelines

For example, this new stage in the work aimed more strongly and clearly at generating a model that could be measured, favouring and clarifying the manner in which to assess how a specific maternity unit complies with the guidelines and objectives of the SFCM initiative. In this way, the evaluation aimed to make the intervention model more specific through different mechanisms with measurable results, and adjusting objectives. This was reflected in some of the work guidelines, such as defining which provinces were a priority as regards infant and maternal mortality, and working with them what SFCM means, narrowing it down and focusing it on measurable work. To that effect, they said:

The evaluation work was very efficient in working with the province colleagues. We could come back to the provinces and say: 'Out of all this work you are very proud

of, an external view has highlighted the following issues. So, after considering this new scenario, will you participate or not? Because from UNICEF, we will follow what the evaluation said'. So, the evaluation also compelled the colleagues from the provinces to rethink their role. That was a long work process that took almost the whole year 2016 in order to generate a new approach model.

Many of the recommendations aimed at the need and the advantage of deepening the systematisation of all the implementation stage. These would facilitate a comparative analysis for best practice studies. In a similar way, based on the recommendation of systematising and identifying the minimal conditions of viability and monitoring of the intervention, the provinces committed to creating a monitoring and implementation committee, whilst UNICEF would train the provinces on these topics.

On their part, the evaluators, reflecting on the work later, felt satisfied with their work was able to make a difference. They recognised that there were some weaknesses in the evaluation approach, such as not being able to talk to the users of the programme and their families, perhaps because they were in a delicate situation at the moment of childbirth. They also agreed that the interpretation and understanding of the work was very demanding, where nothing was evident or logical and that the reality of implementation differed in each provincial scenario. Finally, they reflected on the evaluation's usefulness:

In our story and work experience in evaluation, we had many opportunities to evaluate programmes at their end stage, which were restricted, and many times had been funded by international cooperation agencies. They were

programmes restricted in time, and hence, when the time of making recommendations arrived, even if they were authentic, you met with the teams that would tell you: 'Oh ... good, but the programme is kind of over,' so it is sad to carry out evaluations that you know would have an extremely limited impact. In this case, I think there was some inclination to close the program, however, I think the evaluation did make an impact in the sense of changing the perception of the people who had to make that decision. They made an important change in some of the programme's strategic issues. This was important in order for us to feel that an external evaluator is effective influence in timely decision-making.

The evaluators' vision of UNICEF as an institution open for evaluation to influence decision-making, was quite gratifying. The evaluators felt they could justify their recommendation that the closure of the programme and departure of UNICEF should be postponed. That further development was needed in the provinces so that the programme could be properly implemented. Stronger advocacy efforts were needed in the provinces so that the work would be endorsed at the national level and could be institutionalised. It was a great experience because the evaluation truly helped in decision-making.

The evaluation cooperated with and contributed to the transformation of the SFCM initiative, in a favourable context given that there were certain institutional conditions favourable for the use of the evaluation results

The evaluation cooperated with and contributed to the transformation of the SFCM initiative in a context favourable for the use of the evaluation results. Among them, we can highlight, the presence of the implementation agency team, which was receptive to evaluation and able to legitimise its results. The programme was developed in provinces with different political affiliations and the evaluation itself was carried out during a political campaign. This legitimised not only to the programme but also the evaluation results, favouring the adoption of the recommendations. Furthermore, the SFCM initiative was the result of a special institutional mixture, present in the design and in project management, including Government, civil society and the private sector (such as the medical teams generally associated with the Argentine Paediatric Association). In this case, the wealth in terms of the multiplicity of actors, worked with a high consensus regarding the characteristics and legitimacy of the program.

An additional element that brings closure to this evaluation story: once it was decided to continue the programme, the evaluators were summoned again to help the provincial authorities plan the new action cycles that would give continuity to the second phase of the programme, implementing the recommendations and guiding strategical issues regarding the programme.

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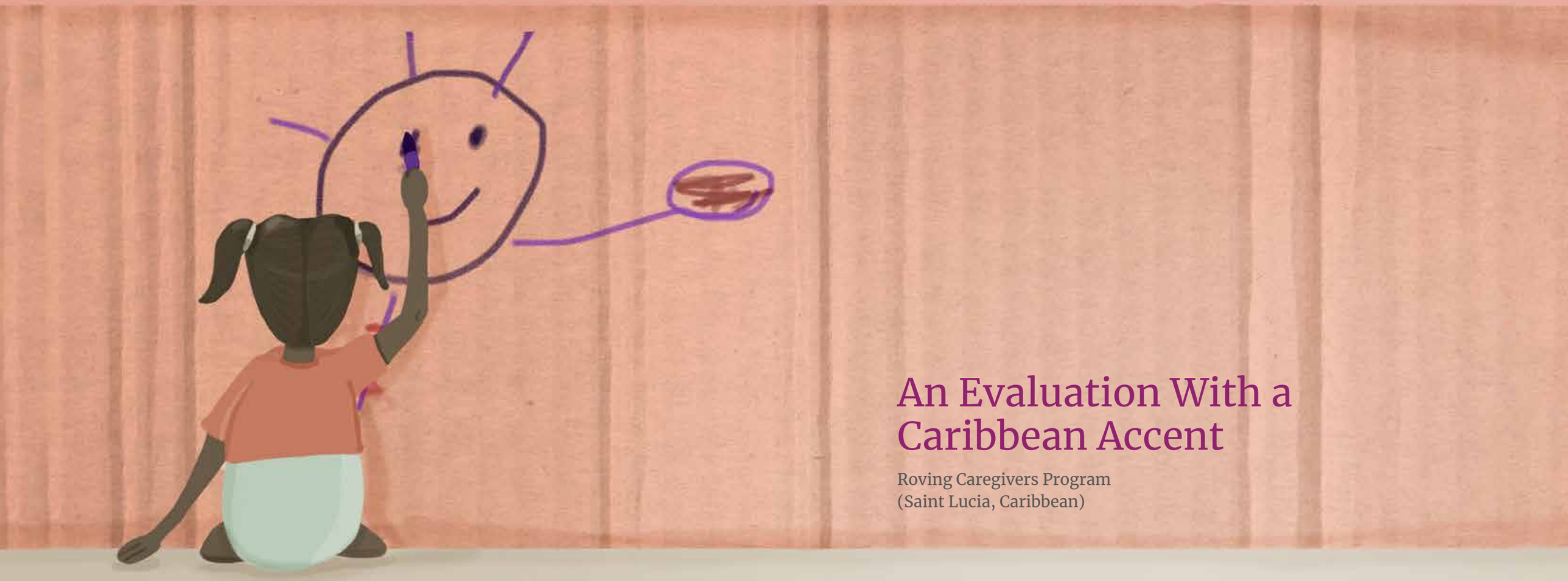
1. A personal message from Antonio Canaviri: In many of their intervations, UNICEF Argentina works with its own funds and, when it comes to an evaluation, it always seeks to follow the evaluation rules and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group and UNICEF. Especially at the moment of hiring people to carry out an evaluation in UNICEF, there is a rigorous process in order to ensure quality and monitor the recommendations. Moreover, before starting and hiring people for the evaluation, terms of reference are prepared

based on the aforementioned guidelines. In this case, the reference terms and the proposal given by the evaluators were explained in detail and thoroughly (both available). Finally, once finished, the report is reviewed by UNICEF external experts who grade the quality of the report.

Interviewees:
Sebastián Waisgrais, Antonio Canaviri, Alejandra Faúndez, Marisa Weinstein, Marcela Yannover.

Writers:
María Alejandra Lucero, Cecilia Luna and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella.



An Evaluation With a Caribbean Accent

Roving Caregivers Program
(Saint Lucia, Caribbean)

Funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, Roving Caregivers Program (RCP) started at the end of the 1990s in Jamaica. The initiative consisted of organising a series of home visits from a traveling caregiver to vulnerable families, giving them educational support and supporting the parents with their children's upbringing from birth until they turned three years old. The programme aimed at introducing and boosting child rearing practices designed for comprehensive early childhood development. Given the context of poverty and deprivation surrounding these families, they had limited access to nursery services which only provided children's supervisory care. Other services where children were given some kind of meaningful stimulation turned out to be expensive and out of reach to poorer households. In turn, these types of public services were highly on demand, their resources were scarce, and their staff did not have enough training. The Roving Caregivers Program RCP was a programme which would fill in the service gap and address these needs in a comprehensive manner, combining child stimulation, health

protection, mother support and the parent training with regard to their children's upbringing.

> The initiative consisted of organising a series of home visits from a traveling caregiver to vulnerable families, giving them educational support and helping the parents in their children's upbringing

The work carried out in the child development field in the Caribbean by the Roving Caregivers Program won the Maurice Pate award, granted by UNICEF in the year 2000. In an attempt to expand this commitment to a more sustainable level, the van Leer Foundation set up the Caribbean Child Support Initiative in the year 2002 and decided to promote and replicate this model in other Caribbean territories extending its implementation to Dominica, Grenada, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Belize, and Saint Lucia. One of the strategic reasons behind replicating the programme was that it would provide a local, deeply-rooted, and worthwhile solution to interventions supporting early childhood development.

The Potential of the Evaluation Approach

After a first systematic round of evaluation of the RCP in Jamaica in 2004, its funders wanted to understand the impact in other Caribbean contexts where it was also being implemented. To this goal, a long evaluation was carried out in Saint Lucia where the programme was carried out between 2006-2009, with the collaboration of the University of Northern British Columbia, the Amsterdam Institute for International Development, and the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

> The mixed component of the evaluation (quantitative and qualitative) provided validity to the findings that resulted from both approaches, making the findings of each approach more solid and reliable

The evaluation used a mixed longitudinal approach —developed at specific intervals of the implementation of the project— that involved the monitoring of a group of 44 families, 22 of which were beneficiaries of RCP and 22 who weren't. The evaluation didn't cover RCP as a whole, but was focused on understanding and assessing the impact of the programme on its participants.

The evaluation turned out to be quite original in its development context. The mixed component (quantitative and qualitative) -which gave validity to the findings of both approaches, also allowed for the findings of each approach to be more solid and reliable. In the quantitative evaluation report carried out in 2010, the evaluators made a comment on Eleanor Wint, professor of the University of Northern British Columbia and an external consultant in charge of the qualitative component of the evaluation:

Eleanor Wint played a key role in the development of the parents' empowerment tools. Her working capacity and her qualitative evaluation of the parents (participating in the Roving Caregivers Program) in St. Lucia

was a crucial factor to conducting this research.

The intercultural quality of the evaluators (coming from The Netherlands, Canada, and the Caribbean itself), their vast and deep knowledge of the local reality, as well as the participants' willingness to commit to the evaluation process, turned out to be very significant in its development. As a result, the participatory nature of the evaluation was easily articulated with the intervention style of the programme. Eleanor Wint commented on her experience as programme evaluator:

We had to go to St. Lucia during the summer and conduct the evaluation for four or five years (...). Many of the people participating in the programme did not feel shy about cooperating with the evaluation, reasons for which the evaluation's design was very important, since it was articulated in the style and shape to the actions in RCP. I believe that the programme's approach itself made the participants feel a sense of familiarity, which was very important to them. On the other hand, we were especially careful in clearly communicating all the steps of the evaluation. This was a huge help for us as evaluators so that we were welcomed and there wasn't any resistance when sharing their experience of the programme. This participation grew through the evaluation process as well.

From the start, the people responsible for RCP were clearly and explicitly interested in counting on a strong qualitative component in the evaluation, which was finally achieved through in-depth interviews, focus groups, writing accounts, etc. All of these techniques combined aimed at providing contextual, personal, and cultural information which would allow us to understand the families' choices, as well as giving an account

of their different ways of behaving. As a result, it generated information on the children, their parents or those responsible for their upbringing, as well as the community and the person who played the role of the visiting caregiver.

> On the other hand, we were especially careful in clearly communicating all the steps of the evaluation. This was a huge help for us, as evaluators so that we were welcomed and there wasn't any resistance

The evaluation had to face and overcome different challenges. These included: 1) making sure they could obtain a stable and adequate sample of the families to approach (a situation which was difficult to achieve because the families were admitted to RCP at different times and there were different migration situations), 2) rectifying problems in data collection (by filling empty spaces between different observation rounds), and 3) keeping the families who weren't part of RCP motivated to participate in the evaluation, since they didn't benefit by participating in the activities related to the evaluation. These difficulties gradually led to placing a special emphasis on observing the interaction between the traveling caregiver and the family, as well as the development of in-depth interviews. Some of the assessments made by the evaluator were similar to this:

All the observations that described the interactions demonstrated that the children's responses to the sessions with the traveling caregiver were positive. They often seemed very excited, the children ran to meet them and hold them, and their parents smiled when they saw them. There was no doubt that the children and parents valued those visits. In turn, the traveling caregivers consider the parents' participation as a necessary requirement for their successful performance in the programme.

> Some difficulties gradually led to place a special emphasis in observing the interaction between the traveling caregiver and the family, as well as the development of in-depth interviews

The evaluation showed that the programme's main activity was being developed successfully; that is to say, the traveling caregivers spent time with the families every week (with the children as well as parents), participating in all the activities designed to have a positive impact on their knowledge and understanding of children's upbringing practices. All of this took place in a context where the traveling caregiver's visits and contributions were appreciated. The type of transversal route the evaluators followed in the communities showed how some of the families had started to plant their own food thanks to the encouragement the programme gave them to provide a favourable environment for their children's development and upbringing. This determination and resilience capacity were marked as something that should be used for their benefit, by the programme.

The evaluation also demonstrated that, even in the face of the enormous challenges that come with

living below the poverty line, the parents in the lower socioeconomic communities acquired knowledge and made meaningful changes in their surroundings as a result of their participation in the programme. The intervention model of the programme was able to trigger meaningful changes in the children's upbringing practices, as well as in their own behaviour and social cognition. The most significative changes are seen in the area of hygiene, sanitation, and nutritional practices, and even in the use of house space in some cases.

The qualitative approach of the evaluation showed that the parents' participating in the programme gained more experimental knowledge in regards to the value of good practices in their children's upbringing during their early childhood formative years. For those families participating in the programme, there were substantially more stimulating interactions and some positive effects were highlighted in the cognitive development of children from 6 to 18 months old, especially when it came to their fine motor skills and visual reception.

> The evaluation also demonstrated that, even in the face of the enormous challenges that come with living below the poverty line, the parents in the lower socioeconomic communities acquired knowledge and made meaningful changes in their surroundings as a result of their participation in the programme

Julia, one of the programme's supervisor made the following comment about the evaluation:

I believe that the evaluation carried out on the Roving Caregivers Program was very good and I felt very satisfied with the results achieved, and very happy that they could show the things we already knew, and also that it helped to include some group activities. The evaluation also highlighted the fact that the children and parents needed to do more things together, it helped us to send a clear message to the parents. People felt at ease with the evaluation and it was exciting for us as we had never been part of an evaluation like this one, which is why we were really looking forward to the results. The evaluation and recommendations made were really oriented towards highlighting how much the programme could do for the children and how much families benefitted. That is to say, the emphasis of the evaluation focused on how the programme can move forward to achieve better interventions.

The qualitative evaluation of the programme supported the theoretical and methodological solidity of the RCP replication, confirming that the central objective of stimulating children's cognitive ability was possible. It visibly confirmed that there were significant opportunities to also make an impact on the parents' behaviour in regards to children's development. This gave place to a new programme: The Family Learning Programme, which was the most direct impact of the evaluation on its participants' quality of life.

The RCP and its New Branch, the Family Literacy Programme

Ruth Philips-Fevrier, responsible for the RCP in St. Lucia, commented on the origin of the Family Literacy Programme in the following way:

It was increasingly evident that there was a serious deficiency in the expressive and writing skills of a significant number of parents. On top of that there was an absence or lack of enough printed materials available in the households. We felt that including a literacy component to the RCP was very necessary. So, the Family Literacy Programme was created by the convergence of three factors: our knowledge about the educational history and profile of the parents participating in the Roving Caregivers Program; our everyday observations and evaluations of the children and the parents that participated in the programme; and the results of the qualitative study, which confirmed from an external viewpoint, what we had known intuitively.

In this way, the Family Literacy Programme was conceived as an additional tool aimed at reducing illiteracy and at the same time integrating family learning concepts into the Roving Caregivers Program. Towards the beginning of 2010, the programme was introduced as a means of confronting this deficiency, developing resources to cope with it, such as simple storybooks, reading activities and games. Some training workshops were carried out for the programme's staff in order to provide them with the needed knowledge, as well as the skills and competences to include early literacy in the activities where parents and their children participated. Around 300 families benefitted when the Family Literacy Programme was implemented as an extension of the Roving Caregivers Program.

The evidence collected by agents of the programme reveal the significant impact it has had on them and how it is highly valued by families and members of the communities

The Family Literacy Programme was based on a holistic approach to education in which the members of the family, as well as the community members, learned and grew together. It was based on the assumption that the parents, caregivers, and adults in the communities are the first teachers to the children, and that a big part of the learning process happens before and goes beyond any of the traditional and formal schooling environment. There is an understanding that learning is a life-long process. The RCP aimed at including activities that addressed how a member of the family uses or needs to use reading, writing, calculations, and communication in order to carry out their everyday activities. It also encouraged the parents to provide their children with a literacy-rich environment, and focused on the fact that the members of the community and the family should be able to help and teach other members in order to make the most of and adapt to an accelerated technological world.

This additional component to the Roving Caregivers Program turned out to be important and critical, since it encouraged all the family and community members to get involved in order to better understand and appreciate the possibilities literacy can provide. It also helped to reduce the gap between the literacy programmes oriented towards adults and the other learning programmes contextually appropriate and oriented towards children. Ruth Phillips-Fevrier commented on the impact of the literacy programme:

Even though it has not been possible to evaluate the true impact that the Family Literacy Programme has had on the children's comprehensive development and their families, the monitoring we

conducted and the anecdotal findings give us the certainty that a lot of value has been added to the intervention in general by including this component.

The evidence collected by agents of the programme reveal the significant impact it has had on them and how it is highly valued by families and members of the communities. It is particularly relevant that this programme resulted from the original one (Roving Caregivers Program) because it has multiplied its scope and impact in Saint Lucia.

The Search for New Horizons after the Evaluation

The participants who were interviewed recognised the impact of the evaluation. In regards to the effects of the RCP, the evaluation helped to make different adjustments in its operation that improved its performance and approach to the families participating.

In the participants themselves, the fact that the evaluation included dialogue and was horizontal in nature, reinforced their commitment to participate in the TCP. This emphasis was connected not only to the techniques and ways of approaching the evaluation, but also with its actual implementation in areas or sectors where evaluation practices were foreign.

> The intervention level was integrated with other factors that indicated the relevance and need of a literacy programme, which confirmed the usefulness of its implementation.

The results of the qualitative evaluation of the programme in St. Lucia were integrated with other factors that indicated the relevance and need for a literacy programme, which confirmed the usefulness of its implementation. Shortly after, other countries in the region included this component, as well as training children to get ready for primary school.

The qualitative evaluation was useful for legitimising the programme's intervention model, as well as displaying its ability to adapt and flexibility in the different contexts of the RCP. Since its beginning, there have been many changes to this programme, including the type of training provided for caregivers, the content of those trainings, and the selection criteria for choosing the traveling caregivers. The evaluation results also supported the expansion of the programme to Dominica, Saint Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago, Grenada, and Belize, allowing others to emulate its design with some focused changes in some countries. At the same time, local governments were motivated to include this programme in their national agenda. In turn, the main financer, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, uses this model in different parts of the world to show the possibilities of early learning strategies.

While the participation in the Roving Caregivers Program entailed the parents' involvement in achieving a better comprehensive development for their children and a positive integration into the school system, their participation in the qualitative evaluation reinforced the importance they gave to early learning and directly favoured the creation of the Family Literacy Programme.

Finally, the evaluation was useful and had an impact on the evaluators themselves, as Eleanor describes:

We now have an original body of knowledge in terms of the tools developed, as well as the evaluator's perspective. I wrote an article which describes the need for a new perspective when working with people who live in poverty, since they show a particular type of free determination which leads them to persevere. This helps to decimate the myth that poor people are lazy, dependent, or that they are unable to understand what they have gotten themselves into.

Interviewees:
Eleanor Wint, Ruth Phillips Frevier, Julia Edwin.

Writers:
Vanesa Castro and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella.

From Indifference to Appropriation

The Self-evaluation Process in the National University of Lanús -UNLa-
(Argentina)

Institutional evaluation was introduced in the Argentine university calendar in 1990, in a context of debates and tension regarding the requirement of institutional evaluation as a need of the university community. The CONEAU[1] (a decentralized organisation, which started its activities in 1996 as the agency in charge of carrying out institutional evaluation of universities) considers institutional evaluation as a complex, two-phase process: (1) self-evaluation and (2) external evaluation, each of which involves different actors in charge of the institution who intervene differently. While the agency responsible for carrying out the external evaluation is the CONEAU itself, each university is in charge of planning and carrying out its own institutional self-evaluation process. This entails a significant challenge for universities, because even though they have extensive experience with evaluation practices (selection processes of professors, scholarships and subsidies, student evaluation, course of studies and research project

evaluation), those experiences are different from institutional evaluation.

> Before the beginning of the second institutional evaluation, the first experience had given a preconceived idea (not always positive) to some of the people who participated in it

The first self-evaluation experience carried out by the National University of Lanus (UNLa) occurred between 2003-2005. In the view of some members of the university community, this evaluation was an external imposition from CONEAU. This first experience created preconceived ideas (not always positive) about what to expect in the second evaluation. Furthermore, other institutional actors who had not participated in the first self-evaluation and had no references to this kind of activity initially experienced this call for a second self-evaluation as an additional 'public burden'. When approached, many of the participants did not understand what was expected of them or what their role and/or function during the process would be, even though each person had previously received an explanatory document, elaborated by the technical team of evaluation experts coordinated by the UNLa vice-chancellor- Nerio Neirotti).

The UNLa and its (second) Self-Evaluation

The UNLa is in the Lanus district in the Buenos Aires urban areas. Since its creation, it has been considered an urban university committed to a university model different from the traditional model. A traditional university model is associated with self-referential styles and shapes and to disciplinary subdivisions, where the 'university extension' component is considered to be residual and secondary against the priority components of academic management, and science and technology. Because of that, the structure of the UNLa is based on problematic fields, which guide the organisation of the different undergraduate programmes and research projects, creating a link between technology and cooperation.

In the university context, aspects such the interdisciplinary nature and ability to approach knowledge considering local problems, going beyond its function of 'knowing and transmitting' in order to achieve the 'know how' are also relevant.

> For the UNLa the relation with the community occupies a central position in its mission. Their 'university extension' role has been understood as University Cooperation

That is why the relation to the social environment or community occupies a central position in the university mission, in a way that the role of 'university extension' role has been understood as *University Cooperation*. In order to meet the objectives of serving the community needs and maintaining a close relation between the University and its reality, the Social Communal Council (Consejo

Social Comunitario) was created consisting of representatives of organisations and people well-known in the local community. The council has a representative with the right to speak and vote in the university High Council (Consejo Superior).

> The self-evaluation process not only conveyed the need of complying with the Education Act but also the need of carrying out an evaluation process which would promote evaluation culture

As a whole, these innovative characteristics of the UNLa presented a great challenge when designing a self-evaluation process that considered the approach of these parameters. For example, the self-evaluation launched a process which was deliberative, participatory, and open to the university community regarding UNLa's performance. Even though it was important to assess the progress made in regards to the recommendations which emerged from the first external institutional evaluation —as well as the distance between the reality and strategic planning elaborated at that time— they wanted to set a precedent and generate a reflexive framework for the second external institutional evaluation, which would be carried out by CONEAU in the near future.

The self-evaluation process began by order of the High Council, through Resolution No. 105/11, which conveyed not only the need to comply with the Education Act but also the need to carry out an evaluation process which would promote an evaluation culture. For example, the resolution stressed

one of the central concepts of the work: 'The preservation of a systematic and permanent insightful attitude and critical view towards institutional actions.' In this way, the concept that guided the self-evaluation process[2] was not only intended to produce evaluative knowledge which could be used to make decisions, but also to obtain results that could be effectively communicated and appropriated by decision-makers and all other actors involved in the university life. An important objective was to encourage an 'evaluation culture' in order to set up an insightful, ordered, and systematic habit of evaluation with a considerable amount of participation.

The Self-Evaluation Technical Team played a strategic role in the development of the evaluation process as a whole, and it committed itself to carry out an evaluation process in line with the values by which the university itself is guided. This team was formed entirely of professionals working for the UNLa, some were professors and some non-academic staff, and with different profiles and functions and most of them having academic training and experience in the area of research methodology.

The Self-Evaluation Technical Team played a strategic role in the development of the evaluation process as a whole, and it committed itself to carry out an evaluation experience in line with the values by which the university itself is guided

The evaluation team understood the need to design an evaluation approach able to capture the complexity of the existing university model. For that purpose, the team developed a three-stage evaluation process, using both quantitative and qualitative methodology, relying heavily on *self-evaluation plenary workshops*. These workshops allowed the distribution of documents and the conduct of lively discussions about conclusions and recommendations, with the participation of university commissions and authorities through an increasingly complex process of analysis. The methodology also included analysis of quantitative documentation and information existing in the database of the UNLa, interviews of key informants, and a survey undertaken by the university commissions specifically for the self-evaluation process. The three stages of the evaluation were:

Stage 1) Vertical analysis by functions: this stage comprised the main functions of the University (academic, cooperation, science and technology management) together with the support functions (administration, infrastructure and communication) with the governmental and institutional policy function leading all of them. These seven functions were taken as dimensions of analysis, creating a separate analysis committee for each of them with the participation of all the commissions, sectors and areas of the university.

Stage 2) Analysis across departments: the documents related to each of the dimensions previously described were used to gather information from the point of view of the specific problematic area of each department. This analysis took place at the same time as the departmental self-evaluation. As each departmental report was discussed in meetings with the different commissions,

four departmental documents were presented and debated in a new self-evaluation plenary workshop.

Stage 3) Final analysis integrating the functions and departments on the basis of a double entry model (dimensions/departments). The members of the High Council were in charge of this stage, since they also had the responsibility to write the final report.

This staged approach and the committee work, with participants who came from diverse backgrounds and who changed from one stage to another, turned out to be highly productive and achieved notable learning about the university reality and the vision their members had of it. In addition, these strategies also strengthened the formal and informal networks of the university community. Even though this approach involved certain challenges, such as the diversity of educational training and viewpoints of the people involved, the results were highly satisfactory, and the benefits surpassed the typical difficulties found in this kind of procedure.

The technical evaluation team offered technical assistance, coordinated the process, and carried out the follow-up, while always encouraging dialogue among the different actors involved

The technical evaluation team offered technical assistance, coordinated the process and carried out the follow-up, always encouraging dialogue among the different actors involved. This ensured well-balanced, fair and continuous participation of members, as well as protecting the confidentiality of the information obtained before making it public. The team discussed in-depth the inevitable trade-offs between methodological rigour and a broad and dynamic participation that would make the process longer. In this case, the team decided not to give up on the participation component, given that the creation of the evaluation culture at the core of the University was as important as the process itself. All these elements were crucial during the evaluation process, which extended over a period of two years.

The Self-Evaluation Process

Since the first institutional self-evaluation was viewed in the UNLa community mostly as an external requirement, there was initially a generalised indifference towards the second self-evaluation. However, beginning with the first workshop, the continuous work by the evaluation team to favour and give value to the participation and opinion of all the actors, helping and encouraging the process on the technical as well as on the methodological aspects, sparked a renewed enthusiasm for the self-evaluation. This allowed the team to break through the initial indifference barrier and transform what was originally grudging participation into enthusiastic and involved participation. In order to achieve this, a fundamental component was added – making it a self-evaluation project that had been worked on, discussed, agreed upon, and finally approved by the High Council of the UNLa. This came from a series of procedures that allowed the fulfilment of a participatory approach, including

both the Chancellor's resolute decision to promote and encourage the self-evaluation and also the implementation of the project carried out by the Vice-chancellor and his technical team. As Nerio Neirotti, coordinator of the evaluation team puts it:

We say that the motivation in order to achieve participation has taken us to live a two-year-long experience in which, as a university, we started from an indifference stage, then continued to a participation one, to finally reach a third stage that might be called 'appropriation,' in which the self-evaluation was considered as 'our own' and no less important than the other management functions. This was key for understanding not only how to carry out a self-evaluation process but also to know what it is useful for, which gave place to appropriating this process as something that might help to make decisions in the management area, or rather help to reflect on our own problems in each particular area.

In other words, the self-evaluation process slowly changed into an organisational learning dynamic, in which the main actors were discovering the advantages of participating in this task and making the most of the partial results for their own management actions. Even though some of the actors occasionally lamented that certain tasks had to be delayed due to the time it took to carry out the self-evaluation activities, it increasingly became the foundation of fruitful dialogues and revealing findings as regards matters to be improved or the basis of programmes to develop in the future. Marcela Bottinelli, member of the evaluation team, recall:

It was very interesting and even striking to see how some people were reluctant to be part of the process at the beginning, they were even strongly judgemental and sceptical of what they could contribute, and then they started participating in the proposed dynamic, and finally they not only were the ones who participated the most but they even encouraged others to join in!

As a university, we started from an indifference stage, then continued to a participation one, to finally reach a third stage that might be called 'appropriation'

The participatory and open dynamic of the workshops helped each of the commissions to approach positively the different problems the process presented. The commitment and interest of a diversity of actors was notable when they actively contributed towards a fruitful self-evaluation by dedicating time and effort to searching for information, preparing documents, and participating on the debates during the workshops. The evaluation team was able to communicate that this type of commitment would have a positive bearing in the university community as a whole, separating the product of the self-evaluation from a simple external requirement, where the useful possibilities and application might be minimal, non-existent, or at least unsure. Related to this, Neirotti made the following comment showing his satisfaction:

For us a very relevant indicator that the self-evaluation process was following a right path was the fact that it was possible to include into plenary discussions topics that in some of these cases end up as hallway conversations. This showed that there were no forbidden topics, everything could be discussed

and debated on, and the participants were committed to go through a process and obtain a product significant for the university.

While the self-evaluation process was taking place, an election of university authorities was held resulting in the re-election of the chancellor and vice-chancellor, together with changes of authorities at other levels of the university organisation. This situation did not create any interference in the evaluation dynamic, rather quite the opposite: the newly installed authorities throughout the different levels of the university community felt that it was very valuable to have systematic and insightful information about what the University was doing and how these actions were valued by the different areas.

The two-year long institutional self-evaluation process allowed the University to identify and solve problems in a procedural manner. One example of this was the process of Courses Review, proposed and initiated during the self-evaluation process from the identification of different problems around the central topics of the academic dimension: students' admission, continuation, and graduation of all the different degree courses of the University. Another example involved the different flaws in the internal and external communication that the self-evaluation pointed out, from which a battery of measures was developed to improve and boost the area.[3]

The two-year long process of self-evaluation allowed the University to identify and solve problems in a procedural manner

Taking into account the reports and preliminary documents, one commission of the High Council took on the responsibility to write the final draft of the self-evaluation report. The evaluation team sent in multiple queries once they started working on the style and editing aspects of the document, in order to respect the authors' intentions. This report was submitted to the High Council of the UNLa and after it got its approval, it was submitted before the University Assembly (the main governing body of the University). Victoria Fernández, a member of the evaluation team, commented:

One of the expectations of the team, as regards the expression of the institutional self-evaluation nature, aimed at generating the emergence of the much-anticipated evaluation culture. And we believe that this has been a tangible result of the self-evaluation process. It is clear and evident that annual evaluations at department level are now expected with a different attitude, in a more constructive manner and with more interest in its development. The contributions that evaluation can make to the improvement of the university actions have been acknowledged.

One challenge encountered in the self-evaluation was the difficulty of organising data in a quick and reliable manner due to the different databases co-existing in the UNLa space, the traditional handling of some of the data, the lack of a digital record of some indicators, and so on. After this discovery, the DIPEG (Management Planning and Evaluation Department) worked together with the IT Office to plan a project to articulate information systems, as well as to create a joint commission to work on the problems and articulation needs of information systems.

Self-Evaluation Results

One of the main successes of the self-evaluation was that it produced material actually used and capable of being used. This was true for the decision-making level as well as the policy-making level of the university. Some examples include: the revision of all the course of studies of the University degrees; the strengthening of areas such as Communication; the evaluation proposal in the area of science and technology by the MINCyT (Argentine Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation); the enquiry for the creation of action plans approved each year by the University Assembly, etc. Especially noteworthy was the creation of the Management Planning and Evaluation Unit, a unit which then renamed itself as Management Planning and Evaluation Department (DIPEG, due to its abbreviation in Spanish). The creation of this department answered the need for an insightful evaluation space for the different institutional practices. This unit is comprised of experts in planning, evaluation, research methodology, and information systems.

The external evaluation, carried out two years after the second self-evaluation process had finished, revisited the self-evaluation report, not only to update the information but also to determine which actions being implemented needed revision in order to overcome obstacles and difficulties. In the external evaluation report carried out by peer professionals, a link between both evaluation stages can be found, given that the documents produced by the University during the Second Institutional Self-Evaluation were used and expanded by external peer evaluators and technicians in order to organise their questions and

the focus of analysis of their visits. The self-evaluation report was also continued and referenced by them, in this way complementing the evaluation process.

> One of the main successes of the self-evaluation was that it produced material actually used and capable of being used

The Self-Evaluation Facilitators

The first self-evaluation was not able to generate the participation of the whole University community or the desire to build a tool for the institution itself. In contrast, the second process clearly expressed all the methodologies that would be implemented, the areas that would be evaluated, and the creation of a technical team that would give the actors support through the evaluation development. This defined a dynamic, which was constant from the beginning and necessarily collective. Around 200 people participated in the formal stages, along with even more participants in the collective open debates and a significant number of queries which included the opinion of many more community actors. In this way, the technical team played a crucial role in helping to express the relevant problems for each actor, as well as in systematising the different topics that emerged during meetings.

Throughout the self-evaluation process, the evaluation team consistently presented the vision that evaluation should become a continuous process, thereby helping to nourish these abilities within the

university community for subsequent evaluations. This approach was articulated so that the collective of actors involved in the process became aware about the significant amount of information needed to evaluate an institution such as the UNLa, the significant amount of data currently generated that was not being utilized to its highest potential, and the number of tasks involved in recollecting the information needed.

These factors helped the actors to elaborate investigation mechanisms capable of being validated and sustained over time. As a result of this process, there was a need to create the DIPEG, as mentioned before, with the mission of promoting, coordinating, providing technical assistance and conducting training courses on planning and evaluation processes to strengthen institutional management.

The evaluation team consistently presented the vision that evaluation should become a continuous process

The University authorities' commitment to the self-evaluation played a crucial role, much beyond the cursory institutional participation required in the self-evaluation process. Through their actions and attitudes they empowered the process to go far beyond the fulfilment of the basic requirements demanded by the regulations. In effect, they delegated some of their role to the collective of the organisation. Without giving up their responsibility to run the institution, they created spaces, resources, and environments that gave the collective of the organisation a prominent role. The theoretical and institutional framework helped create these attitudes by making the intervening actors feel that their participation and commitment was endorsed and desirable during a significant period of time (two academic years). This also reaffirmed the university's social responsibility, not only with regard to accountability for internal and external evaluation, but also to the community itself. The UNLa authorities showed wisdom in allowing a participatory model, not only in methodological terms, but also in the investigation design, leaving aside quicker and more-guided implementations in order to better include a diversity of opinions.

The most relevant reasons for the evaluation's impact were the participatory design, the exchange of viewpoints between different groups (commissions, High Council, departments, technical team), and the strategic management of the authorities who committed themselves and the University to the goal and the dynamic of the self-evaluation.

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1. The National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU) is an Argentine public agency created in 1996 and which is under the authority of the Secretary of University Policies of the Ministry of Education. The CONEAU is in charge of the evaluation of public and private universities, as well as the accreditation of their undergraduate and graduate programmes and their degrees.

2. There were three documents that backed this self-evaluation process: The Institutional Education Project, the University Statute and the already mentioned Resolution 105/2011 passed by the High Council which includes the objectives, the working methodology, the participation dynamic of the community actors, and a work schedule.

3. Some of them were the following:
-Identification and description of the different audiences.
-Communicational problems diagnosis, differentiated intake, and level of satisfaction of the different existing means of communication.
-Creation and implementation of the UNLa radio and television.
-Relaunching of the Magazine called Viento Sur.
-Restructuring of the website and email list.

-Digitalisation of the telephone equipment by increasing the number of lines simultaneously available.

Interviewees:
Dr. Nerio Neirotti (Vice-Chancellor and General Coordinator of the Second Self-Evaluation Process), Dr. María Marcela Bottinelli (member of the Self-Evaluation Technical Team and the DIPEG), Lic. Matias Mattalini (member and current Director of the DIPEG) and Lic. Victoria Fernández (support staff of the Self-Evaluation Technical Team).

Writers:
Vanesa Castro and Pablo Rodríguez Bilella.

The View of Those Who See

Participatory Evaluation of the Cancer Care and Prevention Programme in Valle de la Estrella (Costa Rica)

Not even a natural paradise like Costa Rica is cancer free. Cancer is the second highest cause of death in this country, second only to cardiovascular disease. Data reveals a negative trend: in a period of just 25 years, the incidence of cancer has risen from 140 cases per hundred thousand inhabitants registered in 1991, up to 229 recorded in 2014, the last year for which data is available. These are worrisome figures, but the problem can be tackled by means of health promotion and disease prevention actions, as well as improving the treatment services.

The Costa Rican Social Security Fund (Caja Costarricence del Seguro Social), commonly known as Caja, is the institution responsible for providing universal health-care services. It is the most important entity in the country and where one of every hundred Costa Ricans works. Although it recently celebrated its 75th anniversary, it can boast good health. Nonetheless, it faces important challenges, such as its financial sustainability, the response to new diseases, the reduction of their contributor base and the emerging competition from the private sector.

The doubts about the future of Caja coexist within and outside the country, that the work carried out by it has been decisive in increasing life expectancy up to 79.6 years old (the second highest in Latin America, only behind Chile) and, in general, to raise the human development indicators in Costa Rica.

As with so many other public services, the partnership between Caja and its public is essential for the success in the fight against cancer. Specialists emphasize the importance of investing in healthcare systems and professional training, but they also advocate information and education as decisive factors in the prevention and treatment of the disease. It is estimated that one third of cancer deaths could have been prevented with simple changes like a sedentary lifestyle, obesity or smoking. And although not all tumours can be prevented with healthy lifestyles, early detection is possible if people know about and follow adequate healthcare routines.

Investing in healthcare systems, professional training, and social education are decisive factors in the prevention and treatment of cancer

The creation of Health Committees in 1998 was a milestone in the formalisation of an alliance between the public sector and the client citizens in the healthcare field in Costa Rica. Committees are community organisations made up of representatives of the insured population, local businesses and health associations. Even without authority over the health-care centres, the committees can forward their opinions and issue recommendations to improve the services provided to their communities. Despite the formal recognition of their important role, a survey conducted by Caja itself revealed that Health Committee members face lack of support and acceptance by health centres' staff. In this context, any actions geared towards bringing the institution and the user communities closer are crucial to improve the quality of healthcare services.

Can a participatory evaluation help bring both positions together? What happens when an evaluation process is led by the beneficiaries themselves, along with the local technical staff of the programme? How to ensure the rigour and quality of an evaluation not conducted by experts? What are the advantages and disadvantages of carrying out this type of evaluation?

To answer these questions, we highlight the case named Participatory Evaluation of the Cancer Prevention and Care Programme in Valle de la Estrella, Limon province, Costa Rica. This evaluation was conducted with support from the Evaluation Capacity Development Project in Latin America (FOCEVAL), implemented by the German Institute for Development Cooperation Evaluation (DEval).[1]

The authors of this chapter witnessed the evaluation, but only as facilitators of the process. The leading actors were the representatives from the Health Committees and the medical staff from Valle de la Estrella. Theirs is the experience and merit; ours —maybe— the ability to listen and talk about it afterwards. With the same objectivity we hope to convey the reasons that led us to state that we

witnessed *an evaluation that makes a difference.*

An Evaluation Developed from the Ground Up

Hidden in Valle de la Estrella is one of the most beautiful —but also most isolated— areas of the Costa Rican Caribbean. Together with the neighbouring Talamanca canton, it is home of the Bri-brís and Cabécares indigenous peoples, who have settled in the place since pre-Columbian times. The zone also hosts banana plantations, whose development seriously affects the equal distribution of the rich and plentiful resources of the area. This mix of factors results in Valle de la Estrella having a low —with a strong tendency to very low— level of social development compared with the rest of the country. Given this background, what encouraged a group of neighbours and medical staff from this community to turn to evaluation as an instrument to improve a health programme?

The origin of the initiative can be traced back to a seven-hour journey (by public transport) from Valle de la Estrella, to San José de Costa Rica, where a group of representatives of the public sector, the academy, the evaluation community, and organised civil society hold regular meetings (in the National Evaluation Platform) to discuss and propose joint-initiatives that promote evaluation in the country. Among the priorities highlighted by this group were the promotion of evaluation requests by citizens, their active participation in them and their insistence on the implementation of the evaluation results. To achieve this, adequate opportunities for participation must be identified and opened.

The Platform agreed to generate learning experiences by im-

plementing ‘evaluation from the ground up’, based on participatory evaluation approaches. The main characteristic of this approach is evaluation leadership by groups with close knowledge of the programme: specially the technical staff that provide the services at the local level and the community of users of the services.

The National Evaluation Platform group gave special emphasis to making sure that the origin of the evaluation, and the selection of the programme to be evaluated, came from citizen organisations instead of being imposed or determined by the institutions. For this, they approached the organisations in a process that lasted over a year. Several informative meetings were held with representatives of social organisations, a training seminar on participatory evaluation was conducted, and there was an open call for all interested organisations to submit project proposals for evaluation from a participatory point of view.

> An evaluation must open the adequate participation channels, bringing forth those who intimately know the programme: the technical staff that provides the services at the local level and the community that uses those services

Several proposals were submitted by about fifty organisations that participated in these activities, four of which were selected. A team of experts visited each of the areas in order to meet with the organisations and analyse the technical feasibility and the expected benefits for each evaluation proposal. They also considered and assessed the commitment of the local organisation representatives to participate in the evaluation. Their motivation was extremely important since no remuneration had been budgeted for those involved in the evaluation. Only transport, food and accommodation expenses would be covered.

> The fact that the initial motivation arose from grass-root organisations and that a topic as sensitive as cancer had been selected to carry out the evaluation marked the rest of the evaluation process in a crucial way

The proposal presented by the Regional Council of Health Committees of the Caribbean Huétar region in Costa Rica to evaluate the cancer prevention and care services offered in Valle de la Estrella was chosen.

There were too many deaths in my community. We attended a different funeral every week. One of my sisters died a few weeks ago from cancer. And my other sister and my brother in law were also diagnosed during the evaluation process.

These were the words of one of the Health Committees representatives about her main motivations to participate in such a demanding evaluation process.

The fact that the initial motivation arose from the grass-root organisations, and that a topic as sensitive as cancer had been selected to carry out the evaluation, marked

the rest of the process in a crucial way. The seven Health Committee representatives who started the process by comprising the evaluation team considered themselves from the onset as the true protagonists of the evaluation and assumed leadership during the whole process, even though new actors joined as the project progressed.

Evaluation with a Multiple Perspective

Even in the first meetings with the Health Committee representatives, the advantage of creating an evaluation team was suggested. The perspective of the beneficiary community offered only a partial view of the health system; therefore, a more technical viewpoint was needed to clarify doubts, myths and false beliefs about cancer. Hence, a doctor and a nurse from the oncology department of the Valle de la Estrella Health Centre were invited to join in the evaluation team. They both contributed technical knowledge about the disease and shared their institutional perspective that complemented the view of the Health Committees. In the end, the final evaluation team comprised of nine people.

Having the doctors in the evaluation team was great to better understand the way in which the health services operate, resolving all the doubts the group had.

This is a quote from one of the Health Committees members, implying that the decision of enlarging the evaluation team helped them better comprehend the internal reality of Caja.

Joining in tandem the medical staff and the users' representatives to perform the evaluation holds a certain symbolic nature in the context of the Costa Rican health system. Even though the Health Committees are assistance bodies recognised by law, in fact the members of these organisations feel that Caja should pay more attention to them and give their work more visibility. In this context, any joint effort and attempts to bring both groups' positions closer together is crucial to improve the operation of the health system.

> Participatory evaluation is exactly that, the opportunity to get to know the views of different social actors

The advantages of performing the evaluation with an enlarged team were immediately evident. The user's perspective of a service is usually contrasted with that of the service provider. Integrating both views in the evaluation team allowed us to explore how different points of view were built, expressed, defended, and sometimes modified during the debates generated along the process.

The participatory evaluation is exactly that, the opportunity to get to know the views of different social actors.

One of the Health Committees representatives expressed in those words, his reflection on the joint-work undertaken.

An Evaluation Without Professional Evaluators

Along with all the advantages of enlarging the evaluation team, the first difficulties —as expected— arose. The main challenge was to find out how a group of people without previous knowledge of evaluation and with different levels of training and

experience could conduct a rigorous evaluation that met quality standards.

The work of the support group was crucial to assist the evaluation team and ensure the rigour of the evaluation process

The adopted measure was the creation of a support group to ensure the quality of the evaluation process, but without affecting the independence and leadership of the evaluation team members. The group of people in charge of building and preserving this delicate balance included representatives from the Evaluation Unit of the Costa Rican Ministry of Planning, the Costa Rica Ombudsman Office, and the FOCEVAL project. In addition, two key people were assigned to work day by day together with the evaluation team: a participatory evaluation expert and an expert facilitator of processes and community participation.

The job of the support group was fundamental to helping the evaluation team and guaranteeing the rigour of the evaluation process. Their first activity was to conduct a custom-made training on participatory evaluation for the group. Every work session with the evaluation team included an educational component, complementing the theoretical introduction imparted by the expert facilitator. Evaluation-friendly tools were also designed to encourage participation that, after the relevant training, could be used by the evaluation team in different situations and contexts.

Besides their educational task, the support group helped the evaluation team in tasks that, due to their extreme complexity or time restrictions, required a more intensive accompaniment. Even the members of the evaluation team summarise the contribution of the assistance group in the following words:

We liked the game methodology of the participatory evaluation expert and the important things he taught us during the training sessions.

We keep really good memories of the sessions with the facilitator. She was able to lead us in the learning process, she was patient and never ignored or disregarded what we said.

The support of the institutions made us feel that what we were doing was important.

An Evaluation that Encourages Critical Analysis

Besides developing competences, one important challenge the evaluation team faced was to take on a different role than the one local actors usually play during an evaluation. During this evaluation they were not going to be simple informants, but true protagonists responsible for the monitoring of an evaluation process. This transformation entailed positioning themselves as evaluators whose main mission was to carry out a critical and sustained analysis of the programme which they were a part of. All in all, the aim was for them to recognise the value of their own experience and knowledge as local development actors.

The Health Committee representatives, most of them community leaders with a long history of social activism, had to leave aside their usual role as users of the health system to take on a role of researchers who critically questioned and valued the services based on the evidence gathered from different sources. On

the other hand, health staff had to review their own performance from a critical position. The trainings and exchange meetings convened by the support group, especially those work sessions with the facilitator, produced gradual and consistent changes. One of the representatives of the Health Committees made a very positive assessment of the achievements:

It was amazing because in a way we felt that we had always been doing it. We didn't feel uncomfortable, we jumped into the process.

Adopting a new evaluation perspective and getting to know the new tools has also prepared the participants to better care for their neighbours' health. Starting from this experience, many Health Committees of the region are playing a much more active role as links between the user and the Caja. One of them comments:

The evaluation was a way of reaching out to people, getting to know the users and the institutions better, having the time to talk to doctors, something that had never been done that way. And now one feels capable of asking the doctors questions.

Having information about the management of Caja to stand up for the rights of the people is, without a doubt, a milestone

For the regional representatives of Caja, the experience surpassed the expectations of strengthening the capabilities of Health Committees and has allowed for the creation of alliances and linking with other institutions such as the Planning

Ministry and the Ombudsman Office. The representative of the Ministry of Planning in the support group concludes in a general way that:

with this type of evaluations a new culture of evaluation is developed and there is no doubt that we are teaching the citizens to demand these processes. In the Ministry, we try to encourage this from the side of the institutions, but we had not gotten the message across to the citizens yet. We needed to take that next step.

An Evaluation from a Different Point of View

The advantages of a participatory and plural evaluation with local leadership were evident right from the start when defining the evaluation objectives and questions and when identifying the programme elements on which the analysis should focus. In addition to interviews and document reviews, the evaluation in Valle de la Estrella included two workshops with participation of Caja's personnel and the members of the Health Committees.

> It was an extremely valuable experience, full of learning, where our point of view or suggestions were never disregarded or ignored

The first workshop opened with an institutional presentation on the objectives and operation of the cancer prevention and care programme, with references to specific actions being carried out in Valle de la Estrella. The representatives of the Health Committees came up with questions and proposals until they reached an agreement with the medical staff about the specific elements of the programme to be evaluated.

The next evaluation stages integrated multiple perspectives, which along with the skills developed by local actors, became a distinguishing point of the evaluation. For more complex tasks, such as data analysis or report writing, all results were discussed and validated with the evaluation team, with active contribution from the support group. Among its members there is wide agreement that:

It was an extremely valuable experience, full of learning, where our point of view or suggestions were never disregarded or ignored.

The participatory and multi-perspectival dimension of this evaluation is also reflected in the final evaluation report. The recommendations chapter includes three groups of well-differentiated recipients: Caja as the entity responsible for the programme, the Health Committees themselves as local development actors, and the community of service users. This feature provides a very good example of the feeling of shared responsibility this kind of evaluation generates.

The Use of Evaluation and an Evaluation of the Use

Given the uniqueness of the experience and the fact that many of the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation were also applicable to the whole of Costa Rica, the Health Committees' representatives made several presentations of the evaluation results in other regions of the country. They even gave a presentation in the capital city specifically aimed at the central authorities of Caja. Apart from the favourable reception of

both the applied methodology and the evaluation results, these tours had a very positive effect motivating the evaluation team members: their invested voluntary and committed effort was acknowledged.

At the time of writing this story (in May 2018, when more or less a year has passed after the presentation of the final evaluation report), the people involved in the evaluation continue their efforts towards the recommendations being translated into as large a number of service improvements as possible. The action plan for implementing the recommendations was formulated jointly by the Health Committees of the region to which Valle de la Estrella belongs and the regional representatives of Caja. Caja recently decided to adopt this action plan in the other 26 regional units of the country, considering that it contains initiatives applicable to all of them. And Caja themselves, together with the Health Committees, is working on a system to monitor the application of the recommendations.

The application of the recommendations at the regional and local fields level has not encountered major difficulties since they are within —or at least close— to the field of action of the people directly involved in the evaluation process. This verification reveals an important advantage of the participatory approaches. In many cases, the use of the evaluation results is compromised when a break is put on the process as the evaluation team submits the final report and ends their engagement to the evaluation. In the next stage, the responsibility of implementing the recommendations gets transferred to the units or people responsible. If these people did not know or were not sufficiently involved in the evaluation process, it is not uncommon for the recommendations to end up being considered somehow as foreign, which creates a certain degree of resistance to their application. This situation does not happen, or barely so, when evaluations are conducted by the local leaders, as in the evaluation we are referring to.

The further away the recipient of recommendations is from the evaluation process, the harder it is for those recommendations to be received and implemented. The presentation of results in San Jose was quite successful in terms of audience: even some of the national representatives of the institution attended. But, truth be told, no specific action commitments were made, nor joint-work proposals were undertaken at the national level. Clearly, one of the biggest challenges of an evaluation undertaken and developed with the lead of local actors, is to engage the strategic decision-making centres of the institution responsible of the programme right from the start of the evaluation. To the extent that this is achieved, the final job of implementing the recommendations on that level will become easier.

There are diverse opinions of the Health Committees' representatives about this issue. Some are left with the positive feeling of all things learned through the evaluation and resign themselves to the fact that the evaluation has not been used in the way they would have wanted, which they express with a hint of complaint: *Caja is not interested in us knowing this much.*

One of the major challenges posed by an evaluation is the local actors' leadership right from the onset of the evaluation process

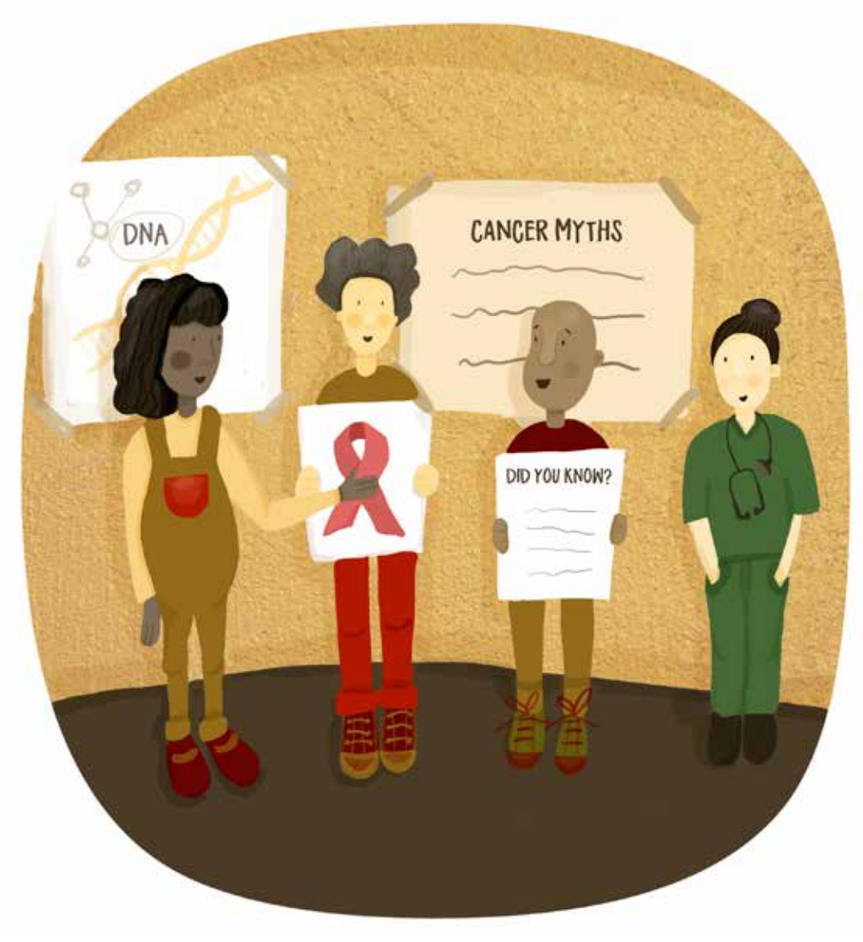
Others propose to continue searching for ways to get the recommendation implemented at the central level of Caja: *we need to know how to reach the decision-makers.*

And a third group gives a rather encouraging, middle-ground proposal: *the test is to see what happens in Valle de la Estrella and if, some improvements are made, we can start from there.*

The Outcome of a Different Evaluation

If we come back to the initial questions we can conclude that one of the main achievements attributed to participatory evaluation approaches is indeed bringing the positions of the actors involved in the programme closer together, by generating spaces for reflection, understanding and collective construction. The case of Valle de la Estrella is specially revealing since they started from very opposing positions: the viewpoint of the user community and the position of the institution providing the service. Strengthening this type of alliances through evaluation is, without doubt, one of the most remarkable results of the process.

It has also become clear that the local actors, who are closer to the development of the programmes, can not only perform a rigorous high-quality evaluation but also provide a richer and context-focused assessment than what an external team could offer. Of course, it is necessary to create the right conditions to ensure equal participation and that the evaluation meets quality standards, even if the protagonists are not experienced evaluators. The work of the support group is to generate favourable conditions by training the evaluation team, maintaining their motivation and adapting the tools for their use. On the other hand, the time



these support tasks require can cause delays and add pressure to do things faster.

In the always critical phase of implementing the evaluation recommendations, very positive results have also been achieved. When the control of the evaluation process falls on the actors directly involved in the programme, it is easier for them to adopt and apply the improvement actions proposed.

The main merit of a participatory evaluation is to bring together the positions of the actors involved in the programmes thought the creation of spaces for reflection, understanding and collective construction

We can also extract some messages for the evaluation community, since some of the schemes and instruments applied under this participatory approach are perfectly combinable with other evaluation methods. Insofar as evaluations account for the context and the local perception the results obtained by the local actors that constitute the nucleus of any intervention are richer and easier to interpret. This contribution has great relevance in the current context of the 2030 Agenda where participation, sustainability of the actions undertaken and the opening of participation spaces to ensure that no one is left behind, have been identified as central elements for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Finally, good results are highlighted in terms of learning and empowerment of the participants. This type of experience contributes to the construction of an evaluation culture, as they make this instrument available to civil society organisations, who demand and deserve new channels of active and influential participation in the public agenda.

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1. Chronologically, this evaluation started to develop in 2015 when the first discussions with civil society organisations took place in order to present evaluation as an instrument for improvement suitable for these action fields. The implementation stage of the Valle de la Estrella evaluation started in June, 2016, and finished in February, 2017, with the presentation of the final report and results. At the time of writing this story (May, 2018), the implementation of the recommendations is still in process.

Interviewees:
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Esther Barquero, Fressy Calderón, Hernán Fernández, María Eugenia Romero, Norma Barr, Olga Ramírez and Susana Olivares (Health Committees' representatives).
Virginia Venegas and Karol Aguilar (local medical staff).

Members of the assistance group:
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Printed in Argentina, December / 2018
in Akian Gráfica Editora S. A.
Clay 2992, C1426DLD, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

When we hear the word evaluation we tend to frown and to associate it with inspections, requirements and stress.

On top of that, if we link evaluation with the field of development interventions (projects, programmes or policies), it's like entering an unknown and scary land. This is because many evaluations do not contribute to decision-making and their use tends to be very limited if non-existent. However, there can be a different reality.

This book compiles seven evaluation stories in development contexts, which in a diversified and innovative manner, produced positive effects in the place in which they took place. Scattered all over Latin America and the Caribbean, these narratives cover evaluation of interventions that worked with children, rural young people, indigenous women, health programmes and university self-evaluation.

Through surprising and entertaining narratives, these stories identify the factors that allowed evaluation to enhance local development.

This book will be of great use for social programmes' managers and technicians, as well as academic, evaluators and for the public in general who are interested in processes where social change is enhanced by evaluation.

ISBN 978-987-3984-77-8

Leaving a footprint