

Constituency Voice

30th March 2009

This session

- Purpose: explore practical approaches for enhancing constituency voice
- Contents:
 1. What is Constituency Voice?
 2. Current practices
 - Good practice; constraints
 3. How can it be improved?
 - New methods

Constituency Voice

- Making sure that development agencies hear from their *primary constituents*.
 - Throughout planning, monitoring and evaluation
- Bridging power differences.
- Helps make sure programmes & evaluations reflect constituents' real priorities.
 - Needed for relevance, impact & sustainability
- Also: empowerment in practice.

Multi-purpose toolcarriers

- Agencies invested \$40m in ‘toolcarriers’, to carry ploughs, carts, seed-drills etc.
- 10,000 were made, in many different programmes, mostly in Africa & Asia.
- Major evaluation: *“no wheeled toolcarrier has yet been proved by sustained farmer adoption in any developing country”*.
- Technical experts thought they were a good idea. Farmers did not. But their view was not heard.
- Lack of ***Constituency Voice***.

Wider system

- Development agencies have many different stakeholders, with different demands.
 - Demands from one influences others.
- Operating in complex and changing environments.
- Difficult to bridge power imbalances.
- *Question: within this, how do we enhance constituency voice?*

Literature

- Substantial literature analyses these issues, e.g.
 - David Ellerman *“Helping people help themselves”*
 - Robert Chambers *“Whose reality counts?”*
 - Roger Riddell *“Does foreign aid really work?”*
 - Alnoor Ebrahim & Edward Weisband *“Global accountabilities”*
 - Tsunami Evaluation Coalition report
 - Mary Anderson’s Listening Project
 - Others ...

Discussion question 1

- From your experience, please identify examples of when agencies have listened to primary constituents effectively.
 - What impact did constituency voice have on programme activities?
 - What methods were used, and why were they effective?

Discussion question 2

- From your experience, what constraints do agencies face in listening to their primary constituents effectively?
 - What is the impact of other stakeholders' demands & expectations?
 - Are there adequate systems for constituency voice?

New methods – an emerging field

1. Joint negotiation of the different purposes of feedback (all stakeholders)
2. Systematically survey constituents' perceptions
 - *Their* experience of receiving services / assistance / funds (drawing on 'customer satisfaction')
 - Mixed research methods
 - Fit into other monitoring & evaluating activities
3. Comparative data sets allow benchmarking
4. Commitment to take feedback seriously
 - Report back to constituents
 - Use the data to drive learning conversations

Comparative data



Leading examples

Macro level	
Humanitarian Response Index www.daraint.org	All OECD government funding for humanitarian response
Center for Effective Philanthropy www.effectivephilanthropy.org	Grantee perceptions of US foundations
Micro level	
Measuring Empowerment quality.bond.org.uk	Social movement in Bangladesh
Listen First www.listenfirst.org	Concern Worldwide pilot

Keystone: specialists in comparative constituency feedback

Ethical framework

Area	Purpose
Primary constituents are involved in designing survey	Constituency voice Relevance
Independently administered	Objectivity
Informed consent of respondents	No one is forced to participate
Anonymous responses & data kept confidential	No discrimination
Report back to constituents	Shared learning and open dialogue

Applications in agriculture

- Farmers' views on:
 - Quantity and quality of extension services / officers
 - Impact of programmes and new technologies
 - Fit with existing organisations, priorities & innovation methods
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Confidence in development agencies (quality of relationship / partnership)
- Local agencies' (government, NGO etc) views on:
 - Quantity and quality of services / advice received
 - Impact of programmes
 - Fit with existing priorities & innovation methods
 - Cost effectiveness
 - Confidence in donors (quality of relationship / partnership)

Potential insights

- Adoption rates & reasons
 - Identifying effective communication channels, causal links and key drivers
- Disaggregation by gender
 - Imagine if women's satisfaction was a KPI, linked to funding
- Unintended impacts
- Improved understanding of local context (including social / political issues)
 - For constituents, field staff and managers
- Improved understanding of success and service delivery standards
 - For constituents
- Powerful lead & lag indicators for impact & sustainability

Discussion question 3

- What do you think about the emerging new methods (known as comparative constituency feedback)?
 - What are the strengths and weaknesses?
 - Could they be applied in your work?