



Summary

of the Seminar on “Making Markets Work for the Poor: Results Measurement in Private Sector Development – Current Practice and Challenges ahead”

from 13th May 2009 at Westside, Bern, Switzerland

Introduction

Over the past three years SDC’s Employment and Income (E+I) Division has organised an event in May as part of a process to establish a more strategically coherent position in the employment and income domain, based on the making markets work for the poor (M4P) approach. The 2009 event organised by the E+I network (which superseded the E+I Division) was devoted to the topic of “Making Markets Work for the Poor: Results Measurement in Private Sector Development – Current Practices and Challenges Ahead”.

The seminar was structured as follows:

Welcome and introduction	Jürg Benz (<i>Dep. Head, Regional Cooperation Dept., SDC</i>)
Conceptual framework for results measurement	Rob Hitchins (<i>Springfield Centre, UK</i>)
Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) initiative on results measurement	Jim Tanburn (<i>Coordinator DCED</i>)
Rural Livelihood Development Project (RLDP), Tanzania: Establishing an enhanced result measurement system	Heini Conrad (<i>International Adviser, Intercooperation</i>)
SDC South Caucasus: Economic development and employment portfolio management and outcome monitoring	Beka Tagauri (<i>Programme Officer</i>) and Derek Müller (<i>Head of Cooperation, SDC Tbilisi</i>)
Katalyst, Bangladesh: Establishing a broad results measurement system, measuring and reporting results	Wafa Hafiz (<i>Business Consultant, Katalyst, Dhaka</i>)
Structured panel discussion	Walter Horn (<i>Senior Advisor, Swisscontact</i>); Jim Tanburn (<i>DCED</i>); Rob Hitchins (<i>Springfield Centre</i>); Roger Denzer (<i>Head Latin America Division, SDC</i>); Derek Müller (<i>SDC Tbilisi</i>)
Wrap up and closing remarks	Peter Tschumi (<i>Focal Point Employment and Income, SDC</i>)

Conceptual framework for results measurement

A systemic approach to results measurement, based on M4P, was presented. Agencies need to be transparent about the challenges inherent in measuring the results of their interventions. By doing so, they can more realistically balance practicality with credibility, seeking to attribute the impact of interventions *plausibly* rather than *scientifically*. Results measurement shouldn’t be driven solely by accountability (‘prove’) objectives but recognise its importance for informing interventions (‘improve’). Effective results measurement should be founded on a strategic framework which links logically a programme’s intervention to poverty reduction, via systemic change and improved growth and access. This in turn lays the basis for more detailed ‘impact logics’ (‘results chains’) which form the operational basis for results measurement and intervention steering.

DCED initiative on results measurement

International developments in result measurement were presented. The employment and income field is under increasing pressure to demonstrate its effectiveness and consequently faces a results measurement imperative. The DCED is seeking to establish more consistent standards of results measurement, which in turn can generate credible information. Although some commonly-defined indicators (“scale”, “jobs” and “income”) will be developed to enable addition of results across interventions and permit comparison between programmes, the main emphasis of the initiative is to test a standard of good measurement practice which focuses on the integrity of measurement processes or systems. The intention is that programmes take responsibility for measurement, rather than rely on external assessments. A programme’s measurement approach will then be audited for compliance with the standard. There are two distinctive features of the initiative: first it has been largely practitioner-driven and therefore focused on what’s practicable rather than what’s perfect. Second, impact logics or results chains are central to the standard’s approach.

Case studies explore how results measurement is being applied practically in different market development programmes

Three case studies were presented, from RLDC in Tanzania, the economic development and employment portfolio of SDC in the South Caucasus and Katalyst in Bangladesh. Each of these programmes were quite different, in terms of their context, focus and the maturity of their approach to results measurement. However all exhibited a considerable degree of consistency with good practices and a number of features in common:

- § *The importance and practical utility of impact logics*, as the basis for developing and improving interventions, developing common understanding and establishing coherence across a portfolio of development activities – as well as effective results measurement.
- § *Start with an ‘improve’ agenda*. Recognising that measurement improves intervention effectiveness helps build commitment within a programme. This ensures continuity and quality of measurement, generating credible information to fulfil ‘prove’ objectives.
- § *‘Internalise’ results measurement as much as possible*. The requirements of good results measurement – impact logics, baseline information etc – are intrinsically linked to routine activities in M4P, such as market analysis and the development of intervention strategy. It is a mistake to regard results measurement as a periodic event to be conducted by external consultants.
- § *Manage the funder-programme relationship*. Improving measurement practices means being clearer and more realistic about what is measured and how. Programmes need to engage with their funders to ensure that there is mutual understanding about information requirements and measurement approaches. Similarly funders can send strong signals – through contracts, reporting requirements and technical assistance – to programmes to encourage them to enhance their results measurement practices.

Conclusions

After presentations and during the panel discussion at the end of the day there were active discussions by participants. These exhibited a considerable degree of commonality around certain key themes, *inter alia*:

- § *Change in results measurement practice is happening*. There is no need to start from scratch. A group of motivated practitioners, endorsed by DCED, has already begun the process, exerting considerable effort, developing and testing guidelines and procedures. This offers an opportunity for SDC, the E+I network and partners to build on an established momentum.

- § *How much change is required?* Adopting better results measurement practice need not be revolutionary – change can be an iterative or evolutionary process. In the words of one participant, results measurement approaches need to be “*simple enough to be practical, yet complex enough to be meaningful*”. It is important not to get consumed by the technical minutiae of results measurement (impact logics, results chains, causality) and focus on establishing the basic principles (clear intervention logic, capturing information).
- § *Where to start (especially if you are a small project)?* Start by identifying and then ‘selling’ the value-addition of results measurement in your organisation or programme – how is it useful?
- Typically, impact logics have proved extremely useful in helping practitioners ‘think through’ what their project is all about and helping them explain that to other stakeholders. It is also a good way of streamlining an excessively complex range of activities or building coherence across a portfolio of projects.
 - Another important starting point is not results measurement *per se*, but – once greater clarity is established – how information is communicated. What is measured and what is actually communicated is not necessarily the same thing. More effort needs to be taken to understand the needs of different stakeholders and then tailor information or messages accordingly.
- § *Develop a culture and environment for better results measurement.* Results measurement is regarded negatively, which is an obstacle to change. Funders need to signal and support better results measurement in their programmes, emphasising in particular its utility for intervention management and streamlining accountability requirements. Internalisation of results measurement within programmes requires that senior staff support and empower other programme staff to get into the habit of scrutinising their work as a matter of routine. Finally, programme design needs to incorporate time and space for good results measurement – as well as adequate resources.
- § *Engage and contribute to the community of good practice.* There’s a considerable body of experience within the Swiss development community and beyond. It is vital that motivated practitioners utilise, build on and add to this, rather than pursuing change in isolation.

Annexes:

The following power point presentations are available under the same web section:

- Conceptual framework (by Rob Hitchins, Springfield Centre, UK)
- DCED initiative on results measurement (by Jim Tanburn, Coordinator DCED)
- Rural Livelihood Development Project Tanzania (by Heini Conrad, Intercooperation)
- Economic development and employment portfolio management of SDC South Caucasus (by Beka Tagauri, Derek Müller, SDC Tbilisi)
- Katalyst, Bangladesh (by Wafa Hafiz, Business Consultant, Katalyst, Dhaka)