

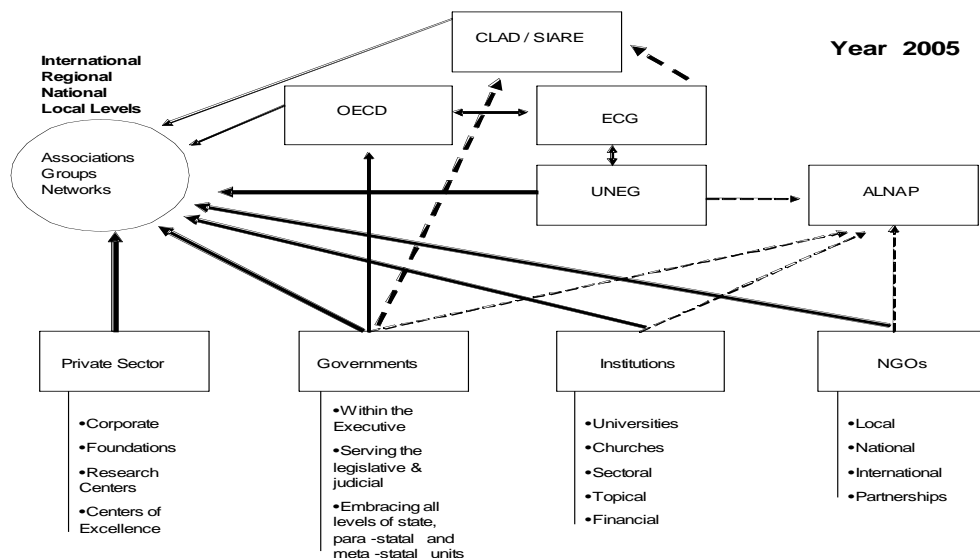
The Importance of Evaluation Associations and Networks

By Jean Serge Quesnel

1. Who's Who?

Greater professional recognition is in the making. When one draws a map of existing and emerging evaluation associations, groups and networks, it becomes evident that evaluation is increasingly being valued. From the seminal purpose of sharing experience and mutual learning, has grown a more professional rallying, as evidenced by the growing consensus about evaluation deontology in the various evaluation associations.

The following diagram illustrates existing evaluation groups. This holistic view shows quite an impressive picture, especially when taking into account the fact that there has been an accelerated development over the last five years. The arrows show where membership comes from. Nowadays more than 60 groupings of evaluators can be tallied.



The Private Sector has its own evaluation systems within the respective corporate structures. It also sponsors foundations and research centers, each with an evaluation capacity. Centers of excellence in evaluation exist such as the Evaluators Institute¹, Center for European Evaluation Expertise (EUREVAL)² and the Performance Assessment Resource Centre (PARC)³.

¹ See <http://www.evaluatorsinstitute.com>

² See <http://www.eureval-c3e.fr/english/>

³ See <http://www.parcinfo.org/index.asp>

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have developed strong evaluation capacity and have their own networks sharing amongst themselves, linking as well local, national⁴, regional and international⁵ entities. Also institutions have partnerships and networks most often based on a discipline, a sector or particular topic of interest. They support excellent publications fostering knowledge building in evaluation and enhancing methodological rigor.

No doubt, governments have been the main protagonist of evaluation. They use evaluation for the purpose of good governance, accountability, learning by doing, re-engineering ways and means for improving performance, value-for-money and assessing taxpayer satisfaction. Many governments have evaluation units within each of their ministries/departments, as well as internal governmental networks⁶ linking governmental units, fostering joint work and harmonizing evaluation approaches. Many governments also have evaluation units independent from the executive, serving the legislative bodies. These independent units have their own networks often associated with other oversight functions, such as INTOSAI.⁷ Noteworthy as well are the many evaluation offices of the European Union and its Commissions.⁸

Through international development and cooperation activities, governments have made a significant contribution to the mainstreaming of evaluation across the world. The main body that introduced greater professionalism in the evaluation of official development assistance was the Expert Group on Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Expert Group created in 1982 subsequently became the DAC Working Party on Evaluation. This Working Party nowadays is known as the DAC Network on Development Evaluation⁹ It provides a forum to evaluation specialists from 30 governmental and multilateral agencies working together aiming at improving the relevance and effectiveness of development cooperation. One of its aims is the promotion and support of evaluation capacity development.¹⁰

Another potent leverage used by governments for greater systematization of the use of evaluation is the system of international financial institutions. These institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, World Bank Group¹¹, Regional¹² and Sub-regional multilateral development banks or international funds are governed by assemblies of government representatives. Each organization has an evaluation unit. The Evaluation

⁴ For an example see the CCIC website at <http://www.ccic.ca/e/home/index.shtml>

⁵ For an example see Oxfam's website at <http://www.oxfam.org/>

⁶ For an example see Canada's at <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/>

⁷ See <http://www.intosai.org/>

⁸ See http://europa.eu.int/comm/echo/evaluation/index_en.htm or http://europa.eu.int/comm/budget/evaluation/index_en.htm

⁹ See http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,2688,en_2649_34435_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹⁰ See http://www.internationalevaluation.com/briefing_en.html

¹¹ See <http://www.worldbank.org/oed/>

¹² For an example see the African Development Bank at <http://www.afdb.org/>

Cooperation Group (ECG)¹³ brings together the heads of evaluation of the global and regional organizations. They have done much to harmonise and develop new evaluation approaches in response to evolving development policy challenges.

Governments are the member states forming the United Nations System, supporting its secretariat and many specialized offices, agencies, programmes and funds. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)¹⁴ brings together some 38 Heads of evaluation across the UN system. UNEG aims to improve the use of evaluation within the UN System, to contribute to harmonization and simplification and to undertake joint evaluation work, especially at country level. The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution requesting that the UN provide support to member countries, enabling them to evaluation their programmes and activities. Hence, evaluation capacity strengthening is much part of UNEG's work programme.

In Latin America and the Caribbean regions there is a network of governments working together with the multilateral banks for the improvement of the performance of the public sector. The Latin American Center for Development Management (CLAD)¹⁵ and its Integrated Analytical Information System on Public Sector Reform (SIARE)¹⁶ plays a significant role in the promotion of the use of sound evaluation approaches in the good governance of the public sector.

The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP)¹⁷ is an international, interagency forum working to improve learning, accountability and performance across the Humanitarian Sector. It rallies both governmental and non-governmental partners and has made exponential progress in the application of evaluation in emergency and unstable situations and has gone a long way in generating lessons learned for better policy and programme design.

The most open fora where evaluators meet are the evaluation associations and networks. Evaluation members are involved in many aspects of evaluation and performance measurement. Members include interested individuals, evaluation practitioners, managers, consultants, teachers and students, officials from all levels of government, educational institutions, research agencies, civil society organisations and businesses. Members meet regularly through groups at local, national and international levels. In the chart below, the hierarchy of evaluation associations and network is drawn.

¹³ See <http://www.ecgnet.org/>

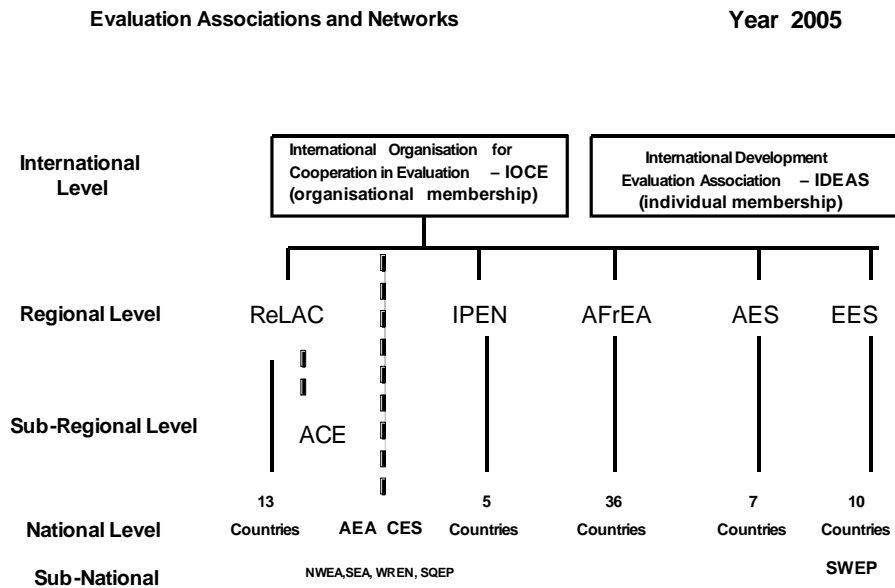
¹⁴ See <http://www.uneval.org/>

¹⁵ See <http://www.clad.org.ve/>

¹⁶ See <http://www.clad.org.ve/siare/index.htm>

¹⁷ See <http://www.alnap.org/>

At the global level there are two associations, notwithstanding ALNAP's network mentioned above. They are International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS).



The International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation¹⁸ is called to play a major role in the professionalisation of evaluation in the near future. This organisation is the “world umbrella” of evaluation association and networks.¹⁹ The mission of the IOCE as stated in its constitution is:

To help legitimate evaluation and support evaluation societies, associations and networks so that they can better contribute to good governance, effective decision making and strengthen the role of civil society.

IOCE believes that evaluation is best strengthened through national and regional organisations. Membership is made up of organisations *not* individuals. IOCE aims to promote cooperation between national and regional evaluation societies, associations or networks. As an international organisation, the IOCE is committed to cultural diversity, inclusiveness and to bringing together different evaluation traditions in ways that respect this diversity. IOCE is a loose coalition of regional and national evaluation organisations from around the world. It is dedicated to building leadership and capacity in countries, fosters cross-fertilization of evaluation theory and practice around the world, and supports evaluation professionalisation.

IOCE was launched at an Inaugural Assembly in Lima, Peru at the end of March 2003. Representatives from 24 evaluation groupings from Latin America, Africa, Australasia,

¹⁸ See <http://www.internationalevaluation.com/>

¹⁹ For the list see <http://ioce.net/content/index.cfm?navID=3&itemID=3&lan=en>

North America, Asia, Europe and the ex Soviet Union attended the Assembly. Observers were also present from various sponsor organisations. Support for the Assembly was received from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, UNICEF, the World Bank, UK Department for International Development, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, Global Greengrants Fund as well as from the American Evaluation Association, the Canadian Evaluation Society and other national and regional groups who sent their representatives.

IOCE is a platform for worldwide cooperation and partnership in evaluation, fostering the cross fertilisation of ideas, high professional standards and an open and global perspective among evaluators. The vision is that collaboration between evaluation associations would strengthen evaluation worldwide. IOCE seeks to legitimate and strengthen evaluation societies, associations or networks so that they can better contribute to good governance and strengthen civil society. It wishes to build evaluation capacity, develop evaluation principles and procedures, encourage the development of new evaluation societies and associations or networks, undertake educational activities that will increase public awareness of evaluation, and seek to secure resources for co-operative activity.

The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS)²⁰ had its first conference in New Delhi in April 2005. IDEAS was created with the support of the World Bank and the DAC Network on Development Evaluation for the purpose of attracting individual members world-wide (particularly from developing countries and transition economies), who will:

- *promote development evaluation for results, transparency and accountability in public policy and expenditure;*
- *give priority to evaluation capacity development;*
- *foster the highest intellectual and professional standards in development evaluation;*
- *encourage national and regional development evaluation groups.*

In addition to the two global evaluation associations, there are five regional associations/networks.

The American Evaluation Association²¹ is the first national association to be created. De facto, it also acts as the North American regional convener. AEA has approximately 4000 members representing all 50 states of the USA as well as over 60 countries. In October 2005, AEA together with the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES²²) held a joint meeting in Toronto where some 2500 evaluation practitioners assisted in four days to more than 525 concurrent sessions dealing with evaluation themes and issues. Many participants took advantage of 50+ pre & post-conference training sessions in evaluation. The CES has also provincial chapters²³. The Quebec Programme Evaluation Society (SQEP)²⁴ an

²⁰ See <http://www.ideas-int.org/>

²¹ See <http://www.eval.org/News/news.htm>

²² See <http://evaluationcanada.ca/>

²³ For example see <http://www.evaluationontario.ca/>

²⁴ See <http://www.sqep.ca/index.htm>

independent association collaborates with the CES acting as a provincial chapter for that province. Similarly, the American Evaluation Association has sub-national associations such as the North West Evaluation Association,²⁵ the Southeast Evaluation Association²⁶ and the Washington Research and Evaluation Network.²⁷

The Australasian Evaluation Society was the first regional association. It has some 700 individual members from the region. Most are from Australia and New Zealand. AES collaborates particularly with the Malaysia Evaluation Society²⁸ and the Sri Lanka Evaluation Society²⁹.

The African Evaluation Association³⁰ will have its fourth biennial conference in Niger in January 2007. At the time of the creation of AFrEA, in 1999, evaluation associations or networks existed in only six African countries. At present at least 18 such associations or networks³¹ have been developed or are in the process of development, all with the common goal of promoting evaluation on a national basis in their respective countries.

The primary goal of the European Evaluation Society.³² (EES) is to promote theory, practice and utilization of high quality evaluation, but not exclusively, within the European countries. This goal is obtained by bringing together academics and practitioners from all over Europe and from any professional sector, thus creating a forum where all participants can benefit from co-operation and bridge building. The Society was founded in The Hague in 1994. The first official board was elected in autumn 1995 and started its work in January 1996. National evaluation associations and networks also exist in Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom³³.

In October 2004, the Latin American and Caribbean Evaluation Network (ReLAC) was launched in Peru. Present members are the Brazilian Evaluation Association, the Central American Evaluation Association and networks from Chili, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru. ReLAC plans to hold its second biennial conference in Colombia in May 2007.

Last but not least, there is the International Program Evaluation Network³⁴ (IPEN) mainly composed of evaluators from the former Soviet Union countries. IPEN was founded in 2000 and the fifth conference was held successfully in Almaty, Kazakhstan in September 2005. About 150 participants from 20 countries from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States attended the conference

²⁵ See <http://www.nwea.org>

²⁶ See <http://www.bitbrothers.com/sea/>

²⁷ See <http://www.wren-network.net/>

²⁸ See <http://www.mes.org.my/>

²⁹ <http://www.nsf.ac.lk/sleva/>

³⁰ See <http://www.afrea.org/conference/>

³¹ See <http://www.afrea.org/conference/national>

³² See <http://www.europeanevaluation.org/>

³³ See list of websites may be found at <http://ioce.net/content/index.cfm?navID=3&itemID=3&lan=en>

³⁴ See <http://www.eval-net.org/>

2. The Crucial Role of Some Evaluation Associations and Groups in Evaluation Capacity Development

Evaluation Associations play a crucial role from the local to the international level in evaluation capacity development. For example, one should not underestimate the influence that the Washington Research and Evaluation Network and the Ottawa Chapter of the Canadian Evaluation Association had in the strengthening of the evaluation function in their respective capitals and by extension on the development of their national evaluation systems and the governmental use of evaluation by the legislative and executive.

The American Evaluation Association's mission³⁵ is to:

Improve evaluation practices and methods

Increase evaluation use

Promote evaluation as a profession and

Support the contribution of evaluation to the generation of theory and knowledge about effective human action.

For many years the AEA served as the North American and International convener on evaluation. Needless to say that most founders of national, regional and international associations have had an exposure to the pioneering work of the AEA.

Another dynamic network of evaluators promoting evaluation capacity building is the Expert Group on Aid Evaluation of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Together with the Multilateral Development Banks, the Group has sponsored evaluation capacity development.

In March 1987, a seminar³⁶ with evaluators from countries across the world was held in Paris under the auspices of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC/OECD). The seminar provided an opportunity to engage in a capacity development programme. It was agreed that conducting a series of seminars on a regional basis would be useful in generating exchanges based on the needs and specificities of each region of the world.

The first regional seminar on evaluation in Africa was jointly sponsored by DAC/OECD Expert Group on Aid Evaluation and the African Development Bank. It took place in Abidjan in May 1990. Its objectives included the clarification of evaluation needs as perceived by African countries. The seminar explored the ways and means of strengthening African evaluation capabilities and of increasing awareness of evaluation as a key tool for effective management. Participants gained new understanding of evaluation issues in the African context.

³⁵ See: <http://www.eval.org/aboutus.asp>

³⁶ The summary report of the discussion, *Evaluation in Developing Countries: A Step Towards Dialogue*, was published by the OECD in 1988.

In November 1998, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme together with the agencies of international cooperation of Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden organized another Pan-African seminar. This seminar also held in Abidjan, was specifically on Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa³⁷. Close to 100 participants attended. They were from twelve African countries and from donor countries, international and regional institutions. One of the objectives of the Abidjan seminar was to provide an overview of progress with evaluation capacity development in Africa, including the sharing of lessons of experience. Another was to build consensus on the purposes and elements of evaluation in support to development. A third objective was to identify strategies and resources for building evaluation demand and supply in African countries. A fourth was to help country teams, representing the 12 participating African countries, to develop preliminary action plan for developing evaluation systems in their countries. A final objective was to support the creation of country and regional networks to encourage follow-up work. This provided support for the creation of national evaluation networks and the African Evaluation Association.

The Regional Workshop and Seminar on Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa, held in Johannesburg, South Africa in September 2000 was a follow-up to the regional seminar held in Abidjan in 1998. The event³⁸ brought together 56 participants from 11 sub-Saharan countries and 32 from multilateral and bilateral agencies. They represented governments, non-governmental organizations, research institutions, universities and the private sector. The event was hosted by the Development Bank of South Africa, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Development research Centre, UNICEF, UNDP, USAID and AusAID. The two main objectives were a) the definition of the requirements and capabilities of M&E in the context of good governance and accountability for better results, and b) the development of a collaborative strategy and infrastructure for a pan-African M&E network.

In May 1992, in Kuala Lumpur, the DAC/OECD Expert Group on Aid Evaluation and the Asian Development Bank hosted a Regional Seminar on Performance Evaluation in Asia and the Pacific.³⁹ Attending participants included 38 senior representatives from 17 developing countries, 43 representatives from 17 donor countries and six multilateral institutions. In addition 16 senior officials of the Government of Malaysia attended as observers. Through a series of well prepared papers on evaluation practices and issues, the seminar brought the participants up-to-date with the latest thinking on evaluation. The understanding of both the recipients and donors was broadened with respect to the range of institutional capabilities, evaluation strategies, models, systems and resources. The seminar reviewed practical evaluation experiences of participant countries. Recipient countries' plans to strengthen evaluation capacities were discussed. The seminar

³⁷ The proceedings were published jointly by the World Bank and the African Development Bank as *Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa – Selected Proceedings from a Seminar in Abidjan.1998*

³⁸ The proceedings were published by the Development Bank of Southern Africa as *Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Development in Africa, 2000*. The complete set of the 45 papers presented may be found at <http://www.dbsa.org/M&E/M&E.htm>

³⁹ The proceedings were published by the Asian Development Bank as *Summary of the Proceedings of the Regional Seminar on performance Evaluation in Asia and the Pacific, 1992*

concluded with an Action Plan for strengthening performance evaluation through closer cooperation between recipient countries and aid agencies.

In June 1995, in Manila, the Asian Development Bank hosted a Regional Workshop⁴⁰ on Strengthening Post-evaluation Feedback System. For the Workshop 14 Developing Countries prepared country papers outlining the status of post-evaluation in their own country. Much of the Workshop discussion focused on issues relating to the countries' commitment and priority for post-evaluation and the difficulties encountered. An *Agenda for Action* was also developed intensifying efforts to support evaluation outreach programmes for the benefit of the public sector in the countries.

In November 1993, in Quito, some 80 participants representing 26 governments of Latin America and the Caribbean attended a Regional Seminar on Evaluation, together with some 30 participants from the Expert Group on Aid Evaluation of DAC/OECD. The Seminar was sponsored by DAC/OECD and the Inter-American Development Bank. The aim of the Seminar⁴¹ was to further sensitise partners in development to the importance of evaluation as a management and planning tool and to broaden the understanding of the utilization of evaluation in government. There was an exchange of experience and the identification of opportunities of closer collaboration between countries. The adoption of an Action Plan to strengthen the evaluation function in the region was a tangible result of the Seminar.

In October 1994 the Inter-American Development Bank in collaboration with the Caribbean Development Bank hosted a Regional Seminar for the Caribbean countries in Barbados⁴². Representatives from 17 Caribbean and regional governments participated in the Seminar. The results were a) an increase awareness about the role of evaluation in the process of public sector reform; b) the development of a regional strategy for enhancing the role of evaluation and strengthening evaluation capacity, and c) the preparation of a collaborative plan of action among development assistance organizations.

In December 1994, in San Jose, Costa Rica, the Central American Evaluation Association, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Inter-American Development Bank and the Central American Bank for Economic Integration hosted an Evaluation Seminar⁴³ for Central American countries, Panama and the Dominican Republic. The main theme of the Seminar was the role that evaluation plays in the modernization of the State and in achieving greater efficiency in public investment management. There was a review of national experiences which provide an opportunity

⁴⁰ The proceedings were published by the Asian Development Bank as *Postevaluation and Feedback – Realities and Challenges in the Asian and Pacific Region, 1995*

⁴¹ The proceedings were published jointly by OECD and the Inter-American Development Bank as *Regional Seminar on Monitoring and Evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean : Strengthening Evaluation Capabilities for Sustainable Development, 1993*

⁴² The proceeding were jointly published by the Inter-American Development Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank as *Regional Seminar on Monitoring and Evaluation in the Caribbean: Strengthening Evaluation Capabilities for Sustainable Development, 1994*

⁴³ The proceedings were published by the Inter-American Development Bank as *First Evaluation Seminar for Central America, Panama & The Dominican Republic, 1995*

to identify ways of strengthening evaluation capacities. There was a consensus to a) promote an evaluation culture in government by establishing and strengthening national evaluation units and systems; b) to strengthen the skills and expertise of the human resources engaged in evaluation activities, and c) support the mission of the Central American Evaluation Association as a facilitator in the region.

In October 2005, in Tegucigalpa, the Second Regional Evaluation Seminar was organised by the Honduras Evaluation Network with the collaboration of ReLAC, the Central American Evaluation Association, the Central American Bank for Economic Integration, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and UNICEF.

In July 1996, in Cartagena de Indias, the Colombian National Planning Department and the Inter-American Development Bank hosted a meeting on Results-Based Evaluation and Control of Public Management⁴⁴ for the benefit of the South American Countries. There was a consensus that a gradual and systematic process of retooling the public sector was required, seeking more suitable administrative and management mechanism for efficient, responsive and user-oriented performance. A cultural change will lead to the transformation of public institutions and it hinges on the concepts of transparency and accountability. It was obvious to the participants that evaluation has a key role to play in the process of public sector reform.

Finally one has to single out the tremendous contribution of the World Bank in evaluation capacity development. Noteworthy were the bi-annual conference held at the Bank headquarters hosted by the Evaluation Office. The World Bank Series on *Evaluation and Development* are indeed a much sought reference source. This series of conference have attracted and involved evaluation practitioners from all over the world. They were a tremendous forum of exchange and stimulation for the progress of development evaluation. Also recognition has to be made to the catalytical role of the World Bank for the establishment of the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET)⁴⁵ at Carleton University in Ottawa.

3. Concluding remarks

The experience of the evaluation community in general shows that the success or failure of Evaluation Capacity Development depends greatly on three conditions:

- a) The awareness and appreciation at the governmental decision-making levels of the importance and necessity of evaluation – in other words the existence of demand of evaluation.
- b) The institutionalization and meaningful integration of the various evaluation function in the government machinery at national, sectoral, programme/project, and sub-statal levels.

⁴⁴ The proceedings were published by the Inter-American Development bank as *South American Meeting on Results-Based Evaluation and Control of Public Management, 1996*

⁴⁵ See <http://www.ipdet.org/>

- c) The development of human and financial resources to support a professional, dedicated, and effective cadre of evaluators and evaluation managers.

The framework for international cooperation exists to:

- Establish an international consensus on the legitimacy and credibility of evaluation as part of civic responsibility and participation.
- Increase the systematic utilization of evaluation internationally and support evaluation societies in evaluation utilization in national and local policy decision making.
- Build capacity through the provision of opportunities for reciprocal learning amongst established and newly formed or emergent evaluation societies.
- Develop general principles, procedures, ethics and codes of conduct for evaluation and commissioning practice
- Provide a forum for the exchange of good practice in evaluation theory and practice and develop new evaluation knowledge through cooperative research and other activities
- Increase and support cultural specificity in evaluation design and practice by encouraging pilot approaches in diverse cultural settings.

To sum up, this means tremendous potential for the professionalisation of evaluators in an open and global perspective with the benefit of cross-fertilisation of ideas. That is the mission of the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation.