

Rapid evaluation – some experiences from Africa (and Venezuela)

Professor Ian Goldman

30 September 2021

Different approaches to rapid evaluation

- Doing a full evaluation process but quicker (rapid evaluation)
- Synthesising existing evaluations:
 - Used to inform VNR in Nigeria and Madagascar
 - Smallholder evaluation in South Africa (drew on 5+ existing evaluations)
- Using an evaluative workshop to develop evaluative findings
- Outline guidance here:
<https://evalsdgs.org/2020/01/01/guide-on-embedding-evaluation-in-vnrs-in-africa-enesfrpt/>
- Started testing out rapid models in Dept of Planning, M&E and then with Twende Mbele, CLEAR-AA/UNICEF
- Today primary focus on the first



Approach

- Developed guidelines for each approach
- Training governments to undertake RE through developing the evaluation plan with the team that will undertake the evaluation: SA – DPME/W Cape, Benin, Kenya, Ghana
- One day module in training on VNRs run by UNICEF/CLEAR-AA, also one day on synthesis, and one day on evaluative workshops
- Also undertook a rapid evaluation in Venezuela, and with UNEG on UN agencies work in NECD

Rapid Evaluation Guideline

12 May 2020



**planning, monitoring
& evaluation**

Department:
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Evaluation Guideline No 2.2.21

How to undertake rapid evaluations

Created March 2019

Updated: 12 May 2020

What do we mean by rapid

6-12 weeks to production of report

How can we reduce the time on processes around (before and after)?

How can we do with a predominantly internal team?

Is there a possibility of a **facilitated** evaluation – so changed role of expert, working with internal team?

What are the stages from thinking of the idea to using the evaluation

What stages

Pre-evaluation

Doing the evaluation

After the evaluation

Concept note development (eg for National Eval Plan)

Develop TOR

Planning the design

Management/governance arrangements

Buy-in from stakeholders

Supply chain processes

Management response

Improvement plan

Where can we speed up but keep quality?

5

5

Situations favouring more robust (longer) or rapid evaluations

Situation favours longer (more robust)

Where you need to be very sure that the picture is correct:

- Where the programme or policy is very large and you need a very clear picture of benefits and how it is working;
- Where the implications of the policy/ programme is critical and will affect peoples lives and communities at large;
- Where much is at stake, or there is a lot of contention about the programme or policy so it is key that the result can't be challenged.

Where you can anticipate and plan for the decision points by scheduling the evaluation well in time

Situation favours rapid

Where realtime feedback is needed

Where you have to get the results in 2-3 months

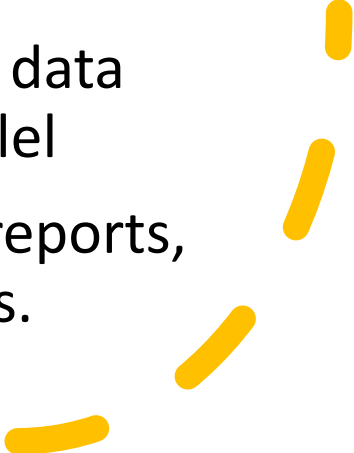
Where the primary purpose is formative to feed-in to ongoing policy and planning processes

For organizational learning and problem solving

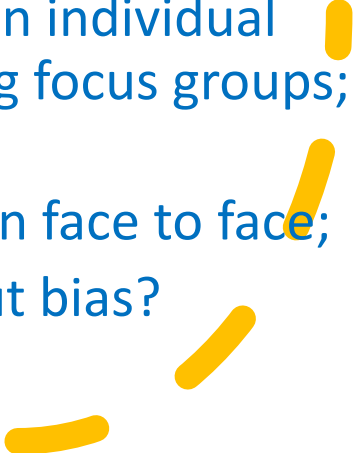
Where the evaluation budget is very limited

Where focusing on narrower topics and/or specific geographical areas

Undertaking the rapid evaluation

- **Good preparation with focused enquiry**
 - **Focused enquiry so limiting scope** – few evaluation questions and limiting geographical scope;
 - **Focusing the evaluation questions** around specific and well-defined evaluation needs
 - **Pragmatic (truncated) methods** (see next slide)
 - **Working in teams**, ensuring data collections happens in parallel
 - **Accessible outputs** – short reports, short videos, evidence briefs.
- 

Pragmatic (truncated) methods:

- Reducing the **literature review** – eg a few critical international papers.
 - Narrowing the **secondary data**;
 - Depending more on **existing data** rather than collecting new data;
 - Where **new data**:
 - Reducing data points: 2 districts, not 5; sample points per district; number of interviews with more focus on a few key respondents;
 - More group work rather than individual interviews: workshops, using focus groups; PRA with beneficiaries;
 - Phone interviews rather than face to face;
 - Short surveys, e.g. online but bias?
- 

Ensuring robustness and speed



Representivity if possible to be able to make inferences from results (external validity)



Rigour of individual **methods** (but limited by time)



Triangulation:

Comparing different sources/questions to ensure that getting consistent results

Integrating evidence from sources



Make sure got **key stakeholders** eg for interviews



Make sure have a **360 degree picture**



Use of **expert panels**



Validation by people who know the situation

Rapid evaluations conducted as a result of this work

- SA national (DPME): 1 (internal)
 - Western Cape Province (State): 3 internal, linked to the COVID response – lot of policymaker interest
- Benin: 2 facilitated
- Sierra Leone: 2 internal
- Ghana: 2 internal, tech support provided
- And personally:
 - a rapid evaluation/review in Venezuela for UNICEF
 - A rapid evaluation/review for UNEG on UN agency role in NECD



Key lessons - Ghana

2 rapid evaluations on national priority programmes: One Village One Dam and One District One Factory Programs.

Key lessons:

- It was timely and provided insightful evidence to the respective Ministers and the implementation teams.
- It has deepened the interest and appetite of the respective ministries for evidence to inform their decisions.
- It has helped to demystify the perceptions about complexity of evaluations.



Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results

ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

Key lessons - overall

- Time is not only to do the evaluation, but preparation, and also development of improvement plan etc
 - Need to allocate the time to build ownership (Steering Group), agree TORs, identify existing data etc – can't miss the preparation stage, and for interaction during the evaluation
- Must limit the scope (questions, geographical, sample etc)
 - Danger of reluctance to reduce eg interviews
 - Can use workshops etc to build quickly – e.g. developing the evaluation plan, theory of change workshop and methodology
- Needs careful design (we have run course to help design)
- It is possible to do the evaluations internally, but ideally with an evaluation expert as facilitator
 - Does need training in additional research skills
 - Need people to be able to allocate the time
 - Can be very powerful when people e.g. from ministry undertake field work (e.g. Sierra Leone)

Thank you for your time and good luck with the evaluation

Ian Goldman

ian.goldman@wits.ac.za

@iangoldmansa