

Final Report on the International Seminar on Current Trends and Results in PSD, Bangkok 17th – 20th January 2012

13th February 2012

In 2007, the Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) decided to promote a Standard for measuring and reporting results in private sector development (PSD). Since then, the Secretariat and Results Measurement Steering Group have worked hard to disseminate the awareness and knowledge required. As a result, the Standard has attracted increasing interest, both from PSD programmes in the field, and from member agencies at HQ level. For the first time, an international Seminar was organised, to bring together member agencies and practitioners. This report summarises the experience of the Seminar; more information is available on request.

Participants

Applications for participation were accepted from anyone who already had substantive experience in PSD (some were not accepted). It was stressed that this was not a training course, and that training courses were available elsewhere. The final make-up of participants showed a mix of practitioners in the field, consultants and representatives of 11 DCED member agencies. The participants came from 32 countries, representing 54 organisations, field programmes and governments.



Presentations

All of the presentations can be downloaded from www.enterprise-development.org/page/seminar They covered the following topics:

- Overviews of PSD, the DCED and results measurement (3 presentations)
- Business environment reform and trade promotion in East Africa, Bangladesh and Afghanistan (3)
- Good practice in design of new programmes, and management of existing ones (2)
- Challenge Funds (3)
- Making Markets Work for the Poor in value chains, in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Honduras, Indonesia, Nigeria and Thailand (7)
- Working with new donors in Kenya and Uganda (1)
- Results-related trends in GIZ, Netherlands MoFA, AusAID, SDC and ILO (5)



The Secretariat worked closely with all of the presenters, to ensure that they were as consistent and informative as possible. Each practitioner was asked to describe the work they were doing on the ground, what results they were achieving, and how they were measuring them. Perhaps as a result of time pressures, most chose to focus on the measurement aspect, and in particular extolled the merits of the DCED Standard.

After every presentation, there was a plenary discussion; there was also a World Cafe session for participants to meet each other, and a Market-Place where 6 themes proposed by participants were discussed in more detail. Finally, there was a participatory session to plan for the future, with participants grouped according to their institutional affiliation.

Conclusions

The Seminar was not structured particularly to formulate conclusions, but rather to promote learning,

exchange and networking; nonetheless, some observations can be made:

General insights and observations



Many agencies are finding greatly increased pressure to report on results, and are moving towards a monitoring framework similar to the DCED Standard. Logframes remain a useful summary of the logic of a programme, for supervisors and evaluators; however, the more detailed results chains are increasingly seen not only as a good practice, but also as a vital management tool. The two descriptions of a programme, using these two formats, need to be internally consistent.

Good monitoring is a core management task, as the OECD definition makes clear. It should not be classified together with evaluation as 'M&E', or entirely delegated to a monitoring expert or consultant. Little thought has yet been given, however, to how to create a working culture of good management and honest reporting of results, while at the same time motivating staff to achieve good results.

Using monitoring data in real time to make management decisions is more challenging, but remains a worthy and important goal. Adequate resources do need to be allocated to enable good management and monitoring, particularly in the case of challenge funds - where the grantees are spread over a wide area, yet the management costs are often cut to a minimum.

New partners, including those in the private sector, already expect clear and frequent reporting against quantified targets. They also tend to be more pro-active in communicating projected achievements through the mass media, which can raise expectations.

Observations about the application of the Standard

Several speakers spoke at length on the merits of the DCED Standard (without having been asked to do so). In SDC's words, it is "simple enough to be practical – complex enough to be meaningful". All presentations of programmes reported on results, often against specific targets; a selection of these was summarised in a 'map of honour' acknowledging the programmes already willing to publish data in this way.



Small programmes can apply the Standard essentially as it stands; larger programmes have specific challenges relating to the size of their portfolio, including coherence across components, nesting of results chains, and aggregation of results while avoiding double-counting.

Demand for Standard-related skills is rising rapidly, as donors and others call for compliance. However, limited capacity in the skills needed to implement a good monitoring system was noted as a major constraint, in terms of staff, partners and consultants; technical capacity in other languages than English is also an issue.

The option of auditing a programme's monitoring system, as offered by DCED, motivates some (but not all) programmes to work towards full compliance with the Standard.

Observations about future work and directions

There was widespread support for the idea that DCED should enhance and expand its plan for implementation of the Standard. Some of these discussions focused on the need to build capacity in the core skills needed to work towards compliance with all aspects of the Standard – in programmes, in member agencies and in consulting companies. As a prelude to this, it was felt that more systematic research of the market system around the Standard (demand, supply etc.) would be informative, in preparation for this new phase.

There was widespread acceptance of the Standard as codifying good practice, as partly evidenced by enthusiasm to apply it to fields other than PSD - such as vocational training, health, education and infrastructure. In light of the currently-limited technical capacities, however, this probably deserves lower priority for DCED in the near future.

Several member agencies wanted to learn more about how to apply the DCED Standard to PSD in a challenge fund context. Three Seminar presentations described this, but some issues need to be explored further. Several participants also wanted to explore the application of a framework such as the Standard to programmes that aim to reform the business environment; one presentation covered this for trade-related work, and more work is now being planned, under the auspices of the Business Environment Working Group.



Other issues also attracted interest and discussion, including for example how best to report on employment creation; most practitioners focused instead on income indicators, such as Net Attributable Income Change (as proposed by Jim Tomecko). Pressure to report on employment gains is likely to increase with time, however, and an expanded DCED plan to roll out the Standard would probably need to take this into account.

Dissemination

- The Seminar was promoted through the [DCED's website](#), [Facebook page](#), [Twitter feed](#) and six relevant groups on LinkedIn.
- [The SDC Employment and Income Network created a new area of its website](#) dedicated to the Seminar, including presentation summaries, daily interviews and a live twitter feed
- [Business Fights Poverty created a webpage](#) for the Seminar, with some subsequent posts by members; around 10,000 people on its mailing list received a notification
- The [Business Innovation Facility](#) highlighted some of the key learning points from the Seminar in a dedicated page on their website, to which the DCED and others added comments
- IFC, BMZ, M4P Hub, Business Call to Action, MaFI and AECF (re-)tweeted about the Seminar
- Videos of presentations and interviews are now being edited, and will be published through the DCED's YouTube page and Business Fights Poverty.

Participant feedback

37% of the participants completed a feedback form; of those, 98% felt that their expectations had been fully or partly met. 50% of those who completed a form listed as the most useful aspect the presentations of projects, including experiences in implementing the Standard. Examples of comments include:



"The Seminar was extremely helpful – I learned a great deal and feel like I understand the DCED Standard much better. In fact, it was one of the most useful Seminars I've been to in a while."

"It was a novel experience to have diverse development stakeholders such as donors, implementers and consultants in the same event" and "The Seminar offered rich and diverse practical experiences from different perspectives: implementers, donor field offices and donor headquarters etc."

3 participants called for more focus on the technical aspects of results measurement, while 7 called for less focus on results measurement (preferring a greater focus on PSD approaches generally).