Summary of the conference on:

"The impact of education campaigns and programs on international development and collaboration: feasibility and suggestions for methods"

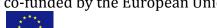Tuesday February 14 – 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Adelie Miguel Sierra, Independent Consultant
Gilbert Graugnard, Independent Consultant
Anne Kaboré, EDUCASOL
Audrey Noury, F3E

Summary Outline:
- Context and Objectives of the Session
- Useful elements for the construction of a collaborative description of impact
- Motivation for and obstacles to engagement in impact evaluation
- Suggestions for responding to the needs and expectations of actors and participants

The following documents (in French) are available by request:
- Acts from February 14, 2012
- List of Participants
- State of affairs of evaluation practices of the impact of EAD-SI actions

1. Context and objectives of the Session

At the end of a three year partnership, EDUCASOL and F3E published the methods guide "EAD-SI: Self-Assessment of Projects," edited with the support of CIEDEL (International Center for Study of Local Development), and translated into English. Its objective is to point out common points of reference in order to help EAD-SI actors who work directly with target populations to begin the process of self-evaluation.

Educasol and F3E have renewed their partnership for three more years in order to address the more global question of the impact of the programs and campaigns of EAD-SI, beyond the short-term results of EAD-SI.

This session, which represents the first step of this new process, has also allowed the sharing of the thoughts and ideas of the work group from the DARE forum dealing with this issue.

This session had four objectives:
1. To define the criteria for evaluating EAD-SI programs' impact and identify which elements distinguish it from the other criteria of the assessment
2. To take a critical look at the practices currently used in the field, as evaluated by a committee
3. To identify, as a group, the motivating factors and the obstacles to the implementation of the impact evaluation process of EAD-SI and to examine its feasibility
4. Share the needs and desires of the actors of EAD-SI with regards to capacity building and skill development in order to establish a process for impact evaluation and common project approaches

2. Useful elements for the construction of a collaborative description of the impact of the actions of EAD-SI

At the beginning of the conference, a basic definition was proposed as follows:

"The impact of an action of EAD-SI is the situation created by all significant and lasting changes, whether positive or negative, anticipated or not, in the lives and environment of people or groups and for which a direct or indirect cause and effect link could be established with the action of EAD-SI."

The following precisions were suggested:
- A results-based approach answers the question: "What have I done?
- An effects-based approach: What is happening?
- An impact-based approach: What have they done with it?
⇒ The impact-based approach requires some decentralization: moving into the populations' side

Debates brought forth the following clarifications:
- The impact could be defined as a collective and participation-friendly process focused on the significance of the project
- Evaluation of the results is not necessarily a prerequisite for the analysis of the impact. We may first consider the observed changes as being the product of multiple interventions and events.

- Finally, the cause and effect link between action and impact would be secondary.
- An evaluation of the impact of EAD-SI questions the foundations of EAD-SI.
- To address first the issue of the quality of the project leads to the issue of the impact and vice versa.
- Take into account how the specific preoccupations of different kinds of participants (NGOs, public authorities, local governments) allow us to clarify certain issues and reasons for hesitation. For example:
  - NGOs: who is ready to finance an evaluation that does not yield results in the short term?
  - Representatives of public authority would be prepared to finance impact studies with certain conditions
  - Local governments have examined the actual desire of participants to study the question of impact together and to develop spaces for this
  - Finally, the issue of the coherence of the aims of EAD-SI and politics (on the local, national, or European levels) was highlighted

3.   Motivations for and obstacles to engagement in impact evaluation

Evaluating the impact of the actions of EAD-SI would contribute to:
- Examining the reasons behind the actions of EAD-SI and the organization of the participants that perform them
- Promoting the aims and objectives of EAD-SI
- General understanding of the stakes, progress, and difficulties of advancing
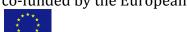
But this requires:
- Accepting the need for introspection and questioning
- Taking into account the time needed for the many actions, changes, mandates, financing, types of projects, and target populations
- A political will and means
- Overcoming feelings of isolation in the face of the complexity of the surroundings and the many methodological challenges

4.   Suggestions for responding to needs and expectations of participants

CONDUCTING THE ACTIONS OF EAD-SI WITH AN EYE TO PROJECTED IMPACT REQUIRES:
- Examination, from the project's conception, of feasible objectives and target changes
- Having a picture of the initial situation and preliminary reports of the state of affairs should be carried out keeping in mind the project's goals and objectives (What areas? With what public? What might be learned from this? Etc.)
- Highlighting the results of impact studies by publishing them, allowing more transparency, which creates a climate of greater confidence and learning

DIFFERENT IDEAS AND METHODS FOR EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF EAD-SI

- <u>Through a network:</u> Lead a collective impact study within a network, on the network's platform
- <u>By locale:</u> Use the local government as the center of the impact study, go out into the streets, speak with local populations, recognize that the entire civil society is an active participant in change
- <u>By population:</u> Identify the changes observed in affected populations: Who are the participants? Their active partners? Their public intermediaries? The final beneficiaries (From "the South" and/or "the North")?
- <u>Through partners:</u> Cooperate with stakeholders, internal or external, to complete an impact study
- <u>By theme:</u> Makes it easier for the multiple actors, for considering the coherence of public politics (for example: migration, fair trade…)
- <u>By method of action:</u> Sensitivity campaigns, awareness campaigns, and real engagement and mobilization campaigns

Two methods or approaches present themselves:
- A "micro" approach, in which one looks at the impact on a smaller scale, taking a finer look at the changes brought about by the project and/or the organization
- An "macro" approach, which requires a collective definition of the most important steps, possibly more expensive, which could be done using conventional evaluation methods but would also require more innovative methods which comply with the specificities of EAD-SI

SUGGESTIONS FOR METHODOLOGY:

- Work on the semantics of the impact of EAD-SI in order to come up with a common definition (indicators, effects, signs of change…)
- Engage in an impact evaluation using a dual research-action approach: pre- state of affairs /evaluation of a panel of citizens; interaction with different publics; experimenting with different measures of impact/modeling and repeat experiments
- Qualitative research: formalize the study's questions, focusing not on linear cause and effect or quantifiable responses, but rather on the indices and signs of progress and change
- Maintain the bond between collective and individual reflection: An interactive, collective process to reflect on the meaning of the project
- Be open to other environments and sectors, most notably research (education science, sociology…), and implement steps for the many participants to break out of their defined groups
- Agree upon a realistic sphere of impact