

8 Evaluation-Based Workshop

The Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) has the mandate of assessing the development effectiveness of World Bank support and is a unit within the World Bank structure, reporting directly to the Board of Executive Directors. One of IEG’s core assignments is to disseminate its report findings in all sorts of outreach and learning activities.

In 2008 IEG completed the last of a series of four comprehensive evaluation reports related to the same overarching topic of public sector reform. Based on particularly high interest in the topic, IEG organized—in collaboration with the World Bank Office in Ethiopia, the Africa Region’s Public Sector Reform and Capacity Building Unit,¹ the Public Sector Governance Group,² and the World Bank Institute³—an evaluation-based learning event. This event was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 9–10, 2008. The workshop title was “Lessons of a Decade of Public Sector Reform: Voices of African Client Stakeholders.” The event was funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad). The invited participants were 60 individuals from 8 African countries, as well as several development partners and regional organization representatives.

The workshop objective was to improve learning among participants who were involved in public sector reform projects and to enhance aid effectiveness in the sector, specifically for donor-supported reforms. This evaluation-based learning approach was structured along the concept of the Learning Spiral, which determined the design of the event. From a World Bank perspective, the workshop aimed to close the feedback loop of the World Bank’s activity

1. The Africa Region’s Public Sector Reform and Capacity Building Unit helps shape the Bank’s strategic thinking and operational planning on public sector governance and reform in client countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa Region.

2. The Public Sector Governance Group brings together people working across the Bank on lending and nonlending activities that relate to core public sector reform.

3. The World Bank Institute is the learning and capacity building unit of the World Bank.

cycle, where projects are executed by operations and then evaluated by IEG, which in turn disseminates its findings as lessons learned to the sectors, operations, The World Bank Institute, and client countries.

8.1 Four Evaluation Reports—Conceptualization Stage

Improving public sector effectiveness and efficiency is a priority item on the reform agenda of most African countries. In setting up a learning event, IEG considered four evaluation reports closely related to the topic that had been published between 2005 and 2008.⁴ The specific content of the reports dealt with decentralization, financial accountability assessments, procurement assessment, and capacity building in Africa. To make the four evaluation reports readily accessible, they were summarized and the summary given to the workshop participants a few weeks prior to the workshop. The content of the summary was further condensed into two basic and interrelated lessons, which gave the workshop its distinctive content structure: In the first half of the workshop, the lesson discussed was that effective public sector reform has to be based on a coherent and country-owned strategy. In the second half, the given lesson dealt with was that appropriate capacities that allow the implementation of these strategies have to be systematically strengthened.

In addition to the written documents, and to make sure that every participant had the same level of information, at the opening session of the workshop two IEG staff members introduced the key findings and the lessons learned. This gave the participants an early opportunity to comment and to validate the presented findings. This measure allowed IEG to complement and update the evaluation results and allowed the participants to find initial common ground.

To ensure the ownership of the workshop by the involved World Bank units, each unit delegated one staff member to the organizing team who would be responsible for all operational and procedural tasks related to the event. The team was led by one of the four IEG report authors. With

4. The IEG reports included were *Decentralization in Client Countries: An Evaluation of World Bank Support, 1997–2007* (2007b); *Public Sector Reform: What Works and Why?* (2008b); *Country Financial Accountability Assessments and Country Procurement Assessment Reports: How Effective Are World Bank Fiduciary Diagnostics?* (2008c); and *Capacity Building in Africa* (2005) (see <http://www.worldbank.org/ieg/>).

the exception of the team leader, all other team members acted as moderators of either the plenary sessions or the breakout groups.

8.2 Eight African Countries—Triangulation Stage

Most participants at the workshop were selected from eight African countries, including the five Anglophone countries of Ethiopia (host), Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Tanzania, and the three Francophone countries of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, and Rwanda. About five participants represented each country; they had been selected based on their involvement in designing and implementing public sector reform projects. To take into account the complexity of public sector reform in multilevel governmental systems and to ensure that the relevant perspectives were considered, the invited participants represented all major spheres in the national and subnational levels, as well as policy makers and civil servants. In addition, each delegation included at least one participant from a nongovernmental organization.

The actual appointment of the selected individuals was made in collaboration with the World Bank country offices and the selected governments. To enrich the range of perspectives, other experts and practitioners were invited, such as two international experts from South Africa and South Korea; several representatives of development partners, including the African Development Bank, the Danish International Development Assistance, the European Union, and the German Technical Cooperation; and representatives from regional organizations such as the African Union, the Pan-African Conference of Ministers for Public Service, and the African Training and Research Center for Administration in Development. To round out the perspectives, the conference organizers were also represented at the workshop by at least one participant. In all, there were close to 60 participants at the event.

8.3 Concept Note and Guidance Note—Accommodation Stage

To make the learning process transparent and accessible, a concept note was prepared to describe the purpose, objectives, and structure of the workshop. The overarching message in this document was that

all participants would have equal treatment during the workshop. This measure was particularly challenging because the hierarchical differences among the participants were wide; participants ranged from lower-level governmental advisors up to the Prime Minister of Ethiopia (see Photo 21). All participants were seated around a closed rectangle, with no podium (see Photo 23). To ease the communication between the French- and English- speaking participants, the dialogue in the plenary sessions had simultaneous translation.

In an additional guidance note, the methodologies of the workshop as well as the specific roles of the different participants were explained. Strong emphasis was given to the description of the communication rules, which bound all participants equally. Among them were the Chatham House Rules, which regulate the exchange of information with the outside world.⁵ Other rules were applied to the regulation of the formal exchange, such as five-minute speaking time limits and the prohibition of PowerPoint® presentations.

Two moderators enforced the communication rules in the plenary sessions. They were members of the organizing team and were selected



(From right to left) Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia; Kenichi Ohashi, World Bank Country Director to Ethiopia; and Anand Rajaram, World Bank Regional Manager, Sub-Saharan and North African Region.

based on their political impartiality; neither of them was involved in the public sector reform projects discussed and neither had any authorship in the reports. The design of the workshop required that one actively facilitate the dialogue and the other observe the process dynamics and ensure that all participants had an equal amount of time to speak. The two handled this task as a team and rotated their roles after each session. Because there was and no *head* of the table, they were, despite their distinct role, integrated in the same seating order as everyone else (see Photo 22).

5. For the definition of the Chatham House rules, see subsection 5.3.

Each participant received a large package of documents prior to the event beginning, including a personal invitation letter, the workshop agenda, the concept and guidance notes, the IEG evaluation summary, and a fact sheet from the World Bank country offices. To remind the participants about the main principles of the workshop, the two moderators gave a short presentation about the workshop proceedings at the workshop inauguration.

Photo 22 Plenary Session Moderation



The two moderators of the plenary sessions (fourth and fifth from left).

8.4 Plenary Sessions—Internalization Stage

At the center of the workshop were two identically structured half-day sessions. Each focused on one of the two main lessons. In the first part of the session, the plenary session (see Photo 23), three participants reflected in a short statement on the lesson at stake in light of their respective country experience.

The three speakers were chosen from different countries and held different positions; this ensured the diversity of perspectives. The statements were informal in style and reflected the personal opinion of the speaker. This is unlike formal governmental conference settings, where official positions are presented from prepared texts.

These statements were structured along several key guiding questions, which were directed to each of the lessons. Among the questions raised for the first session were How could participants motivate public sector reform? How could they generate ownership? And how could they use international experience? For the

Photo 23 Plenary Session



Roundtable with 60 participants.

second session the questions were How did participants understand capacity development challenges? How could stakeholders' views be integrated? And how should capacity development activities be prioritized?

The presentations were followed by statements from the rest of the participants, who also described their individual experiences. The session closed with a short commentary by the international experts, who presented their experiences from a global viewpoint. These added further perspectives to the table.

8.5 Breakout Groups—Externalization Stage

To share the reflections made in the previous stage—the Internalization Stage—in the second part of the workshop session, the plenary split into two parallel breakout groups. These groups were moderated by two other members of the organizing team to give the two plenary session moderators the freedom to follow the process in both groups and thus get a continuous overview of the overall workshop progress.



Breakout group with the representatives of the Francophone countries.

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The purpose of the breakout groups was to create a more intimate space that would allow participants to share their individual reflections from the previous plenary session among their peers. The groups were formed along French- and English-speaking participants

to ease communication and obviate the need for simultaneous translation (see Photo 24).

Based on the shared country experiences in the plenary session, the emphasis in the breakout groups was on developing new insights and practices around effective and country-owned public sector reform strategies and about effective capacity building.

8.6 Review of Evaluation Reports— Reconceptualization Stage

In the first part of the final workshop session, the breakout group facilitators reported their observations to the plenary about new patterns and insights raised in the two groups with regard to country-owned public sector reform strategies and capacity building. These observations were complemented by the individual lessons learned that one country and three donor representatives shared. In the ensuing dialogue, a modified understanding of effective public sector reform projects was adopted. By operating this way, the original results of the evaluation findings became redefined and updated to fit the latest course of action.

8.7 Action Plan—Transformation Stage

The purpose of the final plenary session was to discuss the impact of the new findings on future public sector reform projects. For this purpose the workshop participants drafted, under the guidance of the moderators, an action plan under which all participants committed themselves to taking concrete measures and to applying their new insights to their particular frame of action (see Photo 25). This process also included the participation of the World Bank staff, who committed themselves to supporting the implementation of the country-specific action plans.



Photo 25 Action Planning
The workshop team leader (second from left) working on the action plan developed in real time by the workshop participants.

8.8 Brochure—Configuration Stage

For the purpose of configuring the newly reframed knowledge and its contextual application, the workshop results, including the different action plans, were summarized in *Lessons of a Decade of Public Sector Reform*:

Voices of African Client Stakeholders (IEG 2008e). The document reflects all relevant information about the event in an easily accessible and readable manner. It can be understood as an extension of and the actualization of the existing evaluation reports and was added as appendix to the four report Web sites. Furthermore, the findings were publicly disseminated at a press conference and through numerous interviews organized by IEG, with the participation of prominent workshop participants.

8.9 Final Comments and Evaluation

The different action plans developed in the transformation stage triggered a whole range of bilateral and multilateral follow-up activities, many of them directly supported by diverse World Bank units (IEG 2008e). Through this process, a number of small networks were created among countries committed to working together on particular subjects in public sector reform.

A further important product of the event was the brochure about the workshop results, which updated and complemented the existing four IEG evaluation reports from the perspective of eight African countries (IEG 2008e). This new knowledge was subsequently integrated into IEG's dissemination process, that is, in a learning event about public sector reform, organized by the World Bank's Middle East and North African Region unit immediately after the workshop. In a figurative way, this follow-up event is an example how a next new spin of the learning spiral is set in motion.

The workshop was reviewed by the participants in a Level One evaluation conducted at the end of the workshop. The results were remarkable because the average ratings were segmented according to the different participant groups: in a scale of 1 (very bad) to 5 (very good), the representatives from governments rated the *relevance of the workshop to the current work* the highest (4.8), followed by the nonprofit organizations (4.7) and the donor organizations (4.3). The average rating was 4.56.

In regard to the *overall usefulness of the activity*, members of governments rated the event 4.8, nonprofit organizations rated it 4.7, and donor organizations rated it 3.9. The average rating was 4.45. The workshop had also some long-term impact, as is seen in a feedback letter from an individual participant of the Ethiopian government more than one year after the event (see Box 5).

Box 5 Reflections from the Director of Planning and Programming Directorate, Ministry of Capacity Building of the Government of Ethiopia

I participated in the workshop as a team member of the delegation of the Ethiopian government. As head of Planning and Programming Directorate of the federal Ministry of Capacity Building in Ethiopia, I am very much engaged in the implementation of public sector reform and capacity building initiatives already under way in the country in various sectors at different tiers of government.

How the Ethiopian government embarked on the public sector reform and capacity building programs is best described with historical trajectories. The incumbent government came to power by overthrowing the former socialist military regime with armed struggle. This coincided with the end of the Cold War, economic governance reform toward a market economy, multiparty democratization ideology, glocalization (globalization and localization at the same time)—all happened worldwide in developed and developing countries alike. The Ethiopian government, with a new constitution, introduced federal arrangements mainly based on national identity/ethnicity, multiparty democracy, market economy, and decentralization and launched these almost at the same time in the early and mid-1990s. The underpinning principles of the current Ethiopian government policies are referred to as a mix of market economy, revolutionary democracy, and developmental state. These underpinning principles are considered basics for other government policies and strategies. Strategies were prepared by the Ethiopian government for rural and agricultural development, industrial and infrastructural development, and social development starting around the end of last decade. Capacity building and public sector reform programs were designed roughly at the same time to assist the effective implementation of these sectoral strategies. These reform programs have been under implementation for about a decade and a lot of stories can be told of their successes and challenges.

As a person closely engaged in this process for five or so years, I had various questions in mind, and of course many of them were recurring on different occasions at meetings with stakeholders. Some questions relate to political ownership and commitment; governance structure for leading,

(Box continues on the following page.)

Box 5 (continued)

coordinating, and managing public sector reform and capacity building initiatives; management of public sector reform in decentralized/federal systems where subnational governments maintain certain sovereignty; the role of institutional and human resources capacity to implement the reform; and the role of development partners. There are also basic questions related to the political economy of public sector reform: public sector reform for what (demand, purpose), who (drivers, targets), how (effective strategy), and when (timing, sequencing, sustainability).

The workshop was helpful in shedding light on questions like these by providing the opportunity to discuss experiences of other countries in Africa. Resource allocation from own source, committed governance structure to play a leadership role, and supporting rules and regulations are considered indicative of political ownership and commitment to the reform in a country. It was also emphasized during the workshop that institutional and human resources capacity plays a key role in the implementation of public sector reform. Participants in the workshop reiterated the need for deploying and retaining the requisite human resources in order to be able to effectively implement the reform. It was observed that even when the political ownership seems to be high, institutional and human resource capacity remain challenging in many African countries. This is what I feel is relevant here in Ethiopia as well.

Regarding the leadership and coordination structure of the reform, the participants took note of various possibilities that depended on the contextual environment. The Ethiopian government has organized a separate ministry in charge of initiating, leading, and coordinating the management of public sector reform. In Tanzania, a coordinating body was set up in the president's office, and the steering committee established for this purpose makes sure implementation and coordination of the reform in various sectoral ministries and agencies go smoothly. In Nigeria, state governments are said to be autonomous and normally are left to their own discretion. Development partners were expected to directly engage themselves with state governments in supporting the public sector reform initiatives in Nigeria.

Another learning point relates to the role of development partners. It was recommended that the World Bank and other development partners remain engaged with countries even when the political ownership and

Box 5 (continued)

commitment are lacking. The consensus by the participants was that the World Bank role needs to be leading with creative ideas and best practices, “particularly through technical support instead of dictating to governments using its financial power. I found this understanding very important in our case, as it provides an opportunity to maintain an engaged dialogue with development partners including the World Bank.

I feel the most important impact of the workshop has to do with the confidence it gave me in my role as a professional staff dealing with public sector reform in day-to-day operations. The experiences, success factors, and challenges I learned about during the workshop have given me the impetus to play a much larger role in the country’s public sector reform agenda.

Finally, I must say that I was very much impressed by the management of the workshop process, where an enormous number of lessons and future actions were covered only within the two days of the workshop. The workshop discussions and resulting materials will remain valuable for me and other practitioners of public sector reform in the Ethiopian government.

Ato Ahmed Mohammed Ali, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 12, 2010

