

# Evidence and Evaluation: the Australasian Evaluation Society's 2009 Conference, Canberra Australia

Précis of presentation

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## “Challenges in evaluating aid programs in PNG”

The Australia Papua New Guinea Incentive Fund experience of 'fitting' expected outcome indicators to completed projects and developing capacity in local staff.

### Introduction

*“More than ever, citizens and taxpayers expect to see the tangible results of development efforts. We will demonstrate that our actions translate into positive impacts on people’s lives. We will be accountable to each other and to our respective parliaments and governing bodies for these outcomes”.* (Accra Agenda for Action: 3<sup>rd</sup> High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, September 2008, point 10).

Ownership, harmonisation, alignment, results and mutual accountability are key factors in reforming the way aid is delivered and managed in PNG. This was reinforced by its own Declaration in Kavieng in 2008. Starting at the project level, evaluation is central to providing evidence of aid effectiveness and impact.

In Papua New Guinea monitoring and evaluation is growing in importance to measure aid effectiveness and as a performance management tool. Evaluation consultants need to be aware of the significant shifts in international development; the challenges to aid effectiveness and the conditions under which monitoring and evaluation is conducted in Papua New Guinea. While the tools for monitoring and evaluation are recognised across the board, the PNG environment and context makes it different.

### Snap shot of PNG

Papua New Guineans have relatively low life expectancy and high infant and maternal mortality. The population is geographically and culturally diverse<sup>1</sup> and service delivery is expensive and difficult. Over 80% of people live in poor rural conditions, often without easy access to potable water or power. Most rural communities lack quality health care, education and adequate communications or transport. Girls schooling comes second to that of boys: female literacy is 51%, compared to 63% for males. Violence against women is common and women have poor access to employment. The Incentive Fund addressed some of these issues as part of its programs.

### Background to the Australia Papua New Guinea Incentive Fund

After agreement between the PNG and Australian Governments, the Incentive Fund began in July 2000 and concluded in May 2009. Coffey International Development was contracted to implement and manage it. The activity was described as innovative and high risk, representing a new direction for delivering Australian aid to PNG.

The Incentive Fund goal was *“to support private and public sector organisations in PNG to participate in and contribute to national development in accord with the development policies of the PNG and Australian Governments”.* The development expectations for the Fund were to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/country/papua.cfm>

verify that PNG organisations could effectively deliver Australian aid<sup>2</sup> and to confirm that this aid to PNG was effective.

The Incentive Fund operated across 15 of the 20 provinces of PNG. Through the organisations it funded, it helped address rural and other disadvantaged communities. It also provided a range of sustainable outcomes linked to the Government of PNG's Medium Term Development Strategy. Overall, the Incentive Fund increased PNG participation in delivering and managing Australian aid in PNG. Approximately 69% of the total expenditure went to local PNG contractors, which meant most donor funds stayed in country and in communities.

Thirty-nine Programs and thirty-three organisations were funded over the nine years and funding ranged from K1million to K12.6million. Each Program was evaluated at completion and summary evaluation reports are located on the Incentive Fund web-site [[www.cidsharepoint.net/apngifund](http://www.cidsharepoint.net/apngifund)].

### Evaluation in the PNG context

*This presentation focuses on evolving evaluation practices in an AusAID funded program in Papua New Guinea.*

Rigid theories and approaches do not always deliver understanding about the impacts of aid projects on 'grass roots' communities. In PNG, evaluators must be flexible in both attitude and approach. Providing data that can be escalated into national and international reporting introduces a tension between the demands of standardization and flexibility.

Evaluators must understand and appreciate the importance of including beneficiaries as well as key stakeholders; de-mystifying processes and being culturally appropriate in their methods, techniques and language. Qualitative approaches are essential to PNG evaluations, especially in seeking, identifying and assessing unexpected outcomes and lessons learnt. Alternative and inclusive approaches and 'doing the best you can' are appropriate strategies in developing an evaluation culture in Papua New Guinea.

There are many inherent difficulties in evaluation work in PNG. In particular, there is a lack of authoritative or reliable quantitative and baseline data; difficulties in communication, transport and access to rural and remote areas; differing cultural expectations and understandings about the use of evaluation, and other cultural and linguistic differences. These difficulties often limit the range of people able to participate in an evaluation or demand a desk research approach without evidence gathered directly from beneficiaries of a program.

### The evolving focus at APNGIF

The Incentive Fund faced other evaluation difficulties. Prior to 2006, all programs had agreed outputs or performance indicators (PI) that funded organisations needed to achieve. No programs had indicators for the development outcomes they were expected to deliver. The Incentive Fund had to evaluate Programs against the PI soon after completion and, therefore, without the chance to gauge their longer term impacts and sustainability.

In 2006, an Independent Review Team recommended the Incentive Fund 'retrofit' development outcome indicators (DOI) to all programs, and then test the indicators by measuring against them. The Incentive Fund appointed Jennifer Rush as Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist with responsibility to re-write the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, develop these outcome indicators for all programs and to ensure that the required evaluations were conducted. There were five months for the first two tasks, and 15 months (to February 2008) to conduct 29 evaluations. A further 10 programs would reach completion after this date, and would be evaluated at completion against all PI and DOI.

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<sup>2</sup> Interest from PNG organisations was extremely high. The APNGIF received 4340 enquiries, appraised 338 concept papers and 217 full proposals, put 62 proposals to the Management Group for consideration. Thirty-nine (39) were approved.

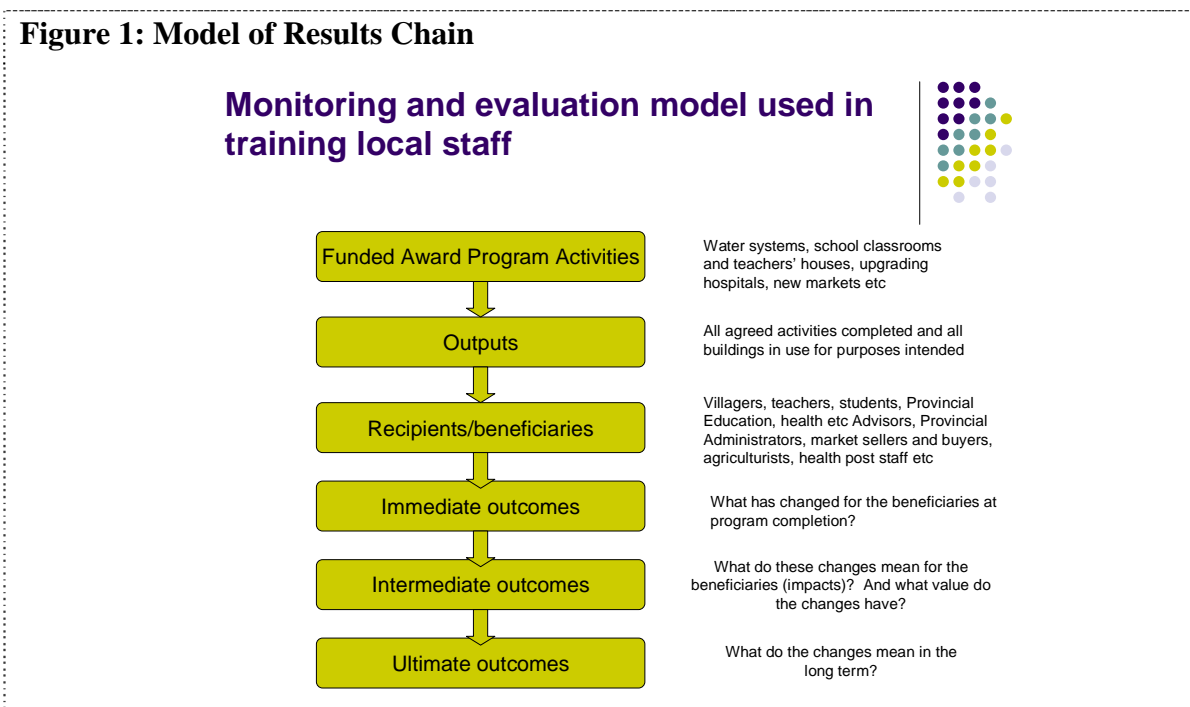
There were four Development Specialists including the specialist Evaluator and five Papua New Guinean support staff. We had a challenge!

It was clear that a ‘testing objectives’ approach<sup>3</sup> offered the best and most practical solution to the evaluation task. The requirement to “*accurately determine the extent to which stipulated objectives have been reached*” would be difficult in the environment and at an early post-project completion stage. However, funded organisations were not going to be held responsible for achieving the outcomes “after the event”. The Incentive Fund just had to go and see if the outcomes were there.

**We recognised:**

- the difficulty of having no baselines and the paucity of reliable quantitative data in PNG;
- the need for culturally appropriate methods including *tok pisin* and gender equity;
- the need to extend the range of key stakeholders and beneficiaries involved in Incentive Fund evaluations, thereby incurring the need for more resources;
- the need to include questions on gender participation and HIV/AIDS awareness; and
- the efficacy of the results chain model<sup>4</sup> (see below) and concomitant qualitative data collection as a focus.

**Figure 1: Model of Results Chain**



Fifteen of the evaluations immediately followed program completion) and 14 were of programs completed for at least a year. In effect we would be looking for impacts rather than long term outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> See Jess Dart: *Six Normative Approaches to Evaluation*

<sup>4</sup> See Office of the Auditor General of Canada: “*Reporting on outcomes: setting performance expectations and telling performance stories*”. April 2003, p8

**On completion**

Outputs



**After 1 year**

Early impacts



**2-10 years**

Longer term outcomes

**To develop the indicators we:**

- reviewed the successful Program proposals and their objectives;
- read the Development Specialists’ appraisals and the Management Group approval criteria;
- established program objectives’ relationships to the Government of PNG Medium Term Development Strategy (2005-2010);
- Checked with the National Monitoring Authority to see what existing indicators were being used and might be utilised to facilitate reporting to the GoPNG ( See annex A);
- ‘brain stormed’ with Development Specialists, in some cases writing proxies to overcome data scarcity and difficulties in measuring.

The program objectives were the starting point. Within these, funded organisations had expressed their program ‘dream’, the outcome they wanted to achieve. The program proposals were thorough and comprehensive, as were the appraisals done by the Incentive Fund Development Specialists. An example of an early Program Results chain and new indicators now follows. The program – an upgrade of facilities at the PNG Maritime College – was completed in 2003. The looseness of the impact and outcome indicators reflects the PNG environment.

**Table 1: PNG Maritime College results chain approach**

<b>Organisational goal and objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The goal of the program is “<i>to hasten progress towards maritime self-sufficiency by enhancing the ability of the PNGMC to respond to increased demands for maritime training</i>”<sup>5</sup>.</li></ul> <p>The program has four major objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to increase access to PNGMC courses by PNG nationals, particularly women, leading to wider participation in maritime industries;</li><li>• to improve the ability of PNGMC to enrol and accommodate students in maritime courses;</li><li>• to enhance the quality of learning by exposing students to current maritime technology and systems; and</li><li>• to enhance the quality of teaching by providing quality facilities for staff to research, develop and present courses.</li></ul>
<b>Activities outlined in performance indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demolishing ablutions blocks, junior dormitory and fire-fighting block</li><li>• Building new ablution block, junior and senior accommodation, recreation room and fire-fighting complex</li><li>• Refurbishing intermediate dormitory, kitchen/dining area and staff office area</li><li>• Addressing sewage, pipe and tank work</li><li>• Upgrading wiring in college buildings, install computer network and set up student ID and records system</li></ul>
<b>Beneficiaries</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• shipping companies;</li><li>• staff and students;</li><li>• Madang Province and PNG Maritime industry;</li><li>• National and international shipping;</li></ul>

<sup>5</sup> The proposal noted that it takes about 7 years for a person to be fully qualified as a seafarer: “*to attain Class 1 status in the maritime industry, with a high attrition rate as personnel migrate to the shore, the project must have a direct impact on the industry by increasing the numbers of qualified personnel available to crew PNG ships*”.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• other Pacific nations; and</li> <li>• National Maritime Safety Authority.</li> </ul>
<b>Immediate evaluation (September 2003)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase of student Officers from 85 to 117 in 2003, target of 250 in 2008.</li> <li>• Increase in number of Ratings students 76 to 143 with target of 130 in 2008.</li> <li>• Increase number of women from 10, target 20 in 2008.</li> <li>• Increase number enrolled from 240 to 260 in 2003, target 380 in 2008.</li> <li>• Increase overseas student intake from 6 to 10 in 2003, target 20 in 2008.</li> <li>• Increased revenue from international students from K0.9m in 2002, to K1.25m in 2003 – towards a target K1.9m in 2008.</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate impact indicators (new) (October 2006)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of satisfaction of PNG shipping companies with the availability and quality of PNG and other maritime workers graduating from PMGMC</li> <li>• Extent of satisfaction of PNGMC staff and graduates of increased number and quality of courses at PNGMC, as the basis for employment in maritime industry</li> <li>• Extent of impact on Madang Province from the program as narrated by Provincial Government officials</li> <li>• Improved equity of access by women to traditionally male jobs</li> </ul>
<b>New long term development outcome indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extent of contribution to, and impact on, maritime self sufficiency<sup>6</sup> in PNG</li> </ul>

### Availability of data

The following data was available for the 2006 evaluation:

- Maritime College enrolment data (provided in mid 2007);
- Incentive Fund monitoring and evaluation data;
- empirical evidence from interviews with PNG shipping companies, PNGMC staff and students, National Maritime Safety Authority; Madang Provincial Government officials and Council of Women, and international consultants involved in providing technical assistance during upgrade;
- reportage from *Skilling the Pacific*, Richard Johnson, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, 2007.

Understanding the restraints within PNG was essential to the process of developing the necessary indicators as well as a timetable for the evaluations<sup>7</sup>. Acknowledging the difficulties, the Incentive Fund triangulated evaluation methods to capture inputs from key stakeholders and beneficiaries. It used quantitative data wherever it was considered reliable and collected stories directly from people whose lives and livelihoods were influenced by the programs. This approach acknowledged the oral traditions of PNG and substantiated the ‘hard’ data included in reports.

### Capacity building for local staff - de-mystifying and training

The size of the task – evaluating 29 programs within a relatively short period of time – presented an opportunity which matched the Incentive Fund philosophy of capacity building for local staff. All staff expressed interest in being part of evaluation teams and in undergoing practical skills training to enable them to go on site visits and interview beneficiaries and stakeholders.

The training included an initial de-mystifying exercise from *Everyday Evaluations on the Run*, (Yolande Wadsworth). Staff confidence rose. Training moved on to how to ask questions, listening, planning field visits, identifying informants, cultural and confidentiality protocols and then to developing questions.

<sup>6</sup> Increased number of trained maritime pilots, harbour masters, stevedores, maritime teachers, surveyors and administrators, ships officers and engineers.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, for one Program a 12 hour boat trip was needed around the east and south coasts of East New Britain, and could only be reached late in the year, when the winds were abating. Other programs involved visits to remote villages and communities and long drives over extremely poor roads. There was often a lot of walking as well.

Teams of three were nominated for each evaluation, taking into account language needs, gender representation and home Provinces for the local staff. Team leaders were nominated and local staff took turns at this role. They led the other team members in planning sessions, arranging with the funded organisations and Provincial authorities for village or program site visits, interviews and focus groups. Each team included one expatriate Development Specialists to ensure support for local staff, if needed.

As well as the Incentive Fund staff the PNG Department of National Planning and Monitoring was invited to send an officer as an integral part of the evaluation team. This provided much appreciated practical evaluation experience to key NDPM staff. Finally, the team included an AusAID observer who had received training from the Incentive Fund Evaluator, on observer protocols.

A comprehensive travel schedule was devised to ensure that all fieldwork could be covered, leaving time for team debriefings and report meetings. At a workshop to celebrate their achievements, local staff presented on what they had learnt through the exercise. Following is the presentation from Evelyn Oli, Incentive Fund Assistant Project Accountant.

*Monitoring and Evaluation Presentation –  
Alotau General Hospital*



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## Preparation

- Familiarization of the Program's Objectives and Development Outcomes
- Identified beneficiaries E.g., Hospital Administration, Doctors, Nurses, Patients, Guardians, Provincial Division of Health and Provincial Council of Women
- Interviews arranged - one team member
- Questionnaires prepared
  - ✓ *Team discussions*
  - ✓ *Draft questions*
  - ✓ *Final version*
- What I learnt
  - ✓ *Importance of knowing what the hospital was trying to achieve*
  - ✓ *How to identify beneficiaries*
  - ✓ *Short simple questions best*
  - ✓ *Importance of relating questions to objectives*
  - ✓ *Interviews will vary according to the nature of program.*
  - ✓ *Understanding health issues in Milne Bay Province*
  - ✓ *Logistics can be difficult*

## In the Field

- Separated interview responsibilities
- I learnt a number of things**
- Flexibility and sensitivity necessary
    - ✓ Doctors and nurses very busy
    - ✓ Sick patients cannot easily talk
    - ✓ Adapt to group interviews
    - ✓ Be sensitive to gender (female interviewer important)
  - Importance of listening
  - Watch out for facial expressions – (be ready to rephrase questions)
  - Be observant
  - Importance of confidentiality
  - Make the interviewee comfortable
  - Write down everything
  - Get any quantitative data while in the field



Evaluators

## Analysis & reporting

In the office we:

- Wrote up interviews
- Discussed and identified key points in relation to objectives
- Wrote report

What I realized

- A lot of common feelings were expressed
- Some unexpected opinions
- Data promised does not always arrive – need to follow up



## Conclusion

The process of 'retro-fitting' expected development outcome indicators to completed programs raised a number of arguments from professional Evaluators as against best evaluation practice. However, the organisations were not to be held responsible for achieving the previously undeclared outcomes. The exercise was to try to provide evidence of impacts from the Incentive Fund approach to managing aid funds through local organisations. The demands on time and resources were enormous. However through taking a very pragmatic approach, using a simple evaluation model and including capacity building for local staff, the Incentive Fund succeeded in providing strong evidence of positive development outcomes for many communities spread across PNG.

In a further attempt to de-mystify the evaluation process and point to the value of understanding outcomes, the Incentive Fund produced a book of 26 stories from the funded programs. The book has been favourably received in PNG and elsewhere. (1241 words plus 1161 at page 3 = 2402)

**ANNEXE A: Example of Linkages between MTDS, MDG and National Sector goals, and a small number of APNGIF Programs**

	Sector Policy area/program	MTDS/ National policy documents	MDG	Sectoral documents & legislation	NMA suggested indicator	APNGIF Program
<b>ECONOMIC</b>						
1	Export crops promotion	MTDS expenditure priority 1			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Volume of palm oil exported from Province</li> <li>No. of farmers involved in palm oil</li> </ul>	006 Kulu bridge (export) 019 OPIC
3	Improve subsistence agriculture	MTDS expenditure priority 2	1	NHP 1996-2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of farmers using new technology</li> <li>No. of extension programs and activities</li> </ul>	002 SA PNG 004 Paiam Market 013 WV Madang 018 Uni of Vudal 031 Mt Hagen market
<b>SOCIAL</b>						
4	Primary school – access	MTDS expenditure priority 3	2	NEP priority 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No., type, location of education facilities in Province and % operational</li> <li>Enrolment of school age children as % of school aged population</li> <li>No. of community &amp; primary schools fully operational with required number of teachers, school facilities, teachers' houses &amp; school materials</li> <li>Quality of required school buildings and facilities</li> </ul>	001 SA PNG 006 Kulu River bridge 008 Pomio Prov. Ed. 010 Simbu 030 Simbu (2)
7	Vocational education	MTDS expenditure priority 4		NEP priority 3		041 Hohola Youth Development Centre
	Secondary education			NEP 1996-2004 (Secondary targets S1,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total number completing G12 as % of those starting G9</li> <li>% of F students completing G12 (of all</li> </ul>	007 Marionville 016 Kerowagi HS

				S2, S4) NEP 2005-2014 Education Reform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students)</li> <li>No of F students completing Grade 12 compared to no. of female students enrolling G9</li> <li>No. of secondary schools fully operational</li> <li>Quality of required school buildings and facilities</li> <li>No. of teachers' houses</li> </ul>	017 Hagita 022 Tari 026 Notre Dame 024 Mercy HS 033 SA Ed (2) 036 Tapini
<b>GENDER</b>						
8	Gender equity	MTDS expenditure priority 3 Constitution of PNG – Pillar 2	3	Accelerated Girls education in PNG Action Plan 2004  NEP 1996-2004 Target 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total M/F students completing Grade 8 as % of all students starting</li> </ul>	007 Marionville 008 Pomio Dist. Ed. 010 Simbu 016 Kerowagi HS 024 Mercy HS 026 Notre Dame HS
<b>HEALTH</b>						
9	Safe motherhood – care	MTDS expenditure priority 5	5	NHP priority 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduced no. of mothers dying during labour</li> <li>Supervised deliveries as % of all births</li> </ul>	013 WV Madang 025 Alotau hospital
11	Immunisation	MTDS expenditure priority 5	6	MHP 2001-2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of children fully immunised</li> <li>% of children &lt;5 yrs immunised</li> </ul>	012 IMR 013 WV Madang
16	Rural health – services	MTDS expenditure priority 5		NHP priority 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ratio of population per health facility</li> <li>% of health facilities fully operational</li> <li>No. of facilities fully maintained and operational</li> <li>Health facilities with sink, water as % of all health facilities</li> </ul>	002 SA PNG 014 Lutheran nurses 028 SA PNG 006 Kulu River bridge 032 Simbu Church health

	Health sanitation	-	MTDS expenditure priority 5		NHP priority 7		012 WV Madang 021 ADRA 023 WV Buka
	Health water/wells	-	MTDS expenditure priority 5		NHP 2001-2010 (Environmental health)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No. of communities with clean water supply systems</li> <li>• No. of water supply projects completed</li> </ul>	002 SA PNG 013 WV Madang 021 ADRA 023 WV Buka 036 Tapini community