

COLOMBIA: EVALUATION PROCESSES – EXPERIENCES TO SHARE

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INTRODUCTION

Through its Public Policy Evaluation Office (DEPP), Colombia's National Planning Department (DNP) continually seeks out best practices and new challenges to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation components of the National System for Evaluation of Management and Results (SINERGIA).

The evaluation component develops the concept of 'effective evaluations', which aims to ensure that findings and recommendations are useful for policy decisions. This concept is based on the value chain tool, which helps establish evaluations' requirements, hypotheses and scope by drawing on the knowledge of public policy processes (e.g. inputs, procedures, outputs, outcomes and impacts). One of the virtues of effective evaluation is the active participation of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, which leads to the rapid implementation of the evaluation's recommendations and helps legitimize the evaluation.

Since 2010, the DEPP has followed a standardized process that begins with identifying and selecting evaluations and ends with monitoring the recommendations' implementation. Developing evaluation processes represents a significant achievement in that the parameterization process provides guidelines and methodological and technical information for entities and the general public at the national, departmental and municipal levels. This contributes to widespread understanding of the evaluation and promotes evaluations of public policies.

In this context, the Strategic Policy Evaluations process is composed of five sub-processes. Each of these sub-processes is the product of collaborations between the implementing entity(ies), DNP and DEPP technical management. Since 2006, this model has led to the completion of 58 SINERGIA-led evaluations and the compilation of 241 evaluation exercises

by actors such as academic institutions, research centres and public entities. The SINERGIA database, Evaluation Radar (*Radar de Evaluaciones*) includes these evaluation exercises.

The DEPP has a broad portfolio of assessment methodologies that meet the needs of each intervention. The methodologies are defined during the initial stages of the evaluation process after the selection of the evaluation.

Through technical cooperation, the DEPP has received contributions from state and international institutions that aim to improve public policy evaluation methodologies. For example, the Peer to Peer programme, developed by the United Kingdom and sponsored by The World Bank, ensures an institutional framework for controlling, monitoring and implementing public policies, primarily those related to delivering public services.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF SINERGIA

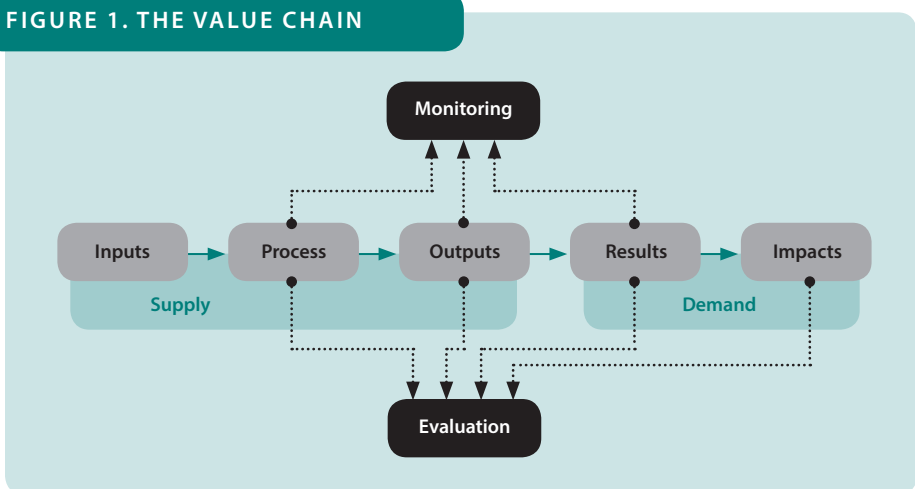
With the goal of strengthening SINERGIA's mission to support the government in staying on track and improving performance as a means to achieve its public policy objectives, the decisive task of achieving conceptual and operational coordination of monitoring and evaluation was undertaken two years ago.

In order to maximize coordination, SINERGIA made precise public policy knowledge the cornerstone of its operations. Thus, it developed the knowledge necessary to carry out its responsibilities based on the theory of change and the value chain.

A complete monitoring and evaluation of public policies requires a clear understanding the policies' background and the transformation processes that benefit society.

The value chain is divided into supply and demand for public goods. On one hand, there are the inputs, processes and products, and on the other, the short-term results or outcomes

FIGURE 1. THE VALUE CHAIN



and long-term results or impacts. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial for decision-making along the value chain.

Based on the needs of the Government of Colombia, four characteristics frame the evaluation of public policies:

- **Oriented towards decision-making:** an evaluation is considered effective if it enables decisions to take action to improve the public policies evaluated;
- **Standardized processes:** clearly defining the assessed product chain increases the probability that the assessment will be effective;
- **Permanent support:** technical supervision of evaluations enables results that are based on evidence and not on external evaluators' biases; and
- **Stakeholder participation:** stakeholder involvement (including programme managers and public policy formulators) at the outset of the design process increases evaluations' effectiveness. Further, the evaluation gains legitimacy to the extent that stakeholders have been part of the process and the evaluation results are shared with them.

To implement this framework, SINERGIA developed a subsystem focused on evaluations. SISDEVAL, the National System of Evaluations, is based on three premises:

- **Invest to know:** the depth of the analysis of evaluations is directly related to their cost;
- **Effective evaluations:** since 2010, the Government of Colombia has carried out evaluations based on a process outline. Such processes are included within the Quality Management System of the DNP; and
- **Evaluation Radar:** the DEPP and other national and regional entities carry out evaluation studies, which are vital inputs for decision-making.

THE EFFECTIVE EVALUATION PROCESS

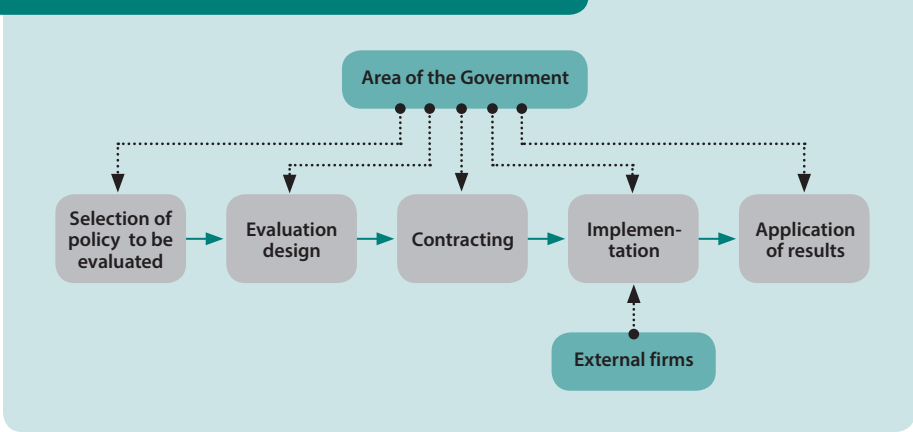
In a context that seeks to improve and search out better citizen information, DEPP and DNP incorporated the Effective Public Policy Evaluations process into its Quality Management System.

The Effective Evaluation Process involves the national government throughout the course of evaluation implementation (see Figure 2). As such, external consulting firms conduct the implementation phase. Stakeholders thus participate throughout these processes in the design and implementation of the public policy to be evaluated. This participation is crucial because it is directly related to the legitimacy of evaluation results.

The five phases of the Effective Evaluation Process are:

- 1) Selection of policy to be evaluated;
- 2) Evaluation design;
- 3) Contracting
- 4) Implementation; and
- 5) Application of results.

FIGURE 2. EFFECTIVE EVALUATION PROCESS



1) Selection of the policy to be evaluated

The initial phase of the evaluation process, selecting the policy to evaluate, defines the evaluation agenda. The agenda comprises the set of strategic policies to be evaluated for a given period of time (one or multiple years).

The DEPP manages a selective evaluation system, framed within a system defined by supply and demand. This phase begins by identifying strategic public policies defined within the National Development Plan. It then reviews the evaluation commitments of National Economic and Social Policy Council documents⁴ and those set during the country's credit operations with multilateral entities.⁵ Finally, requests from decentralized and regional entities are accepted and prioritized, leading to evaluations of select policies of those entities.

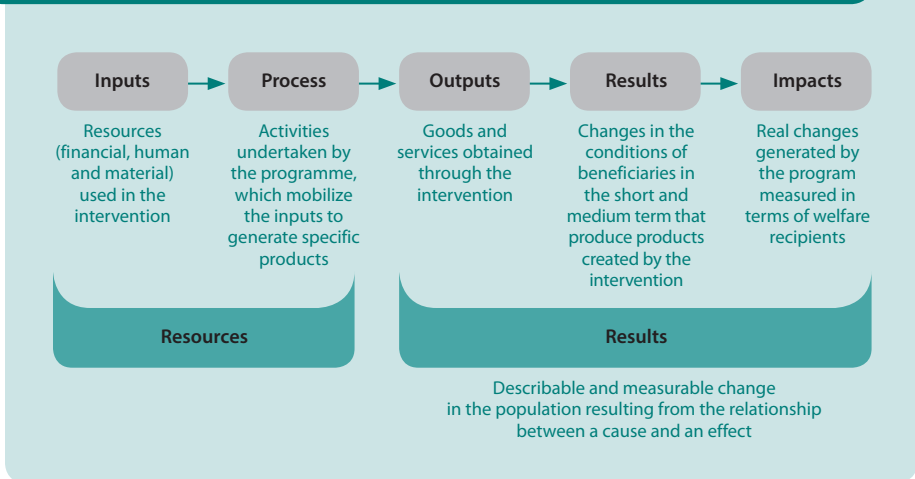
After selecting policies for evaluation, they are prioritized in the DNP Steering Committee. To legitimize the evaluation agenda in all spheres of government, the agenda is presented to the National Economic and Social Policy Council. Once approved, the agenda is published and disseminated to government actors and the evaluation community.⁶ Finally, the evaluations are defined by government agreement and respond to UNDP strategic priorities.

4 The National Economic and Social Policy Council is conceived of as a technical entity in charge of formulating public policies and making decisions tied to economic and social planning (e.g. approving the Annual Operation Plan for Investment). In this sense, as policy makers are responsible for allocating investment resources, it has the ability to set evaluation priorities. A National Economic and Social Policy Council document is a technical instrument of coordination and planning through which the government draws economic and social lines. Source: SISCONPES.

6 Regarding the relationship with the Multilateral Bank, in addition to channeling resources for evaluations based on international borrowing, Colombia is exploring the development of memorandums of understanding with multilateral banks so that the design of evaluations associated with the operation are part of the evaluations agenda and fulfill this double purpose, serving the goals of the credit transaction and public policy goals pursued by the government.

7 For the 2011 evaluation agenda (Spanish-language only), see <<http://www.dnp.gov.co/PortalWeb/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=KAUDYCxgOho%3d&tabid=1157>>.

FIGURE 3. VALUE CHAIN AS THE BASIS OF THE THEORY OF CHANGE



Source: Adapted from Menon, S., J. Karl and K. Wingnaraja, 2009.

2) Evaluation Design

The evaluation scope and methodology are defined during the design phase. Before devising the methodological approach, there is an in-depth study of the theory of change behind the public policy (see Figure 3).

The links of the chain represent the causes and effects of public policies. This enables identifying the interrelated goods offered by the state and the impacts sought for societal welfare, and defining service bottlenecks (which in turn defines the need for an evaluation). After the hypothesis has been set, questions for the evaluation are formulated, and the methodology⁷ necessary to respond to the proposed scope is devised. Once the evaluation methodology in place, the resources necessary for the evaluation (e.g. staff, schedule and cost) are determined.

3) Contracting

The consulting firm is selected during the contracting phase. Based on the design selected for the evaluation, terms of reference are developed, the selection process is opened and tenders are received. The firm with the best staff, experience in similar projects and technical proposal is selected.

4) Implementation

The selected consulting firm conducts the evaluation's implementation phase. As the consulting firm develops this phase, the government plays an active and vital role, ensuring that the implementation is conducted according to the scope defined during the evaluation

7 SINERGIA currently applies five assessment methodologies, each of which is represented by a link on the value chain: Evaluation of Operations, Institutional, Executive, Results and Impact.

design. For this phase, teams of stakeholders (evaluation monitoring committees) responsible for discussing and establishing concepts for evaluation products are established.

5) Application of results

After the consulting firm delivers its products, the evaluation enters the application of results phase. The goal of this phase is to disseminate evaluation results through official channels to decision makers and stakeholders so that the results serve as inputs and feedback to the public policy cycle.

This phase is implemented through different communication mechanisms. The consulting firm provides one of the mechanisms, a series of summary sheets (written in simple and clear language) that consolidate the evaluation results. The consulting firm also develops audio-visual supports to complement the summary sheets.

In addition to dissemination agreements, a document is developed containing the conclusions and recommendations to be implemented. An agreement with the evaluated policy's executing agency is established in order to ensure that the agency implements the evaluation's recommendations in accordance with best practices and that the evaluation contributes to improved interventions.

The communication strategies vary according to the target audience. In line with The World Bank document, 'The Road to Results',⁸ the audience and products are defined in order to devise an outreach strategy for the evaluations. To this end, SINERGIA has defined a series of communication products to promote evaluation use: technical evaluation sheets, awareness-raising meetings and publishing the results in widely circulated print media (e.g. 'Public Policy Bulletin' and DNP and SINERGIA Web sites).

In 2011, evaluation dissemination was achieved through several different communication strategies (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED TO DISSEMINATE EVALUATIONS IN 2011

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY	NUMBER OF EVALUATIONS
Publication of most relevant results on the SINERGIA Web site	22
Dissemination of results through the 'Política Pública Hoy' bulletin	2
Awareness-raising meetings with stakeholders	7
Dissemination of results through the publication of press releases in the DNP Portal and the Rebecca	2

8 Morra, L. and R.C. Rist, 2009.

These strategies have enabled stakeholders and decision makers involved in the programmes to know and assume ownership of the evaluation as a key management input. The strategies have also provided civil society with an understanding of programme results and access to information that for years has been confidential, leading to an increase in levels of political control. This has contributed to promoting managerial accountability and transparency.

In operational terms, evaluation results and recommendations have improved key decision-making in programme performance through expansion, redesign and adopting good management practices.

A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE EVALUATION: EVALUATION OF THE AGRO INGRESO SEGURO PROGRAMME

What is the *Agro Ingreso Seguro* programme?

Agro Ingreso Seguro (AIS) is a Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MADR) programme. The programme's goals are to protect the income of producers affected by external markets and to improve competition in the national agricultural sector in a time of economic internationalization. This programme was implemented under the criteria of Law 1133 of 2007, regulated by Decrees 2594 of 2007 and 3064 of 2008, and as a strategic project in the '2006-2010 Development Plan'.

In accordance with Law 1133, the AIS programme budget since 2008 must be at least 500,000 million Colombian Pesos (roughly US\$277,000), adjusted for inflation, equivalent to approximately 60 percent of MADR investment resources. Over 90 percent of the resources assigned to the programme are implemented in the APC, which includes the Rural Capitalization Incentive, the Special Credit Line, the Technical Assistance Incentive and the call for irrigation and drainage, evaluation instruments contracted⁹ by the MADR with the technical support of the DNP.

BOX 1. AGRO INGRESO SEGURO EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The AIS evaluation made important recommendations, which were accepted and implemented by the programme managers. The evaluation noted:

- The importance of technical assistance to improve the productivity of small producers (only 10.8 percent of the beneficiaries evaluated had technical assistance); and
- There was no implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system (which was designed in the baseline), demonstrating the absence of continuous and relevant information.

With the restructuring of the AIS, a new program was created called Rural Development with Equity. The program includes some of the evaluation's recommendations in its approach:

- Targeting small and medium producers;
- Promoting cooperatives and economies of scale;
- Integral support; and
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

Objective of the Evaluation

The general objective of the evaluation was to determine the impacts of the AIS programme.

Methodology and information gathering

AIS programme evaluation components integrate aspects relevant to the assessment of aggregated impact policy. **Efficiency** was measured through monitoring system indicators, **effectiveness** was determined through an evaluation of impacts during the quantitative and qualitative phases of the evaluation, and **strategy** was assessed according to information provided by departmental distribution matrices.

Main conclusions

Programme management and results

- MADR has not set up a programme monitoring system and therefore is not generating continuous and relevant decision-making information.

Programme impacts

- Small agricultural producers increased their unit cost of production, reduced investment levels and despite increased revenues, failed to positively impact net income;
- The AIS programme did not impact the use of technical assistance, except in the case of large producers and some companies;
- There was no evidence of the systematic use of training for producer households;
- There was evidence of increased agricultural machinery use by companies and households with permanent crops; and
- There were positive impacts on technological innovations (such as improved seeds) for the beneficiaries of irrigation and drainage.

Main recommendations

- To define sectoral instruments, AIS incentives should be coordinated with other programmes;
- AIS should incorporate geographical considerations and focus on resource allocations;
- AIS should avoid dispersion of resources and ensure minimum efforts to support producers (preferably small partners);
- AIS should structure support programmes for small producers from the initial phase through to the commercial and marketing phases where possible;
- For small producers, associative processes should be encouraged as a means to facilitate access to services (e.g. training, technical assistance, transportation and marketing) that correspond to off-farm activities that typically require economies of scale, particularly when local supply of these services is limited; and

- The national government should strengthen land titling activities; secure land titles stimulate investment and development of agricultural activity in general.

CONCLUSION

The Colombian experience indicates that an evaluation is effective if its conclusions and recommendations are taken into account during decision-making processes. Elements identified to ensure this effectiveness include:

1. Standardized evaluation processes;
2. A highly qualified team to lead the evaluation process in order to raise the technical level of the evaluation;
3. An inter-sectoral evaluation agenda with areas and policies that are strategic for the government;
4. A participatory process with government actors involved in the policy evaluation;
5. A broad portfolio of assessment methodologies that respond to the needs of the policy to be evaluated; and
6. Use of different communication mechanisms to provide decision makers with access to evaluation results.

Colombia is assuming important challenges with regards to monitoring and evaluation of public policies. This stance strengthens the national model by constantly seeking opportunities to improve practices by monitoring the implementation of an evaluation's recommendations. These processes are augmented by stakeholders' active participation and efforts to expand the monitoring and evaluation model to the regional level as applied to specific contexts by local authorities. To improve the system, the implementation of monitoring and evaluation crowdsourcing and cloud sourcing is also being pursued as an information management tool to innovate and better connect more stakeholders to the system.

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