

Universidad de Los Andes

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Expanding the Range of Tools for Increased Utilization of M&E in the Colombian Government

One Day Seminar



**Enhancing Evaluation
Utilization**

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Session outline

1. The widespread underutilization of evaluations
2. Why are evaluations underutilized?
3. Examples of evaluation utilization:
SINERGIA, Colombia and the World Bank
“Influential Evaluations” study
4. Ways to strengthen utilization

1. The under-utilization of evaluation findings

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- Evidence of underutilization in both industrialized and developing countries
 - Developing countries
 - Concern from donor agencies and government
 - Civil society concerned about accountability
 - Industrial nations
 - Extensive references in the literature
 - Weiss [1977], Wholey [1970], GAO [1992], Patton [1997]

Underutilization of 3 major US evaluations

GAO follow-up on 3 major U.S. child-care, health and education evaluations in 1995 found:

- All evaluations under-utilized:
- Lack of information not the problem
- Information not organized and communicated effectively
- Did not reach appropriate committee members
- Too highly aggregated

[Patton 1997 p. 9]

Evaluation utilization is a particular challenge when working under budget and time constraints

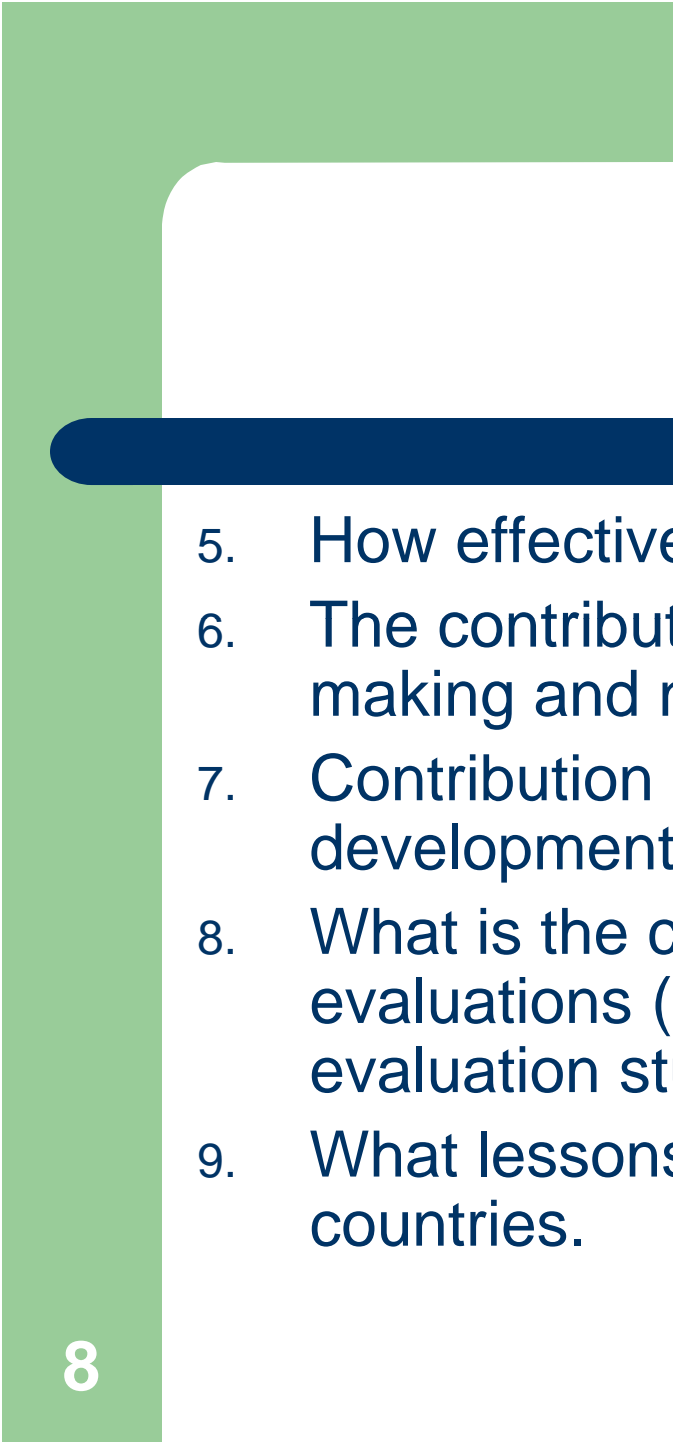

- Implementing agencies often under-staffed and no time to read reports or attend briefings
- No money to bring staff together for briefings/training
- Budget constraints on follow-up actions
- Time constraints make it difficult to deliver report when it is needed
- Political constraints affect acceptance of findings

Questions concerning evaluation utilization in Colombia

SINERGIA is recognized as one of the most innovative national evaluation systems. But the following questions must be asked concerning its utilization and impacts:

1. To what extent does the President's support for SIGOB influence the adoption of M&E by Ministries and sub-national agencies?
2. Use of government evaluation systems by civil society
3. How well does the SIGOB monitoring system help explain over or under-utilization of resources?
4. The contribution of present evaluation systems to developing results-based management.

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5. How effective are DEPP dissemination tools?
 6. The contribution of SINERGIA to budget decision-making and national planning
 7. Contribution of SINERGIA to 4 year national development plan to be submitted in November.
 8. What is the correct balance between in-depth evaluations (i.e. Familias en Accion), rapid evaluation studies and SIGOB-type monitoring?
 9. What lessons can be drawn from Chile and other countries.

2. Why are evaluations under-utilized?

Lack of ownership

- Evaluation focus and design are determined by donor agencies or outside “experts” with little real input from client.
- The “goals definition game” alienates clients from the start
- Limited consultation with, and feedback to, clients.
- Evaluation seen as a threat

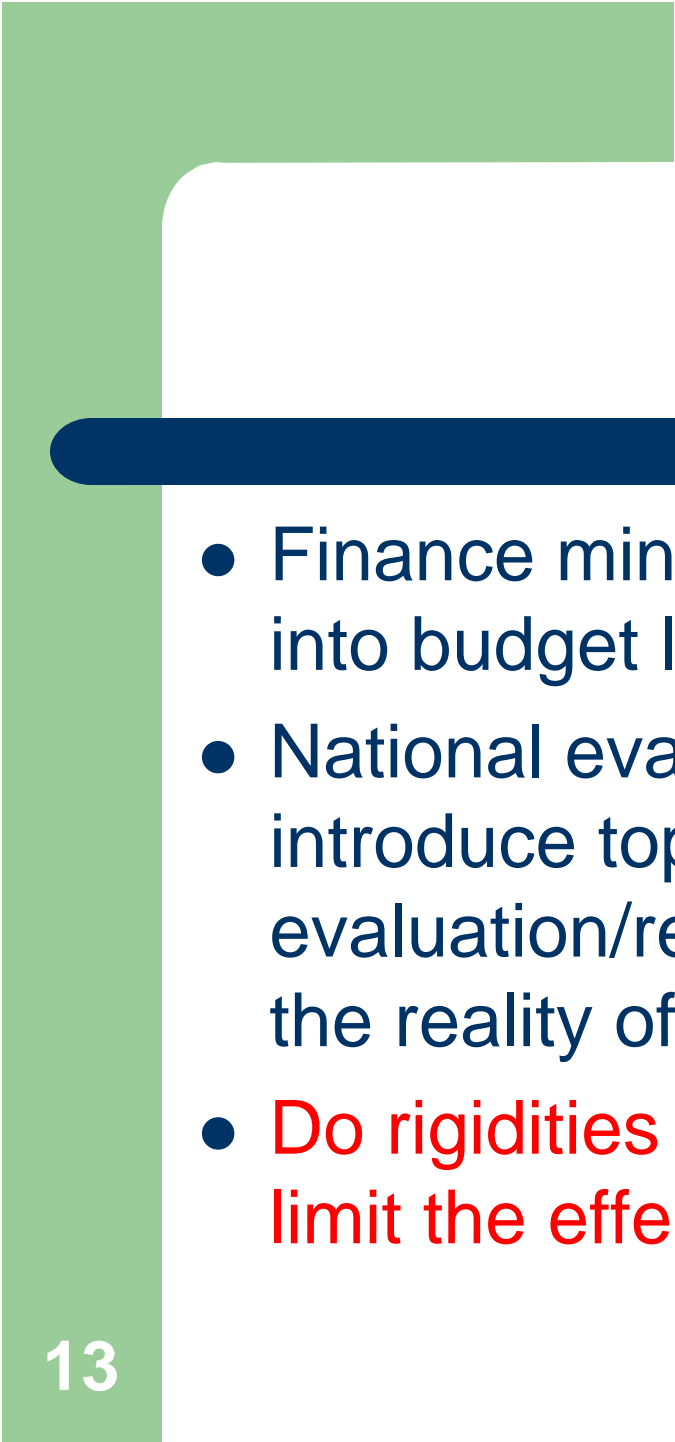

Poor communication between evaluator and client

- Clients are not kept in the loop
- Client does not like the evaluator's communication style
- Language problems
- Conceptual problems
- The “objectivity” paradigm limits contact and communication between evaluator and client
- Client does not share information with other stakeholders

Lack of flexibility and responsiveness to client needs

- Rigid design that cannot be adapted to client needs or changing circumstances
- Quasi-experimental design that cannot adapt indicators and data collection methods to changing circumstances.
- “Objective” stance of evaluator limits interaction with clients.
- Timing: too early or too late

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- Finance ministries try to force evaluations into budget line items
 - National evaluation systems sometimes introduce top-down, uniform evaluation/reporting systems not reflecting the reality of different agencies
 - Do rigidities in Colombian budget systems limit the effective use of evaluation?

Resource constraints

- Budget constraints
 - Data collection
 - Data analysis
 - Bringing staff together to participate in the evaluation process
 - Translation into local languages
- Too many demands on client and stakeholders' time
- Time constraints
- Limited local expertise

Relevance

- The evaluation does not address priority information needs of clients
- Much of the information is not considered useful
- The information is not analyzed and presented in the way that clients want:
 - Too detailed
 - Too general

3. Examples of evaluation utilization

Examples from
SINERGIA and from the
World Bank “Influential
Evaluations” study

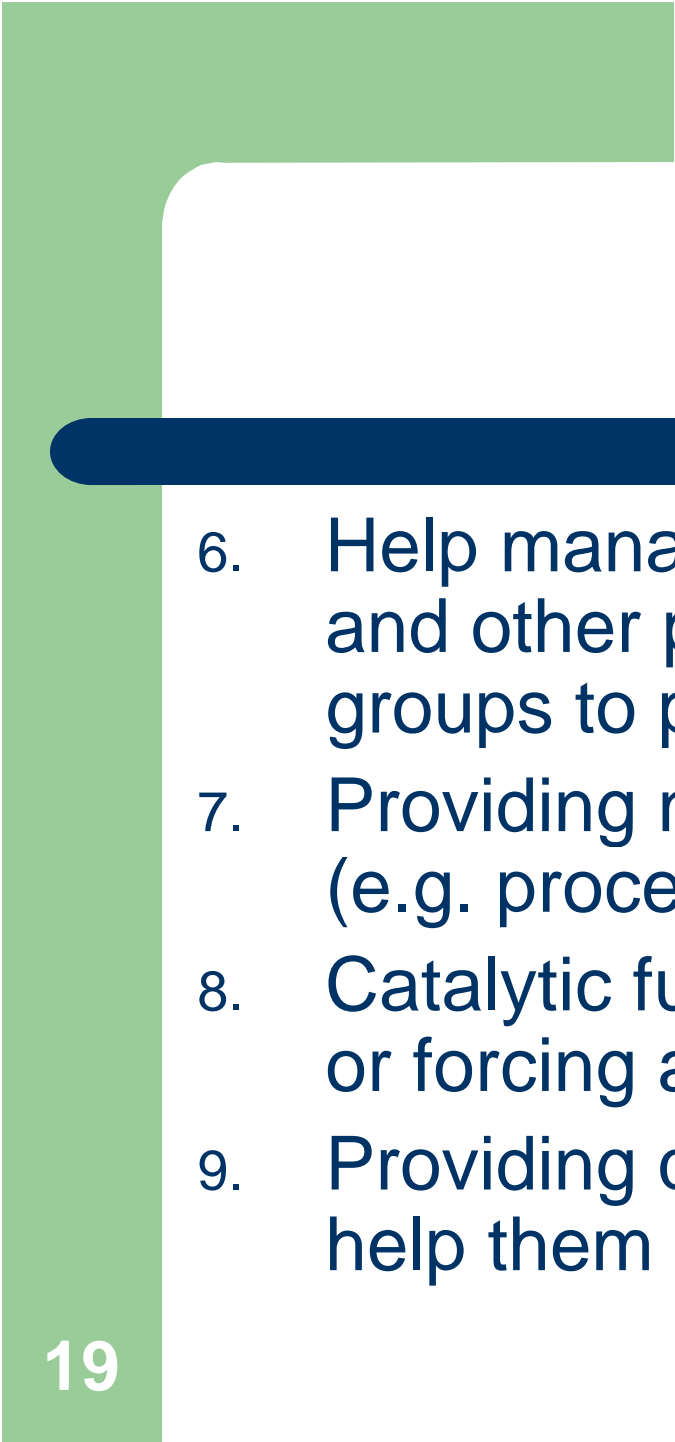

The SINERGIA Familias en Accion evaluation

- The program began in 1999.
- A rigorous impact evaluation launched in 2002 found the program had achieved impressive nutrition, education and health impacts.
- The preliminary findings helped convince President Uribe to retain the previous Government's program and to commit to doubling coverage from 350,000 poor families [the program has now reached 1.5 million families].

How are evaluations used? When are they influential?

1. Never the only factor. Need to understand how evaluations can complement other activities.
 - IFPRI study “final nail in the coffin”.
2. Political cover for difficult decisions
3. Identifying “winners” and “losers” and showing how negative impacts can be mitigated.
4. Credibility and perceived independence of the evaluator may be critical
5. The big picture: helping decision-makers understand the influence of the social, economic and political context.

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6. Help managers understand how political and other pressures limit access of certain groups to project benefits
 7. Providing new knowledge or understanding (e.g. procedures of external agencies)
 8. Catalytic function: bringing people together or forcing action.
 9. Providing quantitative data to civil society to help them hold government accountable

Types of influence that evaluations can have

1. **India: Employment Assurance**
 - Broader interagency perspective helped identify duplications and potential cost savings.
 - Evaluation Office had high-level access to Planning Commission
2. **India: Citizen Report Cards**
 - Alerting management to service problems and
 - providing quantitative data to civil society pressure groups
3. **Indonesia: Village Water Supply**
 - Making policy-makers aware of importance of gender issues and participatory approaches

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4. Large Dams

- Created political space for introducing new social and environmental criteria for evaluating dams and
- launching dialogue that facilitated creation of World Commission on Dams.

5. Pakistan: Wheat Flour Ration Shops

- Political cover for sensitive political decision and showing how to mitigate negative consequences

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6. **Uganda: Education expenditures**

- Developed methodology to document what everyone suspected (expenditure wastage)
- provided documentation to civil society to pressure for improvements

7. **Bulgaria: Metallurgical Project**

- Alerting borrowers and Development Bank to new EU legislation
- showing how to avoid fines
- how to advance launch of mineral production

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8. China: Forestry Policy

- Legitimized questioning the logging ban
- promoting more in-depth policy research
- facilitating creation of Forestry Task Force

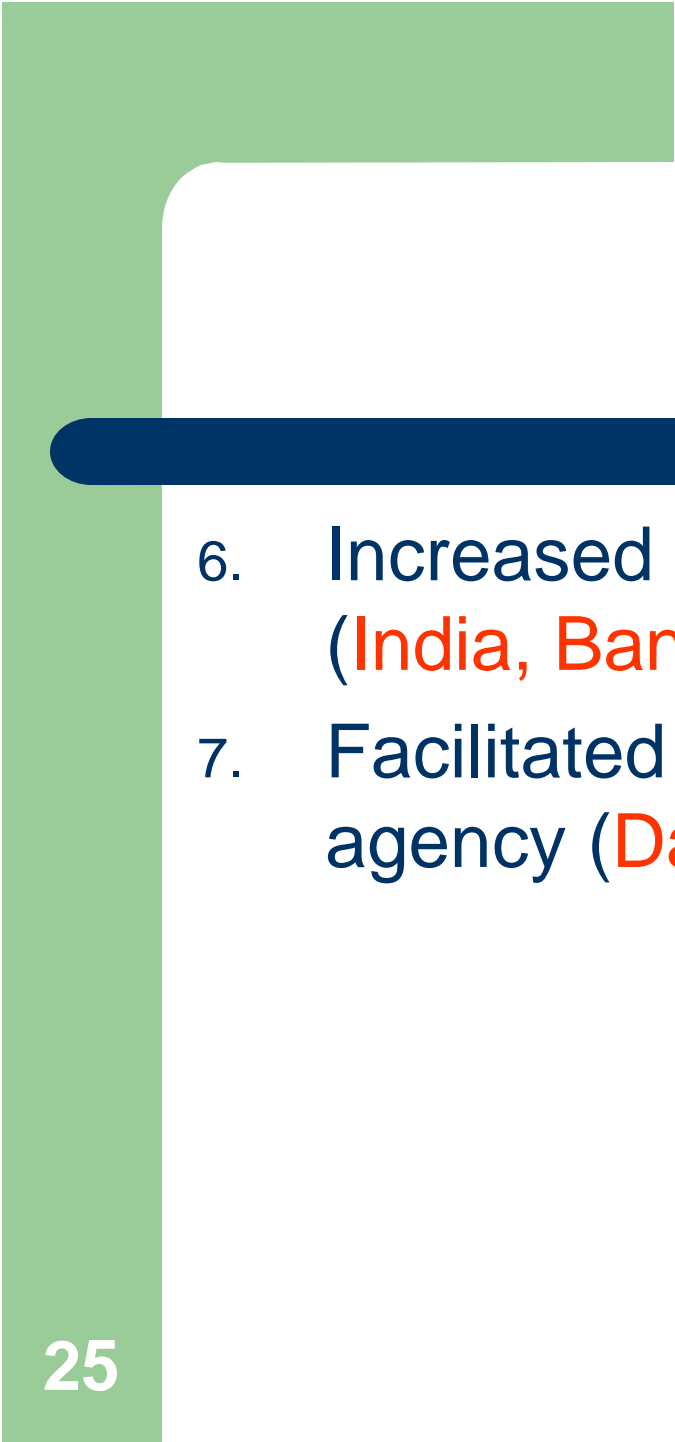

9. Familias en Accion (Colombia)

- Convinced President to continue support and to double number of families covered

What difference did the evaluation make?

1. Major cost savings (**India, Bulgaria, Pakistan**)
2. Increased financial benefits (**Uganda, Bulgaria**)
3. Forced action (**Bangalore, Uganda**)
4. Strengthened gender and participatory planning and management of water (**Indonesia**)
5. Introduced social assessment of dams but discouraged future investments (**Dams**)

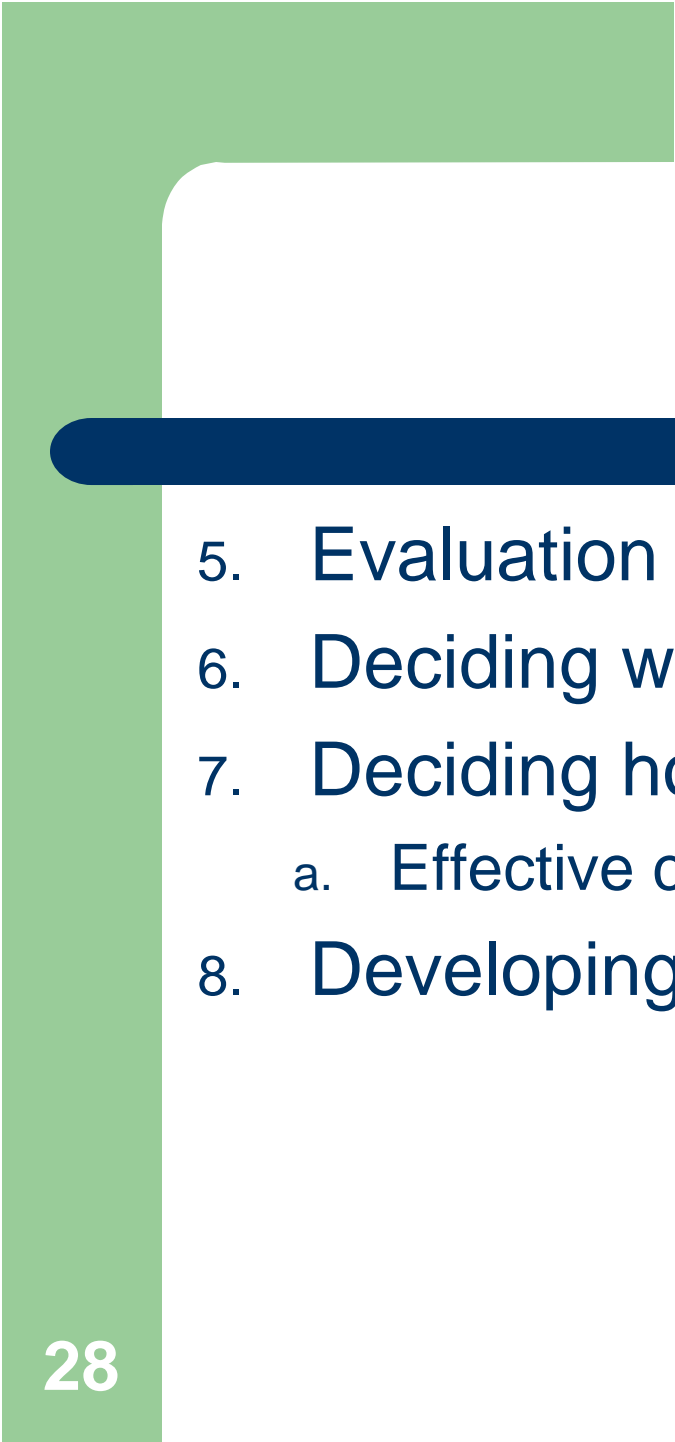

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6. Increased efficiency of service delivery
(India, Bangalore, Indonesia)
 7. Facilitated creation of important policy
agency (Dams, China)

4. Ways to strengthen evaluation utilization

Ways to strengthen evaluation utilization

1. Deciding what to evaluate
2. Timing:
 - a. When to start
 - b. When to present the findings
3. Deciding how to evaluate
 - a. Choosing the right methodology
 - b. In-depth versus rapid evaluation
4. Ensuring effective buy-in
 - a. Stakeholder analysis and building alliances
 - b. The importance of the scoping phase
 - c. Formative evaluation strategies
 - d. Constant communication with clients

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5. Evaluation capacity building
 6. Deciding what to say [see slides 26-28]
 7. Deciding how to say it [see slide 29]
 - a. Effective communication strategies
 8. Developing a follow-up action plan

Step 7: Deciding what to say

- Technical level
- Amount of detail
- Focus on a few key messages
- Target messages to key audiences

Sources of lessons

- Evaluation findings
- Experience of practitioners
- Feedback from program participants
- Expert opinion
- Cross-discipline connections and patterns
- Strength of linkages to outcomes

Identifying evaluation lessons and generating meaning

- Tactics for generating meaning (Handout 1)
- Identifying high quality lessons (Handout 2)

Step 8: Deciding how to say it

1. Communication style and choice of media (Handout 3)
2. Focus report on intended users
3. Quantitative and qualitative communication styles (Handout 4)
4. The clients preferred communication style (Handout 5`)
5. Making claims
6. The importance of graphics
7. Who receives the evaluation report and who is invited to comment