

Measuring project impact

Thirteen representatives from the NPOs of 10 member countries put their heads together during the workshop on Training Evaluation: Review Meeting, held in Singapore, 13–15 August. The review meeting was summoned to address the concerns expressed regarding the evaluation of APO projects, which were raised at the Governing Body Meeting (GBM) and Workshop Meeting of Heads of NPOs (WSM) held this year, in Mongolia and Bali, respectively. Delegates at both the GBM and WSM pointed out the need to evaluate and analyze the impact and effectiveness of APO training courses and projects more rigorously. This meeting was specially convened to review the present practices and methodology of APO evaluations and develop a practical, workable framework for monitoring and measuring the impact of projects.

The workshop started with an analysis of the current modality of APO project evaluation. Participants agreed that the scope should be expanded beyond simply obtaining participants' impressions of the project. At present, the evaluation report prepared by the Secretariat focuses on the efficiency of the training or project implementation. Project participants are required to fill out an evaluation sheet asking about their level of satisfaction, which is measured in terms of logistical arrangements, time management, selection of topics, quality of resource persons, and arrangements for site visits, among others.

The meeting spent the majority of time on answering the question of how the lessons learned can be conveyed and how the knowledge and skills derived from projects are transformed into increases in competence, organizational profitability, and competitiveness. Participants subsequently established a recommended framework for APO project evaluation. The framework includes pre- and postproject components along with the current onsite evaluation format for multicountry projects. For individual-country projects, the emphasis should be placed on measuring the results and impact on the performance of participants' organizations. The framework also answers the questions of "for who, what, and when" in the measurement process.

Close cooperation between the APO and NPOs will be the key to the successful application of the suggested methods since the pre- and postproject evaluations should be conducted by the hosting NPOs. NPOs will also be requested to interact with the beneficiary organizations of the project to report the outcomes. As the roles and responsibilities of NPOs increase, concerns over the shortage of staff and resources to perform the tasks were raised. "The APO should provide resources and technical support to build up the capacity of those NPOs requiring assistance," suggested the resource speakers at the review meeting. 