This year, IDEV celebrates 40 years of evaluation at the African Development Bank (AfDB). Ever since the first dedicated evaluation unit was established in 1980, evaluation has become an integral part of how the Bank operates, how it is held accountable and how it learns from what works and what does not. What was a small unit grew into the Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV) and eventually the Independent Development Evaluation function (IDEV) with over 40 staff. We spoke to some current and former team members and asked them for their reflections on their time at IDEV.
What has been the biggest change since you joined?

Mohamed Hedi Manaï, Former Division Manager, IDEV

I joined the Bank on 4 March 1991 as Senior Evaluation Officer at what was to become IDEV, then the Operations Evaluation Department (OPEV). From first being part of research and planning, reporting to the President in the 1980s and 1990s, the department changed its reporting line to the Board, through its Committee on Operations and Development Effectiveness (CODE), in 1996. In 2002, OPEV’s mandate was clarified by a presidential directive and in 2007, the first independent evaluation policy was approved. It stressed the full compliance of the evaluation function with international norms and good practice standards across the Multilateral Development Banks. This was the biggest change since I joined the Bank, as the department became structurally independent.

Eneas Gakusi, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

For me the biggest change has been the growth of the department in terms of the number of staff and composition: the number of women (professional and general staff), junior consultants and young staff. Also, the department used to have a horizontal structure where all professional staff reported to the Director. The department was organized into two divisions only in 2009 (Projects & Programs Evaluation and Higher Level Evaluation). In 2013, the division for Knowledge Management, Outreach and Capacity Building was born, which helped the activities and the products of the department to be more visible.

Joseph Mouanda, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

Let me talk about a challenge rather than a change. The biggest challenge since I joined the Bank has been to transform the Bank from an approval culture to an effective results-based culture. For a long time and like other Multilateral Development Banks such as the World Bank, and even after the 1994 Knox report on the quality of projects (AfDB) and the 1992 Wapenhans report on effective implementation (World Bank), the quest for results in AfDB remains a long journey.

Foday Turay, former Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

For me, the most visible change is structural: from a small department with all staff reporting to the Director in 2005 to what it is today, a department with a matrix structure comprising the office of the Evaluator General, and three Divisions with clear lines of responsibilities. The fact that the focus of the third Division is on knowledge management, outreach and evaluation capacity development underlines the importance that the Department gives to providing a basis for accountability and to promoting a learning and evaluation culture within and outside the Bank.
Mohamed Hedi Manaï, Former Division Manager, IDEV

For me, the most memorable moments were the efforts to develop evaluation capacity in regional member countries and the support provided to strengthen national evaluation systems and networks such as the African Evaluation Association (AfREA), the Centers for Learning, Evaluation and Results (CLEAR), and other initiatives such as the Evaluation Platform for Regional African Development Institutions (EPRADI), the African Parliamentarians’ Network for Development Evaluation (APNODE), and the “Twende Mbele” Initiative.

In 1990, the Bank, through OPEV, organized the first conference on evaluation, which attracted attention from developing country governments and donors alike and was followed by other conferences, meetings, and training sessions in other parts of the world. Eight years later, in 1998, it was time to take stock of what African governments and donors had accomplished: a regional seminar and workshop on evaluation was held in Abidjan on 16–19 November 1998. It brought together delegates from 12 African countries, donors, and private sector professionals. The conference stressed that evaluation capacity in a country rests on real demand for evaluation to address real information needs, on appropriate institutional structures, and on the capability of evaluation personnel to provide the information needed in a responsive, professional, and timely manner. Since then, evaluation has been put high on the agenda of government decision-makers, donors, civil society organizations and the private sector in Africa.

Ruby Adzobu-Agyare, Secretary, IDEV

There are quite a number of them but the remarkable one is around 1997–2000 when we worked together as a team of less than 20 and everybody was approachable just as a “Father” and his “Kids” at home; maybe because of the small number at the time.

Joseph Mouanda, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

The most memorable moment was when, as an evaluation assistant, within a short term staff position, I won in 2005 an AfDB award for Best Web Coordinator. I realized later that I had the mindset of a “leader without a title” and as said by the renowned author Robin Sharma “titles don't make leaders”.

Foday Turay, former Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

This concerns an issue from a project evaluation field data collection mission in one of the Bank’s Regional Member Countries (RMCs). The issue was my failed attempt to engage, in a project evaluation, a key project stakeholder with high political power and with little or no interest in the evaluation. The issue has kept me reflecting for a long time on how best to appropriately and meaningfully engage key stakeholders especially the politically powerful in an evaluation. I concluded that we need to (i) understand the typologies of the different types project evaluation stakeholders, (ii) develop appropriate engagement strategy for...
each stakeholder subgroup, and (iii) to understand the implementation cost of each strategy, as some of the strategies are unlikely to be cost effective.

What did/do you like most about working in evaluation at the AfDB?

Eneas Gakusi, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

The possibility to lead influential thematic and sector evaluations in different areas: health, education, inclusive finance, regional integration, multinational projects, and finance in general. It gave me the opportunity to interact with the Bank’s internal and external stakeholders, to work in different countries and interview various people from beneficiaries in poor communities to ministries.

One lesson I learned is that it can often be helpful for the evaluator to propose refocusing or broadening the scope of the evaluation initially requested by the authorizing entity (Management, the Board, any other stakeholders). This allows him or her to address the issues at hand while assessing the design, the implementation process, as well as outcomes. The second lesson is to combine quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis, to increase the reliability of the findings and to provide a broader framework for their interpretation. The third lesson is that to be influential, an evaluation must address the question of when and how the findings can most effectively be produced and used; studying the context within which the Bank’s operations and programs are implemented is key.

Ruby Adzobu-Agyare, Secretary, IDEV

I love working in evaluation because one gets to know the whole Bank better as one interacts with every level. This broadens your mind and personality as one comes across different cultures internally and externally.

Joseph Mouanda, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

Working in the evaluation department gives me the opportunity to engage with people on the ground. It is the only way you can truly appreciate the impact of the Bank’s interventions and discover the untold stories and people’s real feelings. Also, the fact that my role as an independent evaluator helps the Bank to learn and improve its operations gives me great joy, as it impacts the lives of people.

Foday Turay, former Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

What I liked most is the available space to be innovative in making evaluation meaningful and useful to the Board, Management and operations staff. This space enabled me to build, while maintaining my independence, trustworthy professional relationship with colleagues in Operations Complexes, and to enhance my understanding of development challenges, opportunities and insights.
How do you see evaluation in the next 40 years: Challenges and opportunities?

Mohamed Hedi Manai, Former Division Manager, IDEV

Although considerable investments were made by the department in communication, the creation of an evaluation culture within the Bank remains a challenge. Increased action is still needed on the part of the Bank's senior leadership and operations complexes to signal their commitment to effective use of evaluation lessons. The Bank needs to promote evaluative thinking to effectively help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Strengthening self-evaluation systems and evaluation capacity building activities in addition increasing real-time evaluations are especially needed during this pandemic, where tight and short feedback loops may overcome difficult lockdown conditions for quality evaluation implementation and use.

Eneas Gakusi, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

In 40 years, it is possible to surmise that the practice of evaluation will continue to increase, using new theories, methods and new information technologies, which will help produce real-time evaluations. The future will depend on the capacity to build on the accumulated achievements. There will be continuously different ways of managing evaluations: relying on the in-house capacity of the staff, consultants, and a mixture of both modalities. I believe that in the future, evaluation will be a fully-fledged discipline exercised by experts who graduated in evaluation and related disciplines with more theoretical and technical skills. Management and development practices will be much more evaluations-based.

Ruby Adzobu-Agyare, Secretary, IDEV

With the changes and achievements I see in only the past 40 years, evaluation is going to be one, if not the most, solicited area in the Bank to improve upon its operations. Evaluation is going to be more understood and embraced in all Bank operations. I am very proud that we have come this far in only 40 years when I look back and see how evaluation was at the time I joined the Bank. Long live Evaluation !!!

Joseph Mouanda, Chief Evaluation Officer, IDEV

In the next 40 years, algorithms and digital technology will greatly influence the evaluation work, and the evaluator will play a more advisory role in addition to that of analyst, to foster development impact.
2,078 Evaluation reports

1,142 Independent evaluations
936 Self-evaluations
963 Project-level evaluations
179 Higher-level evaluations

963 Project-level evaluations

179 Higher-level evaluations

Expanded Supervision Report Evaluation Notes
Project Completion Report Evaluation Notes
Project Performance Evaluation Reports

Thematic Evaluations
Sector Evaluations
Self Evaluation Validation Syntheses
Project Cluster Evaluations
Corporate Evaluations
Country Strategy and Program Evaluations
Regional Integration Strategy Evaluations
Evaluation Syntheses
Impact Evaluations

936 Self-evaluations

Project Completion Reports
Expanded Supervision Reports

Note: All data as of November 17, 2020
Key dates

Evaluation at the African Development Bank dates back 40 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>First evaluation unit established with the creation of a special division within the Bank's Research and Planning Department.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>The division becomes the Operations Evaluation Office reporting to the President.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The evaluation function becomes independent, with the Board of Directors assuming oversight through the General Audit Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>The name of the department is changed to Independent Development Evaluation to better reflect its independence and its mandate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>The department's mandate is reviewed and defined by a Presidential Directive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>The evaluation office is upgraded to a department (Operations Evaluation Department, OPEV).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Board approves a substantially revised Independent Evaluation Policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>The Board approves the first independent evaluation policy and functional responsibilities of the evaluation department.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>The Board approves the first independent evaluation policy and functional responsibilities of the evaluation department.</td>
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Former (acting) Directors of Independent Evaluation

1987–90: Wolde-Mariam Girma
1990–93: Emmanuel Tetegan
1993–96: I.B.C. John
1996–2000: Kebede Temesgen
2000–04: Oldekj Oopi
2004–06: Getinet Georgan
2006–07: Colin Kirk
2007–10: Douglas Barnett
2010–11: Franck Joseph Perrault
2011–18: Karen Rot-Munstermann
2018–19: Rakesh Nangia
2019–20: Roland Michelitsch

Key IDEV e-Resources

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Resource</th>
<th>Launched</th>
<th>Documents</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>EVRD: Evaluation Results Database</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>6,650</td>
<td>7,089</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management Action Record System</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>1,049</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sectors/themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector/Theme</th>
<th>Lessons</th>
<th>Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Transport</td>
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<tr>
<td>Water Supply &amp; Sanitation</td>
<td>488</td>
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</tbody>
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EVRD: Evaluation Results Database

- Launched in 2012
- 2,090 Documents
- 6,650 Lessons
- 7,089 Recommendations

Management Action Record System

- Launched in 2015
- 61 Evaluations
- 352 Recommendations
- 1,049 Actions

IDEV website audience over the last four years

- Visitors: 54,693
- Sessions: 100,342
- Pageviews: 335,847

Number of products disseminated

- 2017: 8,523 Electronically
- 2018: 8,921 Electronically
- 2019: 11,924 Electronically

1. Refers to independent, higher-level evaluations to which Management has provided a formal response in which it commits to actions.