

Programme 'The Politics of Evidence' Conference

23-24 April, 2013

Institute of Development Studies, Brighton, UK

Given that 'the politics of evidence' has not been scrutinised systematically in much depth, the conference seeks to provide that platform. Central in all discussions will be the implications for transformational development. The conference is structured around four questions for which robust insights will be generated by working through participants' cases. Hence, the core input mainly around participants' experiences¹ of the pros and cons of dealing with the politics of evidence and the results agenda. Participants have been accepted based on the experiences that they would bring to discussions. The conference form will be framed by several plenary presentations that will lead into focused group discussions, during which participants' cases will get ample space for discussion.

Focusing Questions for the Big Push Forward Conference

1. What do we mean by 'the politics of evidence' – factors, actors, artefacts? And why is it important?
2. Under what conditions do potentially useful approaches on evidence of and for change - such as theories of change or Value for Money – retain their utility rather than undermine transformational development efforts? What factors and relationships drive the less useful practices and protocols; and which enable evidence to be generated and used in ways that strengthen transformational development?
3. What are the effects of these practices on transformative intentions and impacts?
4. How are people engaging with problematic practices and protocols? What are they accepting and doing, what are they resisting and how? What alternatives have they found to create spaces for approaches more aligned with transformational development?

Collectively, participants will generate:

1. *Conceptual clarity* about 'the politics of evidence' and the 'political space' for debates and practices around development results
2. *Mapping* of the consequences for all levels (from people and communities that development agencies seek to benefit to senior managers and policy makers) of current focus on evidence and results
3. *Tried and tested strategies* and new ideas for organisations and individuals to deal with the concepts and demands related to everyday politics surrounding results-oriented measurement
4. *Generate ideas for collaborative efforts* to explore revised and alternative approaches to addressing the drivers as well as the consequences of the current 'politics of evidence'.

¹ As some examples may be sensitive, we will be working with Chatham House rules and participants may wish to make their experiences anonymous.

Day 1. Framing and Connecting Experiences

Time	Session	Content
08.30		Registration
09.00	Opening	Welcome; origins and aims of the event; programme and participants
09.30	<i>Different perspectives on 'the politics of evidence'</i>	Plenary panel led by Prof. Dr. Duncan Green with Maliha Khan (Oxfam USA); Iqbal Dhaliwal (3ie) and Ola Abualghaib (Disability Rights Fund)
10.45	Break	
11.15	<i>'Nothing as practical as a good theory' – framing lecture</i>	Plenary presentation by Dr. Rosalind Eyben: Origins of 'the evidence discourse', historical perspectives, theoretical ideas, relevance for transformational development
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	Mapping the 'politics of evidence'	Breakout sessions in which participants share their cases, focusing on questions 1 and 2 : what are 'the politics of evidence' in my case and is it helping/hindering?
15.30	Break	
16.00	Plenary pooling of findings from cases	Areas of agreement and where we 'agree to disagree on 'the politics of evidence'. Conducive conditions for a useful & hindering 'evidence discourse' driven practice. Particularly good examples and ideas will be highlighted.
17.15	Close	
18.00	Book Launch & Drinks	Book Launch with Practical Action: <i>Who Counts?: The Power of Participatory Statistics</i> (Jeremy Holland) and <i>Aid, NGOs and the Realities of Women's Lives: A Perfect Storm</i> (Tina Wallace and Fenella Porter)

Day 2. Everyday Practice and Creating Space for Choice

Time	Session	Content
09.00	<i>Everyday practice and its consequences</i>	Plenary presentation by Brendan Whitty: What does 'the field' report? Results of crowd-sourcing survey.
10.00	<i>Effects on transformational development</i>	Group breakout session 1. Cases discussed in relation to question 3 .
11.00	Break	
11.30	<i>Dealing with the consequences – effective strategies</i>	Groups reconvene, focusing on question 4 . Work for whom and at what level, in relation to which artefacts?
13.00	Lunch	
14.00	<i>Effective strategies</i>	Continue with sharing and questioning <i>tried and tested strategies</i> and new ideas for organisations and individuals to create space for choice. <i>Generate ideas for collaborative efforts</i> .
15.15	Break	
15.45	<i>Strategies that work</i>	Synthesising session from groups around Q3 and 4, illustrated by salient examples from participants.
17.00	Closing	