

Background

The Development Resource Centre is an independent, values-based, information and education centre focused on development and global issues that was established in 1993. It is a not-for-profit, non-government, charitable trust with a voluntary governance board. It currently offers a substantial range of development information and global education services. The New Zealand Official Development Assistance Programme has provided a significant proportion of the Development Resource Centre's budget since 1996.

The NZAID core grant supports the Centre's activities in two programme areas, Dev-Zone and the Global Education Centre:

- Dev-Zone provides information services on development and global issues to non-government organisations, consultants and development practitioners, tertiary institutions, government departments, and libraries with an interest in the field of overseas aid and development. Dev Zone operates a public access library including electronic and hard copy resources, manages a web site on development issues, provides email updates on a variety of development topics and produces a number of publications.
- The Global Education Centre provides services to the formal and non-formal education sectors on global education. Global education provides opportunities for examination of the links between the lives of individual New Zealanders and those of people elsewhere in the world. It aims to develop critical thinking skills and to promote awareness and action to bring about a more just world.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the review was to inform the development of a new four-year funding arrangement. The review aimed to provide an opportunity for the New Zealand Agency for International Development and the Development Resource Centre to learn from an examination of current practice and to improve effectiveness as the DRC takes forward its current strategic plan . The objectives of the review were:

- to analyse what the DRC has achieved under the current funding arrangement with NZAID (2003-2008) and the factors that have helped or hindered its work
- to identify strengths, areas for improvement and wider lessons for improving relevance and effectiveness.

Main Findings

Services and Resources

The review findings were positive. Stakeholders appreciated the services and resources provided by the various programmes of the Development Resource Centre (Dev-Zone and the Global Education Centre-Schools Programme and Community Youth Programme). The staff were seen as responsive, experts in their fields, innovative and effective. Annual performance reports highlighted the growth of the organisation, increased production of resources and demand for resources and services. In a number of areas the DRC provides services that are unique in New Zealand and it was generally felt that there would be a large gap in the field of global and development education if they did not exist. Various stakeholders saw them as leaders in their field and there was a demand for them to train and mentor others.

Performance indicators

The review noted that while a substantial amount of quantitative data was available on outputs, it was difficult to consider effectiveness and impact as NZAID and the DRC had not developed performance indicators that focused on outcomes. Some qualitative data and anecdotal evidence on the effectiveness of the organisation's various programmes and their wider impacts was available, but a planning framework was needed that includes outcome level performance indicators.

Value for money

The review found that NZAID has received very good value for money for its support for the DRC and that its work complements and supports NZAID's own objective of building a more knowledgeable community that supports efforts to create a just world. Its contribution was seen as valuable in the formal education sector through its work in schools, the community sector through its youth work, the development and consulting sector through its Dev-Zone programme and academia through its support for DevNet. The review team also identified that there are currently some substantial opportunities for new and innovative work that may be constrained by its financial resources.

Conclusions

The review team concluded that the DRC appears to have performed well in delivering the agreed products and services, the DRC's work was value for money and that there was growing demand for DRC's resources and services. The review also found that in some areas the DRC provides unique services that were not offered, and were unlikely to be offered, by others. Areas that could be improved or strengthened included developing and implementing an outcome focussed monitoring and evaluation framework and system, focusing its resources on more defined populations, refining its priorities and developing a communication strategy.

Key Issues and Learning for NZAID

Key lessons relevant to NZAID support of external organisations were that NZAID needs to work with partners to ensure a strategic approach is taken to achieving outcomes, rather than focusing on activities and outputs; and that funding agreements should facilitate a monitoring and evaluation framework and plan with indicators which will enable periodic assessment of outcomes.

Follow-up

The review made 14 recommendations. NZAID agreed with all of them (as did the DRC). Many of the recommendations have a cost implication for DRC and would require additional resourcing.

To request a copy of the full report email aidevaluation@mfat.govt.nz and quote the reference number - Eva0806.