Osvaldo Feinstein

Adviser to the Spanish Evaluation Agency and chair of the Selection Committee of the Alexandria Conference

"People were under the impression that climate change evaluation would require a whole new set of tools. However, the conference showed that existing evaluation tools and approaches are very useful for the evaluation of climate change and development though, of course, adaptations are needed."

Osvaldo Feinstein has been an expert in the field of evaluation for many years. Because of his extensive experience, he was asked to be the adaptation session manager at the International Conference on Evaluating Climate Change and Development. In this role, he aimed to produce a better understanding of what is involved in evaluating adaptation work and what is needed to produce good evaluations.

Before the conference sessions, he and the participants expected that a whole new set of evaluation tools would be required. He was surprised to learn that, in fact, most of the evaluation tools that already exist could be used to evaluate climate change as well. Although development interventions taking place in other fields differ from those in the field of climate change, their evaluation methods can be tailored for use in adaptation interventions.

As well as modifying various evaluation tools, Feinstein thinks that it is important to tackle existing evaluation challenges in the area of adaptation. He points to the need to explore the adaptation deficit (the inability to adapt to climate change or variability), create a new dialogue on how to address this deficit, and develop a strategy to reduce it in existing and future projects.

Feinstein emphasizes that integration and application of a multidisciplinary approach to evaluation will help make this a reality. He points out that within projects and programs several factors are present and that you cannot look at only one aspect or you "may miss something crucial to successful evaluation."

Feinstein explains that a multidisciplinary approach must include economics, other social disciplines, and the environmental sciences. He stresses that this approach should include some of the elements that have been partly missing from the discussion at the conference, such as biodiversity and the social implications of climate change and adaptation projects.

According to Feinstein, because many existing approaches to evaluation have traditionally been focused on one discipline or sector, they are fragmented and require multidisciplinary teams to integrate them. In addition to adapting and applying these

previously developed approaches, he recommends developing new publications to bring different disciplines and approaches together. Feinstein suggests mining the stock of knowledge and making it more accessible to allow greater use of what's already available.

He notes that this applies to networks as well. "The conference showed that there is a general lack of awareness of the many regional evaluation networks already active throughout the world. This demonstrates a gap." He believes that, "with a very small investment of time we can guide people to become part of these networks. While the question of how to bring the multidisciplinary communities together is yet unresolved, increasing network awareness and access is one strategy to create more unity."

Feinstein feels that the conference gave people the necessary room to build consensus and continue a dialogue that will lead to developing the tools needed for successful evaluation of climate change. But, he cautions, those involved in developing climate change evaluation further need to really understand what others are bringing to the table. This includes communicating and building bridges between different groups, such as evaluators, implementers, and practitioners. In the past, this has been accomplished through a willingness to work together and embark on joint ventures.

Feinstein thinks that the conference may have created a real opening for the various groups to work together more actively in the future. He maintains, "Once people really become a part of these communities, they become active agents."