

IOCE EvalPartners profile survey of Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs)

I. Basic profile information

1. Name and acronym of organization (VOPE)	Red de Seguimiento, Evaluación y Sistematización en América Latina y el Caribe (ReLAC)
2. Geographic scope of organization	1. Regional (multi-national): Latin America & Caribbean
3. Contact Details	Name of main contact person: the present coordinator is Ronny Muñoz E-address: nazareno@racsa.co.cr Postal address: 1043-2050, San José, Costa Rica Telephone: (506) 2234-9870 VOPE website URL: http://noticiasrelac.ning.com/ http://www.relacweb.com/
4. Current membership – numbers of individuals, by their affiliation (if known; please at least give total)	Government: NGOs/CSOs: Academics: Private sector (consultants): Other: Total membership: Around 1,000 (one thousand), 14 national VOPEs
5. Year VOPE was founded	2004
6. Current status (identify which)	We have an operational juridical form recognised by the government of Costa Rica. As such, we have internal bylaws.
7. Information about growth : evolution of the number of members or financial resources in the last 5 years.	The ReLAC has a mailing list of 600 participants, which has been growing slowly in the last 5 years. Since 2010 we also have a site in the NING platform, which has grown to nearly 700 in just two years. Our financial resources are residuary donations and come mainly from the organization of past Conferences, and a small overhead from the IADB study. We have managed financial resources with high variation year by year (USD 7000 to USD 47000). We are studying the implementation of an individual membership payment in order to cover the operational costs of the VOPE.
8. Purpose and mission of VOPE	The purpose of the ReLAC is to strengthen the culture and practice of monitoring, evaluation and systematization, understood this as a political process that could help to improve policies, programs and projects in a more transparent and participative citizenship environment. a. To develop and support opportunities for exchange and reflection between professionals and organizations interested in monitoring, evaluation and systematization. b. To promote capacity building in monitoring, evaluation and systematization. c. To develop principles, procedures and ethical standards of conduct for good practice in monitoring, evaluation and systematization. d. To promote the development and dissemination of concepts, methodologies and tools for monitoring, evaluation and systematization adapted to the cultural diversity of the region. e. To encourage the implementation and transparent, participatory and equitable use of monitoring, evaluation and systematization between national and international organizations. f. To contribute to the development of the international community of monitoring, evaluation and systematization, and do this from the cultural and own experiences of the region. g. To support the development of organizations and national and sub-regional networks of M & E.
9. Current strategy and emphasis	We are in a process of strengthening our situation as a regional VOPE, at the same time that giving support to the VOPEs that constitute the ReLAC.
10. Organizational capacity: Please describe your	We have an Executive Board of seven people, elected in a General Assembly (usually at our regional Conferences). This Executive Board of

governance structure, leadership, services provided, finances, human resources, linkages with other organizations, etc.	seven makes its own arrangements in order to select a coordinator and co-coordinator for the Board. The functions of them are, as the concept imply, to coordinate and animate the work of the network, and they have the same power of vote or veto than the others members of the Board. Internally, the board makes a differentiation of roles, in order to carry the different tasks we take (relationship with the national VOPEs, institutional linkages, animation of working groups, representation at the IOCE, etc.). The representatives of the national VOPEs, working groups and working commissions (oriented by operational task) is the core of our organizational capacity. We have adopted a parallel juridical form, that has the positions required by the law of Costa Rica.
11.Means of communication with members , e.g. newsletter, listserv, publication, website	The ReLAC has a yahoo group (relac@gruposyahoo.com.ar), and the possibility of using different web services (blogs, events, news) in the Ning Platform (http://noticiasrelac.ning.com/). We have used the webinar service of UNICEF a couple of times for our Assemblies and Skype for meetings of the Executive Committee.
12.Past events (e.g. during past year)	We had our last regional conference in 2010. After the conference the main activities as a network has been the working groups in the Ning Platform, mainly those about: a) Gender and Human Rights; b) Evaluation and Systematizatio; c) Planning Approaches and Logic Models. During 2011 we had 2 virtual Assemblies.
13.Forthcoming key events/ conferences – dates, location	We are planning our next regional conference for 2013, probably in Paraguay. At the same time, there are several members interested in continue the discussions in the working groups, as well as to create new ones.
14.Name and e-address of person submitting this information	Pablo Rodríguez-Bilella pablo67@gmail.com
15.Date of this update	20 th April 2012

II. Experience with Evaluation Capacity Building

<p>1. Background: Please provide a brief history of the formation of this organization (VOPE).</p> <p>1.1 Who were/are the key players?</p> <p>1.2 How many members do you have on your governing board/ committee?</p> <p>1.3 What are the main existing strengths that your VOPE is trying to capitalize on?</p> <p>1.4 What are the main challenges that your VOPE is trying to address?</p>	<p>Several milestones signalled the gestation and thus the history of the ReLAC, being the most important the following ones:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation in 1997 of the Electronic Network of the PREVAL initiative (http://preval.org/en), which was a pioneer in the region aimed at bringing together the community of evaluators of Latin America and the Caribbean. A number of actions within this network helped shape this community of evaluators • The participation of representatives of Latin America in the several events aimed to the gestation of the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) • The participation of representatives of Latin America in the Organizing Committee of the Assembly of the IOCE in Lima, Peru, in March 2003. • The formation of national networks in Colombia, Peru and Brazil, which in addition to national actions, joined the efforts of establishing the IOCE. • The inaugural assembly of the IOCE in Lima, Peru in March 2003. Representatives of three VOPEs and the Red PREVAL met and made a commitment to initiate a consultation process and actions conducive to form the Latin American Network of Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization (ReLAC). • In September 2003 (during the Brazilian Evaluation Network conference) ReLAC held the first strategic planning meeting, and the formulation of its vision, mission and objectives. There it was agreed to have the first ReLAC Conference in October 2004 in Lima, Peru, with the support from various institutions, especially PREVAL, UNICEF and the Peruvian Network of Monitoring and Evaluation
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	<p>Nowadays,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1. The key players are the representatives and members of the national VOPEs 1.2. The Executive Board has seven people 1.3. Our main strengths are an increasing visibility of the network in different forums, the recognition of the ReLAC by international organizations (UNICEF, ILO, IADB, World Bank, etc), and by the evaluators of the region; the activities and commitment of the leaders of our working groups; the activities of our members in conferences and publications as ReLAC members. 1.4. Our main challenges has to do with internal governance issues
<p>2. Organizational motivation: What were/are the driving forces of the VOPE and its historical development?</p>	<p>The organizational motivation was the lack of a space where the evaluators of the region can share their experiences and strengthen their evaluation capacities. The context of this was a very weak or inexistent culture of evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean, so it was imperative to try to strengthen the culture and practice of monitoring, evaluation and systematization (an approach developed in LAC), understood this as a political process that could help to improve policies, programs and projects in a more transparent and participative citizenship environment.</p>
<p>3. Evaluation Capacity Building: What has your VOPE done to promote evaluation (M&E) capacity?</p>	<p>The ReLAC developed in 2007 a postgraduate e-learning program in evaluation, with the strong support of UNICEF. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the financial resources to implement it. Most of the professionals involved in the development of this program are eager to update the program (now five years old).</p> <p>In all of our conferences we have had training activities, and we were particularly interested that these were of high quality.</p> <p>We made a study of the demand and supply of evaluation in the region, which was shared with several governments in the region.</p>
<p>4. Context / target entities: More specifically, who are the persons or institutions your organization seeks to influence (to strengthen evaluation capacity)? For example:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 Technical capacities to <i>supply</i> quality evaluations, partnering with experts, local universities or others to provide training for members, etc.; 4.2 Strengthening VOPE organizational capacity itself; 4.3 Enhancing the enabling environment for evaluation, including strengthening the <i>demand</i> for and use of evaluations by policy makers; 4.4 Influencing governmental policies related to evaluation, evaluation designs and implementation of M&E systems, etc. 	<p>The main actors that ReLAC aims to influence are those responsible of public sector institutions, civil society and the private sector.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1. ReLAC performs the training of its members and other stakeholders through conferences, working groups, the exchange of information on technical aspects of evaluation methodologies, specific experiences, and electronic forums. 4.2. ReLAC has supported the organization of national networks in most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which has favoured its growth and strengthening. While so far not all national networks have reached a high level of development, at least there are groups of people working towards being a VOPE and they also participate in the ReLAC working groups. 4.4. Various activities have been developed in order to learn the situation of evaluation in Latin America. One of this was the study of the demand and supply of evaluation services in the region. 4.5. ReLAC has seen in its mission to influence the decision makers of public policy in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, so evaluation can be considered as a key component in every policy, and even the evaluation itself can become a national policy.
<p>5. Public accountability: Is your VOPE helping to strengthen oversight and transparency of government programs? If so, in what ways? Can you share any success stories of evaluators or others promoting public accountability?</p>	<p>We haven't reached this stage yet. We don't have as a VOPE this kind of relationship with the governments of the region, but at the level of individual members.</p>

<p>6. More specifically, what are some of the key themes for which you advocate? For example, are you promoting issues related to cultural sensitivity, equity, social justice, empowerment, transformation, gender, environment, poverty? If so, please describe or attach relevant documents.</p>	<p>The key themes that we are interested and discussing mainly internally, through the working groups of our Web 2.0 platform http://noticiasrelac.ning.com/groups are (in order of relevance for their activities):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation, Gender, and Human Rights Evaluation and Systematization Planning approaches and Logic Models Evaluation and Educational Policies Evaluation and Organizational Learning
<p>7. Methods: Experiences in strengthening skills of individual members, by (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> organizing workshops led by local experts; organizing webinars with international speakers; designing and delivering e-learning programmes; administering mentoring programmes; etc. 	<p>In all our three past conferences we have had workshops aimed to strengthening skills of the participants. As a regional network, we have also endorsed the realization of seminars or panels with a focus on evaluation. In our second conference we introduced a complete e-learning program designed by ReLAC members and with the key support of UNICEF, that finally could not be implemented.</p>
<p>8. Standards: Has your VOPE developed professional standards/ ethical codes/ competencies (or adheres to those developed by others)? If so, please provide documentation.</p>	<p>We have reached the point of being a network recognized by the evaluators of the region and beyond. Through virtual means we have linked up evaluators with both employment and training opportunities. The same ReLAC provides opportunities for training, mainly through its working groups, and secondarily by the discussion e-list. Our challenge is to consolidate these achievements, and take further steps as institutional linkages with governments, the development of standards of evaluation, and to implement other training initiatives.</p>
<p>9. Job opportunities: Do you share employment/ consultancy opportunities with evaluators on your database?</p>	<p>Yes. Several employment/ consultancy opportunities are shared mainly through the mailing list (yahoo group)</p>
<p>10. Progress and results: What progress has been achieved so far in any of the above or other domains? What are expected and unexpected results achieved?</p>	<p>We have reached the point of being a network recognized by the evaluators of the region and beyond. Through virtual means we have linked up evaluators with both employment and training opportunities. The same ReLAC provides opportunities for training, mainly through its working groups, and secondarily by the discussion e-list. Our challenge is to consolidate these achievements, and take further steps as institutional linkages with governments, the development of standards of evaluation, and to implement other training initiatives.</p>
<p>11. Lessons learned: Recommendations/ tips to others for good practices on how to organize and sustain VOPEs like yours.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> It helps to have a highly motivated group of volunteers in the mission and objectives of the VOPE This volunteer group should grow in number and diversify their activities Do not assume that new members have the "know how" about the tasks and ways to act in the VOPE. So make room for induction practices Try continuously to be efficient and effective in using several channels of communication (mostly email) Be concern about forging alliances and expanding the network Open channels of opinion and participation for all the members of the VOPE Be generous and strategic endorsing training and academic events on evaluation Without falling into bureaucracy, maintain the institutional memory of the VOPE
<p>12. Next steps: What does your organization plan to do next?</p>	<p>We are planning our next regional conference for next year. Most of the discussion of our working groups will be oriented to this conference.</p>

<p>13. Willing to share with other VOPEs? For example, would you be interested in forming peer-to-peer partnerships with one or more other VOPEs to share lessons learned, advise each other? If so, describe what you would be willing to share / advice you would seek.</p>	<p>We certainly are very interested in in forming peer-to-peer partnerships with one or more other VOPEs to share lessons learned. We are open to share some of the areas where we have some strengths (using a Web 2.0 platform, the design of an e-learning program), and we would like advice to strengthen our relationships with governments as well as our own governance structure.</p>
<p>14. Suggestions: What ideas do you have for what should be included in activities of the EvalPartners Initiative?</p>	<p>EvalPartners should focus its work in strengthening the VOPEs, both in technical issues linked with evaluation but mainly with strategic actions in order to grow as organizations and to have more possibilities of influencing governments in issues related with Evaluation. For this, the peer-to-peer partnership should have a privileged place.</p>
<p>15. Want to be actively involved? Does your VOPE want to be actively involved in EvalPartners? If so, in what ways?</p>	<p>We are eager to be involved in EvalPartners. We are ready to invite our VOPEs to the activities EvalPartners will have, and at the same time we would like to be a channel to communicate to EvalPartners what the new suggestions and ideas of our VOPEs are. We are also interested in supporting some streams of discussion, mainly those that are closer to what we recognise as our strengths: using of Web2.0 services, the reflection around the systmatization approach and gender-sensitive evaluation, the study of the demand and supply of evaluation, etc.</p>