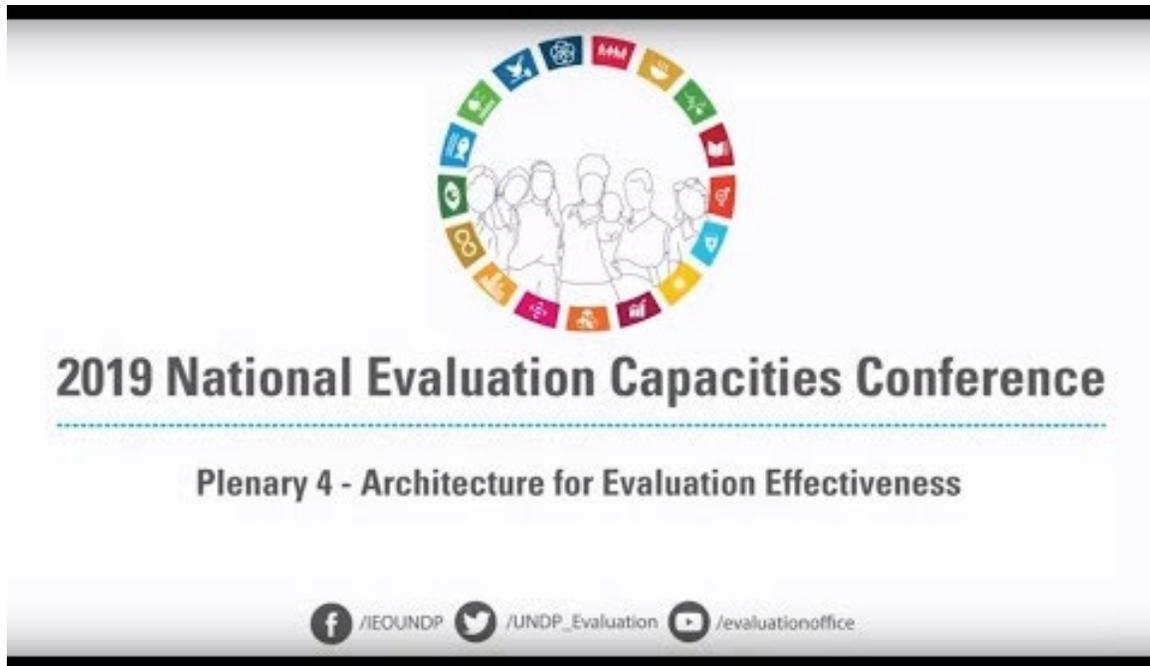


NEC 2019: SESSION ON ARCHITECTURE FOR EVALUATION EFFECTIVENESS

Date: Thursday, 24 October 2019: 09:00-10:30

Venue: Al Dau Grand Ballroom



KEYNOTE: Dr. Indran A. Naidoo, Director, IEO and UNEG Vice Chair

MODERATOR: Marco Segone, Director: EO, UNFPA

PANEL MEMBERS:

- Mr. El Hassan El Mansouri, General Secretary, National Observatory of Human Development, Morocco
- Ms. Esme Faith Nhlane, Chief Economist, M&E, National Planning Commission, Malawi
- Ms. Zorka Kordic, Deputy Secretary-General of the Government, Head of Department for Government Strategies, Secretariat-General of the Government of Montenegro
- Ms. Violeta Corpus, Director IV, National Economic and Development Authority, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation profession has rapidly grown globally, with most governments and disbursing agencies (donors, funders) drawing on evaluative knowledge and expertise to demonstrate accountability and improve performance. In any oversight and accountability type of evaluation, key principles become important and these need to permeate the evaluation architecture. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) references its evaluation function and offices to the 2016 UNEG Norms and Standards. These are sets of foundational principles that explain what constitutes a sound evaluation function. A key issue to note is that for the reports to be taken seriously and acted upon, they need to emerge from credible units, the key of which is the independent principle. Evaluations make a judgment about program quality and worth, as a basis for discussion on what needs to be changed and how. It thus cannot be compromised by bias, with issues of structural, financial, content and behavioural independence being critical.

This presentation shares the independent evaluation function of the UNDP, the lessons from the largest independent evaluation office (IEO) in the UN system. It describes key issues that were addressed in policy and practice that made it a model office. The session shall focus on 4 key areas critical for strengthening evaluation function, i.e., evaluation policy, evaluation quality, evaluation coverage, and communication.

STRENGTHENING EVALUATION FUNCTION: KEY AREAS THAT NEED ATTENTION

Evaluation Policy

As UNDP implements its new Strategic Plan (2018 to 2021), which defines platforms for development as well as an increased focus on innovative solutions to support development, it is increasingly relevant for the organization to have strong, credible and independent evaluation function. Such an evaluation function will ensure the accountability and transparency of its operations. The independence of UNDP's evaluation function remains essential to insulate the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) from undue influence and uphold its credibility in judging UNDP's programmatic effectiveness.

The IEO abides by the Evaluation Policy of UNDP. The Executive Board of UNDP is the custodian of the evaluation policy. The purpose of the policy is to establish a common institutional basis for the UNDP evaluation function. The policy seeks to increase transparency, coherence and efficiency in generating and using evaluative knowledge for organizational learning and effective management for results, and to support accountability. The elements of the 2016 and revised 2019 UNDP Evaluation Policy remain critical for any evaluation office, for example, foundational principles such as reporting lines, behavioral independence (term limitations of heads to prevent conflict of interest), operational and budgetary independence.

The IEO has successfully established its own structure, budget, and professional and managerial independence. It has put in place measures to protect the evaluation function of UNDP from

erosion and undue influence to ensure the continued credibility of its work and the transparency and accountability of the organisation as a whole. As outlined in the UNDP Evaluation Policy, clear budgeting benchmarks were established to ensure that IEO work cannot be restricted through financial constraints. UNDP Management continues to affirm the importance of independence in the work of the IEO and its value in strengthening the development contribution of the organisation. This recognition has resulted in a four-fold increase in independent evaluations by the office, with US\$7.2 billion in programming being evaluated in 2018 and 2019. A critical mass has been reached in advancing a reflective evaluation culture.

The IEO reports to the Executive Board, which also approves its budget and multi-year programme of work. In addition, IEO engages with UNDP's Audit and Evaluation Advisory Committee (AEAC) and the Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP). The EAP advises on the office's work and provides periodic quality assurance of evaluations. The work plan of IEO builds on expectations set out in the UNDP Evaluation Policy and operationalized with a budget of \$42.1 million from 2018 to 2021.

Though independent, the office continues to engage fully with UNDP management and programme teams in undertaking evaluations to ensure findings, conclusions and recommendations are thoroughly considered and taken into account in policies, programmes and new development approaches across the organization.

Questions to the panel:

- Who sets the evaluation policy in your government, and how is the function protected, and how does the authorizing environment use evaluations constructively?
- What needs to be done to protect and expand the oversight ability, and how are citizen voices captured about how government performs?

Evaluation coverage

Evaluation coverage of the programme of the organisation is critical in ensuring accountability. UNDP IEO conducts evaluations of UNDP Country Programmes prior to the submission of a new four- or five-year Country Programme to the UNDP Executive Board. The IEO also carries out corporate thematic evaluations that would inform the organisations' global policies and programmes. Moving towards 100% independent evaluation coverage of all country programmes that are scheduled for a new strategy is a key milestone for IEO. The coverage relates to visibility and impact, and issues of scale and scope are pertinent. Implementing an evaluation strategy that facilitates 100% coverage of countries allows for a more in-depth examination of key issues within clusters or typology of countries. The IEO recognizes that expanding country programme evaluation coverage requires both product innovation (i.e. in the content and scope of evaluations) and process innovation (i.e. in the ways country programme evaluations are conducted). The recent review of IEO country programme evaluation methods has the potential to further consolidate these and similar innovations. The IEO covers all key areas of support through corporate (thematic) evaluations, which are tabled for formal consideration and decision by the UNDP Executive Board, generate considerable discussion within the

organisation, and among other key stakeholders, as well as inform UNDP global policies and strategies.

Questions to the panel:

- What is the scope of evaluation coverage in your country, and how does it relate to national development plans and the SDGs?
- Who prioritizes topics, and how does it deal with the SDG goal to reduce poverty and inequality?
- Who receives your evaluation reports and what are they required to do in response to the conclusions and recommendations provided?

Evaluation quality

Since 2012, the IEO has made considerable progress in building internal mechanisms, platforms and processes for optimizing its independent evaluation, oversight, quality assurance and outreach functions. To ensure evaluation quality at a lower cost, the office has strengthened its team of professional evaluators as well as its research team, enabling more research and data collection prior to country visits when initial desk-related findings are verified.

Establishment of an Evaluation Advisory Panel (EAP) is one of the key measures taken by the IEO, for outsider scrutiny and advice to strengthen the quality of independent evaluations. The members of the EAP are eminent and internationally recognized leaders in the evaluation and supported the quality assurance function of the IEO Director. The EAP has reviewed and made recommendations on various IEO products; provided the IEO with strategic advice, conducted several training sessions on various topics relating to development, evaluation theory and practice; provided guidance on methodology, communications, outreach and knowledge management strategy, as well as staff professionalization and capacity; and participated with the IEO in a number of external outreach events and conferences, including the International Conferences on National Evaluation Capacities.

Evaluations conducted by the programme units are important building blocks for the independent evaluations, hence their quality assumes importance. One of the tasks of the IEO is the assessment of the quality of the evaluations conducted by the programme units, which resulted in a steady improvement of evaluations. The process aids UNDP in identifying weaknesses across the implementation of evaluations that may need further strengthening, support or capacity-building, both geographically and by evaluation type. Quality assessment data, comments and recommendations are readily available to improve implementation and use of resources. IEO developed comprehensive UNDP evaluation guidelines which reflect UNDP's commitment to evaluation and its desire to improve evaluation quality, credibility and usability.

A question to the panel:

- What are the methods applied to ensure the quality of evaluations? Are there examples of such measures in your country?

Evaluation communication

Communications at the IEO has been deliberately strengthened to communicate key evaluation messages to key stakeholders. The IEO website, the face of the office, was redesigned and revamped to become more user-friendly with innovative features. Several communications strategies and processes have been introduced and transformed the one product into multiple digestible products with the goal to increase IEO visibility and strengthen an evaluation culture within UNDP. As a result, the IEO, in addition to its full reports now creates illustrated summaries, briefs, infographics, expanded annual reports, newsletters, summaries, animated videos; branding; and social media networks. These strategies have led to increased access to evaluations on both the web and out-reach platforms.

A key independence principle is the ability to share findings and recommendations in a timely manner. All UNDP independent evaluations are undertaken in close collaboration with programme units within UNDP as well as partners and stakeholders. Continued strong communication and cooperation with UNDP has ensured highly informative and detailed evaluator findings and robust and detailed management responses to recommendations. It is critical that messages, irrespective of how challenging they are, get shared in the public domain. UNDP's decentralized evaluations, as well as independent evaluation, are shared on a public repository (<https://erc.undp.org/>).

Country programme evaluations are shared with the respective government and other key partners of UNDP. Corporate thematic evaluations are shared at informal and formal sessions with the UNDP Executive Board, where the IEO presents detailed evaluation findings, giving opportunities for robust discussion. In addition, the office is increasingly developing new information pieces to keep the Board and partners informed of its work.

A question to the panel:

- In your country, does the evaluation function have the space to engage directly with key stakeholder- civil society, academia, other persons etc.

Summation:

Colleagues, this ends my presentation, and I look forward to your questions, comments, and responses to the questions raised. To jog your memory, the questions posed during my presentation are as follows:

1. Who sets the evaluation policy in your government, and how is the function protected, and how does the authorizing environment use evaluations constructively?
2. What needs to be done to protect and expand the oversight ability, and how are citizen voices captured about how government performs?
3. What is the scope of evaluation coverage in your country, and how does it relate to national development plans and the SDGs?
4. Who prioritizes topics, and how does it deal with the SDG goal to reduce poverty and inequality?
5. Who receives your evaluation reports and what are they required to do in response to the conclusions and recommendations provided?

6. What are the methods applied to ensure the quality of evaluations? Are there examples of such measures in your country?
7. In your country, does the evaluation function have the space to engage directly with key stakeholder- civil society, academia, other persons etc.

RESOURCES

1. Indran Naidoo, 2018. IPDET Graduation Speech: <https://undp.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/teams/IEO/directorate/Shared%20Documents/IEO%20and%20SDG/Keynotes/201807%20Indran%20Naidoo%20speech%20-%20IPDET.pdf?csf=1&e=4e4Hh3>
2. Indran Naidoo, 2019. Audit and Evaluation: Working Collaboratively to Support Accountability, EES Conference paper. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/papers/papers-articles.shtml>
3. Indran Naidoo, 2018. Revisiting independence, objectivity and the critically reflective role of evaluation for the SDG Era. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/papers/papers-articles.shtml>
4. UNDP IEO, 2018. Annual Report on Evaluation. <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/annual-report/are-2018.shtml>
5. UNEG Norms and Standards, 2016, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>
6. Evaluation Advisory Panel Deliberations 2019, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/directors-desk.shtml>
7. UNDP Evaluation Policies, 2016 & 2019, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/policy.shtml>

Multimedia and media resources that IEO engaged with:

8. Video of Srinii Pillay, M.D., CEO and Founder of NeuroBusiness Group; Assistant Professor (Part-time), Harvard Medical School, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qIvGAQb23JFXUISdtjGjJEoqpG3pI2Dr/view?ts=5dad633e>

Some books from Srinii Pillay:



9. <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/there-should-be-a-generational-approach-to-handling-workplace-anxiety/>
10. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90382424/how-to-build-emotional-intelligence-at-work>
11. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2019/08/05/five-brain-based-methods-to-lead-organizational-change/#6117f4f02154>
12. <https://hbr.org/2017/05/your-brain-can-only-take-so-much-focus>
13. <https://hbr.org/2016/03/the-science-behind-how-leaders-connect-with-their-teams>

