



Secretaria de Avaliação e Gestão da Informação
Ministério do Desenvolvimento Social e Combate à Fome



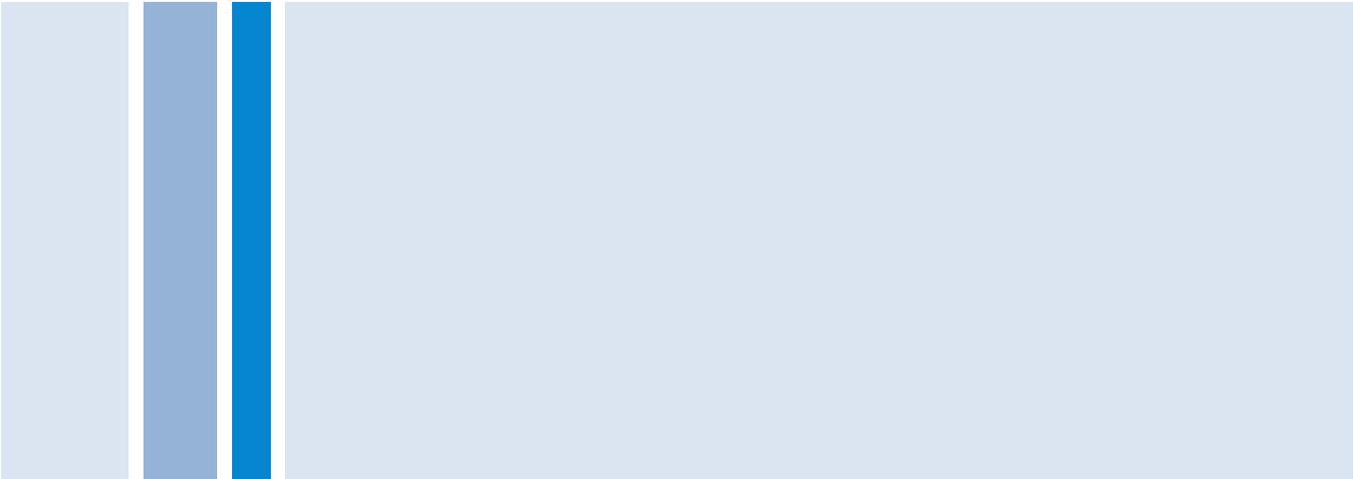
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SUMMARY OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FROM THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES



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I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provides support to national evaluation capacity development which is carried out within the mandate set by the UNDP Evaluation Policy. This support is provided at the request of programme host governments, and carried out in cooperation with UNDP regional bureaus and country offices. This joint effort with UNDP programme units is designed to bolster UNDPs' support in the area of government capacity building. The work of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UNDP is designed to help strengthen communities of practice in evaluation. This evaluation capacity development work has been aligned with the UNDP efforts to promote South-South and Triangular Cooperation to the fullest extent possible.



Since 2009, the IEO of UNDP has organised biannual International Conferences on National Evaluation Capacities (NEC). The first conference was held in December 2009 in Casablanca, Morocco in partnership with the Moroccan National Observatory for Human Development. The second conference was held in September 2011 in Johannesburg, South Africa in partnership with the Public Service Commission of South Africa. The third conference took place in São Paulo, Brazil in

partnership with the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MDS) of the Secretariat of Evaluation and Information Management (SAGI). The increase in the number of countries participating reflects the growing demand for support in evaluation capacity development from government, which both the UNDP and IEO are responding to. It reflects a global thrust for greater accountability and performance from citizens and other stakeholders.

CONFERENCE

The Third International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) was held in São Paulo, Brazil, from 30 September to 2 October 2013 and brought together 160 participants from 63 countries. The conference provided an opportunity for an open exchange and direct interaction between national institutions commissioning evaluations, institutions and professionals conducting evaluations and decision makers using evaluations.

The event was sponsored by the Regional Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR), Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank and EvalPartners. Donors included the Governments of Finland, Norway and the United Kingdom.



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To enable open dialogue, interaction and learning, a Community of Practice (CoP) was put into place pre-conference. It consisted of online discussions based on the theme of the conference - ***Solutions to Challenges Linked to Independence, Credibility and Use of Evaluations***. This report summarizes the e-discussions of the pre-conference activities held online on the NEC CoP from July to September 2013.

The CoP focused on enhancing the NEC conference by bringing to it new ideas and perspectives and the outputs and analysis of these discussions were incorporated into the conference. Post-conference the CoP is an ongoing effort and it aims to support and promote a diverse series of dialogues leading up to the 2015 International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear), as declared during the conference. The community space will soon be reorganized to discuss the 18 Commitments as agreed by the NEC conference participants.

The site dedicated to the CoP was www.unteamworks.org/NEC with discussions divided into three categories namely use, credibility and independence. While participation in the conference itself was by invitation only, the online community was open to public and open engagement. Discussants around the world joined the conversation to influence the global dialogue on national evaluation capacities. The dialogues concentrated on the evaluation function within governments and welcomed comments to address questions such as:

- What are the national evaluation capacities needed to ensure independence, credibility and use of evaluations?
- What innovative approaches or solutions can governments apply or have applied to ensure independence, credibility and use of evaluations?
- What incentives can be used to ensure the independence, credibility and use of evaluations?

PARTICIPANTS

Participants such as staff from UNDP, MDS/SAGI as well as lead experts, practitioners, academia, civil society, Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) and other development agencies internationally engaged on the COP.



II. SUMMARY OF THE E-DISCUSSIONS ON USE

The e-discussion on **use of evaluation** took place from 26 July to 20 September 2013. The dialogue centred on questions indicated further in this section.

What do you think are the national capacities needed to ensure the use of evaluations conducted or commissioned by governments?

The discussion commenced with participants communicating the various features necessary to improve use of evaluation, including:

- Appropriate institutional arrangements, including the creation of protocols and guidelines for evaluation
- Clear evaluation focus and objectives in order to determine good evaluation design and the appropriate *“choice of instruments and methods used to generate relevant and useful information and knowledge choice of instruments and methods to generate information and knowledge”*¹
- Ability to produce reliable and useful knowledge and data
- Capacity to identify the target audiences
- Capacity to identify how results will be used
- Communication skills and attention to the presentation and dissemination of results
- A political environment that encourages evaluation
- Fostering ownership of the evaluation by stakeholders

Papers submitted and posted on-line highlighted, in particular the need for institutionalizing evaluation within government institutions and ensuring that evaluation processes have appropriate feedback mechanisms in place so that corrective actions on projects and programmes can be taken using monitoring and evaluation (M&E) information. *“Evaluations should be part of a system and clearly communicated to stakeholders from the beginning of a project or programme. This will avoid later surprise or hesitance by the parties that conduct and/or use the evaluation.”*²

Discussants also stressed that in specific contexts, such as fragile states where development partners are heavily involved, it is important to ensure good communication between government and development partners for agreement on objectives, design, target stakeholders, and use of evaluation findings. Inadequate communication increases the risk of absence in ownership from the government

¹ Paulo Jannuzzi, “Encouraging the effective use of evaluations to improve management policies and programmes”, National Evaluation Capacities Conference paper, United Nations Development Programme (2013).

² Mohammad Sarwary Hamed, “Use of Evaluation – Local Governance M&E System in Afghanistan”, National Evaluation Capacities Conference paper, United Nations Development Programme (2013).

and stakeholders triggering the evaluation findings to become irrelevant or information not being used accurately by the stakeholders.

Discussants along with the papers submitted recognized that underpinning all of the specified characteristics and capacities is necessary for efficient use of evaluation combined with monitoring and evaluation skills for those who are commissioners, conductors, users and decision makers of evaluations. The skills referred to include but are not confined to the areas of conceptual - theory and concepts, methodological and process issues.

What challenges do you face or see when producing evaluations that can have expected impact and serve public functions?

Participants discussed the challenges that they have come across in producing evaluations which could be used in public administration. One recurrent theme as mentioned earlier was the lack of institutionalization of the practice of conducting evaluations within governmental organizations. Several other challenges linked to this theme were also identified, such as lack of:

Lack of

an appropriate enabling environment for the establishment of effective monitoring and evaluation systems (increased political will and commitment by government, civil society and others).

professional expertise in M&E, leading to *“evaluations are seen as burdensome and something undertaken at the end of the work, and, because the nature of projects and programmes may change, as an exercise that may or may not be helpful to future activities”*³.

awareness or understanding and practical experience of the how M&E findings can be used to improve, projects, programmes and policies within government particularly by high level officials and decision makers.

coordination among government and development partners in carrying out evaluations, leading to a lack of use of findings or duplication of efforts in carrying out evaluations on similar issues.

dissemination and appropriate communication of findings and recommendations from evaluations to stakeholders and wider audiences.

effective use of evaluation findings due to lack of dissemination of results, unreliable information, lack of identification of potential users of the information, etc.

³ Ibid.

What innovative approaches and solutions have you used, seen, or suggest, to increase the use of evaluations?

Discussants articulated a number of solutions that could be applied in order to address the mentioned challenges and increase utility of evaluations. First and foremost, were greater efforts on behalf of governments and civil society to institutionalize the practice of evaluations by creating an enabling environment and promoting an evaluative and results-based culture.

Participants suggested that institutionalization of evaluation practice and use of results, could be achieved by *“linking public sector performance management and evaluation to other ongoing reform initiatives in order to build and further strengthen the evaluation culture while ensuring buy-in from policy makers and fostering commitment and demand for the evaluations, as well as inciting public dialogue around them.”*⁴ Other participants also highlighted the need for greater M&E coordination through an M&E coordination bureau in order to better prioritize evaluations, communicate with stakeholders and development partners and prevent the duplication of efforts.

Another solution to augment use of evaluations is to apply feedback mechanisms. Projects and programmes should have built in systems that allow for real time feedback loops with easily accessible monitoring information or evaluation findings that can be used conduct corrective actions. *“A World Bank project example of single loop learning is the Karnataka watershed project in India, which used real time monitoring, and evaluation to improve targeting and efficiency during delivery. Strategic focus on creating a high quality M&E framework led to the generation of data necessary to document the project’s success and at the project’s end spread the lessons learned to enable project gains to be replicated and scaled by other projects.”*⁵

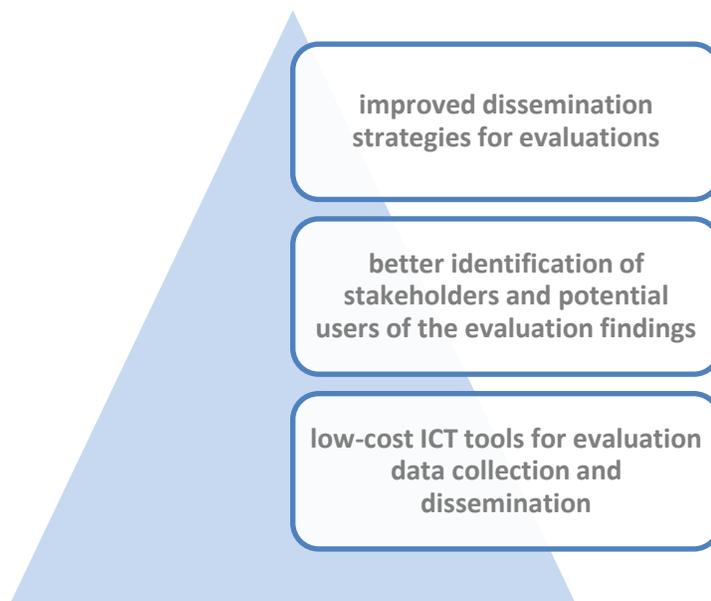


⁴ Comment posted by Serdar Bayriyev, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 21 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363654.

⁵ Comment posted by Clay Wescott, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 11 September 2013 www.unteamworks.org/node/363654.

In the discussion, improving evaluation skills and awareness was mentioned as a way to progress evaluation use. One suggestion for achieving this was by governments providing its programme managers and technical staff with basic programme based training on the project, programme or policy cycle in order to produce and use high quality, credible and relevant evaluation findings. The course was proposed to be divided into three modules of 40 hours and would *“be important for programme managers and technical staff to submit case studies from their own experience.”*⁶

The discussants also highlighted solutions to improve the use of evaluations results through:



Linked to these solutions, discussants related their experiences from South Africa and Malawi, where the governments are in the process of creating evaluation databases through which evaluations can be accessed online by stakeholders.

What incentives can motivate potential users to demand and use evaluations for decision-making processes?

Discussants agreed that potential users could be motivated to demand and use evaluations for decision-making by making evaluation results more accessible to wider public audiences, high level decision makers and civil society. As mentioned, discussants suggested a variety of mechanisms such as ICT tools and online databases as in the case of Malawi and South Africa. Mexico suggested incentivizing use by:

- Developing evaluation methodologies that must be used by evaluators in order to guarantee a quality and consistency
- Internet accessibility of all evaluations

⁶ Ibid.

- Promoting evaluations with short summaries that are easy understandable for policy makers and non-specialists⁷

Discussants agreed that the utility of evaluation findings could be increased by reaching the right audiences, policy makers, programme coordinators, congress, and civil society. There was also consensus that civil society could play a larger role in promoting evaluation use, by exerting pressure on their government to make policy decisions based on the findings provided in order to be accountable and transparent.

What can be done to ensure that evaluation findings are timely and strategic to support decision-making?

Discussants revealed a wide range of methods that could be applied for timely and strategic evaluation findings which are summarized below.

- Ensure an enabling environment that promotes transparency and accountability
- Institutionalize the practice of evaluation, for example, some governments have achieved this by enacting laws that make evaluation mandatory
- Coordinate evaluations between government agencies through a coordinating office or agency and to coordinate with development partners
- Train M&E staff in order to improve skills and create an awareness and understanding of the importance of evaluations
- Develop guidelines and national protocols for evaluation
- Examine how projects, programmes, and policies are designed and structured
- Build in feedback loops and mechanisms that allow for the use of evaluation findings to improve results
- Plan evaluations ahead of time, as part of annual plans or multi-annual plans and strategies
- Target users and stakeholders that will use the information and findings constructively
- Communicate and disseminate results widely using social media platforms, databases, websites, etc. Focus on how results are packaged and use ICTs to gather and disseminate information. Use highly vocal stakeholders such as civil society to channel results

‘USE OF EVALUATION’ AT THE CONFERENCE

Use of Evaluation was the theme on the first day of the conference in Brazil. Plenary session 1 commenced with the dialogue on the *importance of EvalYear*. Mr. Asela Kalugampitiya (Secretariat of EvalYear on behalf of EvalPartners, Sri Lanka) presented on EvalYear serving as a catalyst to strengthening evaluation by promoting policy making and promoting demand and use of evaluations. Mr. Kalugampitiya shared that EvalPartners in collaboration with the South-Asia Parliamentarians

⁷ Comment posted by Gabriela Pérez Yarahúa, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 27 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363654.



Forum on Development Evaluation have started a Global Mapping process of the countries that have national evaluation policies in place and which countries are in the process of discussing or implementing it. The findings from the process will identify key stakeholders in order to work and support further dialogues on national evaluation policy.

The presentation was followed by Sri Lankan panellists, Hon. Kabir Hashim (Member of Parliament, Leader of South Asia Parliamentarian Forum and Member of EvalPartners International Advisory Group), Mr. Velayuthan Sivagnanasothy, (Secretary, Ministry of Traditional Industries and Small Enterprise Development) and Ms. Mallika Samaranayake, (President of Community of Evaluators, South Asia) discussing the *importance of EvalYear and how governments, parliamentarians and VOPEs can work together to strengthen the demand and use of evaluation.*

Plenary session 1 concluded by declaring **2015 as the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear)**⁸, in order to advocate and promote evaluation and evidence-based policy making at international, regional, national and local levels. The declaration was followed by plenary session by Mr. Paulo Jannuzzi giving his key note address on *innovative solutions to challenges linked to use of evaluation.* Mr. Jannuzzi opened his address by stating that besides credibility and independence, usage and innovations are vital in evaluations. Mr. Jannuzzi shared that the social development ministry which he represents, works for developing services and programmes and their actions directly impact the population. It involves working with information and knowledge with clear targets which require actions that are innovative for management of their programmes. In order to guarantee the usage of information for programme improvement, he emphasised the need to produce and customize reports and proper strategies for the different agents involved - people from the street to the highest level of decision makers.

In the solution forums three simultaneous dialogues took place and participants discussed potential commitments and interests in cooperating on south-south solutions to promote the use of evaluations. Day one closed with a summary of the solution forums. Mr. Jimmy Kawaye (Programme Coordinator for Development Effectiveness and Accounting Programme, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, Malawi), Mr. Agustín Escobar (Evaluation Expert, Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política de Desarrollo Social, CONEVAL, Mexico), and Ms. Ivett Subero (Director of UN System Monitoring, Multilateral Cooperation Office, DIGECOOM, Ministry of Economy, Dominican Republic) elaborated on *innovative solutions to deal with challenges linked to use of evaluation.*

⁸ www.mymande.org/evalyear.

III. SUMMARY OF THE E-DISCUSSIONS ON CREDIBILITY

The e-discussions on **credibility of evaluation** took place from 19 August to 20 September 2013. This dialogue centred on the questions that are outlined further. The conversation starter was a paper, submitted by Ms. Maria Bustelo, Associate Professor, at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Short papers⁹ submitted by the conference participants encouraged the dialogue and helped the NEC team collect information and suggestions for items to be discussed at the conference in Brazil.

What do you think are the national capacities needed to ensure the credibility of evaluations conducted or commissioned by government?

Various stakeholders shared the national capacities needed to ensure credibility from their perspective as outlined in the table below.

Evaluators	In addition to training, field work and analysis experience are very important as pre-requisites for producing quality work in evaluation.
Politicians	Governments are political systems and politicians control the national budget. By lobbying politicians and strengthening their capacities, it would be possible to present the potential benefits of demonstrating development results to their constituency through evaluation.
Institutions	<i>“Credibility not only depends on the quality and independence of the evaluators, but also on the institutions and the systems where the evaluations are conceived, planned and managed”</i> . ¹⁰

⁹ Jeni Vaitsman, Roberto W.S. Rodrigues, Rômulo Paes-Sousa, “The System for evaluating and monitoring social development programmes and policies: the case of the Ministry of Social Development and the Fight against Hunger in Brazil”. Marco Natalino, Alexandro Rodrigues Pinto, Marta Battaglia Custodio “Evaluating Social Development in Brazil – analysis of the cycle of production and dissemination of evaluation studies by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger”, National Evaluation Capacities Conference paper, United Nations Development Programme (2013).

¹⁰ Maria Bustelo, “Encouraging Innovative Solutions to Challenges Linked to Independence, Credibility and Use of Evaluations”, National Evaluation Capacities Conference paper, United Nations Development Programme (2013).

What challenges do you face or see in ensuring the credibility of evaluations, either conducted or commissioned by government?

The challenges discussed were as follows:

- Poor dissemination of M&E requirements at the grass roots or implementation level results in requirements that are overlooked or ignored. For instance, when a grass roots implementer does not maintain the necessary records required for tracking project progress (especially in the absence of baseline/comparison data) leads to evaluation outputs not being fully reflective of the impact thereby affecting the credibility.
- Poor dissemination of evaluation objectives (especially to the beneficiaries) results in low or skewed demand for evaluation leading to poor participation in the evaluation process as well as in the examination of the evaluation outputs. Poor dissemination sets off lack of understanding of evaluation objectives, whereby beneficiaries question evaluations as having any direct benefits.
- Politicization of evaluation processes and outputs affects the credibility of evaluations. This happens during the evaluation process in order to influence the results either positively or negatively depending on political influence. On the other hand, credibility of the outputs is usually challenged if they do not conform to the political interest of the majority. Credibility is lost not on the basis of empirical evidence but on the basis of public perception.
- The power and interest dynamics (in most cases, the project implementers are also the evaluation contractor). Most evaluators whether internal or external do not have benefits similar to those of auditors. Evaluators in most cases are under undue pressure to distort results to the benefit of the implementers
- Poor integration of evaluation and audit functions. Evaluations and audits are seen as mutually exclusive. An audit may raise questions not adequately addressed in evaluations. In such cases, the credibility of evaluation outputs is questioned. It is imperative that these two functions are integrated for synergy purposes.

What innovative approaches and solutions have you used, seen or suggest to ensure the credibility of evaluations?

Discussion on this question revealed some of the following key points:

- Professionalization of capacity building through codes of practice is a way to improve and assure evaluation credibility. In addition to the ethical code, criteria such as autonomy and training are fundamental for social and professional recognition.
- Local evaluation networks, association, societies and VOPE's (Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluation) can play a role in bringing professional input through multi-stakeholder collaboration in National M&E Systems implementation, as in the case of Kenya. Governments and VOPE's can work together to ensure that the culture and practice of M&E is encouraged across sectors of the economy to provide evidence of implementation.
- Governmental institutions could also collaborate with national institutions of higher learning to provide M&E courses.

- It is important to have independent evaluation units in order to be protected from political influence. This can be through the implementation of M&E policy with relevant legal enforcement mechanisms which would enable evaluation units to commission, manage and utilize independent and credible evaluations.
- The creation of public awareness on evaluations comprising both positive and negative development results is important. This will help in demystifying the fear around evaluation and changing public behaviour to perceive evaluation as a policing rather than a management tool. People on the defensive may be one of the reasons for the slow uptake of the M&E practice.

What incentives can be used to ensure the credibility of evaluations?

*“Credibility is also inevitably linked to the participation of stakeholders in the evaluation processes. A participatory approach to evaluation, apart from the benefits of inclusiveness, promotes appropriateness of the evaluation processes and results and consequently the perceived credibility of those processes and results by those who have participated and feel they have a say in the evaluation”.*¹¹ Discussants expressed that this is easier said than done and real participation of stakeholders is a process which requires time and political sensitivity on the part of commissioners and evaluation teams.

*“Some of the ways to involve stakeholders include getting to know and understand the context and the programme to be evaluated, identifying key stakeholders and their information needs (including those needs in the evaluation questions and contrasting or even negotiating them with stakeholders), gathering systematic information and evidence from stakeholders and other sources, and contrasting and/or elaborating collaborative conclusions and recommendations. This will help the evaluation to be perceived as more credible, because the process has been transparent and stakeholders have had opportunities to contribute to several parts of the process”.*¹²

How can the robustness of data on the key development indicators and on monitoring be strengthened to contribute to the credibility of evaluations?

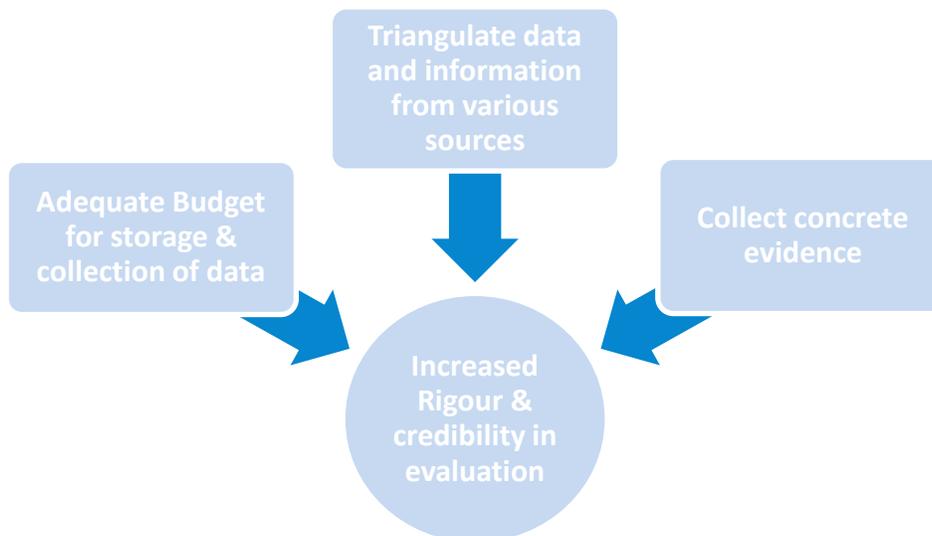
According to discussants it is important to have solid data and analysis. Rigour and credibility in evaluation depends on an adequate budget for investment in the collection and storage of credible monitoring data.

One way of making evaluations more rigorous is to triangulate data and information from various sources. It is important to collect concrete evidence that is not perception based, from as many different groups of stakeholders as possible, not just those involved in the programme, but also people

¹¹ The norm 10.1 of the “Norms for Evaluation in the UN System” published by UNEG in 2005 reads: Transparency and consultation with the major stakeholders are essential features in all stages of the evaluation process. This improves the credibility and quality of the evaluation. It can facilitate consensus building and ownership of the findings, conclusions and recommendations” see www.uneval.org/documentdownload?doc_id=21&file_id=562.

¹² Maria Bustelo, “Encouraging Innovative Solutions to Challenges Linked to Independence, Credibility and Use of Evaluations”, National Evaluation Capacities Conference paper, United Nations Development Programme (2013).

on the ground as well as other organizations involved in the field. Triangulation should also include data sources other than interviews such as surveys, project-level evaluations, official data, media analysis, etc.

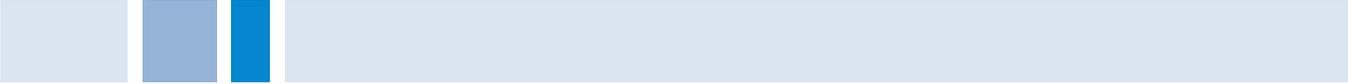


‘CREDIBILITY OF EVALUATION’ AT THE CONFERENCE

Innovative solutions to challenges linked to *credibility of evaluations* were the highlight of the discussions on the second day of the Conference. Ms. Bustelo delivered the keynote address based on her paper discussed in the CoP on how to enhance and ensure credibility of evaluation. Ms. Bustelo stressed that Evaluators do not play a lone role in evaluation and that credibility in evaluations also depends on the institutions and systems where the evaluations are conceived, planned and managed.

Immediately after, two simultaneous dialogues took place and participants engaged in solution forums to discuss potential commitments and interests in cooperating on south-south solutions to promote evaluation credibility. Mr. Indran Naidoo (Director, IEO, UNDP) moderated plenary dialogue 2 on credibility of evaluations and highlighted that evaluation units need to be open to critique and engage with criticism and that evaluation policies serve as protection for evaluators. Mr. Naidoo also explained that a facilitative approach from evaluators empowers evaluations and those skills and competencies are essential for credible evaluations, as evaluation can be destructive if done wrong.

Plenary discussants Ms. Martha McGuire (Canadian Evaluation Society Representative and Treasurer of International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation Board, Canada), Mr. Kobus van der Merwe (Acting Deputy Director-General, Monitoring and Evaluation, Public Service Commission, South Africa), and Mr. Clesencio Tizikara (Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, Ghana) elaborated on how to ensure and strengthen evaluation credibility. Methods, credible arguments, trust in evaluator, evidence, honesty and reputation were some of the key elements mentioned necessary for credible evaluations.



The dialogue was followed by plenary session 4 in which Mr. Thomas Winderl (consultant for monitoring and evaluation, Austria) presented 6 innovations in evaluations: outcome harvesting, crowd sourcing, data exhaust, intelligent infrastructure, remote sensing and data visualization.

Ms. Natalia Kosheleva (President, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation and EvalPartners co-chair, Russian Federation), discussed enabling environments for using innovations in evaluations. She also presented the innovation challenge winners which can be accessed [here](#).

Day two concluded with plenary session 5 on how evaluations have influenced Brazilian programmes. Ms. Paula Montagner (Deputy Secretary of Evaluation and Information Management of the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger) moderated presentations of the 'Program Bolsa Família' and 'Cistern Programme' presented by Mr. Alexandro Rodrigues Pinto and Ms. Cecília Ishikawa Lariú of the Brazilian Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger.

IV. SUMMARY OF THE E-DISCUSSIONS ON INDEPENDENCE

The e-discussions on **independence of evaluation** took place from 5 to 27 September 2013. The contributions provided in this discussion generated a conversation that revolved around the questions indicated below.

What do you think are the national capacities needed to ensure the independence of evaluations conducted or commissioned by government?

In order to achieve independence the discussants highlighted the need to engage universities in training the next generation of evaluators, academics, the civil society, and the evaluation associations.

There was also a lengthy discussion on what really signifies as independence in evaluation? The discussion acknowledged that there are different components related to evaluation: institutional or structural, and personal or behavioural. *“Evaluation independence should be defined in functional and structural terms rather than simply in terms of evaluators' skills and dispositions.”*¹³

The discussants started by providing the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) definitions on independence. According to the norms and standards set out by the UNEG evaluation is said to be independent when it is *“objective, free from undue influence, and has full authority to submit reports directly to appropriate levels of decision-making”*. This definition also applies that management must not impose restrictions on the scope, content, comments and recommendations of evaluation reports, and, in order to avoid conflict of interest, evaluators must not be directly involved in policy-setting, design, implementation or management of the subject of the evaluation, adding that the evaluators should have full access to all relevant information required for the evaluation.¹⁴

What challenges do you face or see in ensuring the independence of evaluations that are conducted or commissioned by government?

The discussants provided several views on which aspects of independence should be emphasized. Some of the key issues affecting independence of evaluations were location of the evaluation function, legal frameworks, methods used, who pays for the evaluations, competencies and values of the evaluators, and the way findings are disseminated. *“External evaluation consultants who are hired to undertake an evaluation of a government programme are far too ready to tell the story that the government agency hiring them wants to hear - because government is such a large source of*

¹³ Comment posted by Robert Picciotto, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 17 September 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

¹⁴ UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation in the UN System. New York 2005. This definition of evaluation independence is in line with the one provided by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD in the Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management, 2002.

evaluation contracts that evaluators have to assume they will need to get more work from the hiring agency and so they seek to please”.¹⁵

The discussants agreed that independence is integrally linked to objectivity and credibility. The conversations highlighted the view that in the development realm, independence in evaluation is only relevant for its help in supporting evaluation’s ultimate function: improving development results. The paper submitted by the IEG, World Bank Group discusses that independence is not an end in itself, and *“should be seen as a characteristic that helps reduce the biases that an evaluation function might have (or be perceived as having). Reducing those biases should increase an evaluation’s credibility, which in turn should increase the use of its evidence it to feed decisions. The assumption is that ‘evidence-based decision-making’ will ultimately improve development results”*.¹⁶

Discussion on whether there is a tradeoff between independence, learning and use of evaluation findings was the most extensive. There was debate on the dichotomy of independence and use and this was reflected through comments such as *“it is indeed challenging to be independent and play a substantive role in policy/strategy/operations development”*¹⁷ and *“there is a tradeoff between independence and integration. The more independent an evaluation agency is, the less integrated to the policy cycle are the evaluations undertaken by the agencies”*.¹⁸

There was also discussion on whether independence was strictly related to accountability or if independence could also contribute to learning and use. There were very diverse opinions. A discussant expressed that *“in fact, independence in evaluation is often seen—although not necessarily correctly—as endangering the adoption of the evidence produced by evaluations”*.¹⁹ There seemed to be consensus that there was a need to achieve a balance in evaluation, combining *“accountability for results through independent evaluation, and learning for better performance and results on the ground.”* Others were convinced that *“there is no tradeoff between independent evaluation and fulsome engagement: independence is not isolation. In fact independent evaluation is essential to the quality of self-evaluation”*.²⁰

Some challenges in ensuring the independence of evaluations are listed as follows:

Values

The values of the individuals conducting the evaluation will influence what they are passionate about and the extent to which they will do their best in conducting and reporting the findings of an objectively conducted evaluation. Evaluators need to have a deep understanding of

¹⁵ Comment posted by Angela O’ Brien-Malone, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 19 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

¹⁶ Hans-Martin Boehmer, Ximena Fernández Ordoñez and Neha Sharma, IEG, World Bank Group

¹⁷ Comment posted by Ashwani Muthoo, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 20 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

¹⁸ Comment posted by Ignacio Irarrazaval, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 20 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

¹⁹ Comment posted by Hans-Martin Boehmer, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 23 September 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

²⁰ Comment posted by Robert Picciotto, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 17 September 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

	the social, economic, political sensitivities, inequities or risks that are associated with programme, policy or project failure or corruption etc. Values also serve as the voice of conscience in what is a “right vs. self-interest” situation.
Hierarchy, management and control	Evaluation can be done through a consortium that is jointly owned by government, private sector, and civil society (this includes actual capital and equity), with Government owning the largest share, but not an equivalent share of the voting rights. The consortium could operate as a social enterprise of the government in order to secure national interest.
Separation or reduction of management authority by agents or department of government	There should be no management of an evaluation by Governments aside from checking the timeline, receiving deliverables, and processing payments upon receipt of deliverables. They should not have any editing or revision rights.
Competence	Primarily, competence is associated with understanding the interests of the different stakeholders and the ability to articulate the findings or to respond to their questions in a meaningful way. To some extent this can be described as stakeholder targeted information packaging and dissemination. If this is done effectively, evaluators will not have to compromise when faced with tough questions by powerful individuals or organizations.

What innovative approaches and solutions have you used, seen or suggest to ensure the independence of evaluations conducted or commissioned by government?

There was not much discussion on successful cases or innovations related to institutional arrangements to achieve greater levels of independence in evaluation. The discussants highlighted the fact that even though some M&E systems were initially concerned mainly with independence, their focus has increasingly shifted towards ensuring better use of evaluation findings. Discussants expressed concern that even in countries with fairly institutionalized M&E systems, independence in evaluation has not yet been achieved.

In terms of structural or institutional dimensions of independence, strong governance and division of powers were key points mentioned as criteria supportive to independence. Enforcement of legislations and evaluation policies were other suggestions through which independence could be implemented.

With regard to innovative methods or approaches, there was discussion on how to incorporate “real-time feedback loops” initiating direct feedback from citizens or beneficiaries of policies and programmes being evaluated. *“Real-time feedback loops from citizens using government services or being affected by policies or programmes can provide immediate and continuous feedback to evaluate government activities. This can be done e.g. by using already collected information (e.g. mobility*



patterns by tracking mobile phones) or asking small samples of citizens for feedback (e.g. rapid one-line questionnaires)".²¹

What incentives can be used to ensure the independence of evaluations?

In Chile, the Budget Office is conducting an average of 30 evaluations per year. An important group of consultants are becoming specialists in this exercise. One incentive would be to encourage academics to participate in evaluations by authorizing them to publish the result of the evaluation in an academic journal. This might motivate academics to participate in evaluations but it will also produce more independence from government, as the results are published in other spaces.

‘INDEPENDENCE OF EVALUATIONS’ AT THE CONFERENCE

Mr. Hans Martin Boehmer (Senior Manager, IEG, Strategy, Communication, and Learning Department, World Bank) kicked off the last day of the conference by delivering his keynote address on *independence of evaluations* in plenary session 6. Mr. Boehmer emphasized the need for engaging with all stakeholders to build respect, trust and engagement and pointed out that this cycle helps analyse the need for independence in evaluations. He highlighted that evaluations need to respond to the goals and not the interests of an organization.

The session was followed by two simultaneous dialogues where participants engaged in solution forums to discuss potential commitments and interests in cooperating on south-south solutions to promote independence of evaluations. A lunch with a speaker was promoted with presentations from Mr. Alexandro Rodrigues Pinto and Ms. Luciana Sardinha on the Brazilian Food Acquisition Program and M&E Surveys, Tools and training Courses.

Plenary dialogue 3, highlighted how to ensure independent evaluations with Ms. Ximena Fernández Ordoñez (Evaluation Officer, IEG World Bank) and Ms. Nidhi Khattri (Head of CLEAR Secretariat) presenting a summary of the solution forums on independence of evaluations.

Mr. Juha Uitto (Deputy Director, IEO, UNDP) moderated the close of the conference with a discussion on possible venues and themes for the next NEC conference. It was agreed that the next conference should take place in Asia and Sri Lanka and India offered to host. The conference closed with a presentation of 18 agreed commitments proposed by the participants to mutually cooperate in south-south solutions and contribute towards EvalYear.

²¹ Comment posted by Thomas Winderl, National Evaluation Capacities online community, 18 August 2013, www.unteamworks.org/node/363659.

V. CONCLUSIONS

COP participants that attended the conference in São Paulo brought the discussions to dialogues that took place during the conference in the format of solution forums. The discussion from the COP helped draft the list of [18 NEC commitments](#)²² agreed and undersigned by a number of participants interested in collaborating and committing to promote national evaluation capacities development.

As a result of the Third International NEC Conference, the 18 commitments below were agreed to and undersigned by participants.

Commitment 1	Develop and implement a transparent results based monitoring and evaluation framework to track the efforts and results of the implemented commitments proposed in this conference.
Commitment 2	Collaborate to build and strengthen credible national data systems to improve the integrity of such systems, in order to better link performance of policies and programmes.
Commitment 3	Develop systems to promote the transparent follow-up of evaluations, such as management response tracking systems and citizens' commission that allow for effective monitoring of the implementation of evaluation recommendations.
Commitment 4	Study the alternatives, assessing the pros and cons of different options of institutional set-ups for evaluation, such as national evaluation legislation/policy, where appropriate, taking the country context into account and establishing a set of minimum requirements based on lessons learnt.
Commitment 5	Develop/strengthen/support/expand joint peer-to-peer systems and mentoring programmes among professional associations of evaluators and government evaluation units.
Commitment 6	Create/strengthen Parliamentarians' Forums for development evaluation in different regions to advocate for use and conduct of evaluations.
Commitment 7	Facilitate partnership/cooperation between Governments, VOPEs, Parliaments and private sector initiatives to strengthen the understanding about what evaluation is and how it can be useful for different actions.
Commitment 8	Develop approaches based on lessons learned, on how to incorporate cultural dimensions into evaluation in different regional and national contexts.
Commitment 9	Develop standards, based on lessons learned, to ensure proper triangulation of evidence, checks & balances and qualitative data use not just perception-based.

²² www.nec2013.org.

Commitment 10	Develop standards, based on lessons learned to ensure stakeholders' involvement in evaluations while still guaranteeing the independence of assessments.
Commitment 11	Develop/connect national registries/national statistical systems to monitoring and evaluation systems with increased frequency of data collection to support evaluations and decision making.
Commitment 12	Have an online platform (NEC COP) to present/exchange experiences; keep NEC participant connected and follow up on the commitments.
Commitment 13	Translate material on evaluation into different languages.
Commitment 14	Map and analyze effectiveness of coordination mechanisms and practices between central evaluation units and sector ministry units and local government evaluations.
Commitment 15	Support joint regional/national events to take stock of developments in these commitments (in 2014), including the sharing/learning of good practices to validate data from multiple sources, manage sensitive data and disseminate evaluation results.
Commitment 16	Assign resources (a percentage of the initiatives' costs) for the conduct of evaluations when designing/approving projects/programmes/policies.
Commitment 17	Use external evaluators to facilitate/moderate self-assessments and reviews.
Commitment 18	Incorporate gender capacities/perspectives in Monitoring and evaluation national systems.

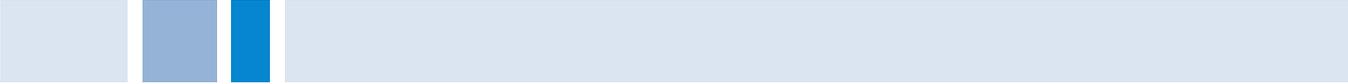
The expectation now is that partners, NEC participants and other stakeholders will engage in opportunities to exchange knowledge and discuss how national governments and partners can cooperate, under the edges of south-south cooperation to implement the 18 NEC commitments. UNDP is committed to developing and implementing a strategy to follow up on and monitor efforts, cooperation agreements and results of national governments and partners linked to the 18 NEC commitments and towards EvalYear.

UNDP will also help to identify and follow up on potential cooperation among conference participants and other potential interested parties; link interested parties to potential partners and UNDP programmatic units able to support south-south cooperation initiatives for the implementation of the commitments.

VI. ANNEX 1: PARTICIPANTS

Name	Agency
Alpha Amadou Bah	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, UNDP, Madagascar
Carlo Bakker	Independent Monitoring Performance Expertise Centre (IMPEC), Improving Government Performance, Netherlands
Rob D. van den Berg	Independent Evaluation Office, Global Environment Fund (GEF)
Pablo Rodriguez-Bilella	Researcher & Evaluator, Argentina
Jean de Dieu Bizimana	Country Manager, ICF International, USA
Hans- Martin Boehmer	Senior Manager, IEG, Strategy, Communication, and Learning Department, World Bank, USA
Maria Bustelo	Associate Professor, at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain
Tessie Catsambas	President, EnCompass LLC, USA
Jennifer Colville	Policy Advisor, Knowledge, Innovation & Capacity Group, UNDP, USA
Olivier Cossee	Evaluation Advisor, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, USA
Diego Dorado	Senior Public Sector Management Specialist , World Bank, USA
Alejandra Faundez	Director, Equity and Inclusion Consultancy, Chile
Bruno Cabral França	Politics Social Analyst, Brazil
Ian Goldman	Head, Evaluation and Research Department of Performance M&E, South African Presidency
Laura Gonzalez	Regional Evaluation Specialist for Latin America & Caribbean, UN Women, USA
Thania de la Garza	Adjunct General Director of Evaluation, Consejo Nacional de Evaluación de la Política Social (CONEVAL), Mexico
Ignacio Irarrazaval	Director, Pontifical Catholic University, Chile
Issaka Herman Traoré	Afrea Board Member, Burkina Faso
Marcia Joppert	Consultant, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, Brazil
Kubat Jumaliev	Expert, Division on Public Administration and Personnel Work, Kyrgyzstan
Asela Kalugampitiya	Secretariat of EvalYear, Sri Lanka
Saidi Kibeya	Senior Adviser to the President, Burundi
Farhod Khamidov	Evaluation Specialist, Cambodia

Samson Machuka	Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate, Ministry of Devolution and Planning, the Presidency Ministry of Devolution and Planning, Kenya
Claudia Maldonado	Professor at CIDE and Director General of Center for Learning on Results and Evaluation (CLEAR) for Latin America, Mexico
Angela O' Brien-Malone	Australian Public Service, Australia
Hernan Minier	Economist, Researcher and Professor at the School of Economics and the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurial Innovation of the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
Dieudonne Mouafo	Chief, Evaluation Unit, UNV, Germany
Mohamed Mouime	Director, Information System, Morocco
Ashwani Muthoo	Deputy Director, Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD, Italy
Jennifer Mutua	M&E Specialist, Kenya
Indran Naidoo	Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, USA
Winston Nyasulu	Assistant Budget Director, Monitoring and Evaluation Section Ministry of Finance, Malawi
Ximena Fernández Ordoñez	Evaluation Officer, IEG, World Bank
Aida El Khoury de Paula	Student at Universidad Complutense de Madrid - Magíster En Evaluación de Programas Y Políticas Públicas, Spain
Robert Picciotto	Visiting Professor, Department of Political Economy, King's College, London, UK
Laura Rizzardini	Associate Faculty at University of Phoenix, President at Laura Rizzardini, Inc, USA
Roberto La Rovere	Evaluation Specialist, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, USA
Mohammad Hamed Sarwary	Director, Monitoring and Evaluation, Afghanistan
Meegan Scott	Corporate Strategy Planning, Marketing & Performance Evaluation Professional
Albert Soer	Practice Leader, Capacity Development, UNDP, Somalia
Romolo Tassone	Consultant, Knowledge, Innovation & Capacity Group, UNDP, USA
Njoroge Thuo	Social and Development Researcher, Kenya
Sonam Tobgyal	Senior Research Officer, Gross National Happiness Commission, Bhutan
Juha Uitto	Deputy Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, USA
Sara Vaca	Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, Spain
Clay Wescott	Editor at International Public Management Review, Senior Consultant at The World Bank, Director at Asia Pacific Governance Institute



Arianne Wessal

Extended Term Consultant, IEG/CLEAR, Word Bank, USA

Thomas Winderl

Consultant, Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation, Austria

Gabriela Pérez Yarahuán

Visiting Scholar at Center for Learning and Evaluation Research (CLEAR) Latin America, and Professor at Universidad Iberoamericana, Mexico

VII.ANNEX 2: PICTURES



NEC Participants 2013



Opening of the NEC conference



Opening of the NEC conference



Day 1 Plenary Session on EvalYear



Day 1 Exchange forum 2 on USE of evaluations



Participants at the NEC conference



Day 2 Exchange Forum on Evaluation Credibility



Solution Forum on Evaluation Independence



Day 3 Plenary Session on Approaches and Models for Enhancing Public Policy Accountability and Learning



Commitments of the NEC conference



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

Independent Evaluation Office

220 East 42nd Street
20th Floor
New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel. +1(646) 781 4200

Fax. +1(646) 781 4213

www.undp.org/evaluation

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