

Draft Proposal – approach to the second conference on national evaluation capacities

For discussion with partners

1. Introduction

UNDP Evaluation Office, in collaboration with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), supports national evaluation capacity development by providing a forum for discussion of evaluation issues confronting countries. In December 2009, UNDP Evaluation Office, in partnership with the Moroccan National Observatory for Human Development, organized a first international conference on national evaluation capacities in Casablanca, Morocco. The conference brought together national partners from around 20 countries, regional experts in evaluation, and UNDP professionals. Participants prepared papers and made presentations on their respective experiences and shared lessons learned. This collective process of peer exchange and learning greatly enhanced the endogenous process which defines capacity development. It also provided opportunities for informed South-South and triangular partnerships and cooperation in evaluation.¹

The Public Service Commission (PSC) of South Africa has collaborated previously with the UNDP, and they will co-host a follow up conference in South Africa on 12, 13 and 14 September 2011, immediately following the National Monitoring and Evaluation conference of the South African M and E Association (SAMEA), which the PSC is co-hosting. This note presents a brief background to this proposed conference and outlines its key theme and ideas on the management of the conference.

2. Objectives

The broader purpose of the conference is to provide a forum for open discussion on issues confronting evaluation in countries, enabling participants to draw on recent and innovative experiences of other countries. The conference is also intended to promote understanding of international standards in evaluation, and advocacy for evaluation as a means of managing for development results, improving public accountability and learning.

To enhance the understanding and appreciation of evaluation as a powerful tool of public accountability in the countries, the conference has the following three specific objectives:

- a) To share experiences from countries with different levels of development of national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, including those that may be considering creating one and have important experiences with other types of evaluation efforts;
- b) To identify lessons and constraints in implementing national M&E systems;
- c) To identify supply and demand for technical assistance in strengthening institutional capacity for national M&E systems under the umbrella of South-South and triangular cooperation.

As was the case in the last conference, lessons and outcomes of the conference will be summarized in the conference proceedings paper, which will further contribute to the knowledge sharing and south-south cooperation among countries that are striving to strengthen their evaluation-related efforts².

¹This has been exemplified in the June 2010 event organized by the Government of Benin which brought together a number of evaluation practitioners in Francophone Africa to further exchange lessons and contribute to ongoing efforts to institutionalize the evaluation of public policies in Benin. The conference also confirmed the demand for periodic or annual conferences of programme countries to be supported by UNDP and UNEG.

²Available at <http://stone.undp.org/undpweb/eo/evalnet/workshop/nec/index.cfm>

3. Background on national evaluation capacity

Governments around the world have been intensifying their efforts to improve national evaluation systems and practice. The Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations development system: conclusions and recommendations (TCPR A/62/253, 2007) stipulates that “Governments of developing countries have primary responsibility ... for evaluating the impact on national development. The emphasis on national ownership of the evaluation process by developing countries represents a paradigm shift, compared to a tradition where evaluation was mostly commissioned by funding organizations.” Recently, greater emphasis has been given to country-led and country-owned evaluations, which support evidence-based decision-making in national policy and development. In programme countries, evaluation is increasingly recognized as an important tool for accountability and learning for both public and private institutions promoting good governance. Members of both civil society and the private sector are also playing increasingly central and active roles in promoting greater accountability for public actions through evaluation. Evaluation capacity exists and is rapidly growing across countries. There is tremendous scope for exchanges of homegrown and country-driven solutions, ideas and experience to support capacity development in evaluation.

In response to this new paradigm, evaluation capacity development has become a dynamic area of work for development partners, including the UN. Multilateral and bilateral development partners have been supporting national efforts to further strengthen evaluation capacity through their evaluation offices and programme activities. The UN General Assembly (GA) has requested the “UN system to pursue and intensify its efforts to strengthen evaluation capacities in programme countries,” “taking into account national conditions and ensuring respect for national ownership, strategies and sovereignty” (Resolution 59/520 of 2004, Resolution 62/208 of 2007).

UNDP identifies national ownership of evaluation as one of the key guiding principles of evaluation: “evaluation should be guided by national priorities and concerns and should be conducted in alignment with national systems...it should build the capacity of national institutions to implement, monitor and evaluate” (UNDP evaluation policy 2010). In line with this principle, the Executive Board of UNDP has requested UNDP to support national evaluation capacity in programme countries, and the UNDP evaluation policy recognizes evaluation capacity development as one of the key areas of work for the UNDP Evaluation Office and programme units.

4. Proposed theme for the 2011 conference: Use of evaluation

The Casablanca conference highlighted the “use of evaluation” as a broad topic for this following conference. Since the topic is broad, it needs to be codified and broken down to manageable and focused sub-topics with a clear audience in mind. The critical elements of which include the following:

- There is a distinction between planning, conducting, and using evaluation.
- It is important to define criteria for use, during planning and conducting the evaluation.
- Primary users of evaluation are decision-makers and policy-makers, and thus there is a need for high-level political will, leadership and commitment in respect of both evaluating public policies and using such evaluations.
- There is a strong link between the quality of evaluation and its use.
- There is a need for sufficient capacities to support dissemination and knowledge management efforts.

These critical elements should provide the framework for the design of the conference.

It was recommended that to further guide the selection of topics for the conference and to enhance the quality and value of the conference, a survey be conducted, targeting countries with an evaluation system for public policies.

5. Management of the conference

It is proposed that the conference be co-hosted by UNDP Evaluation Office and the South African Public Service Commission. The UN country team in South Africa will provide critical support to the organization of the conference. Representatives of these three institutions will be the core organizers of the conference. They will be responsible planning, management and administration of the day-to-day work of organizing the conference.

It is proposed that there be a high-level international advisory group, comprised of, *inter alia*, a senior representative of the Department of Performance Monitoring & Evaluation in the Government of South Africa, a national, regional or global association of evaluators, country representatives who have participated in the previous conference, the Moroccan National Observatory of Human Development (co-host of the previous conference), and the private sector. This group will provide guidance and recommendations on the design of the conference (i.e. selection criteria for participating countries, conference topics, structure of the conference. It will review draft papers to enhance quality. The organizers will prepare a draft TOR for the advisory group, which will be finalized with input from the members of the advisory group.

The Director General of the PSC, the Director of the UNDP Evaluation Office, and the Resident Coordinator of the UN in South Africa are proposed to be responsible for all decision making pertaining to the organization of the conference, including nominating the members of the international reference group.

6. Participants

The 2009 Casablanca conference recommended the involvement of ministries of finance, general audit bodies, national parliamentarians, and civil society organizations in addition to technical ministries. The inclusion of "users of evaluation" and decision-makers is of particular importance when addressing the use of evaluation. The governments that participated in the previous conference will receive an invitation to the follow-up conference in order to ensure continuity and the development of a critical mass for wider knowledge sharing and network. Additional participants may be selected, based on recommendations from the reference group.

7. Proposed timeframe

The conference is proposed for September 2011. The proposed venue is South Africa. Critical milestones include the following:

Establishing a management structure	February/March 2011
Announcement of the event	March 2011
Identifying conference participants (desk review, survey, consultations)	March-April 2011
Assessing topics of interest (desk review, survey, consultations)	March-April 2011
Consultations for partnerships and financing	March-April 2011
Concept note and design of workshop	April-May 2011
Call for paper and initiate contacts with participants	May 2011

Review of papers
Conference
Issuance of proceedings

June-August 2011
September 2011
December 2011

8. Partnerships and Financing

The conference will require partnerships with a wide variety of actors. Participating countries/governments will be requested to prepare papers, serve as reviewers or discussants, to enhance knowledge sharing during the conference. They will also be asked to identify a critical cohort of two to three participants that would play a significant role in the conference and the subsequent use of information for high impact in their respective countries. To the extent possible, in order to enhance ownership and south-south cooperation in knowledge sharing and capacity exchange, the participating countries are encouraged to finance the participation of their representatives and/or of representatives from other countries. Evaluation professionals from the UNEG and the wider evaluation community will support the conference as appropriate.

The UNDP Evaluation Office, with guidance from the PSC and the UN in South Africa, will be responsible for building partnerships to secure required resources for the conference. Several donors have expressed interest in supporting the conference.

9. Estimated resource requirements

The estimated costs for the 2011 conference have been established based on similar experience from the past.

ITEM	ESTIMATED COST in USD
Conference logistics	
Hiring of venue and equipments, lunches, and interpretation*	\$ 45,000
Travel (tickets, daily allowance, terminal fees & visa fees) **	\$ 142,000
Sub-total	\$187,000
Conference papers and presentations	
Translation of conference papers***	\$ 10,000
Publications of the conference proceeding report (editing, translation into French/Spanish/English, design and printing) ****	\$ 60,000
Website development for the conference papers, resource materials and post-conference follow up	\$ 5,000
Sub-total	\$75,000
Conference preparation	
Researcher for background information	\$ 2,000
Conference facilitator and resource persons	\$ 5,000
Sub-total	\$ 7,000
Miscellaneous (5%)	\$13,450
ESTIMATED TOTAL COST	\$ 282,450

*Based on the 2009 conference figures for 80 participants.

**Based on the estimated cost for 50 participants who are paid for by the NEC conference (remaining 30 will be self-financing).

*** While the participants can submit papers in one of the UN languages, all papers will be made available in English.

**** The final conference proceedings will be made available in English, Spanish and French.