

3. Online Tool for Self-Diagnosing National Evaluation Strategy Options¹⁶

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Public policy evaluation helps to determine the merits, achievements and limits of national policies and programmes, of what governments chose to do or not to do. They have the potential to inform actions by the government and enable policymakers to act as responsibly and efficiently as possible. The performance management for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) further underscores the continuing challenges facing national evaluation capacities and the need to develop national evaluation frameworks and to strengthen the linkages between evaluation and public policy processes. The online tool for self-diagnosing national evaluation strategy options is part of the ongoing work in support of national evaluation capacity development work by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), in response to increasing demand for national evaluation capacities in key policy areas, both for accountability and for learning.

For over two decades, IEO has supported the building of national evaluation capacities, including particular efforts to strengthen evaluation as an instrument of accountability. The IEO facilitated the exchange of evaluation practices through forums such as the biennial NEC conferences and used joint evaluations with national programme counterparts to strengthen evaluation approaches and practices. Given that the 2030 Agenda calls for a systematic follow-up and review of the implementation of the SDGs and that country-led evaluations constitute a key element in this process, strengthening national evaluation

16 The National Evaluation Diagnostics Tool was discussed by a panel on “Country-led Evaluation in the Era of the Sustainable Development Goals: Guidance Note and On-line Assessment Tool”, which discussed country-level national evaluation challenges in the context of the SDGs. See <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/nec2017/> for further details. The authors of this paper would like to thank the panelists: Per Øyvind Bastøe, Director, Evaluation Department, Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) and Chair of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development; Mr. Timothy Lubanga, Commissioner of Monitoring and Evaluation, Office of the Prime Minister, Uganda; Iye Moakofi, Principal District Plans Coordinator, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Botswana; Nina Sarishvili, Head of Service, Policy Planning and Strategic Coordination, Administration of the Government of Georgia; and Mohd. Monirul Islam, Deputy Chief, General Economics Division, Planning Commission, Bangladesh.

capacities has assumed even greater importance. The Bangkok and Istanbul NEC conferences provided a platform to discuss how national evaluation frameworks could respond to development strategies in the context of the SDGs at the country level. The online tool for self-diagnosing national evaluation strategy options provides an easy-to-use framework for assessing existing evaluation capacities and developing an evaluation framework that reflects existing institutional capacities. The tool is intended to help governments to develop a concrete evaluation framework for ascertaining progress towards the goals of their national development strategies and in turn the SDGs.

The following sections address current challenges to national evaluations, provide an overview of the impetus for developing the diagnostic tool and an outline of the tool and its key elements, and summarize the need for a holistic approach to developing national evaluation capacity.

NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES ARE SLOWLY EVOLVING

The assessment of national capacities carried out by IEO out during the course of preparing the tool shows that evaluation capacity is evolving, but not at the required pace. There are three broad categories of evaluation capacity: (1) mature capacities, where national evaluation is well established, with evaluations mainstreamed across government institutions and sophisticated data systems; (2) evolving capacities, where countries show a level of commitment to evaluation, but the number of national programmes that are evaluated continues to be limited. Data systems generate information on a set of indicators; and (3) emergent evaluation capacities, in the process of creating enabling an environment for evaluation and generate only basic data. A majority of countries are classified as having evolving and emergent capacities.

What does strengthening national evaluation capacity mean for different institutional contexts? The evaluation of national development policies and programmes requires a holistic approach. Although this is not a new insight, the SDGs emphasize the urgency of pursuing such an approach. We are at a stage where there is a shared agreement that national evaluations should be country-led, inclusive and participatory and support public policy processes. The SDGs emphasize the need for an integrated perspective of institutions and development and to move away from a silo approach, because development processes cannot be pigeonholed into isolated projects or interventions if the goal is sustainable development. National evaluations should help to capture this. The other important element is how evaluations should address the focus on the poorest and most vulnerable and “leaving no one behind”. There are considerable expectations that the SDGs will accelerate a resolution to longstanding development data challenges, which is critical for data-driven national evaluations.

There are multiple factors slowing national evaluation progress in emergent and evolving capacity contexts.

First, there is a lack of emphasis on strengthening evaluation capacities. Countries have yet to prioritize evaluation; for example, limited resources are allocated for evaluations and evaluation budgets often are small, unstable, assigned but not disbursed or spent largely on monitoring activities. Even where centralized, designated evaluation entities do exist, they

often lack authority or are unable to work across sectors and levels of government, with a lack of clarity on institutional arrangements, roles, responsibilities and coordination. In large countries, there is limited attention to evaluation at subnational levels. There are various accountability and reporting arrangements, but with significant gaps in the assessment of development performance.

An issue in national evaluation capacity similar to capacity development in other institutions is the “capacity trap” of importing standard responses to predetermined problems when there is a lack of basic systems and processes. There is a mismatch between expectations and the actual capacity of prevailing administrative systems to implement even the most routine administrative tasks.

Second, challenges remain in the use of evaluations. Evaluation systems are not always well aligned with national planning processes. The timing and scope of evaluations often are not aligned with planning and budget cycles. Learning loops or formal processes for using or applying evaluation findings is an area that needs attention. Where data are available, it is official data that are often used for reporting and less so for public policy decisions or performance monitoring. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have improved the availability and use of data for reporting, data were not used for MDG monitoring.¹⁷

Countries use a variety of accountability and transparency mechanisms. While the demand for evaluation as a feedback loop is rising, many policymakers give more prominence to monitoring. There remains a certain level of apprehension relative to the notion of evaluation. Some policymakers are also not convinced of the necessity of evaluation because they are confident that they already know “what works” and what does not.

Third, persistent gaps in national development data and analysis remain an issue in public policy evaluations.¹⁸ Adequate resources are not assigned for data collection and analysis that would inform public policy. Holistic statistical capacity is an issue in several countries. National statistical offices do not have adequate resources and capacities, resulting in uneven quality of development data (both outdated data and poor usability and accessibility of data). National statistics have an uneven sectoral focus and there are several SDG areas with sparse data. While some international agencies support data generation and national statistical systems, coordination remains weak. Often there are multiple reporting arrangements rather than a strong national statistical system that coordinates development statistics. National statistical systems have yet to optimize available technology to improve the quality, availability and analysis of development data.

17 Joint Inspection Unit, ‘Evaluation of the contribution of the United Nations development system to strengthening national capacities for statistical analysis and data collection to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally-agreed goals’, JIU/REP/2016/5; and UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, ‘Evaluation of the contribution of the global and regional Human Development Reports to public policy processes’, 2015.

18 UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, ‘Evaluation of the role of UNDP in supporting national achievement of the Millennium Development Goals’, 2015; and UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, ‘Evaluation of global and regional Human Development Reports’, 2015.

DEMAND FOR EVALUATION CAPACITY DIAGNOSTICS

The panel discussion on the tool, along with various studies, including one conducted recently by the IEO on national evaluation capacities and expectations at country level, found that countries are committed to the SDGs but are approaching them through the lens of their national development priorities.¹⁹ Although they are keen to integrate SDG specificities in national evaluations, evaluation for the SDGs per se is not a focus.

It is widely acknowledged that countries are interested in evaluation to strengthen their governance agendas and public-sector performance but start from very different levels of both evaluation capacity and overall government capacity and resources. Key challenges include capacity traps due to dysfunctional systems or practices and a mismatch between expectations and the actual capacity of prevailing administrative systems.

Strengthening systems takes time and is not a linear process. Governments face multiple demands and challenges on many fronts. Evaluation is important but needs to support development activity rather than being an additional burden. Countries with nascent evaluation functions cannot be expected to produce and use high-quality, cross-sectoral real-time evaluations within 3, 5 or even 10 years.

Because countries view the SDGs through the lens of their national development priorities, they are more interested in national evaluation diagnostics than in SDG evaluation diagnostics. Countries are interested in using evaluation to strengthen their governance agendas and public sector performance but start from very different levels of both evaluation capacity and general government capacity and resources. Moreover, there are different ways of organizing and developing national evaluation systems. There is more of a demand for evaluation diagnostic tools for national development strategies rather than for the SDGs. There are some diagnostic materials for national evaluation capacities but they are relatively dated and there is no indication that they are currently being used. There is demand for a flexible tool for use by governments at national, regional and local levels.

ONLINE TOOL FOR SELF-DIAGNOSING NATIONAL EVALUATION STRATEGY OPTIONS

Responding to the demand for a flexible and easy-to-apply national evaluation diagnostic and development framework, the IEO developed the *online tool for self-diagnosing national evaluation strategy options*, available at <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml#dig>.²⁰ The tool details action points to be considered in developing a country's

19 See, UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 'Towards a Baseline Study. Insights on National Evaluation Capacities in 43 countries', 2015, http://web.undp.org/evaluation/nec/baseline_study.shtml; Biscaye, Pierre et al., 'Evaluating Country-Level Government Monitoring & Evaluation Systems', Evans School of Public Policy & Research Group, 2015; Guzmán, Marcela, Ignacio Irarrázaval and Boris de los Ríos, 'Monitoring and Evaluation System: The Case of Chile 1990-2014', World Bank, 2014; DfID, 'Demand for and Supply of Evaluations in Selected Sub-Saharan African Countries', 2013.

20 UNDP Independent Evaluation Office, 'Self-Assessment Online Tool for National Evaluation Diagnostics and Strategizing', 2017, <http://web.undp.org/evaluation/guidance.shtml>.

evaluation framework both for its national development strategy and the SDGs and will facilitate identifying various steps in developing a country-level evaluation framework. The key objectives of this diagnostic process are to facilitate development or strengthening of a national evaluation framework for the SDGs and inform country-led evaluation processes and systems that are central to the follow-up and review of progress towards the SDGs. Its overall purpose is to enable governments to develop a systematic approach to determining key areas, pathways and parameters for evaluating national development strategies and achievement of the SDGs.

Providing a step-by-step mechanism to assess evaluation capacity, the tool enables users to determine needs and establish action points for developing a country's framework for the evaluation of national development strategies and the SDGs. It aims to augment national evaluation capacities in the SDG era and help countries to integrate, strengthen and connect three interlocking elements: national government systems, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and national evaluation systems and processes.

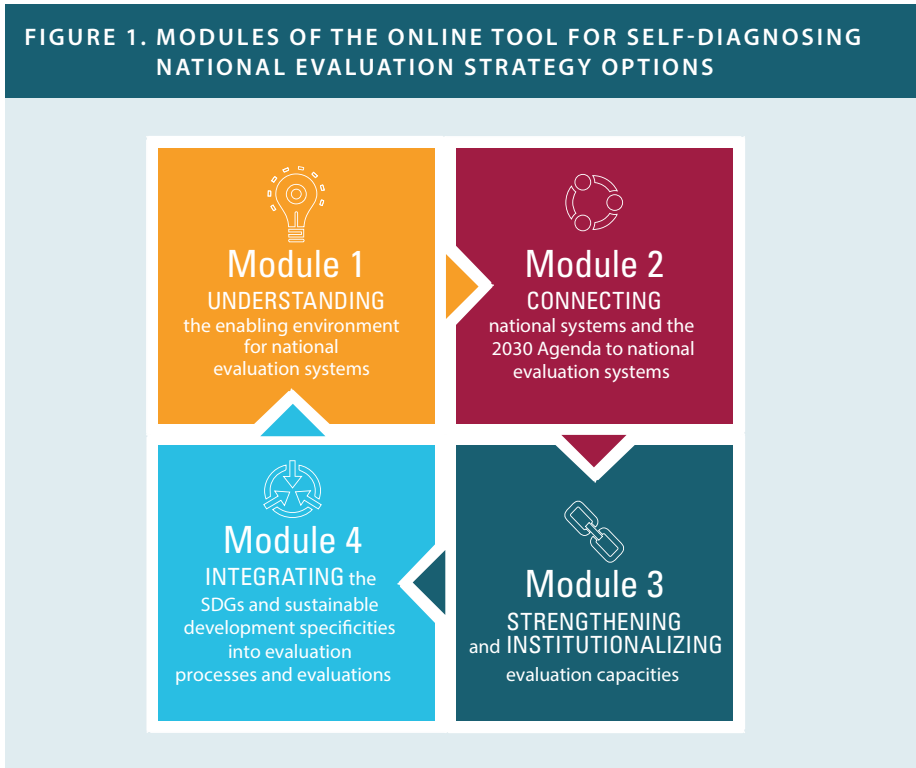
National institutions can use the tool for evaluation diagnostics to assess national development strategies and programmes as well as the SDGs. It provides a flexible and practical framework for a country to assess the evaluation capacities of the government or of specific government entities. It situates evaluation practices within the context of other public-sector feedback mechanisms and recognizes that an evaluation practice is built over time. The approach followed in developing the tool is to enable users to ascertain evaluation bottlenecks and priority areas for improving evaluation capacities. It also helps them to identify needs for critical institutional systems and processes and prepare evaluation frameworks.

The tool is for use by government entities, regardless of the level of their country's evaluation systems, processes and capacities. It can be used by evaluation systems that are mature, evolving or emergent. The main advantage is that the tool lends itself to the analysis of evaluation needs and bottlenecks and strategies to develop evaluation systems and processes at different levels of government. It can be used by the staff of the central evaluation entity, national government institutions, sectoral agencies and regional/state and local governments. It can also be used to develop evaluation processes for major national programmes where information on impact is critical. The self-assessment process is driven by the government entities and the tool is designed to be simple to use with minimal support from evaluation experts.

Consisting of a series of questions that enable countries to identify a requirement for building evaluation capacity, the tool helps users to understand the enabling environment for national evaluation systems and institutional capacities in different countries. It also connects national systems to the 2030 Agenda and enables integration of the SDGs and sustainable development issues into the evaluation process. Countries are expected to use the diagnostic results to develop and implement an evaluation action plan that identifies feasible priorities, clear targets, a timeline and required resources for building their national evaluation capacities.

Responding to countries' preference for national evaluation diagnostics as opposed to SDG evaluation diagnostics, the diagnostic processes outlined in the tool situates evaluative

practices within the context of other public-sector feedback mechanisms and recognize that evaluation is a practice that is built over time, rather than a set of outputs. The tool has four modules to help unpack evaluation requirements through a series of steps to assess key evaluation bottlenecks and specific needs and develop context-specific evaluation parameters (see Figure 1). The approach is non-prescriptive to account for differences in institutional and other development contexts.



MODULES

Because the modules are self-explanatory, limited technical expertise is needed to use them. The modules are based on the recognition that the need for structured evaluation practice cannot be universally assumed. Evaluations have benefits—such as informing and legitimizing decisions—but they also come with costs in time, money and effort. There is likely to be hesitance to invest scarce resources into formal evaluative practices if current arrangements satisfy countries' needs for information and legitimacy. In these cases, the modules enable users to explore different options and scenarios.

Module 1 is on understanding and building an enabling environment for national evaluation systems. It covers an assessment of contextual factors that shape the enabling environment for evaluation and helps to identify paths that would facilitate and accelerate

national evaluation capacities. It provides examples of accelerator paths for building an evaluation function. An area that is specifically addressed is the collaboration with constituencies with comparable objectives, for example audit systems. In many countries, the audit mechanism is fairly well developed compared to evaluation. Instead of creating boundaries, the national evaluation function can leverage collaboration with other accountability institutions.

Module 2 facilitates the taking stock of links between national systems and the SDGs. An understanding of these links is critical for framing national evaluations. While this module does not provide guidance for a comprehensive approach to integrating the SDGs, it does enable the identification of gaps, discrepancies and areas of convergence national and sectoral development objectives and indicators against the 17 SDGs. It enables an assessment of the national prioritization of the SDG framework (parts or more comprehensively) mainstreaming of the SDGs in ministries, departments, agencies and at subnational levels; balancing sectoral priorities vs. an integrated agenda; and setting up and empowering coordination mechanisms. “National systems” as used here implies a web of values, institutions, incentives, policies, plans and priorities that determine how decision-making, planning, implementation and accountability processes work in a country. Most countries operate through a multiplicity of systems and authorities, such as municipal, provincial, state/ regional and sectoral levels of governance.

An integrated approach to achieving the SDGs means that siloed, sector-based approaches to development solutions need to change. Much like the delineation of the 2030 Agenda into 17 sectoral or thematic goals, countries operate through a series of entities (ministries, departments, agencies) with sectoral or thematic responsibilities. However, the SDGs have interlinking targets that require a more holistic approach to development. To bridge this gap between a holistic approach and a traditional sectoral approach, some countries have established a high-level entity to lead and coordinate SDG implementation, follow-up and review. These entities are usually attached to central ministries of planning or finance or central political offices such as the prime minister’s or president’s office. In some countries, these entities are framed as sustainable development councils that oversee national sustainability planning. It is critical that evaluation systems be integrally linked to such coordination mechanisms.

Module 3 provides instruments and options for strengthening and institutionalizing evaluation capacities. It includes tools designed for integrating evaluation into national and subnational planning and implementation cycles. It also presents key steps in developing a national evaluation system. The module underscores that evaluation capacity should be phased, adapted to the local context and accompanied by a commitment of resources (centralized units versus subnational units). It also addresses how to avoid capacity traps and stresses the need for linkages with data systems and building on existing accountability systems.

Mainstreaming evaluation in national and subnational institutions consists of fully integrating evaluation activities into all relevant aspects of institutional practice. This includes: (1) updating mandates and policies; (2) assigning responsibilities and resources

for evaluation; (3) assigning responsibilities and resources for evaluation capacity development; and (4) assigning responsibilities for the use, dissemination and follow-up of evaluation recommendations. Ideally, where resources are plentiful, officials of various national government departments and provincial and municipal entities become familiar with and regularly conduct or commission evaluations. Where resources are lacking, however, mainstreaming can overburden decentralized institutions with additional tasks without providing the resources to fulfil them. Evaluation responsibilities should therefore be phased in over time, be adapted to the local context and be accompanied by sufficient resources.

Module 4 is on ensuring that evaluations integrate SDG principles and approaches. Integrating the SDG specificities into evaluation practices will be critical. Traditional areas of national evaluation capacity development efforts already cover country leadership, rigour, learning, etc. The 2030 Agenda, however, outlines key programming principles such as sustainability, resilience, equality, partnerships and leaving no one behind. Evaluations systems should capture progress in these areas. The module clarifies new expectations pertaining to some of the key demands that the 2030 Agenda places on national evaluation systems and proposes steps for updating evaluation approaches. After mapping national systems against the 2030 Agenda and building or strengthening the basis of a national evaluation system, the next step consists of updating existing evaluation systems to consider the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda outlines several key principles for evaluation related to achieving the SDGs. Many of these are areas that address strengthening of evaluation systems and processes in general, for example, institutional leadership, rigour in the conduct of evaluations, learning systems and partnerships.

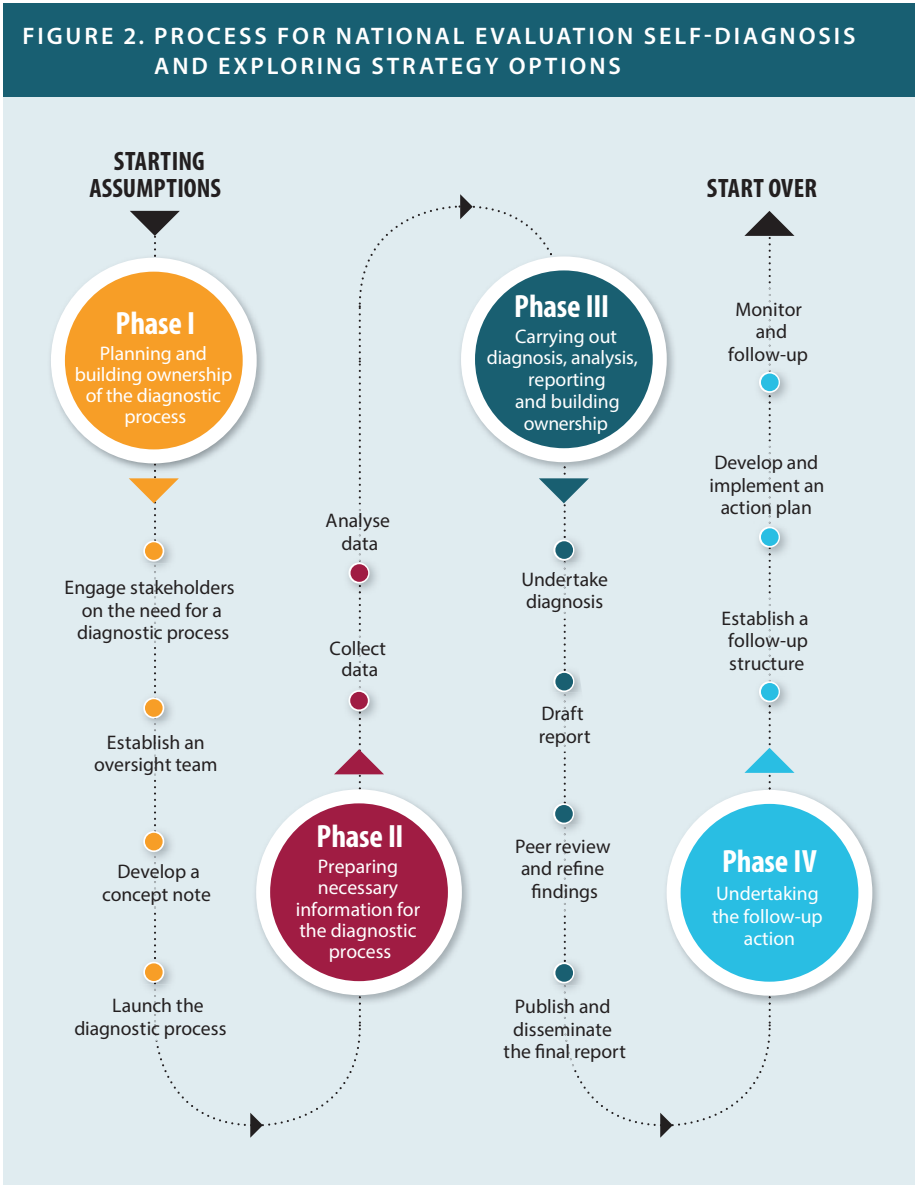
The 2030 Agenda places renewed emphasis on four key issues that national institutions generally emphasize, although with varying degrees of emphasis: universality, resilience, partnerships and equity. Evaluation policies, mandates, competency frameworks, standards and procedures should be updated to respond to new expectations and to ensure the integration of new evaluation approaches, questions and values into evaluation plans, terms of reference and methodologies. Updating these presents an opportunity to foster conversations among evaluation stakeholders about what is needed, desired and feasible.

NATIONAL EVALUATION SELF-DIAGNOSING PROCESS

The process of carrying out a national evaluation diagnosis matters just as much as its ultimate findings. An accurate and insightful analysis of national evaluation should be perceived as important, credible and useful by relevant stakeholders. Carrying out a diagnostic process, therefore, consists of much more than gathering evidence and disseminating a report.

The diagnostic process begins before the collection and analysis of information on evaluation systems and processes, and it does not end with the presentation of findings in a document. The tool emphasizes a carefully managed process that would add significant value to the diagnostic exercise. The diagnostic process is seen as part of a larger change-management process that builds on the following practices that apply to all phases of the diagnostic process:

- Fostering ownership:** To facilitate change in national evaluation systems and processes, it is essential to build ownership throughout each phase of the diagnostic process, particularly at the planning and reporting stage. Ownership is built by consulting, involving and informing stakeholders, both through punctual engagements (workshops, presentations) and by formally assigning them responsibilities and powers (as reviewers, committee members, etc.).



- **Leveraging the process for capacity-building, raising awareness and sharing information:** The process of conducting a national evaluation diagnostic provides an opportunity to raise stakeholders' awareness of the utility of evaluative practices and to connect them to other stakeholders with shared interests. To do so, it is important to structure consultations not merely as a technical process but one that facilitates learning for all key stakeholders.
- **Focusing on stakeholder utility:** Ultimately, all steps of the diagnostic process should be oriented towards stakeholder utility. This includes using language, evidence and communication channels appropriate for the target audience; formulating findings that are relevant to decision-making; and ensuring that the process incorporates clear follow-up and review processes.

A sequential outline of steps to be taken for the four phases is outlined in Figure 2. This process is compatible with methodologies for sector capacity assessment and with various governance structures, and it can be led by a government. The main emphasis is on building ownership of the diagnostic process among key stakeholders. The process for conducting the diagnostics is built on two assumptions:

- A government/public sector entity has decided to launch the evaluation diagnostic process, either because of its own interests and incentives or because it needs to respond to demands and pressures.
- The entity has conducted a readiness assessment for evaluation capacity diagnosis and concluded it is worth proceeding.

PHASE I. PLANNING AND BUILDING OWNERSHIP OF THE EVALUATION DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

The first phase of the evaluation diagnostic process has four steps. The objective of this first phase is to engage stakeholders and mobilize their support for the process and to decide who will carry it out and how. It is critical for strengthening national evaluation capacities to engage stakeholders at each stage of the national evaluation capacity diagnostic process. This starting point usually precedes the formal diagnostic process. Since the entities may not be well-resourced or powerful within the government architecture, the primary objective of this dialogue usually is to obtain support for the process from senior staff, such as ministers or the office of the president or head of the entity. This may require "selling" the evaluation to senior government stakeholders who may not fully recognize its purpose, may conflate it with monitoring or may fear or resent it. A secondary objective is to scan stakeholders to determine if there are interested actors elsewhere who will want to be involved and who might use the results. This might involve consultations with other agencies and levels of administration and with civil society, the private sector and international development partners. An exhaustive mapping is not necessarily required at this stage, as the emphasis remains on generating enough support for starting the process. However, at this stage it is worth considering possible interlinkages and cross-sectoral collaboration.

An oversight team for the diagnostic process should be established and assign responsibilities for the smooth conduct of the process. The precise structure of the team's responsibilities varies according to the approach taken. For decentralized evaluation diagnostics, the oversight team will likely lead, design and execute the diagnostic process. Where the process takes place at the national level, a broad-based collaborative review group should also be established. This group consists of higher-level stakeholders who support the process but lack the time to be significantly involved. For more involved processes, the oversight team should involve high-level stakeholders in an oversight and governance role, and delegate the actual assessment process to an assessment team. It is generally a good practice to have both a technical team (with a team leader) and a wider consultative group of stakeholders, which ideally should involve at least a senior government official supporting the process (an institutional sponsor, or several for a jointly-led model). For rapid assessments, a senior official should at least provide a letter of support or introduction to endorse the process and facilitate the team's access to stakeholders.

A draft concept note covering objectives, methods and resources needed should guide the diagnostic process. The concept note sets out key characteristics of the diagnostic process. It might include, for example, a list of key issues to be agreed on such as objectives/purpose, intended audience, the scope of the process (unit of analysis), management arrangements and roles of various stakeholders, financing of the assessment, an overview of the intended methodology and information requirements. The draft concept note should be shared with key stakeholders for review; this is an important step because the concept note defines the rest of the process. The note itself should be brief, rarely exceeding six pages. For quicker diagnostic processes, it may be considerably shorter or not formally be written at all (even when not written, however, the key questions should be addressed and key stakeholders consulted). An in-depth diagnostic process may involve launches across government entities and at different levels, while a decentralized process may be on a smaller scale.

PHASE II. PREPARING INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

The second phase of the diagnostic process involves preparing a preliminary diagnostic for each national evaluation capacity dimension outlined in the modules. Although this phase contains few steps, it is likely to be one of the most intensive phases and the one exposed to the most important risks, surprises and delays. This step includes collecting data for responding to the questions in the modules. Where back-up evidence is not readily available, the process of completing the modules may take longer. For some areas, consultations with other entities and levels of government may be needed. Adequate time should be set aside for consultations and for substantiating answers.

Analysing the data requires triangulation of information collected (verifying that information from different sources coincides). For instance, stakeholder perceptions about the number and quality of evaluations can be checked against actual evaluation reports sampled. This analysis should also highlight data gaps requiring further data collection. This step

ensures that the diagnosis provides an accurate representation of the needs and challenges facing the programme or entity.

PHASE III. CARRYING OUT THE DIAGNOSIS, ANALYSIS AND REPORTING AND BUILDING OWNERSHIP OF THE DIAGNOSTIC FINDINGS

The third phase of the process consists of four steps: diagnosing evaluation capacities; drafting the diagnostic report; holding a peer review and refining the findings; and publishing and disseminating the final report. The objective of this phase is to provide a summary overview of national evaluation capacities and to disseminate this information in a useful way to key stakeholders. It also involves choosing actions for an evaluation framework.

Usually the draft report is prepared by the individuals involved in data collection and analysis. It summarizes the findings on the various dimensions of national evaluation capacity and the diagnostic and relevant contextual information. The report should respond to the objectives outlined in the concept note and be written with the target audience in mind. It should also include a section on recommended follow-up action. The draft report should be shared with stakeholders (e.g., the consultative review group, if one was established) to inform them of preliminary findings, give them an opportunity to provide feedback and ensure a degree of independent quality assessment. If time allows, a peer review can be conducted in several rounds, first by soliciting detailed comments from peers or technical experts and then by disseminating it more widely to higher-level reviewers. After the report is revised based on feedback, a formal launch event can be held if resources are available.

PHASE IV. UNDERTAKING THE FOLLOW-UP ACTION

The fourth phase of the diagnostic process consists of engaging stakeholders on the need for follow-up and establishing a follow-up structure; developing an action plan; and monitoring and following up on the action plan. The objective of this phase is to leverage the knowledge and momentum produced by the diagnostic process to build national evaluation processes and systems at the level where the diagnostic process will take place. This phase is closely tied to and likely to overlap with the previous phase, particularly if the diagnostic model chosen faces limited time and resources.

Establishing an entity to oversee the follow-up process is critical; this may be the same team as the one that oversaw the diagnostic process, but rather than taking on a technical role the team can now be thought of as a process enabler and can include an evaluation practice group on national evaluations. Membership can be flexible, but to facilitate the reform process it helps to include institutions affected by intended changes, as well as institutions spearheading or financing the process. To avoid diluting responsibility, the follow-up entity should have a structure for designating a team leader or chair who is formally responsible for the follow-up process. The evaluation practice group should lead the development of an action plan that identifies feasible priorities, clear targets, a timeline and required resources (financial, human and political). It is crucial to building ownership of the action plan by developing it in a consultative manner, to avoid presenting institutions with

priorities or reform actions they did not anticipate or do not support. Consultations can take place through a workshop or several rounds of feedback on a draft, depending on the resources available.

Once the action plan has been launched, focal points should be identified in key reform units/institutions to report on progress against the targets outlined in the action plan, and to identify challenges encountered and good practices established. Information on progress and issues should be reported regularly via the community of practice to key stakeholders who participated in the diagnostic process. The action plan can be updated as needed over time. Following an adequate period of monitoring and review (usually three to five years), a renewed diagnostic process should be considered to examine progress more comprehensively.

NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY APPROACH NEEDS RECONSIDERATION

There are three issues which are worth considering in taking forward the discussion of national evaluation capacity in the context of SDG programming. First, national evaluation can no longer be seen in isolation and needs to be located within public-sector systems and governance processes. The evolution of evaluation systems is closely associated with the level of governance reforms and systems for accountability and transparency. Second, the SDGs are intertwined with national development strategies, so that evaluation of SDGs means an evaluation of national development plans. Third, the development of national evaluation capacities requires integrating, strengthening and connecting these three interlocking elements: national systems of government, the development agenda including the SDGs and evaluation.

At the country level, a more systemic approach to national evaluations is needed which entails taking a holistic view of development and looking at evaluations as an interaction between a complex set of actors and actions. Efforts of United Nations agencies and other actors should therefore focus on addressing institutional and process issues that can accelerate evaluation capacities. The tool can be one of the paths to enable countries to assess capacity needs and accelerate national evaluation capacities in a more coherent and holistic way.