



# The Status of National Evaluation Policies Worldwide

**BARBARA ROSENSTEIN**

Chairperson, the Israeli Association for Programme Evaluation,  
Evaluator, Lecturer and Consultant

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Asela Kalugampitiya for commissioning the research on behalf of the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation and for his helpful, suggestions and corrections throughout the process.

I would also like to thank Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation and EvalPartners for funding the project.

## INTRODUCTION

Evaluation is a complex field, and evaluation policy is even more so. The complexity of the field demands reflective thinking about evaluation purposes and use and careful planning to ensure both. The research was proposed by Parliamentarians Forum on Development Evaluation, a collective of parliamentarians committed to the development of evaluations in South Asian Region countries. The goal of the Forum is to advance enabling environments for nationally owned, transparent, systematic and standard development evaluation process in line with National Evaluation Policy (NEP) at country level. The Forum, along with EvalPartners and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) through Mr. Asela Kalugampitiya commissioned a Mapping of the Status of NEPs in August 2013 and Six Cases Studies of NEPs. The research and reports were conducted and written by Dr. Barbara Rosenstein for the Mapping and Ms. Katerina Stolyarenko for the case studies. The report and the case studies appeared in December 2013. The first Mapping the Status of NEP Report and Six Case Studies were presented at conferences worldwide and for much valuable feedback was received. Therefore, although there was a great deal of information in the first reports, it was clear that still more information was needed and an update was commissioned in November 2014 and completed in February, 2015 by Dr. Rosenstein. In addition, four cases studies of the interface between NEP and gender responsiveness and equity focus were

commissioned and completed by Ms. Stolyarenko. These reports attempt to fill the gaps and provide additional information and insights.<sup>30</sup>

The paper presents the rationale behind the mapping of NEPs and the mapping itself. This paper is relevant and important, within the context of the 2015 National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Conference, because it increases knowledge concerning NEPs worldwide by presenting the kinds of evaluation policies and practices that are in operation in over 60 countries. The paper provides valuable links to policies and legislation and answers the key questions: Which countries have a NEP? Which countries conduct evaluation without a national policy? Who administers evaluation policies? In what sectors and disciplines are evaluations conducted? Who are the responsible agencies for such evaluation? The paper speaks directly to the issues addressed at the conference and it is hoped that it will contribute to the wealth of discourse, activities and developments in the International Year of Evaluation, 2015.

## THE STUDY

The definition of a national evaluation policy used for this study is: A legislated or recognized policy that serves as a basis for evaluation across government agencies. On the one hand, it is a broad definition, but on the other, it includes recognized policies that are documented. The data was collected through a search of government websites, international funding agency websites (World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UNDP, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, UNICEF, IOCE, EvalPartners+) on the Internet, and through correspondences with key players who shared their knowledge generously with me. It is important to note that this is a very dynamic field and that the numbers change as this is being written. New policies and practices develop all the time. A survey was conducted of 106 countries of which 59 were chosen because of the documentation available concerning them. During presentations of the findings at conferences, two more countries were added. Thus the total number of countries involved in the findings is 61.

## FINDINGS

The picture that emerged from the study completed in February 2015, is summarized in Table 1. As shown in the table, there are evaluation policies in practice, formalized and not formalized. One would think that the countries with formalized policies would have a well-established evaluation practice; however, this is not always the case. Of the 17 countries with well-established evaluation practice, three do not have a formalized policy. Concerning evolving policies, i.e. countries in which the evaluation field exists and is evolving, eight have a formal policy and six do not. Most of the countries covered in the study are developing an evaluation culture and policy. Of these, 10 have a formalized evaluation policy in place, and 20 do not.

---

30 <http://www.pfde.net/index.php/publications-resources/global-mapping-report-2015>  
<http://www.pfde.net/index.php/publications-resources/case-studies-on-ef-gr-m-e-systems>

**TABLE 1. NEP OR EVALUATION PRACTICE N=61<sup>31</sup>**

WELL ESTABLISHED (17)	EVOLVING (14)	NEP OR EVALUATION PRACTICE/STAGE	DEVELOPING (30)
14	8	Formalized (32)	10
3	6	Not formalized (29)	20

Table 2 lists the countries according to categories outlined above.

**TABLE 2. NEP OR EVALUATION PRACTICE N=61**

NEP/STAGE	WELL ESTABLISHED (17)	EVOLVING (14)	DEVELOPING EARLY STAGE (30)	
<b>Formalized (32)</b>	Canada Chile Colombia Finland France Germany Japan Mexico Norway Peru Republic of Korea Sweden Switzerland USA	Brazil Costa Rica Malaysia Morocco Peru South Africa The Philippines Trinidad and Tobago	Benin Ethiopia Hungary Jamaica Kazakhstan Kyrgyz Republic Nepal Uganda Ukraine Vietnam	
<b>Not formalized (29)</b>	Australia New Zealand UK	Argentina India Israel Italy Spain New Zealand	Bangladesh Bhutan Botswana Burkina Faso Cameroon Cape Verde Ghana Indonesia Jordan Kenya	Mongolia Namibia Pakistan Paraguay Poland Portugal Maldives Romania Tanzania Zambia

31 Added the time of the conference: Trinidad and Tobago, Nepal and the Philippines changed status from non-formalized to formalized policy – legislation expected at the beginning of 2016.

## ADMINISTERING BODIES

The study examined the agencies responsible for administering evaluation policies. Information was not clear concerning this area since many of the administering bodies overlap. Table 3 shows the distribution from the available data. In many countries the evaluation policy sits in the President's Office, but the administration and implementation of the policy is the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance and Planning. As seen in Table 3, the administering body in 19 countries is the Ministry of Finance and Planning; in 13 countries the President or Prime Minister or Cabinet is responsible for administering the policy; in eight countries the administering body is the Audit Office; and in 19 countries a combination of agencies is responsible for the implementation of the policy.

**TABLE 3. ADMINISTERING BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF EVALUATION POLICIES**

ADMINISTERING BODY	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES
Ministry of Finance and Planning	19
President/Prime Minister or Cabinet	13
Audit Office	8
Other or combinations	19

The documentation is not always clear concerning the agency, office or ministry responsible for implementing and administrating the evaluation policy. As already mentioned, in many cases more than one administering body is involved.

## SECTORS WHERE NEP OR EVALUATION IS CONDUCTED

Not all evaluation policies apply to all sectors. The sectors vary according to the policy and the country. Table 4 shows the distribution of the sectors where evaluation policies focus

**TABLE 4. SECTORS WHERE NEP OR EVALUATION IS CONDUCTED, OR AIMED**

SECTOR	NUMBER OF COUNTRIES WHERE THIS IS THE CASE
Whole of government	28
Development projects	12
All sectors	9
Other	10

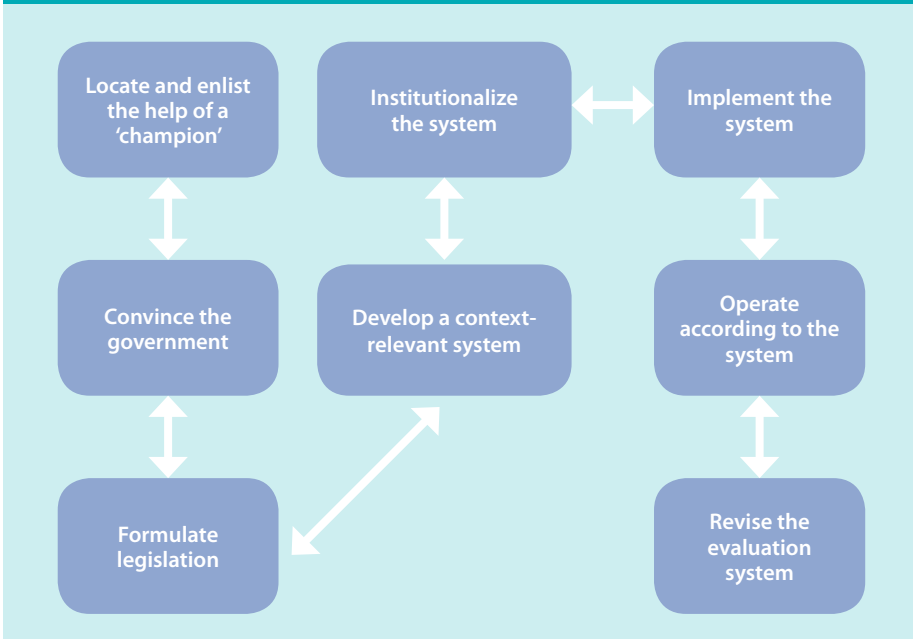
their efforts. Most apply to the whole of government; many to development projects; fewer to all sectors; and some to others. It is important to note that many countries apply the policy to development projects only, especially those carried out in other countries.

## DEVELOPING A NATIONAL EVALUATION POLICY

The process of developing and implemented a national evaluation policy is an iterative and dynamic process. The place to begin is to find a champion in the government who believes in the value of evaluation and will lead to the next stage, persuading and convincing people of the benefits of evaluation from the inside. National evaluation associations could work in conjunction with the 'champion' to organize symposia, conferences, international events, etc. to expose the issues and demonstrate the value of evaluation. They work towards building an evaluation culture. Together they can move one to the next stage, formulating legislation. These stages are iterative, and not consecutive. Each advance to another stage requires looking back and examining the previous stage and checking information, goals and strategies. If you convince the government that a national evaluation policy is beneficial to the worth of that government's projects and programmes, you have to return to the original motives to check whether the policy that has been devised suits those aims. It is important to weigh the issues involved carefully because once a policy is institutionalized, it is difficult to change it. Sometimes it could prove difficult to implement a policy that has too many restrictions, requirements and an inflexible time table. Once a policy is institutionalized it must be implemented. Some countries in this study had policies on the books, but not in practice and vice versa. Implementation of the policy requires operation according to the policy and checking whether the policy is functional, efficient, and beneficial to programmes and programme participants. The next stage is the revision stage. Most countries that have had NEPs for a length of time, Mexico, Colombia, Canada, periodically revise the policies to fit the practice and the context. For instance, one cannot require evaluations on every government programme if there are not enough evaluators in the country to conduct those evaluations soundly. On the other hand, government administrators, programme operators, and participants have to have the time available to read and apply evaluation findings. If there are too many reports and not enough time or personnel available to read them, then the purpose of having evaluation is lost. The NEP has to be context bound. You cannot take one country's policy and paste it onto another country. Thus, this is a dynamic model for developing a national evaluation policy. Figure 1 illustrates this model.

Several challenges face those who develop, institutionalize and implement a national evaluation policy. The first two involve either side of the evaluation process: the commissioner of the evaluation and the evaluator. Sometimes the number of evaluations required by the NEP overloads the system. There are not enough people to read, respond and act on the evaluation reports. A situation like this occurred in South Africa in the beginning of the implementation of their ambitious and detailed NEP. There were simply too many reports to be read and acted upon. Then the policy was revised to require reduce the frequency of evaluation reports on any given programme. On the other side, the number of trained evaluators in a particular country is often insufficient to conduct the required number of

**FIGURE 1. THE ITERATIVE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A NATIONAL EVALUATION POLICY CHALLENGES**



evaluations properly. The Paris Declaration requires local evaluators to conduct evaluations. If the number of evaluations is too large, there are not enough local evaluators to do the job.

The other challenges involve the quality of the evaluations. Many NEPs focus on summative evaluations rather than process or formative evaluations. Such a policy can eliminate many of the learning benefits of evaluation by looking at the end product rather than the process leading up to it. That is, not examining the black box, which provides so much valuable learning. Another challenge is the stress on quantity of evaluations rather than quality. This problem is self-explanatory. It is important to do less, better, than to do more, not so well. The last and significant challenge that emerged from the study is the possible focus on evaluation at the expense of programme planning. It is important to devise and plan programmes well. A limited amount of funding is available and it has to be divided properly between programmes and evaluation of those programmes recognizing the good evaluation can assist in good programme planning.

## BENEFITS OF NEP

The first benefit is that an NEP provides a framework in which to operate. In other words, commissioners of evaluation, evaluators, programme developers and operators all know what is expected of them. Furthermore, an NEP sets a standard for evaluations countrywide. Thus

evaluators and users of evaluation are held to an acceptable standard that should maintain high quality in evaluations. An NEP promotes evaluation use if the policy requires use in some form. In other words, there is some kind of mechanism in the policy to follow up on evaluation use. A good NEP should support strategic planning and implementation of programmes and should ensure better programming through knowledge gained from evaluation. In effect that is the purpose of evaluation. An NEP can promote gender and equity by requiring gender and equity responsiveness in programmes and evaluations. This particular issue was examined in four countries by Katerina Stolyarenko in her study mentioned and cited above.

## THE MAIN ISSUES

Several important conclusions can be drawn from the study. The first is a technical issue concerning the definition of a NEP. It is not as straightforward as it seems. Opinions differ about whether a country has a policy or not, even among practicing evaluators and commissioners of evaluation in that country. Some countries have formulated policies, but they have not yet been legislated. Some have policies that are implemented, but not legislated. Therefore, the field is somewhat amorphous. The present study focused on documentation of legislation as a basis for the definition. Together with the problematic definition, is the fact that a great variety of NEPs exists with different formats, administrators, applications and requirements. There is no standardization because each country develops a policy according to its own particular context. Such variety should be appreciated and valued since it reflects the actual situation globally. Another fact that arose from the study was that many countries routinely conduct evaluation without having a formal policy. Each ministry or government department, or funding agency has its own evaluation requirements. So that not only do policies differ, components of those policies differ regarding administrators of the policy, sectors to which they apply and specific requirements for type and number of evaluation. Furthermore, all NEPs and all evaluations must include gender and equity responsiveness.

The main question, however, despite the drive for NEPs, is whether an NEP is right for every country context. The answer appears obvious and the movement to develop NEPs is snowballing. Perhaps a stable evaluation culture is essential for a successful NEP. Should such a culture be a prerequisite or develop alongside an NEP? Thus, it is suggested that a study been conducted to examine whether NEPs definitely result in stronger evaluation culture, better evaluations, better programmes and the improvement of people's lives since these are the aims of evaluators and users of evaluations alike.

## REFERENCES

- Rosenstein, B. 2015. 'Status of National Evaluation Policies Global Mapping Report'. 2nd Edition. February 2015. Available at <<http://www.pfde.net/index.php/publications-resources/global-mapping-report-2015>>.
- Stolyarenko, K. 2015. 'Case Studies on EF&GR M&E Systems'. Available at: <<http://www.pfde.net/index.php/publications-resources/case-studies-on-ef-gr-m-e-systems>>.