



National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical tips on how to strengthen National Evaluation Systems

A Report for the United Nations Evaluation Group
(UNEG) Task Force on National Evaluation Capacity
Development



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UNEG

United Nations Evaluation Group

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List of abbreviations

ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NECD	National evaluation capacity development
NES	National monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system
NSA	National statistical agency
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RBM	Results-based management
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women
VOPE	Voluntary Organization of Professional Evaluators

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Introduction

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide both technical and non-technical staff in the United Nations (UN) system with practical tips on how to strengthen national evaluation capacity systems. It is not meant to be prescriptive but is intended to highlight key elements to consider when working on national evaluation capacity development (NECD).
2. The frame of reference for NECD is the new paradigm that underlines support to evaluation capacity building within the context of developing a country-owned national system. In other words, the driver for NECD is the broad goal of good governance, as opposed to narrower objectives, such as satisfying donor evaluation and reporting requirements.
3. The report was produced¹ as a deliverable of the UNEG Task Force on National Evaluation Capacity Development co-chaired by Guy Thijs, International Labour Organization (ILO), and Marco Segone, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Other members of the Task Force included Francisco Guzman, ILO; Inga Sniukaite, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women); Laura Gonzalez, UN Women; Eva Kiwango, The Joint

¹ The lead consultant for this report was Robert Lahey, the founding Head of Canada's Centre of Excellence for Evaluation. He brought with him to this exercise three decades of practical experience working with organizations on evaluation and M&E capacity building. Since 2004, he has been working directly with countries around the world to help them develop results-oriented Performance Monitoring and Evaluation capacities.

United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS); Ana Rosa Soares, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Dieudonne Mouafo, United Nations Volunteers (UNV). It draws from the NECD experiences of the last twenty-plus years, many, though not all of which, have been appropriately documented.

The draft report was presented and endorsed at the UNEG Annual General Meeting in April 2012.

4. This report and the advice that it offers recognizes that UN agencies are involved in NECD in a variety of country situations and are assisting countries that are at different stages of maturity with their national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems (NESs); also, that different UN agencies have different mandates and levels of experience and capacity with NECD initiatives.
5. The road map provided by this report comprises three steps as it leads to the identification of ways that UN agencies can best support NECD. These steps are each represented by a section of this report:

Section 1 – A Framework for understanding NECD

- Sorting through some of the ambiguity of concepts and terms underlying NECD.
- Identifies generic building blocks and 'critical success factors' that are important in both developing a country-owned NES and for maintaining its effectiveness and sustainability.

Section 2 – Good practices in NECD and establishing NES

- Taken from a country perspective, and drawn from the experience of the last 20 years.
- Important early steps in the NECD process are identified – M&E Readiness Assessment; and clarifying 'drivers' for NES.
- Examines components of the NES and NECD from a 'systems' perspective; i.e. in a national system: Who are the providers and the users of evaluation information? How is it intended to use the information? At what level within a country? What are the key components of infrastructure for an NES? Who are the main players in the country most likely to be responsible for NECD and the eventual NES?
- A set of 'Tips' provides additional perspective for UN agencies considering NECD support in any given country.

Section 3 – Where and how UN agencies can best support NECD

- **Box 9** – A framework outlining potential areas and initiatives where UN agencies could offer support at various points in the NECD process.
- **Box 10** – Lessons on factors that have both advanced NECD and have been barriers to progress or slowed down the pace. These represent 'Do's' and 'Don'ts', respectively, for NECD that UN agencies should factor in when planning specific initiatives. Box 10 synthesizes the main issues raised in this report.

6. Throughout the report, boxes are used to array key pieces of information about the particular subject in a succinct fashion. This format is followed to facilitate ease of reference.

Section 4 – References and suggested Resources

A detailed overview of references consulted in preparing this publication and suggested on-line resources for practitioners interested in more detail (only available on the accompanying CD-ROM).



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Framework for understanding NECD

Definitions and terminology

7. There are countless sources to turn to for definitions of the many terms associated with NECD (**Annex 1** identifies several useful sources).
8. There is some ambiguity, however, around some of the key concepts associated with NECD. To help clarify their usage, four concepts fundamental to NECD are discussed in **Box 1** below. These comprise:
 - (1) the distinction between 'evaluation' and 'monitoring';
 - (2) 'performance management' and 'results-based management (RBM)';
 - (3) 'national evaluation system' and 'monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system', a term often used in its place;
 - (4) in broad terms, what is implied for a country by 'national evaluation capacity development'.



Box 1

Clarifying the terminology of national evaluation capacity development

'Evaluation' versus 'monitoring' – two tools to measure performance²

The term 'evaluation' is not always well understood. It can take many forms, address a range of issues and potentially serve a variety of uses and users to support a country's national development goals. It is also often the most cost-effective way to measure 'outcomes' associated with projects, programmes or policies.

'Performance monitoring' can also play an important role in increasing understanding of government performance and measuring progress on national development goals. It requires the identification of relevant indicators of 'performance', the establishment of ongoing measurement systems and the availability of credible data to populate the indicators. Once operational, monitoring information can be a ready source of information on 'outputs' and (potentially) short-term 'outcomes', as well as providing an important input to the conduct of an evaluation.

Monitoring though does not provide the depth of understanding of 'performance' that can be gleaned from an evaluation. Also, evaluation is generally needed to measure higher-level results ('intermediate and longer-term outcomes' and 'impacts' of public sector interventions). But, being a discipline based on social science research methods, evaluation requires a higher skill set and level of experience that is often lacking or in short supply in a country context.

Capacity building efforts need to recognize the above distinctions and the importance of strengthening both as key components of an effective and sustainable national system.

'Performance management' – 'results-based management'

These two terms can be considered interchangeable, both referring to 'a management strategy focusing on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts'.³ Its broad objective is to advance sound management practice and strengthen accountability and good governance across all organizations.

At a country level, implementing RBM is likely to require some level of public sector reform, which should then be the broad driver for NECD, i.e. introducing a more systematic and results-oriented approach to creating and using performance information in government planning, budgeting, management and decision-making.

It means managing programmes and organizations with a focus on the actual results being achieved. To do this requires: clearly defining expectations about results to be achieved; delivering the programmes or services; measuring and evaluating performance; and, making adjustments to improve both efficiency and effectiveness. It also means reporting on performance to citizens.

Movement to a RBM system, whether for organizations or countries, is long term and iterative. The two tools of monitoring and evaluation though are critical components.

The terms 'performance management' and 'performance measurement' are often confused. The foundation of performance management (or RBM) is accurate and timely performance

² For additional information comparing and contrasting 'monitoring' and 'evaluation', see UNDP (2009).

³ OECD (2002).

information. Thus, NECD efforts are needed to support development of an information regime that measures, evaluates and reports on the performance of programmes; holds managers accountable for achieving results; and ensures unbiased analysis and reporting.

'National evaluation system' or 'monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system'

These are somewhat ambiguous terms and not always well understood. What may be deemed to be a country's 'national evaluation system (NES)' may in fact have little to do with the practice of 'evaluation' per se. In fact, the more widely used term for developing countries is 'monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system' and this is often used interchangeably when talking about a country's NES.

Further, in many instances, the prime focus of the national M&E system is on the 'M', with little or no investment in the 'E'.⁴ It is important, therefore, to assess and understand the country context so that any NECD efforts by UN agencies represent the most effective interventions to support the national system. It also underscores the fact that NECD efforts in some cases may need to recognize that there may be little or no operational capacity for evaluation at the outset (though certainly other dimensions to build upon).

BUT, a national evaluation (or, M&E) system needs to be thought of as more than simply the generation of 'performance' information. Evaluation (or M&E) is not an 'end' in itself. The concept needs to be viewed in terms of a systems approach that recognizes the importance of both an ability to provide sound evidence (the supply side) as well as the capacity within the system for individuals and institutions to use information (the demand side).⁵

In supporting NECD, it is thus important to reflect on: (i) who will be carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities; and (ii) who will use the 'results' information across the system?

'National evaluation capacity development (NECD)'

The basis for 'national evaluation capacity development' builds on the concepts described above. Underlying it though is the belief that results-based monitoring and evaluation represent public management tools that yield information that can be used to better manage policies, programmes and projects; demonstrate progress on national development goals to citizens and stakeholders; and, in the process, to serve as key accountability tools.

NECD needs to be thought of more than simply in technocratic terms though. National ownership implies a particular cultural, social and political context.⁶ The driver for establishing a national evaluation (or M&E) system ought to be good governance. And, this could be associated with government modernization initiatives, the proactive introduction of a results-based management framework for the public sector and/or some other form of public sector reform. This could be triggered by political change; or it could be encouraged by the actions and support of international agencies and donors. If it is to be owned by the country, it needs to be linked to the national development plan and integrated into the operations and culture of government institutions and ministries. To be sustainable though, governments must believe in the utility of the NES and understand its benefits. And, to do that, they must eventually own the system.

⁴ When used in this report, the term M&E is intended to include the application of *both* monitoring *and* evaluation.

⁵ Segone (2010a).

⁶ Segone (2010b).

9. As **Box 2** demonstrates, the concept of NECD has indeed been evolving – from a historical pattern of evaluation being carried out primarily in the context of cooperation and development aid to this new paradigm centred around national ownership and evaluation capacity that is linked to the national vision of the country, accountability and good governance.⁷ This shift is having an impact on how UN agencies and donors can best support NECD.



Box 2

The changing paradigm of national evaluation capacity development

- "...in the UN, as in the bilateral aid community, development is too often coterminous with development cooperation. National ownership is seen from the outside looking in. Reference is made to building national ownership as though it is to be created from the outside..."
- "If evaluation is to reorient public action, evaluation criteria and evaluation questions must answer what is important for the citizen and policy maker and not only for the funder and manager of the initiative, whether national or international."
- "...underline(s) the importance of relating capacity to national vision and national aspirations. Investment in technical rigour is an intrinsic and necessary part of evaluation capacity. But it is not sufficient."
- "...development evaluation needs to be subsumed within national ownership and leadership rather than the latter being understood as something to be fostered through the practice of evaluation practitioners working in development cooperation."
- "Evaluation is an intrinsic part of governance....If evaluation is to be effective and nationally owned it must be part of this democratic space within countries."
- "National ownership would require that development partners join in the evaluation project of the country; that this project is intrinsically linked to national vision and national accountability of citizens; that it be an integral part of strong democratic governance processes; that the evaluation method and process is complex and sensitive enough to capture a range of influences on public policy; that the results of the process are meaningful and can effect change in public action."

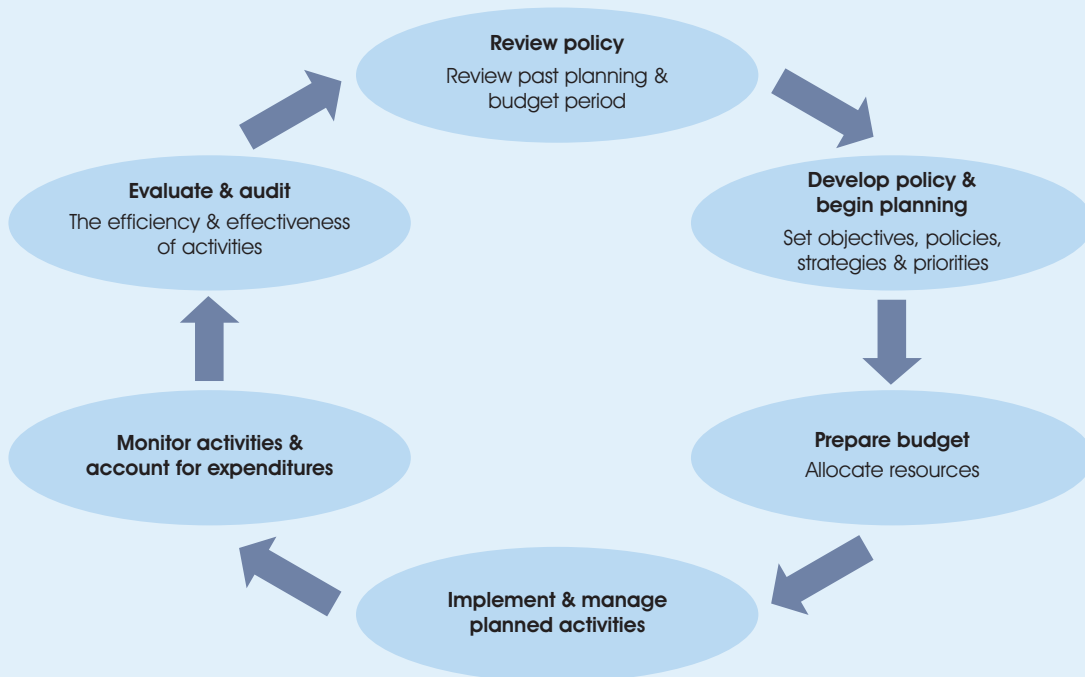
Source: Saraswathi Menon, former Director, Evaluation Office, UNDP, and former Chair, United Nations Evaluation Group (Menon, 2010).

⁷ Menon (2010).

How a national M&E system can improve government performance⁸

10. The contribution of M&E to sound governance is illustrated in the policy cycle depicted in **Figure 1**. M&E provides managers and decision-makers at all levels with unique, objective and credible information to aid in the various stages of the cycle, i.e. planning, policy and programme design, and budgeting. It supports managers in monitoring performance and serves as a 'learning' function by identifying adjustments that may be needed to policies or programmes. Finally, M&E reveals to what extent government programmes and policies have achieved their objectives, thus providing the evidence needed to ensure strong accountability to parliament, civil society,⁹ donors, citizens and to the various government bodies, all of which can provide incentives to improve performance.
11. The use of M&E in the policy cycle imparts a certain discipline at all stages that may not have existed in the past. It also assumes that non-specialists know where and how to use M&E information and that reliable information will be made available in a useable form at a time when it is needed. These assumptions do not always hold true in many countries, particularly in the early stages of M&E system development.

Figure 1: The policy cycle: linking M&E with policy, planning, budgeting and management¹⁰



⁸ See Mackay (2010) for a more complete discussion.

⁹ Civil society is used throughout the report as a generic term referring to nongovernmental bodies, social partners' representatives and private sector representatives, including associations of professional evaluators.

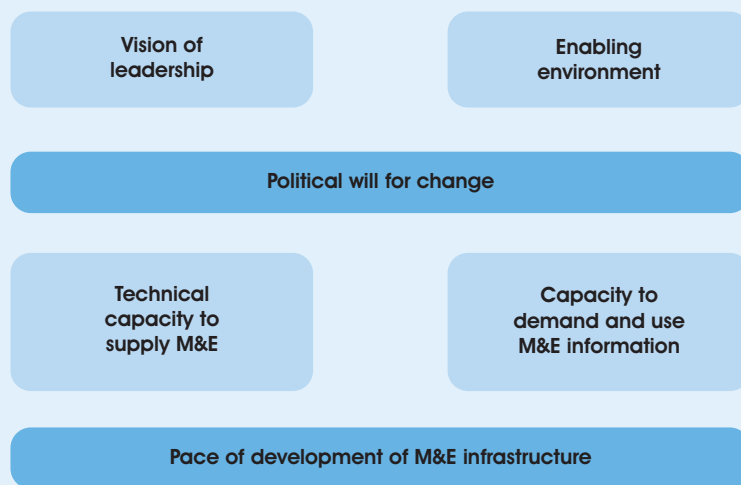
¹⁰ Mackay (2010).

Building blocks for developing a national evaluation (or M&E) system

12. A national evaluation (or M&E) system could be thought of as resting on two overriding influences: (i) the political will for change within a country; and (ii) the pace of development of M&E infrastructure. Upon these rest four essential building blocks, shown in **Figure 2**.¹¹

- Vision of leadership within the country
- An enabling environment for an M&E system to develop and function
- The capacity to supply M&E information - the technical capacity to measure performance and provide credible information in a timely way
- The capacity within the system to demand and use M&E information – key users being government institutions, ministries, citizens, the media and other stakeholders, as civil society and donors.

Figure 2: Four essential building blocks for an effective M&E system



13. While each country faces its own unique challenges in building an M&E system, the framework above identifies the broad considerations for developing and implementing an M&E system in the public sector. This is elaborated further in **Box 3**, which focuses on important considerations for NECD:

- Inherent in the framework is recognition of the broad set of players that need to be involved in developing an M&E system for it to be both effective and sustainable.
- The notion of an M&E system implies that a capability within government is being created to both generate and use performance information that will assist in improving public sector management and governance.
- M&E information will be used (or demanded) if effective incentives (rewards or sanctions) are built into the system.

¹¹ See Lahey (2006) and Lahey (2007).

- While performance information is normally collected and analysed by trained analysts and data specialists, non-technical public sector managers are the ones that generally use it. Although these managers do not require a technical comprehension of M&E methods, it is still important for them to understand and appreciate how M&E information can help them in the management of their programmes and policies.



Box 3

Four essential building blocks – elaborated

Vision

- An understanding of how M&E information can assist public sector managers, decision-makers and the country in moving to achieve its national goals.
- Requires strategic leadership, and a clear understanding of basic concepts and potential uses of M&E.

Enabling environment

- A commitment to launch an M&E exercise and sustain it over the long term.
- A commitment to develop the resources necessary for an M&E system, and to allow it to develop and mature.
- A commitment to support the values and ethics that underlie a successful M&E system – transparency, objectivity, accountability and a commitment to a results-orientation and good governance.
- A strong civil society demanding and advocating for the above values, and for evidence-based policy-making.
- A willingness and ability to challenge current culture within organizations.

Capacity to supply M&E information

- The technical capacity and infrastructure 'to do'.
- Existence of credible and relevant data (disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, etc.) and information-gathering systems.
- Availability of skilled personnel to gather, analyse and report on the performance of government policies and programmes, including potential partners within the country, such as universities, research institutes, think tanks, etc.
- A national statistical agency (NSA) to facilitate a national data development strategy and assist ministries and agencies in capturing and storing data.
- Infrastructure to ensure a systematic, comprehensive and credible approach to M&E. This would include policies and standards intended to: clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for performance monitoring and evaluation; establish expectations across the system for evaluation, monitoring and timing, and a high level of performance reporting; and set out quality standards for conducting M&E.
- Organizational structure to conduct and/or manage M&E exercises.

- A policy centre to provide policy direction, oversight and assistance for the system-wide development of M&E.

Capacity to demand and use M&E information

- Capacity within government institutions and civil society organizations to incorporate and use M&E information as part of the normal process of business.
- Requires that governments and civil society stakeholders be clear about where and how M&E information can and will be used within government (e.g. planning, policy or programme development, decision-making, budgeting). This can evolve over time.
- Implies that non-technical personnel (e.g. programme managers) and civil society organizations have an appreciation of M&E concepts and use of M&E information.
- Requires adequate incentives ('carrots and sticks') within organizations/the system to ensure that managers use M&E information, and report credible information in a timely fashion.
- Reinforces the need within organizations for formal or informal mechanisms and forums for reporting and sharing M&E information.
- Laws governing access to information would increase transparency and the potential for M&E information to be made available to the media, civil society, etc., and facilitate their participation in the national system.

14. Thus, the two overriding considerations in discussing the four NECD building blocks are the need for political support and technical capacity building.
15. Political support serves to launch and resource the M&E exercise; leads any change in organizational culture; provides the champion(s); ensures an enabling environment; deflects resistance to the introduction of M&E and the changes that this might imply; and helps ensure that the M&E system is sustainable over the long term.
16. However, a successful M&E system takes more than political will. The technical hurdles take time to resolve: credible data systems need to be put in place and developed; M&E specialists need training; and managers throughout the system need educating on how and where M&E information will be used. This is generally a lengthy and iterative process and one where continuous learning and improvement through oversight mechanisms is particularly beneficial.
17. The many lessons that can be drawn from the experience of both developed and developing countries¹² can signal areas where UN agencies might best support NECD. **Box 4** identifies some key challenges and lessons for NECD drawn from country experiences over the last two decades.

¹² See for example, Mackay (2010); Lahey (2010a); Rubio (2011); Laguna (2011).



Box 4

Challenges in building a national M&E system – lessons from international experience

M&E drivers

- A serious effort to build a national M&E system starts with a substantive government demand for M&E information. It requires political will and sustained commitment. Central leadership and a plan are very important.
- M&E information is not an end in itself. A reasonable demand for evaluation is fundamental.

Incentives for using M&E information

- A strong civil society that demands that public policies and programmes be designed and implemented based on evidence.
- The capacity to use M&E information relies on incentives that encourage managers to demand such information and actually use it as part of their normal operations. This could take the form of sanctions for not complying or rewards for meeting requirements.
- Internal infrastructure on its own is insufficient to sustain an M&E system. A number of formal requirements associated with its use (at both ministerial and central levels, and in the context of both management and accountability) will oblige managers and senior officials to invest in M&E development.

Stewardship close to the centre

- It helps to have the institutional lead of the M&E system close to central government (e.g. ministries of finance or planning) where it can not only lead in the design and roll out of the M&E system across government, but also serve as a M&E 'champion' and facilitator.
- Since countries' M&E systems are generally developed incrementally, it is important to monitor progress and make regular adjustments. This 'oversight' role can also be part of the central agency's mandate.
- Oversight by the national audit office could be a way of giving broad and public exposure to how well the M&E system is being implemented and to any adjustments that might be needed.

The danger of over-engineering


- Over-engineering of an M&E system could see a proliferation of indicators and/or a large set of uncoordinated data systems across ministries. Data development is important but it needs leadership from the central ministry, the national data office and relevant ministries.

Training should provide for more than M&E competencies

- There are too few skilled M&E specialists in most national M&E systems. A long-term training strategy needs to include a development component to build the necessary skill sets.
- Other (non-technical, but important) audiences for training and M&E orientation include senior officials (who provide the leadership and political support needed to finance and sustain the M&E system); the users of M&E information (budget analysts, poverty analysts, programme managers, etc.); civil society and the private sector.

A guide to plan and monitor NECD

18. To aid those involved with the development and implementation of a NES, **Box 5** provides a more detailed checklist of questions deemed to be critical success factors for the development of an effective and sustainable system. This has expanded the framework of the four NECD building blocks discussed above and identified 12 more operational factors and, for each, a list of key considerations for success.
19. It is intended as a guide and not as a prescriptive approach to national M&E development. It recognizes that the broad requirements for an effective M&E system go well beyond simply technical issues.

 Box 5 'Critical success factor' checklist for developing a national evaluation (M & E) system	
Critical success factors	Key considerations for success
Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is driving the demand for M&E? • What are the broad goals of the exercise?
Uses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will M&E information be used, by whom and for what audience(s)? • Are there real needs for information that are currently not being met?
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is leadership supportive? Is it leading the way? • Is there a 'champion' for the M&E exercise?
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there commitment to launch an M&E exercise and to sustain it? • What will serve as the basis to ensure that an M&E system gets implemented and sustained?
Resourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will the financial resources to develop systems, and hire and train skilled personnel come from? • Will organizations be required to internally reallocate or will they be given new money?
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will be accountable for ensuring that an M&E system is a functioning part of the public sector? • Have roles and responsibilities been firmly established?
Technical capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a capacity (data systems and infrastructure) to collect reliable data and report credible information? • Is there an adequate analytical capacity (skilled personnel)? • Are there existing institutions that could serve as credible partners (e.g. national statistical agency, research institutes)?

Critical success factors	Key considerations for success
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a policy and a set of standards in place that describe roles, responsibilities and expectations for the operation of the M&E system and the use of M&E information? • Are the organizations and units that collect and analyse M&E information structured and adequately resourced (budget and human resource capacity)? • Is the M&E information that gets reported credible, timely and responding to the priority issues?
Infrastructure to use M&E information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there formal policies or requirements on how performance monitoring and evaluation information gets used by organizations? • What are the incentives within an organization for using M&E information (rewards and/or sanctions)? • Are there formal or informal vehicles/mechanisms/forums for reporting, sharing or tabling M&E information? • Is results-based performance factored into personnel assessments? • Are civil society, the private sector and other social partners actively involved in the national M&E system?
Oversight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will the system be monitored over time to ensure that it is functioning as expected and to the level expected? • Does the national audit office play any role in monitoring the M&E system and the use of performance information across government? • Is there a policy centre (e.g. within a central ministry) to monitor implementation? • Will the performance of the M&E system be measured and adjusted as necessary?
Values and Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a formal code of conduct describing accountabilities and expected behaviour for officials in the public sector (e.g. transparency, access to information, fair and balanced reporting, accountability)? • Is this code well understood and adhered to by all? • Is 'speaking truth to power' considered appropriate in the public sector and nationally?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What requirements/safeguards are there to ensure that the M&E system will be made sustainable?

Source: Lahey (2006).

Tip 1. The checklist of Box 5 can serve as a useful guide to M&E system development in many ways.

- **A planning tool** - early in the NECD process, to assist in identifying and planning for short- and long-term considerations and requirements underlying a successful national M&E system.
- **A diagnostic tool** – to help in the assessment over time of the progress and identification of gaps in M&E system development.
- **Communication vehicle** – throughout the long NECD process, to help inform and educate various stakeholders, both technical and non-technical, on the direction and pace of the work to help build a NES.



Good practices in building national M&E systems

The importance of understanding the country context

20. There is no simple way of identifying what a good M&E system should look like. It depends on country-specific factors, such as the government's demand for M&E information; the uses to which M&E information will be put; the availability and quality of data and information; the existing evaluation and analytical capacity within the country; the amount the government is prepared to spend on M&E, etc.¹³
21. Determining where and how best to assist NECD must, therefore, start with an understanding of a country's capacity and environment for evaluation and its use in an institutional setting. Step one in the World Bank's Handbook for Development Practitioners, *Ten Steps to a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System*,¹⁴ is the conduct of a 'Readiness Assessment', a relatively quick and inexpensive study into the overall country context.

¹³ Mackay (2010). See **Annex 2**, 'Evaluation Capacity Development – Country Cases' for country-specific examples of M&E systems – in particular, the World Bank ECD series and *PREM Notes*.

¹⁴ Kusek & Rist (2004). Note that 'Readiness Assessment' differs from an 'Evaluability Assessment'.

22. Based on consultations with key stakeholders, document reviews and lessons from international experience, the Readiness Assessment provides information on the opportunities and challenges to developing a NES before significant commitments are made. The dialogue with stakeholders is important for clearly articulating what the system should look like, a necessary precondition for defining an appropriate action plan.

Tip 2. An M&E Readiness Assessment is an important first step to determining where and how NECD efforts are best introduced. It provides a quick snapshot of the capacity and environment for M&E and its findings serve as an objective point of dialogue between stakeholders.

Making the link to results-oriented management practices

23. Evaluation and the development of an evaluation system should not to be seen as an end in itself. It is an essential tool that is needed if public sector management is going to be based on 'managing for results'.
24. Managing for results means clearly defining expected results to be achieved by programmes, delivering the programme(s) or service(s), measuring and evaluating performance, and making adjustments to improve both efficiency and effectiveness. It also means reporting on performance to key audiences.
25. In other words, the foundation of results-based management is accurate and timely performance information. Government ministries (and the system in general) need to systematically measure, evaluate and report on key aspects of their programmes and their performance. For this, M&E tools provide the needed capability.
26. For most countries, the challenge is to apply results-based management in a way and at a pace that the system can accommodate.¹⁵ Over time, however, the goal would be to establish a formalized M&E capability that could be applied to all major government programmes and services.

Tip 3. Discussions of evaluation and NECD should be placed within the context of RBM in the public sector, where results-oriented M&E are the key tools needed to assess performance against goals at all levels (national, sector, ministry, programme).

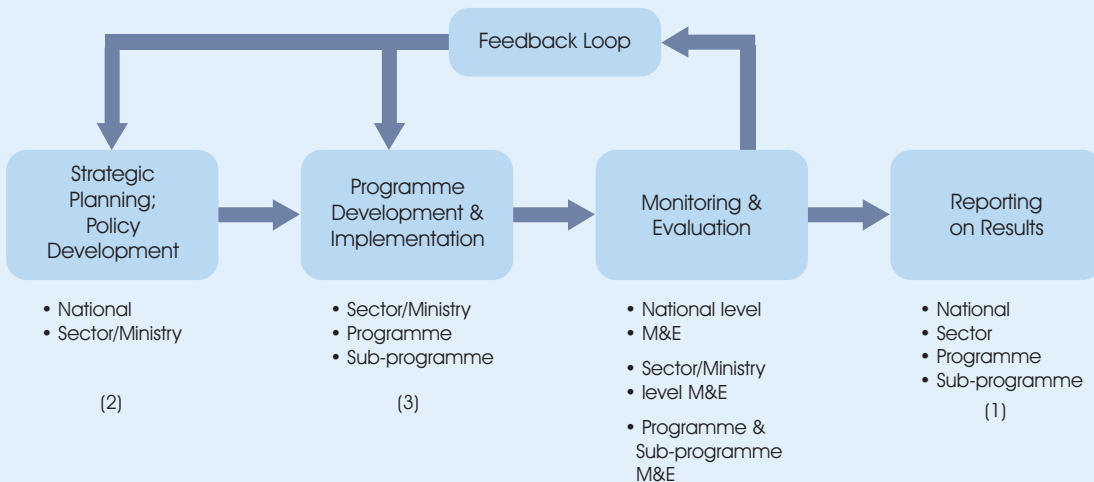
Tip 4. Country context and gaps in the M&E system could suggest that a whole-of-government roll out of NECD may be an overly ambitious pace of development and that a more selective and phased approach to NECD may be more appropriate.

¹⁵ Mackay (2007); and Morra-Immas & Rist (2009), Kusek & Rist (2004).

Clarifying the range of uses and opportunities for M&E information

27. Where RBM may be an important 'driver' for M&E, it is important to recognize and clarify the many potential uses and users of an M&E system early on, for they will have an impact on NECD. Also, as the system matures, the list of uses and users may change.
28. Efforts often focus on the role of M&E as an accountability tool, for example, when reporting on progress in a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) or on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). As **Figure 3** below illustrates though, M&E information can serve as a critical link in a continuous 'feedback loop', emphasizing learning in more strategic and higher level uses (i.e. (1) and (2)) as well as a more management-oriented use as input to the development of programmes (i.e. (3)).

Figure 3: Using M&E information for reporting and accountability AND for management uses



29. **Box 6** elaborates further, identifying four broad uses for M&E information:
- (i) performance reporting
 - (ii) informing policy development and strategic planning discussions
 - (iii) informing budget and funding discussions
 - (iv) programme improvement and management oversight.
30. For each of these, there are various audiences or potential vehicles that could benefit from a more formalized, systematic M&E system.

**Box 6****The many uses and users of M&E information¹⁶**

Use of M&E information/level of use	Potential vehicles/users/audience
1. Performance reporting	
1.1 National performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A national performance report for parliament and citizens on national goals and priorities• Reporting on progress for Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers• Reporting on progress for the MDGs
1.2 Sector/ministry performance report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reporting on performance in ministries' annual reports• Reporting on sector performance to parliamentary committees• Reporting on sector performance to thematic groups
1.3 Programme and project-level performance reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Periodic reporting on performance at the level of programmes and projects to allow relevant managers within a ministry to exercise accountability and governance• Progress updates to general public on key projects
2. Informing policy development and strategic planning discussions	
2.1 National-level discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Input into policy and planning deliberations by cabinets, committees, relevant central agencies, national organizations, etc., on national policy and strategic direction for the country
2.2 Sector/ministry-level discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Input into policy and planning deliberations by senior officials at the ministerial, sectoral and committee levels on sector goals and objectives and their alignment with national goals and objectives
2.3 Programme/project-level discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Input into policy and planning deliberations by senior executives of a ministry and/or managers at the programme and project levels within a particular ministry• Input into cross-ministry policy and planning deliberations by senior officials of a sector
3. Informing budget and funding discussions	
3.1 National budget formulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using performance information as input to central agency deliberations on funding allocations for the national budgets
3.2 Funding decisions within ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using performance information at project and programme levels as input into discussions and decisions on future funding

¹⁶ Further country cases are identified in **Annex 1**.

Use of M&E information/level of use	Potential vehicles/users/audience
4. Programme-level knowledge – improvement – management oversight	
4.1 Programme and project level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using performance information to monitor the progress of programmes in meeting their objectives and measuring impacts attained to date • Using performance information and knowledge about programmes to adjust and improve programmes so as to achieve expected results

Tip 5. Results-based M&E information can and should serve many purposes and, potentially, many users:

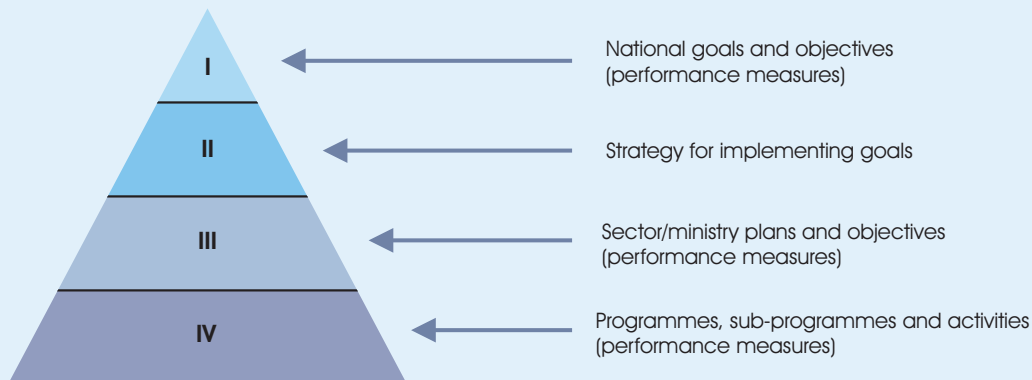
- 1) Monitoring performance so as to report on progress to stakeholders.
- 2) Providing information and knowledge to manage and adjust, improve or terminate programmes, as needed.
- 3) Supporting policy-making, strategic planning and budgeting at a national, ministerial, sectoral and programme level.
- 4) Enhancing transparency and supporting accountability relationships.

A national integrated M&E framework

31. The discussion above illustrates the value of having a national integrated M&E system, where expectations are aligned with performance at national, ministerial and sectoral levels.
32. A national M&E framework would ideally be based on stated goals and objectives. With this identification of expected results for the country, a broad strategy/directional statement would turn those goals into sector strategies and ministry action plans; in other words, a logical link of the expected results at a national level with a clear identification of how to get there.
33. The contribution of individual programmes and projects can also be monitored or evaluated, and ministries would show how they logically link their expected results to the attainment of strategic outcomes of the sector/ministry.
34. These three levels of performance within the public sector – shown as levels I, III and IV in **Figure 4** (next page) – represent different levels of aggregation in terms of indicators and data needed to populate them. They also represent different levels of performance information serving the needs of different users of M&E information.

Tip 6. A cost-effective strategy for developing a NES would be one that recognizes from the outset the three levels of performance implicit in a national system and builds a system from the top down and the bottom up where expectations and measurement strategies are aligned.

Figure 4: A National integrated M&E framework – measuring performance at three levels (I, III, IV)



Key components of the NES infrastructure

35. Most developing (and many developed) countries do not have in place a NES as structured and comprehensive as suggested by the above discussion.¹⁷ What might be appropriate for one country insofar as the infrastructure to support M&E is concerned may not be as workable in another country for reasons associated with the enabling environment.
36. The list of key components that is important in *building* a NES are set out in **Box 7**.¹⁸ In some countries, many of these elements may be in place. In others, M&E components may exist, but not be well systematized or articulated. Mostly, there is a significant capacity gap stalling the setting up of an effective and sustainable system. In the latter case, development of a NES would best be served if it were implemented gradually.
37. In general terms, the key components for an effective and sustainable NES comprise the six elements below.
 1. *The policies, guidelines and guidance for M&E that set the expectations about what should be measured, monitored and reported, how frequently, etc.* These represent the broad rules and expected standards for M&E. It is suggested that the central agency (for example, the ministry of finance or planning) could be the lead agency here, with support as needed from international experts.
 2. *A clear articulation of goals, objectives and expected key results for each level of the public sector where it is intended to measure performance at national, sectoral, ministerial and programme levels.* This can be established through the development of a performance framework at each of those levels, which would then serve as the basis for identifying key performance indicators (KPIs).

¹⁷ Even countries historically deemed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to be leaders in M&E, such as Australia, Canada and the United States, continue to work at developing their systems. See **Annex 1** for references to specific country case studies.

¹⁸ Both Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago have worked with such a listing of M&E infrastructure components as part of their M&E Medium-Term Action Plans (Trinidad & Tobago, 2011a; 2011b). See **Annex 1** for references to other country cases.

3. *A performance measurement strategy that identifies how indicators can use data from performance monitoring, evaluation and special studies.* Implicit in this is a data development strategy that would help identify data sources and any new data needs – an important role for a national statistical agency.
4. *Institutional arrangements to develop and implement the M&E system.* The recommended phased approach to implementation would see M&E units initially in pilot ministries, as well as in a central agency M&E unit.
5. *A training strategy that would provide M&E technical training.* This would be aimed at M&E officers, analysts and those tasked with developing data systems as well as M&E orientation to managers, senior officials and other key stakeholders.
6. *Tasking key officials to monitor the progress of M&E development and provide oversight over the quality of M&E being generated.* Both central agencies and national audit offices could play a role here.



Box

7

Key components of the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) infrastructure

Elements	Possible leads(s)
1. Policies, guidelines and guidance on M&E practices and standards	
1.1 Policy guidance on performance measurement, monitoring and reporting	Central agency
1.2 A performance reporting strategy and guidelines	Central agency
1.3 A government-wide evaluation policy and standards	Central agency
2. Identifying performance frameworks and key performance indicators (KPIs)	
2.1 National-level framework and key performance indicators	Central agency
2.2 Sector/ministry-level framework, programme activity architecture and KPIs	Ministry
2.3 Frameworks and KPIs for key government programmes	Ministry
3. Performance measurement strategy and data development plan	
3.1 National-level performance measurement and reporting	Central agency
3.2 Sector/ministry-level performance measurement and reporting	Ministry
3.3 Programme/project-level performance measurement and reporting	Ministry
3.4 Data development strategy and plan	Central agency, NSA, ministry

Tip 7. Although the listing in **Box 7** is drawn from real country cases, it needs to be viewed as a guide to identifying possible areas of M&E infrastructure that NECD could be supporting.

By having a macro view of the NES and its components, UN agencies will be better able to determine where and how best to support NECD.

The main actors in-country in NECD – their roles and responsibilities

38. There are many key players participating in the development, implementation and ongoing operation of a NES. **Box 8** identifies the key national stakeholders that are generally involved and their potential roles and responsibilities. These will probably alter as the system evolves from the early formative (development/implementation) phase to a fully operational phase.
39. The model shown in **Box 8** is one where both central government agencies and individual ministries play key roles in the NES. Particularly in the early stages of development, the central agencies may play a greater role both in terms of creating a demand for M&E information and in helping ensure that it is institutionalized across the public sector. If a central M&E unit is created (e.g. within a ministry of finance or planning), it could serve as both the M&E focal point/policy centre as well as leading or facilitating the conduct of higher-level evaluations dealing with more strategic or broader horizontal issues of government policy.
40. Individual ministries represent the front-line in terms of what will be needed and expected for public sector results measurement and reporting. In many countries, certain ministries (e.g. education or health) are generally better equipped for M&E for a variety of reasons: they have better data systems; and may already have an M&E unit and experience with international cooperation or nongovernmental organization (NGO) support, etc. They are also good candidates for piloting a NES if a more comprehensive system is being contemplated.
41. Two key capacity challenges that most NESs face to varying degrees are: (i) the quality, credibility and integrity of the data used to populate performance measures; and (ii) the short supply of M&E expertise needed to develop and operate an effective and sustainable system. Both issues require investment and long-term strategies that can implicate both national players and international agencies. For the data issues, the NSA, the data experts, should play a key role in NECD. Monitoring and evaluation skills building and orienting officials on the use of M&E in decision-making is often not found in teaching institutions' formal curricula, putting the onus on other agencies to support or deliver a training strategy.
42. Civil society¹⁹ has a lead role to play in NECD but is in fact frequently playing a minor role in national M&E systems. An effective NES should be capable of ongoing and systematic information gathering from a country's citizens. Moreover, the media and media associations can be important elements in the public reporting and dissemination of M&E information to civil society.

¹⁹ Nongovernmental bodies, social partners' representatives and private sector representatives, including associations of professional evaluators.



Box 8

Roles and responsibilities of national stakeholders in NECD

National stakeholders	Possible roles and responsibilities
Senior government official (e.g. office of the president, office of the PM)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall 'champion' for the drive to results-based M&E in the public sector
Central agency (e.g. ministry of finance or ministry of planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion and facilitator for M&E development and implementation activities • Central coordinator for the roll-out of M&E across ministries • Government policy centre for M&E – guidance and guidelines for performance measurement, monitoring, evaluation and reporting • Establish a central M&E unit • Facilitate or manage high-level evaluations or special studies • Monitor progress of M&E implementation across the system • Play oversight and quality control role for all M&E performance measurement and reporting • Establish M&E professional development strategy for country • Work with other partners in M&E capacity building initiatives: workshops, training, etc. • Lead in development of national performance framework • Lead and coordinate preparation of any national performance report • Advise senior government officials on all M&E matters • Work with civil society and private sector to promote feedback mechanisms as input to M&E • Facilitate development of national M&E professional association
Individual ministries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish internal M&E units • Establish senior-level M&E advisory committee for support and oversight of M&E initiatives • Develop performance framework linking ministry programmes with sector goals • Develop performance measurement strategy to clarify indicators and a cost-effective measurement strategy – working with central agency and NSA on data development strategy

National stakeholders	Possible roles and responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and implement ongoing monitoring systems of ministry programmes • Plan for and conduct periodic evaluations or special studies of programmes or sets of programmes • Annually report on programme results and sector performance • Input to budget and policy discussions
Senior M&E committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine priorities for conduct of high-level evaluation or special studies • Forum for review of findings and decisions for follow-up • Possible oversight over pace of NECD
National statistical agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise on data capture and development • National survey capability • Central data storage • Focal point for national data development strategy • Assisting ministries with data development strategies
National audit office (NAO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential oversight role of M&E system (data audits on quality of data, quality of results-based performance reporting)
Training institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential partners – e.g. national or regional university or a public sector training institute – to help build M&E understanding through formal training
Civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation systems • Provide technical assistance as appropriate • Working with central agency and ministries to formalize ongoing or periodic feedback mechanisms
Private sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with central agency and ministries to formalize ongoing or periodic feedback mechanisms
Other non-public agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential partners with central agency and/or individual ministries in M&E development (where specific M&E pockets of knowledge/expertise exist)

Tip 8. It is important to recognize champions at two levels to grow a national M&E system – at a political level (for example, a minister of finance or planning) and at an operational level (for example, the central unit that may be leading the NECD efforts).



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How can the international community best support NECD?

Interdependence of country/donor actions

43. A broad agenda of harmonization and alignment has been evolving in some developing countries since the late 1990s/early 2000s. One element of this relates to results measurement and reporting, whereby broad goals have been established to move donor agencies operating within developing countries to *harmonize* their results measurement and reporting, and eventually *align* them with country-owned results measurement systems.²⁰ But what does this mean for NECD?

- In moving closer to a state of harmonization, donors are avoiding fragmented donor-driven M&E systems and effectively working together in developing common M&E systems and approaches, including an agreed-upon set of performance measures for results measurement and reporting.

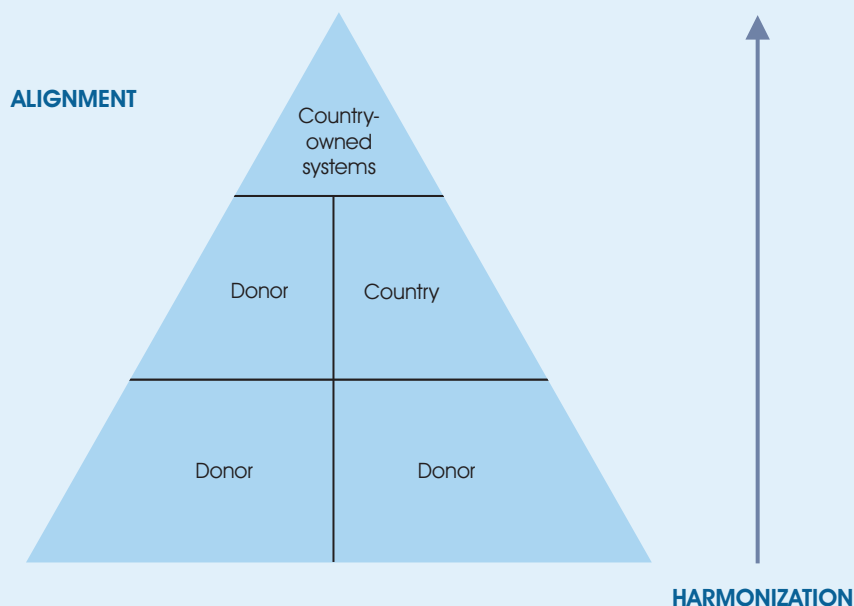
²⁰ Lahey (2004–2005); OECD (2006); Lahey (2008).

- If there is alignment, donors are relying on country-owned M&E systems that are in effect integrated into governments' institutional infrastructure and results-based operations. This assumes (i) that the information-gathering and analytical capabilities of these governments' systems are sufficiently mature as to produce timely and reliable results information; and (ii) that the institutions are willing and expected to use results-based information in the policy, planning and budgetary processes of government.
- In the context of this new paradigm, this implies that: "new evaluation architecture will have to be erected so as to give a privileged role to country-based evaluations with developing countries in the driver's seat."²¹ For UN agencies, obvious areas of support would be in the context of progress reporting on the MDGs and the eventual country-level evaluations of the United Nations Development Assistance Fund (UNDAF).

44. A simple but useful illustration of these concepts is presented in **Figure 5**.

Tip 9. How far and how fast there is movement to harmonization and alignment of M&E systems is a function of BOTH a country's readiness (i.e. a commitment to a results culture, accountability to citizens and the maturity of M&E systems, etc.) AND donor readiness (i.e. donor coordination and collaboration, risk tolerance and accountability/reporting needs to its home electorate, etc.).

Figure 5: Illustration of donor-donor harmonization and donor-country alignment



Tip 10: The movement within a country towards harmonization and alignment of M&E systems is often long and iterative, but is aided by the existence of donor coordinating groups.

²¹ Picciotto (2007).

How UN agencies can best support NECD

The new global reality

45. Over the last two decades, the World Bank and other international financial institutions, and more recently some prominent UN agencies (for example, ILO, UNDP, UNICEF and UN Women) have devoted resources to building evaluation capacity in selected countries. This has generated a plethora of lessons learned about NECD, its effectiveness and sustainability.²² However, in a world where resources are tighter in all global situations, the context for NECD has changed for UN agencies and partner countries alike. UN agencies on their own and under the coordinating body of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) will need to be quite selective in searching for the most cost-effective approach to supporting NECD.

A framework for identifying potential UN initiatives in support of NECD

46. Where and how UN agencies can bring the most value added to NECD will vary from country to country. To assist in this determination and provide a generic framework for making that determination, four phases have been identified that reflect development and implementation of a national evaluation system. These are shown below, along with some questions that would need to be addressed from the perspective of the country:
1. Raising awareness and understanding and advising on a suitable structure for a national evaluation system:
 - What is meant by the NES?
 - What would be a suitable structure for the particular country?
 - Who are the M&E champions and is there a general understanding and commitment (political and institutional) to an NES?
 2. Advising on the development of a suitable plan (such as a medium-term action plan – MTAP) for NECD:
 - What is a suitable plan and pace to achieve the NES goal?
 - What are the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for key players for putting in place the NES?
 - What institutional or organizational changes need to be addressed?
 3. Assisting the process of NES development and implementation:
 - What are the key capacity gaps that need to be addressed: short term, medium term and long term?
 - Where can UN agencies provide the most value added?
 - How best to ensure that the eventual NES is sustainable?
 4. Advising and assisting on the oversight of the NES, i.e. monitoring and evaluating how well NECD is progressing and the NES is performing:

²² There is an exhaustive literature, published by the World Bank alone or in cooperation with other agencies, notably the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) network as well as a variety of publications sponsored by various UN agencies. See Annexes 1 and 2.

- Is NES development and implementation on track?
- Is the NES effective? Performing as expected? Sustainable?
- If not, what needs to be altered?

47. This framework is used to identify specific activities that UN agencies *might* engage in to support NECD. **Box 9** provides a list of potential support activities under each of the four phases, with emphasis on critical areas of NECD that, based on international experience, are sometimes weaker in their development or entirely overlooked.

48. Where and how a UN agency might intervene to assist a country in its NECD would clearly be dependent on several factors, including the particular status and stage of the country in its NES development.

The two following sections provide additional context to ways in which UN agencies can support NECD by: (i) identifying some considerations relevant to UN agencies in their determination of suitable intervention points with illustrative examples of initiatives to support future NECD efforts (**Box 9**); and (ii) advising on 'dos' and 'don'ts', based on international experience of NES development over the last decade (**Box 10**).



Box 9

Possible roles for UN agencies in NECD

Phase 1. Raising awareness and understanding, and advising on a suitable structure for a national evaluation system

- Supporting civil society organizations, including Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs),²³ in enhancing their role to influence national evaluation systems
- Assisting and/or funding in the conduct of a M&E Readiness Assessment
- Providing clarification of the drivers for evaluation, the potential uses and users
- Identifying and working with champions, public sector leaders and areas of M&E strength to increase understanding and commitment, at both political and institutional levels
- Helping identify research and analytical strengths across the system
- Assisting in the determination of gaps in institutional structures, infrastructure, human resource skill sets, disaggregated data, etc.
- Establishing appropriate coordinating and consultative committees to help advance and oversee NECD – harmonization and alignment as goals
- Assisting with participatory mechanisms to help ensure all stakeholders – civil society, the private sector and other social partners – are aware of and engaged in the process
- Increasing awareness and understanding of NES and NECD through promotion and exchange of information and knowledge via funding or the promotion of international conferences, regional/national networks, study missions, country-level workshops, etc.

Phase 2. Advising on the development of a suitable plan for NECD

- Supporting the efforts of key country agencies tasked with putting in place a NES/M&E system (could be a central agency, such as the ministry of finance or planning)
- Assisting or funding development of a medium-term action plan for the establishment of a NES
- Assisting in identifying and establishing necessary communication vehicles and forums for the NECD roll-out
- Helping to identify and group the principal players in the country and their roles, responsibilities in the eventual NES and their accountabilities in the NECD plan
- Helping to identify institutional or organizational changes that may be required, their resource implications, and an appropriate strategy of change
- Providing an advisory role regarding the pace of NECD, for example, a phasing-in strategy versus an immediate whole-of-government approach
- Where M&E is being piloted, assisting in developing an appropriate strategy and plan based on an identification of current strengths in the country
- Facilitating political- and senior-level briefings on NECD efforts towards a NES, i.e. providing a neutral and external expertise and perspective

²³ Since a number of different names are used to describe these groups, the term Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) has been introduced. VOPEs include formally constituted associations or societies, as well as informal networks. Their memberships are open to not only those who conduct evaluations but also to those who commission and utilize evaluations and those engaged in building the evaluation field.

Phase 3. Assisting the process of NES development and implementation

Assisting and/or funding an exercise to clarify and develop a plan for dealing with known or suspected gaps in the NES, for example, M&E skills; data development (low quality, lacking credibility, not results-oriented, issues of comparability, aggregation, access, etc.); civil society involvement; institutionalization in key ministries; too little or no evaluation being conducted; too little or flagging support at senior government or political levels; lack of clarity on the roles and responsibilities of key players; lack of demand or use of M&E information in the system; insufficient incentives identified for use of M&E; capacity within national statistical agency; M&E 'fatigue' across ministries.

- Assisting or funding capacity building efforts to address **human resource gaps**:
 - 1) M&E training, delivered on-site, regionally or on-line;
 - 2) funding support for attendance at international or regional training;
 - 3) 'train the trainer' workshops – including development of M&E training tools and materials;
 - 4) supporting the development of M&E curricula and training materials for local, national or regional training institutes – basic M&E, evaluation methods (basic and intermediate) and approaches (participatory), etc.;
 - 5) orientation 'training' on M&E (role, uses, etc.) to senior government officials, parliamentarians, civil society and private sector organizations;
 - 6) development of training packages on managing evaluation – evaluation planning, budgeting, TOR development, project planning and management skills, evaluation reporting, etc.;
 - 7) training and/or the development of training materials on specific evaluation tools and methods (e.g. logic models, indicator development, surveys, focus groups, interview methods, etc.);
 - 8) workshops aimed at developing evaluation skills through study of real cases from the international community;
 - 9) the establishment of national VOPEs, and linkages with regional, national and international evaluation associations;
 - 10) funding to support the development of a national web site to serve as a central source for evaluation tools, M&E information exchange, etc.
- Assisting or funding capacity building efforts on **data issues**, such as:
 - 1) knowledge exchange and missions between the national statistical agencies and international counterparts;
 - 2) advice and support agencies responsible for national-level performance reporting on results-oriented performance indicators and associated data needs;
 - 3) advice and support to subnational data development;
 - 4) training and the development of skill-building materials for those responsible for surveys, data collection, warehousing and analysis in ministries and other agencies.
- Assisting in the development of **national M&E infrastructure**, such as:
 - 1) policies, standards and guidelines for evaluation and results-oriented performance monitoring and performance reporting;

- 2) advice on evaluation planning, priority-setting, reporting and use;
 - 3) advice on the establishment of M&E units (centrally and within a ministry) – competencies, budgets, mandate, etc.;
 - 4) advice on the establishment of national and sector/ministry-level performance frameworks and cost-effective performance measurement strategies;
 - 5) advice or assist in the development of a national performance report (e.g. MDG progress report) and/or an annual ministry performance report.
- Assisting in or funding the development of an M&E **pilot** in a ministry that is linked to NES development.
 - Assisting or funding the **conduct of a priority evaluation** – to demonstrate to senior officials the role and usefulness of evaluation; a learning exercise in a country where there may have been little or no evaluation as a part of the NES; a mentoring opportunity for local evaluators; an occasion to provide more in-depth information and understanding on a priority subject.
 - Assisting with the **integration of civil society** into the NES, such as:
 - 1) development of participatory and inclusiveness mechanisms to capture and utilize citizen feedback;
 - 2) promotion of the development of public reporting vehicles, accountability and transparency;
 - 3) accessibility to M&E information;
 - 4) engagement of civil society organizations, citizens, parliamentarians, think tanks, the media and others as advocates in the use of M&E information;
 - 5) national and regional VOPEs, as appropriate, to support M&E knowledge and skill development of civil society representatives.

Phase 4. Advising/assisting with the oversight of the NES and its development

- Assisting in the assessment of progress on the country's NECD plan against milestones and advising on any adjustments that may be required to the national M&E plan.
- Assisting in or funding an assessment of any early pilots (for example, establishment of a ministry-level M&E unit and capacity), and advising on lessons learned and implications for roll-out of the national M&E plan.
- Assisting in or funding of a formative evaluation of the NES – the structure, conduct and how well it is performing (use of M&E information, gaps, etc.), and advising on any adjustments that may be needed to make it more effective and sustainable.
- Participating as an external member of a senior-level national evaluation advisory committee that provides oversight and advice regarding the NES and NECD initiatives.

Dos and Don'ts – factors that have advanced or have inhibited progress on NECD

49. Considerable experience over the last decade and a half with NECD has generated much literature and many lessons regarding factors that have advanced NECD (identified here as the 'Dos') and factors that have either been barriers to progress on NECD or slowed down the pace (referred to here as 'Don'ts').²⁴ **Box 10** below identifies a range of areas that overlap with NECD activities that UN agencies might be promoting. As such, the advice implicit in the Dos and the Don'ts should be read in conjunction with **Boxes 8** and **9**.



Box 10

Dos and don'ts for NECD

1. Clarity is often needed on drivers for NECD and uses of the NES

DO

- Position a NES as a critical underpinning of good governance. At any one point, it may be driven by a movement towards RBM or public sector reform initiatives aimed at improved management and accountability.
- NECD should be promoted in terms of building a national country-owned system and not as a UN or donor-centric need. If the needs of UN agencies or donors are put above the needs of the country in question, there may be an inappropriate balance that skews any medium-term action plan in a direction that is not in the long-term interests of M&E development for the country system. Moreover, the political commitment needed for a sustainable NES might be weakened if the system is viewed as principally serving the needs of international agencies.
- Work with country leaders and M&E champions to clarify how M&E information is going to be used in the system and by whom. This dialogue will shed light on: the potential uses and users of M&E information; the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of various stakeholders; and on how the national M&E system would be best rolled out.

2. Considerable ambiguity, even across international agencies, still exists on basic concepts and terms of NES and NECD

DO

- Clarify basic terms early on across international agencies and partner countries.

DON'T

- Assume that all parties have a common understanding of the terms M&E, evaluation, performance measurement, performance management, NES, NECD, etc.

²⁴ See for example Mackay (2007:93–102) where answers are given to 21 of the most frequently asked questions regarding the challenges faced with M&E system development. Also, OECD (2010) and Dyce (2011:11–12).

3. The enabling environment for NES is often a challenge within countries, due to insufficient broad political support, allocated funds for NECD and/or too few incentives for using evaluation (M&E) information

DO

- Recognize that establishing an NES is as much a political exercise as an issue of developing a technical capability.
- Bear in mind that the long-term goal for NECD is an effective and sustainable NES. Success for UN initiatives around NECD arrives when they are no longer needed.
- Recognize and work to inform/educate the important non-technical audiences for NECD – politicians, senior officials and the users of M&E information. All need some form of training/orientation on the role and importance of NES and NECD.
- Identify the country champions for NES – at both political and operational levels – and establish ongoing working relations with them. They could be found in a central government agency (finance or planning), the office of the president or prime minister.

DON'T

- Overlook the importance of communication, and the identification and establishment of necessary forums to share information across all key stakeholders, especially as the initial enthusiasm of project launch passes.

4. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' for NES and NECD – current country context is critical to determining an appropriate strategy

DO

- Encourage conduct of an M&E Readiness Assessment as an early diagnostic. This could be conducted in as little as two weeks (though 4–6 weeks is the norm). It needs to represent an objective appraisal of the current state of M&E capacity, including examination of any earlier failed attempts at NECD. For this reason, it would be better if it were undertaken by an external international consultant, ideally partnered with a local consultant or local officials.

5. Coordination of NECD efforts across all international players and alignment with country efforts is important

DO

- UN agencies and donors should communicate with one another on M&E matters on a regular basis, particularly when a particular country is being targeted for NECD support initiatives.
- The national champion for M&E (for example, a representative of the central agency leading NECD initiatives) needs to be considered as an equal partner and participate in all such discussions.
- Initially, external NECD efforts may be leading the development of the NES, but as country capacity matures, it is important that UN and donor NECD initiatives link with the context of country-led M&E capacity building.

6. In developing national systems, the full range of uses for M&E information – such as knowledge generation and improved management at a ministerial-level – are often not well understood or discussed by country officials

DO

- Training and orientation on M&E and RBM ought to emphasize the utility of M&E information to improve both accountability and management practices through improved knowledge, at both national and subnational levels. In individual ministries, managers' support for NECD efforts will be greater if they understand the advantages for the ministry. The central authorities that are promoting national M&E systems do not always address this even when individual ministries are critical of the successful development and sustainability of a NES.

7. In some countries' national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, the 'E' for evaluation is essentially silent or non-existent as one of the national tools to measure performance

DO

- Ensure that both technical training and non-technical orientation sessions on NES and NECD recognize both the 'M' and the 'E' as two important, yet distinct, tools to measure performance.
- Work with country officials to determine how best to introduce evaluation into the country strategy, particularly if it has previously been absent. Ministries of health and education are often good candidates for piloting evaluation capacity-building efforts and, over time, could serve as champions for the NES and specific NECD initiatives. Also, pockets of research and analytical expertise may exist in government or non-government agencies, though they may not be formally identified as evaluators. An M&E Readiness Assessment would identify this analytical capacity as part of the national resource.
- Work with country officials to build into the strategy the conduct of an evaluation early on in NECD, as a way to demonstrate to senior officials the utility of evaluation as a tool. Work with the central unit to identify a topic that is of importance to senior officials but not overly ambitious, so that there is a high probability that it can be successfully evaluated and reported within a year.²⁵ Such an evaluation would probably be carried out by an international consultant, but it should also serve as a developmental opportunity for the central agency (managing or co-managing the evaluation) and local consultant (mentoring opportunity and empowerment). A UN agency could potentially assist through financial support; co-managing the evaluation; participating in the exercise to scope and develop a terms of reference for the evaluation; or as a member of an evaluation steering or advisory committee (advising on front-end planning, conduct and eventual use of evaluation results).
- Mentor new evaluators on good practice management techniques relevant to evaluations – development of terms of reference; study designs and inception reports; balancing timeliness and rigour; reporting and follow-up to recommendations.

²⁵ An example of such an evaluation might be a high profile government program (perhaps relatively new) where little is known about the results it is generating. The evaluation could be formative in nature with recommendations advising senior government officials on the future direction of the programme.

DON'T

- Assume that all country M&E systems automatically have in place or are developing an evaluation capability. There is often a bias in thinking towards M&E systems being essentially a set of indicators that get reported on a regular basis. This may have resulted from a lack of understanding or capacity for evaluation; performance monitoring being institutionalized within an IT system; the appeal of a performance 'dashboard', etc. Country officials may not appreciate the depth of understanding that comes with evaluation (as compared to monitoring). Also, that measuring 'outcomes' often requires an evaluation or special study.
- Assume that the existence of M&E units, centrally or in individual ministries, automatically implies a capability to conduct evaluations. Where it is generally the case that a good knowledge of M&E and RBM terms and concepts has been gained through training, it is just as likely that evaluation skills or experience are lacking. In such cases, a broader strategy of skill building, including mentoring, may be appropriate.
- In advising countries on how best to fill a void (when evaluation capacity is non-existent), don't recommend an immediate whole-of-government uptake, but rather a more selective piloting, where evaluation can be phased in over an appropriate number of years (say five years, starting with the strongest ministries as pilots). This could allow for a period of learning and adjustment, as well as evaluation of human resources skill building. A government-wide roll-out at one point in time would probably over-extend the resources of a government's central unit that is facilitating M&E development.

Annotations

Annotations

Annex 1. References

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Annex 2. List of suggested resources²⁶

Glossary of Terms

- Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management – World Bank, Independent Evaluation Group (Terms are presented in English <http://www.oecd.org/development/peerreviews/dacmembers/2754804.pdf>, French and Spanish).

Handbooks/Guides on Monitoring and Evaluation

- *Handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for development results*, UNDP, October 2009. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/eo/handbook/>.
- *UNEG good practice guidelines for follow up to evaluations*, UNEG, 2010. Available at: <http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/>.
- *Emerging good practice on managing for development results (MfDR) sourcebook*, third edition, OECD-DAC, 2008. Available at: <http://www.mfdr.org/sourcebook/>.
- *A manager's guide to gender equality & human rights responsive evaluation*, UN Women, 2011. Available at: http://unifem.org/evaluation_manual/
- *Integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluation – towards UNEG guidance*, UNEG, 2011. Available at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=980
- *ILO policy guidelines for results-based evaluation: Principles, rationale, planning and managing for evaluations*, ILO, 2011 Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_mas/---eval/documents/publication/wcms_168289.pdf

Norms and Standards for Evaluation

- *Norms for evaluation in the UN system*, UNEG, 2005 (updated 2011) http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=21.
- *Standards for evaluation in the UN system*, UNEG, 2005. Available at: http://www.uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=22
- *Quality standards for development evaluation*, OECD-DAC, 2010. Available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/>
- *Guiding principles for evaluators*, American Evaluation Association, 2004. Available at: <http://www.eval.org/publications/guidingprinciples.asp>

²⁶ Links to web sites were correct as of 22 July 2012.

- *Guidelines for the ethical conduct of evaluations*, Australasian Evaluation Society, 2006. Available at: <http://www.aes.asn.au>
- *CES guidelines for ethical conduct*, Canadian Evaluation Society. Available at: <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/>
- Competencies for evaluators; professional designation, Canadian Evaluation Society. Available at: <http://www.evaluationcanada.ca/>

Evaluation Capacity Development – Country Cases

1. World Bank – *Evaluation Capacity Development Working Paper Series* (www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd)
 - Zimbabwe (no. 2: 1998)
 - Indonesia (No. 3: 1998)
 - Australia (No. 4: 1998; No. 11: 2004; No. 25: 2011)
 - Colombia, China & Indonesia (No. 5: 1999)
 - Sub-Saharan Africa (No. 7: 2000)
 - Uganda (No.8: 2001; No. 10:2003)
 - Ireland (No. 14: 2005)
 - Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Uruguay (No. 16: 2006)
 - Colombia (No.17: 2007; No. 18: 2009; No. 19: 2009)
 - Mexico (No. 20: 2009)
 - South Africa (No. 21: 2009)
 - Spain (No. 22: 2010)
 - Canada (No. 23:2010)
 - United Kingdom (No. 24: 2010)
 - USA (No. 26: 2011)
2. World Bank – Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, *PREM Notes. Special Series on the Nuts & Bolts of M&E Systems* <http://go.worldbank.org/CC5UP7ABN0>
 - Australia (No. 8: March 2011)
 - Canada (No. 11: June 2011)
 - Chile (No. 13: August 2011)
 - Mexico (No. 14: October 2011)
 - USA (No. 17: February 2012)
3. International Conferences on M&E Capacity Development
 - 'Towards the Institutionalization of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean: Proceedings of a World Bank/Inter-American Development Bank Conference, Washington: 2005'

- 'V Meeting of the Latin American and the Caribbean Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Network: Proceedings of a World Bank/Inter-American Development Bank Conference, Colombia: 2009'
- 'Getting to results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development, IDEAS Global Assembly 2009, Johannesburg: March 17-20, 2009'
- *Influencing Change. Building Evaluation Capacity to Strengthen Governance*, papers from the 2009 IDEAS Global Assembly, World Bank: 2011
- **'International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities'**, Proceeding of a UNDP conference held in partnership with the Moroccan National Observatory for Human Development, Casablanca: December 15-17, 2009
- IDEAS Global Assembly 2011, 'Evaluation in Turbulent Times: The Crises of Food, Fuel, and Finances', Amman: April 11-15, 2011
- 'Second International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities', Proceedings of A UNDP Conference held in partnership with the Public Service Commission of South Africa', Johannesburg: September 12-14, 2011.

Evaluation Capacity Development – General Lessons Learned

1. World Bank - Evaluation Capacity Development Working Paper Series (www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd)
 - 'Lessons from National Experience', No. 1: 1998
 - 'Evaluation Capacity Development: A Diagnostic Guide and Action Framework', No. 6: 1999
 - 'Guide to Conducting Reviews of Organizations Supplying M&E Training', No.9: 2003
 - 'Building Country Capacity for Monitoring and Evaluation in the Public Sector: Selected Lessons of International Experience', No. 13: 2005
 - 'Institutionalization of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems to Improve Public Sector Management', No. 15: 2006
 - 'Assessment of Ghanaian Organizations Involved in the Delivery of Monitoring and Evaluation Training', Operations Evaluation Department: May 2001.
2. World Bank – Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network, *PREM Notes. Special Series on the Nuts & Bolts of M&E Systems* <http://go.worldbank.org/CC5UP7ABN0>
 - 'Conceptual Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation' (No. 1: August 2010)
 - 'Defining the Type of M&E System: Clients, Intended Uses, and Actual Utilization' (No. 2: September 2010)
 - 'M&E Systems and the Budget' (No. 3: October 2010)
 - 'Reconstructing Baseline Data for Impact Evaluation Results Measurement' (No. 4: November 2010)
 - 'Key Steps in Designing and Implementing a Monitoring and Evaluation Process for Individual Country Service Agencies' (No. 5: December 2010)
 - 'The Design and Implementation of a Menu of Evaluations' (No. 6: January 2011)
 - 'Use of Social accountability Tools and Information Technologies in Monitoring and Evaluation' (No. 7: February 2011)

- 'Combining Qualitative Methods for Program Monitoring and Evaluation: Why Are Mixed Method Designs Best?' (No. 9: May 2011)
- 'Defining & Using Indicators & Targets in Government M&E Systems' (No. 12: July 2011)
- 'Five Advances Making it Easier to Work on Results in Development' (No. 15: Oct. 2011)
- 'Conducting Diagnoses of M&E Systems and Capacities' (No. 16: November 2011)

Civil Society – Citizen Engagement

1. World Bank - Evaluation Capacity Development Working Paper Series www.worldbank.org/ieg/ecd
 - 'An Assessment of the Impact of Bangalore Citizen Report Cards on the Performance of Public Agencies', No. 12: 2004
2. 'Portal ODM' – Brazil's MDG Municipal Web-based Monitor (www.portalodm.com.br)
 - Developed by the Regional Observatory for Sustainability Indicators (ORBIS), under the coordination of UNDP and the support of UNICEF, DEVinfo, Ministry of Planning, Budget and Management and the Industrial Social Service of Parana (For description of development, see UNDG 'Good Practices Accelerate the Achievement of MD/MDGs')
3. Botswana Vision Council (<http://www.vision2016.co.bw/>)
 - Vision 2016, the national directional statement for Botswana is overseen by the Vision Council, comprised of representatives of the public sector, private sector and civil society organizations, including the media. Active among communities in promoting the seven pillars of the national agenda, Vision Council in 2009 produced its first national performance report, *Botswana Performance Report. A Report on the Progress Being Achieved Against the Vision 2016 Goals*

On-line Evaluation Resource Libraries

- My M&E www.mymande.org
- Online Evaluation Resource Library (OERL) www.oerl.sri.com
- WBI Capacity Development and Results www.worldbank.org/capacitydevelopment

Training - Webinars

1. Webinars on "Developing National Capacities for Country M&E Systems"
 - Recording and presentations of previous webinars by the following presenters are available at My M&E.
 - S. Menon & F. O'Brienon: 'The role of the UN in fostering national ownership & capacities in evaluation'
 - M. Quinn Patton: 'Future trends in evaluation' & M. Segone: 'Moving from policies to results by developing national capacities for country-led monitoring & evaluation systems'
 - C. Heider: 'Evaluating policies & their results' & C. Russon: 'The role of policy analysis in over-coming the implementation challenge'
 - B. Sanz & F. Etta: 'Human Rights & gender in evaluation'

- L. Morra Imas, R. Picciotto & J. Quesnel: 'The Professionalization of evaluation'
- O. Garcia & A. Bester: 'Joint evaluation of the role & contribution of the UN system in South Africa. Lessons learned'
- M. Bamberger: 'Institutionalizing impact evaluation. A key element in strengthening country-led monitoring & evaluation systems'
- H. Preskill & A. Kuzmin: 'Exploring effective strategies for facilitating evaluation capacity development'
- M. Quinn Patton: 'Utilization-focused evaluations'
- D. Fetterman: 'Empowerment evaluation'

2. Webinars on "Equity-focused evaluations"

- Recordings and presentations are available at My M&E:
- C. Kirk & P. Hawkins: 'Evaluation to accelerate progress towards equitable development'
- B. Sanz & F. Minelli: 'Human rights & Gender equality in evaluations'
- M. Segone & M. Bamberger: 'How to design, implement & use equity-focused evaluations'
- S. Kushner: 'Case study & equity in evaluation'
- B. Williams & M. Reynolds: 'Systems thinking for Equity-focused evaluations'
- P. Rogers & R. Hummelbrunner: 'Program theories & LogFrames to evaluate pro-poor & equity programs'

3. Webinars on "Emerging practices in Development Evaluation"

- Recording and presentations are available at My M&E:
- Z. Ofir & S. Kumar: 'Using a Developing Country Lens in Evaluation'
- F. Carden: 'Emerging Practices in Evaluating Policy Influence'
- J. Raynor: 'Evaluating Networks & Partnerships'
- C. Lusthaus & K. Rojas: 'Evaluating Organizational Performance'
- S. Rochlin: 'Evaluating Innovation'
- A. Bradstock: 'Evaluating Sustainable Development'
- **ABOUT WEBINARS:** Webinars are free and open to interested people. You may attend virtually from your personal or work computer anywhere in the world.
- Detailed agenda and instruction on how to log in are available at My M&E.

Training - Formal

1. IPDET (International Program for Development Evaluation Training)

- IPDET, co-sponsored by the World Bank and Carleton University, offers training annually in June in Ottawa, Canada. Options include a two-week core course, learning the fundamentals of development evaluation, followed by two weeks of optional workshops covering some 25 subject areas. Now in its 12th year, the course is aimed at development professionals who will conduct or manage development evaluations. Its alumni include some 3000 professionals from over 120 countries. (www.ipdet.org)

2. CLEAR (Regional Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results)

- There are five CLEAR centres – See www.theclearinitiative.org
- Anglophone Africa - University of Witwatersrand in South Africa
- Francophone Africa - Centre Africain d'Etudes Supérieures en Gestion (CESAG) in Senegal
- South Asia - Jameel Poverty Action Lab at the Institute for Financial Management and Research in India
- Spanish-speaking Latin America - Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico
- China - Asia Pacific Finance and Development Centre (AFDC) in Shanghai
- The centres are intended to provide demand-driven and regionally-based services for the benefit of government agencies, civil society organizations, development institutions & donors, among other clients. Services to include: (i) training; (ii) advisory services and (iii) evaluation capacity building.

Professional Associations – Evaluation Networks

- IDEAS (International Development Evaluation Association) www.ideas-int.org
- International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation www.ioce.net
- AfrEA (African Evaluation Association) <http://www.afrea.net/aboutafrea.html>
- AEA (American Evaluation Association) www.eval.org
- Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) www.aes.asn.au
- Brazilian Monitoring & Evaluation Network <http://redebrasileirademea.ning.com/>
- Canadian Evaluation Society (CES) www.evaluationcanada.ca
- Danish Evaluation Society www.danskevalueringsselskab.dk
- Dutch Evaluation Society www.videnet.nl
- European Evaluation Society (EES) www.europeanevaluation.org
- Finnish Evaluation Society www.tsv.fi/jasenseurat/details.php?id=279
- French Evaluation Society www.sfe-asso.fr/
- German Society for Evaluation Standards www.degeval.de
- International Program Evaluation Network (Russia and newly independent states) www.eval-net.org
- Israeli Association for Program Evaluation www.iape.org.il
- Italian Evaluation Association www.valutazioneitaliana.it/new/
- Japan Evaluation Society <http://evaluationjp.org/english/index.html>
- Malaysian Evaluation Society www.mes.org.my
- Polish Evaluation Society www.pte.org.pl
- Red de Evaluación de America Latina y el Caribe <http://noticiasrelac.ning.com/>
- South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association www.samea.org.za

- Spanish Evaluation society www.sociedadevaluacion.org
- Sri Lankan Evaluation Association <http://www.sleva.lk/>
- Swedish Evaluation Society www.svuf.nu
- Swiss Evaluation Society www.seval.ch.
- Ugandan Evaluation Association www.ueas.org
- United Kingdom Evaluation Society www.evaluation.org.uk

