



STREAM A. BUILDING RESILIENT NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS

6.1 | Session A1: Status of National Evaluation Systems

Moderator

- ◆ Alan Fox, Deputy Director, IEO, UNDP

Panellists

- ◆ Osvaldo Feinstein, Professor, Complutense University of Madrid
- ◆ Sven Harten, Deputy Director, German Development Evaluation Institute (DEval)
- ◆ Candice Morkel, Director, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results - Anglophone Africa (CLEAR- Anglophone Africa), South Africa
- ◆ Sarah Klier, Team leader Focelac+, DEval

What is holding back the development of National Evaluation Systems? Where are the “capacity traps”, vicious and virtuous circles that explain these setbacks? How can conceptual frameworks help establish National Evaluation Systems and identify gaps?

- ♦ **Evidence-based policymaking needs strong National Evaluation Systems.** NES can be strengthened through ECD, however the prerequisite for doing this is to understand the complexities of the NES and apply a systemic approach to ECD.
- ♦ **Training alone is often misconstrued and equated as capacity-development, without due consideration to the larger ECD framework and ecosystem.** There is a need to change the narrative and work on NEC with a system focus.
- ♦ **Evaluation supply and demand models are inadequate to address NEC.** It is not a linear chain. The assumption that working on the supply side will fix everything needs to be revisited.
- ♦ **There is a need to better understand the real challenges around ECD.** When addressing NES, there is a need to **unpack the capacity needs** of those commissioning, managing, conducting and using evaluation and differentiate stakeholder needs of the government (national and subnational), CSOs, think tanks, parliament etc. and how to better engage with them. Robust diagnostic tools can help increase our understanding.
- ♦ **Enabling environments such as laws, policies and practices for evaluation are a key component** to ensure coherence and sustainability of the entire NES, but not the only condition.
- ♦ There is not one NEC model that fits all contexts. We need to be **mindful of the local context, local needs and capacities**. NES needs to be linked to local evidence-use systems and not imposed by development actors.
- ♦ **There is weak integration of NES with government decision-making systems.** Most often ministries of finance (or treasuries) remain primarily responsible for fiscal planning and budgeting, which they do with little or no engagement with entities responsible for the generation and utilization of evidence, so evaluation findings rarely find their way into budget planning and decision-making.
- ♦ **The growing global consensus on the importance of M&E** brings with it an inherent danger that the effort required to undertake these challenging and resource-intensive processes becomes over-regulated, ritualized and loses its meaning. These processes then become a requirement that needs to be complied with rather than an opportunity for real-life learning and practical accountability.
- ♦ **Political leadership and political-administrative coherence is critical in championing the development of sustainable and effective M&E systems.** Embedding government-wide M&E needs strong political will, dedicated staff and active participation across all levels and institutions of government.
- ♦ **Systems-thinking helps to look at the whole national “M&E ecosystem”,** where key components (e.g., policies, laws) and stakeholders (e.g., private sector, civil society) interdependently interact with and influence each other. It should be used for system diagnosis and to identify “leverage points” for system-wide impact.

Conclusion

National evaluation capacity needs to be embedded in the local context, needs and realities. While NES can be strengthened through ECD, there is a need to consider the complexities of the NES and apply a systemic approach to ECD. A systems perspective can enable analyse NES in a systematic manner to gain a better understanding of the functional aspects and interrelationships within a given evaluation system, in which international agencies and government bodies are only some of the important players, next to civil society actors, academic institutions and others. Grounding ECD in Systems Theory can help rethink the role of ECD practitioners in planning and implementing ECD activities and programmes together with different parts of the evaluation ecosystem.

Quotes

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“We need to consider the historical antecedent of the practice of evaluation in the development sector, especially in the global South. NES needs to be localized and consider indigenous ways to do evaluation - “to speak better to local needs”.

— **Candice Morkel**, Director, CLEAR- Anglophone Africa, South Africa

“For a long time ECD was equated as training, it was a very narrow vision. Fortunately, we are moving away from that”.

— **Sven Harten**, Deputy Director, DEval

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“We have to be humble enough to recognise that there has been progress, but we still need more way to go”.

— **Oswaldo Feinstein**, Professor, Complutense University of Madrid

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Watch the session



Video recording of the Session A1:

[NEC 2022 | Stream A1 - Status of national evaluation systems - YouTube](#)

