08 CHAPTER

STREAM C:
EVALUATING IN THE MIDST OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: FRAGILITY, INEQUALITIES AND ENVIRONMENT

8.1 | Session C1:
The need for evaluation in an unstable world

Moderator
- **Alison Evans**, Director General, Evaluation, World Bank Group

Panellists
- **Kevin Watkins,** Visiting Professor of Practice at the London School of Economics, and former CEO at Save the Children UK and the Overseas Development Institute
- **George Gray Molina,** Head of Strategic Engagement and Chief Economist, UNDP
- **Isabella Kiplagat,** Economist, National Treasury and Planning, Kenya
- **El Hassan El Mansouri**, General Secretary, National Observatory of Human Development, Morocco

Are approaches to evaluation responding to new challenges? And how can evaluation systems play a more effective role in informing decision-making, strengthening accountability and building transparency in a rapidly changing world?

- **Evaluation and evaluation systems are not sufficient to ensure policy changes,** since decision-makers at political level will often cut budgets despite having evaluation evidence urging the contrary.

- **Evaluation needs to be bolder,** challenge those in power more, moving away from the margins to address systemic issues.

- **Evaluation needs to recognise that, as an oversight function, it not only holds up the mirror to governments and organizations,** challenging the achievement of the SDGs, but also represents the people. In this way evaluation needs to change, moving away from looking at efficiencies with often broken systems and engaging more with the systems and political changes needed to bring about greater development and achievement of the SDGs.

- **Crisis, including the recent years of the COVID-19 pandemic, has shown us that evaluation needs to be more flexible** and focus not only on the *before* and *after*, but the changes taking place *during* and *in response to* crisis.

- **Remember who we work for:** SDGs are for the people, and evaluations should be as well. Evaluation should get direct feedback from citizens/users. Communication plays a critical role; without it evaluation results can be damaging.

- **We need to deploy rigorous evaluation methods without losing sight of reality,** and introduce agile ways to evaluate. We no longer have the luxury of time.

- **Strong, resilient, and flexible evaluation systems are needed,** but in many countries access to information/data is limited, defeating the purpose of evaluation systems and tools. There is a need to build demand for evaluation from people and policymakers.

- **Change is not achieved by just making problems** - such as environmental issues and poverty - visible. There is the need for action at political level. Ensuring political will is critical.

Conclusion

It is very important to ensure that evaluation is embedded within public institutions and that there is a strong evaluation culture to accept the findings and results of evaluations. However, there is also a need for evaluations to ask tough questions. Underlining this is the dichotomy of evaluation; being both user focused, to produce results that can be taken up, and at the same time accepting that it will be unpopular, speaking truth to power. Evaluation needs to be technically sound and rigorous, but not to the degree that it loses sight of the big issues by focusing on a narrow agenda within its control. To have impact, evaluation may need to take sides, a difficult consideration for evaluators.

Quote

"Yesterday evaluation was important, but today it is vital."

— **Chafika Affaq**, Governance Team Leader, UNDP Morocco

Watch the session

Video recording of the Session C1:
[NEC 2022 | Stream C1 - The need for Evaluation in an unstable world - YouTube](#)