

STREAM D. METHODOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS FOR THE NEW NORMAL

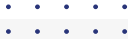
9.1 | Session D1: Innovating to evaluate beyond the 2030 Agenda

Moderator

- ◆ **Indran Naidoo**, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD

Panellists

- ◆ **Mita Marra**, Associate Professor of Political Economics and Policy Evaluation, University of Naples "Federico II"
- ◆ **Dugan Fraser**, Programme Manager, GEI, World Bank Group



Is evaluation innovative and nimble enough for a rapidly changing world? Are innovations aligning with need? How do we bring about a systems-thinking approach for transformative change?



- ♦ **There continues to be resistance to evaluation from those being evaluated.** Equally data collectors can be resistant to share information to better inform evaluation. The evaluation field may need to consider its communication and knowledge management and sharing approaches.
- ♦ **On the supply side, evaluations are sometimes required to fulfil a regulatory requirement, from a compliance perspective.** However, there is a risk that this makes evaluation a mandatory process, limiting its overall use and impact. It may require nudging and soft-power measures, e.g. legislation that requires evaluation after a certain amount of years from introduction, which may help in the institutionalization of evaluation as part of public policymaking.
- ♦ **On the demand side, there is increased demand** for evaluation to support evidence-informed decision-making. Social impact assessment, in public and private sector organizations, environmental, social and governance and impact investing are also demanding better data-driven evaluation.
- ♦ **Innovating evaluation will require addressing and recognising challenges** such as political polarization, new and emerging crises, complex theories of change and multiple sources of evidence and actor viewpoints.
- ♦ **This will require a greater focus on systems-thinking**, backward and forward linkages, and reflections on “reformongering” and the positionality of the evaluator to grasp emergence and embeddedness - while staying principled. It will need evaluators to step-up and engage meaningfully with the decision makers to ensure political will and recognition of the evaluative evidence to ensure evaluations lead to change and are used.
- ♦ **The structure of monitoring and evaluation systems, especially within the public sector, shows the level to which monitoring has been mainstreamed**, possibly due to cultures of accountability and control within public sector institutions, while evaluation remains on the margins and external.
- ♦ **Evaluation isolation has led to less cooperation and information sharing and, as a result, less innovation.** The pandemic forced evaluation to be more innovative, and increases in rapid evaluations illustrate this to a degree. However it remains compliance-oriented, a ritual framed around a fear of failure, with structures such as the DAC criteria restricting rather than allowing broader examination and understanding.
- ♦ **Systems-thinking requires us to be respectful of the system and take time to understand the systemic and individual roles.** Evaluation needs to take a “theories of use” approach, acting as a learning partner. A key contextual barrier is a widespread absence of authentic curiosity.

Conclusion

Evaluation should be bold/ brave and not step away from difficult discussions. Evaluation has a key role in challenging policy and decision-making. Evaluation needs to take a systems-thinking approach, understand systems and the actors in the systems, and be respectful whilst also recognising the challenges and constraints of evaluative approaches and that it is a political process and needs to be challenging.

Quotes

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It is important to consider failure: “Experts themselves can get it wrong; we have to keep trying”

— **Mia Mara**, Associate Professor of Political Economics and Policy Evaluation, University of Naples “Federico II”

“We have to reflect on the mistakes we make and not only look to success”

— **Indran Naidoo**, Director, Independent Office of Evaluation, IFAD

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“Too often, evaluation is part of a compliance ritual that institutions undertake. To cross boundaries, evaluation has to become a genuine learning partner.”

— **Dugan Fraser**, Programme Manager, GEI

Watch the session



Video recording of the Session D1:

[NEC 2022 | Stream D1 - Innovating to Evaluate beyond the 2030 Agenda - YouTube](#)

