

# Supporting the Sustainable Development Goals: Priorities for a Global Evaluation Agenda

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From 27 April to 22 May 2015 the National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Community of Practice (COP), with support from the UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), promoted an online discussion<sup>3</sup> linked to the upcoming NEC conference in Bangkok, on 'How the 2015 NEC Conference in Bangkok: 'Blending Evaluation Principles with Development Practices' can enhance national evaluation capacities and help to develop and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>4</sup> The following is a series of key ideas shared by participants regarding what the priorities for a Global Evaluation Agenda to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) might be.

A participant from **Israel** outlined the importance of discussing National Evaluation Policies (NEPs). Institutionalised evaluation can be categorised into formalised and non-formalised NEPs, and both can be routinely conducted. Systems and guidelines can be applied to help standardize evaluation in countries which have not yet developed NEPs, and also to enable coordination among agencies and government departments. Independent Evaluation Offices should be able to inform governments to make evidence-based decisions, taking into consideration the spending and allocation of funds, as well as operations and programming. The first step towards developing an NEP is to promote a culture of evaluation. Although it is not always the case, an efficient and clear NEP can help sustain good evaluation practices.

A participant from **Cameroon** raised the need to develop statistical information systems to help assess the implementation of the SDGs, and to strengthen national capacities in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) so evaluation capacities to assess all SDGs is developed effectively at the national level. These aspects should be considered in the Global Evaluation Agenda.

An evaluator from **Guatemala**, calls attention to the fact that indicators are means rather than ends. There are two main aspects to indicators: the balance between validity and reliability of the indicators, and, on the other hand, the usefulness of information or data for decision-making by different actors. A lesson learned from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is that assessments have to 'build bridges' to bring partners (population, civil society organisations etc.) together and demand more of the government.

For a participant from **Kenya**, the main priorities for a Global Evaluation Agenda should be: 1) data-driven growth through the implementation of a stronger national M&E policy; and 2) the strengthening of linkages between the government and Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) to make evaluation a priority, through the implementation of NEPs.

According to a participant from **Morocco**, the importance of evaluating activities undertaken to achieve the SDGs is part of a global and strategic vision which comprises five main ideas: to promote the popularisation of the SDGs; to reinforce a legal framework across three levels (government, parliament, civil society); to create information systems and indicators for M&E; to implement a country level evaluation in which States must set goals, targets and indicators; and to link the assessment of sustainable development to environmental assessment.

The Agenda 21 initiative has stimulated reflection on the issue of evaluation. This movement has led to the creation of analytical tools for project evaluations, but the issue of programme and policy evaluation remains largely unresolved.

In **Tunisia**, political reforms have allowed for the assurance of evaluation mechanisms and a generalisation across different sectors at local and regional levels. Strengthening the national statistics institutes was key to producing consistent data and having a solid evaluation system. There are three essential requisites to ensure successful evaluation: first, a clear vision of the objectives, and also of the quantifiable results and tangible, precise formulas; second, having data on indicators available and the possibility of comparison with past evaluations; and, third, evaluations should be carried out by independent institutions. Indicators should follow an international framework, to facilitate comparisons and build on the lessons learned from the MDGs with the necessary improvements. They should be disaggregated by gender and by spatial dimensions, and should measure both outcomes and processes. It is recommended to promote the participation of all stakeholders, to ensure transparency, accountability and the allocation of roles. Investments in national statistical systems and in strengthening national capacities for M&E are necessary to acquire the knowledge, techniques and proper approaches needed to improve the results of M&E and their use in decision-making.

According to comments of a discussion participant from **Spain**, when building evaluation capacities, a gender perspective should be integrated into the M&E system, with the goal of improving overall policymaking. Intersectoral perspectives should also be included, to analyse how different inequalities interact with each other in different contexts. By focusing development policies on people, other aspects should also be taken into consideration, such as the consumption of natural resources.

The priorities according to a participant from **Mexico**, should be: to consider the evaluation results for subsequent planning; to ensure that M&E systems provide easy-to-process information; to enhance M&E capacities across different government bodies, not only within agencies responsible for official evaluations; to achieve evaluations that take into consideration the participation of beneficiaries; and that events and CoPs on evaluation should be jointly organized, avoiding duplication of efforts and initiatives.

The priority that was most widely agreed on was to promote evaluation policies across the national level, to ensure reliable assessment of the SDGs. Therefore, improvements would be incorporated into the national public policy agenda and not focus only on the SDGs. Another consensus that emerged was that during the evaluation process, particular attention should be paid to the most vulnerable populations and to gender.

#### Notes:

1. UNDP/IPC-IG.
2. UNDP Independent Evaluation Office.
3. See <[www.unteamworks.org/nec](http://www.unteamworks.org/nec)>.
4. Indran Naidoo, Director of UNDP IEO; Ana Rosa Soares, Evaluation Advisor from UNDP IEO; and Haroldo Machado Filho, Programme Specialist and SDGs Specialist from UNDP Brazil, were content moderators for this e-discussion.