The background features a large, abstract circular graphic composed of numerous overlapping, semi-transparent blue segments of varying shades, from light sky blue to deep navy blue. These segments are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and movement, resembling a stylized gear or a complex digital interface. The overall effect is modern and technological.

Part I
Overview and
Introduction

Chapter 1

Evaluating Sustainable Development

Vinod Thomas

Abstract. *The United Nations' new Sustainable Development Goals provide the international mandate and opportunity for countries to focus on socially equitable and environmentally sustainable growth. There is a growing recognition in countries that the quality of growth signified by inclusion and sustainability is vital for how it affects the well-being of people and the planet, and for continuing economic growth itself. But this broader recognition also raises several tough challenges. An important one is managing actual or perceived trade-offs that occur as countries pursue sustainable and inclusive development. One example is food security, for which there is the need to increase areas under cultivation while at the same time to ensure sustainable forest use and conservation. The pressure to develop fossil fuel energy to power growth is another case in point which conflicts with controlling pollution and minimizing damages to human health and climate change. The pursuit of sustainable and inclusive growth also presents challenges to evaluation. It would be fair to say that evaluative priorities and methods have not kept pace with the needs of assessing outcomes in sustainability. Stepped-up evaluative efforts are necessary at several levels, ranging from sound frameworks and methods of analysis to relevant and practical applications, conclusions, and recommendations.*

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FRAMEWORK OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Three dimensions of sustainable development are economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability,¹ which align with an ecosystems services approach ensuring that environmental services such as clean air and water and nutritious food remain available for future generations. Past initiatives were largely skewed toward attaining high economic growth. Focusing solely on the pace of growth has contributed to increasing inequality, environmental destruction, and climate change—repercussions that threaten economic growth itself. The challenge for evaluation is integrating the social and environmental dimensions while assessing growth.

The basic framework is one that recognizes that for economic growth to be sustainable, we need to value all three forms of capital—physical, human, and natural (Basu et al. 2017; Thomas et al. 2000). Government spending and private investment have long favored the first two forms of capital, with natural resource management getting short shrift. Yet, a country's natural capital—its stock of natural assets—is essential for the pace and quality of growth. Sustainable land use and agricultural practices, and forest and coastal management, need far greater emphasis.

The fact is that raising economic growth remains the principal driver of policy. Earlier thinking was that social inclusion and environmental sustainability are good to have, but that their pursuit presents unacceptable trade-offs to economic growth. Evaluation results, however, have shown that projects with objectives incorporating inclusive growth and the environment have performed well compared to those that have stand-alone objectives (IED 2014, 2015). These results provide support for building inclusion into the design and implementation of projects intended to help raise economic growth. In this and other instances, evaluators need to put more of such contextual evidence into their evaluations.

The argument in fact goes further. In many settings, growth itself seems to depend on inclusion. The intuition is that when all the people are included in the growth process, the possibilities for growth are that much greater. If so, going forward, not just any growth will do; it needs to be growth that is more inclusive. In this case, there would be a premium on generating growth that disproportionately includes the lower income strata in the growth process.

This line of thinking is just as powerful in the case of environmental sustainability. There is growing evidence that sustained growth will not be possible in the future without tackling environmental degradation and climate change. For example, the costs of climate-related disasters in many disaster-prone countries such as Bangladesh, Cuba, Haiti, the Philippines, and Thailand are staggering, and they weigh on economic growth.

In principle, making growth more inclusive and sustainable is assuring development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Providing more and better

¹<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>.

quality of growth for sustainability requires that high growth be accompanied by quality standards that ensure broad-based benefits through gainful and productive employment and access to opportunities in health, education, and social protection while at the same time ensuring environmental quality that supports future growth.

Nevertheless, sustainable development remains a contentious, complex, and dynamic paradigm. There are many considerations to take into account among which are the many trade-offs and policy issues at stake.

METHODS FOR ANALYSIS

On methods for assessing sustainability, there are five strands to stress. First, cost-benefit analysis, a long-standing economic tool of analysis, can be put to better and wider use to assess sustainability. In particular, the frameworks allow the qualification in the use of market prices to account for externalities such as pollution and congestion. The effect of doing so can be enormous, as in the carbon emissions that aggravate global warming. If, based on such analysis, carbon emissions were to be taxed adequately—in contrast to the absence of such taxes, let alone subsidies that encourage the use of polluting fuels such as coal—the result would change the game.

Furthermore, cost-benefit analysis has not been used often for such purposes. Where it has been used, the results were compelling. For example, environmental impact assessment is mostly based on cost-benefit analysis. It has focused mostly on “do no harm” principles and has been instrumental in preventing investments and projects that would have led to environmental damage.

The use of cost-benefit analysis in some of the multilateral development banks (MDBs) has been on the decline (IEG 2010a). Part of the reason is the greater difficulty in applying the technique in social sectors where lending has been on the rise. But that is not a good enough reason to de-emphasize cost-benefit analysis. The tool is potentially a highly effective means to assess the net gains and losses from interventions.

Second, impact evaluation can help to assess the effects of programs that seek to ensure greater social inclusion and environmental sustainability. The much-cited example is the case of social protection programs, in particular measuring the impacts of conditional cash transfer programs. There are also good examples of the effects of forest protection and natural resource management more generally. While there are many counterfactual evaluations that have contributed such insights, many of the useful efforts have not been experimental.

We also see a strong emergence of new forms of evaluation of impact, such as process tracing, systems mapping, and qualitative comparative analysis. They use methods and tools that are rigorous, but not necessarily experimental. Randomized control trials cannot tackle issues like climate change and sustainability over generations.

Third, green accounting methods in principle are available for better valuation of natural capital (Hamilton 2014). Data are usually a constraint in effectively applying such valuation, but it is clear that when the destruction of

natural capital is not accounted for, it results in inflating long-term growth prospects (Dasgupta 2009). Not accounting for the destruction of natural capital sends the wrong signals for pursuing gross domestic product growth at the expense of de-investing in natural capital, which eventually hurts the growth process itself.

Fourth, social impact analysis brings in especially the harnessing power of participatory process in development planning and implementation and is especially relevant where environmental impact is also taken into account. Even if qualitative in many instances, this work shows a direction that should be encouraged, given its relevance for sustainable development. Social and environmental impact assessment includes the processes of analyzing, monitoring, and managing the intended and unintended social and environmental consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, and projects) and any social and environmental change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment.

Fifth, safeguard compliance mechanisms are essential to ensure that development projects do not cause social and environmental harm. Especially where negative externalities are present, desirable regulations designed to avoid harm would not be followed by private or even public agents without environmental and social safeguards. But safeguards have not historically been considered as part of sustainability criteria of projects, and this must change. A subsequent section discusses safeguards in greater detail.

Rather than thinking of these tools as alternatives, one can have a rigorous framework that mixes methods depending on the issues at hand. It is crucial to list the things that are really important. Incorporation of analysis of counterfactuals can be applied more widely than at present, not only in social areas but also in the agriculture, urban, and infrastructure sectors. These are not necessarily experimental, but can integrate with others' regression analysis, counterfactual systems analysis, and cost-benefit analysis.

We must take cost-benefit analysis more seriously and not hide under the premise of unquantifiable aspects or questions about the reliability of economic, social, and environmental modeling, and a suspicion that sometimes there were biases in the assumptions that were incorporated in these models. It is important to always evaluate both benefits and costs so that the evaluation can objectively guide sustainable development.

Underlying evaluation of impact and cost-benefit analysis is green accounting, which can help enormously in the right valuation, especially of natural capital. Data availability and estimation methods remain a barrier, but they must be overcome with continued efforts and financing for such work, which has high payoffs.

Some applications of these techniques have yielded good results (Thomas and Luo 2011). For example, there have been some striking results in assessing the impact of conditional cash transfer programs in the Philippines. There has been a breakthrough in evaluating sustainable use of natural resources, as for example in Brazil's deforestation and biodiversity loss. Remote sensing in monitoring and evaluation in the management of peatlands in Mongolia has been an interesting experience.

In the urban space, there have been evaluations of the value added when bus rapid transit incorporates a clean development mechanism such as clean energy, as has been done in China. Encouraging commuters to use bus transport in Brazil and Korea is another case in point. The full cost of subsidies for fossil fuels and the value of slashing them have also been assessed quite carefully (IMF 2015; Morgan 2007). More work needs to be done in assessing the full benefits of switching to renewable energy. These issues can be best illustrated with specific areas in mind, a few of which are taken up below.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Environmental sustainability is heavily dependent on how natural resources are harnessed and utilized. There are a number of perceived and actual trade-offs when it comes to natural resource management, especially as they involve externalities and the public goods nature of some of these resources.

In some cases there are win-win opportunities, where growth and environmental objectives complement each other. Improving energy efficiency and reducing energy losses are a case in point (Petrie and Thomas 2013). There are other areas where costs are clearly involved, and yet there may be net-win opportunities as these costs are more than offset by societal and/or environmental gains. Switching out of subsidies for fossil fuels (where negative externalities are present) and even providing subsidies for renewables (where positive externalities are present) would be a case in point.

One central issue is the question of the carbon content of economic growth. A byproduct of economic growth is the production of greenhouse gases and the resulting climate change. A general observation is that a 1 percent increase in per capita income induces—on average and with exceptions—a 1 percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions. But some exceptions offer opportunities to promote strategies that both promote growth and limit emissions.

Ending encouragement to use fossil fuels is one avenue. Removing fossil fuel subsidies would increase economic efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions (van den Berg and Cando-Noordhuizen 2017). The largest subsidizers in absolute terms were Egypt, India, Indonesia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, and Ukraine—all with more than \$10 billion a year in subsidies. Subsidies are 2–7.5 times larger than public spending on health in Bangladesh, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Morocco, Pakistan, the Republic of Yemen, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela.

Using energy-efficient instruments can also help (IED 2014; UNDP 2008). Compact fluorescent lamps draw only 20–30 percent as much power and last much longer. Substituting them for all the incandescent lamps in Sub-Saharan Africa would reduce peak power consumption by 15 gigawatts, roughly 23 percent of the installed capacity.

Together, these findings suggest that a win-win strategy could be built around introducing efficiencies while reducing subsidies and better targeting subsidies to the poor. This would simultaneously reduce the strain on government budgets, free resources to allow extension of energy sources to the poor, and promote more efficient energy use.

Another area of concern is the use of water resources (IEG 2010a; Thomas and Luo 2011). For almost a century, water use has been growing almost twice as fast as population. To meet the demand for water, numerous parts of the world have exceeded sustainable limits of water withdrawal from rivers and groundwater aquifer. The level of water in underground aquifers below Beijing, New Delhi, and many other booming cities is falling rapidly. Major rivers such as the Ganges, the Yangtze, the Nile, and the Jordan are overtaxed and regularly shrink for long periods during the year.

Water shortages already loom in many parts of the world. One-third of the world population, concentrated in developing countries, lives in basins where the water deficit is larger than 50 percent. About 700 million people in 43 countries face water stress, unable to obtain the minimum need of 1,700 cubic meters of water per person per year. And climate change aggravates erratic rainfall patterns, compounding the challenges.

The global water footprint reached 9,000 billion cubic meters a year in 1996–2005. Irrigated agriculture accounts for more than 80 percent of water use in developing countries. Yet, feeding more people and coping with the changing dietary demands from a richer population will require more efficient water use. Without sufficient water, future economic progress could be severely constrained.

But water stress is about more than availability. Rapid economic growth increases not only water use but also pollution. It has changed natural water reservoirs—directly, by draining aquifers, and indirectly, by melting glaciers and the polar ice caps. And overexploitation of groundwater results in salinization, while industrial and agricultural waste pollutes water sources.

The economic benefits of better managing water resources are big, as are the economic costs of inaction. Country examples indicate that proper water management could increase gross domestic product by 5–14 percent. In the Middle East and North Africa, where water shortages are most acute, the cost of environmental degradation from water pollution and excessive withdrawals is estimated at between 2.0 and 7.4 percent of gross domestic product.

It may not be just an issue of better managing scarce resources, but one of changing sources to more sustainable ones. Water scarcity should lead to higher prices for water, which will at a certain point make whole-scale desalination of seawater economical, but with a transportation problem—how to get this water to remote regions and landlocked countries. Innovations in filters and other desalination techniques could drive the price of desalination down, which could bring the tipping point for the market in desalinated water closer.

Yet another aspect is the protection of forests (IEG 2009). An evaluation using forest fires as a proxy found that, on average, protected areas significantly reduce tropical deforestation and associated carbon release, thus reducing carbon emissions while preserving biodiversity. The study examined whether areas subject to strict protection—with essentially no use allowed—fared better than those in which some activity was permitted.

The expectation was that, all things equal, strict protection would have the bigger impact on reducing the incidence of fires, considering differences

in deforestation pressures. But the evaluation found instead that the impact was actually greater when the protected areas allowed sustainable use by local populations than when they did not. This finding is true for Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean, when comparing the mean reduction in fire incidence from strict protected areas with that from multiuse protected areas. In Latin America, where indigenous areas can be identified, the impact on fire incidence is extremely large.

Closely related is the protection of the world's precious biodiversity (GEF 2016a). Placing a value on biodiversity loss is not easy, but the high cost of irreversible losses cannot be underestimated. Protecting biodiversity is a critical element for the protection of our planet, and it has been shown to carry with it valuable resources and sources of livelihood, especially for the poor.

NATURAL DISASTERS

Great floods in China and India, superstorms in the Philippines and in the United States, and summer heat waves in Australia and Japan in recent years are manifestations of an alarming trend in the rise of climate-related disasters. The 2010s may well go down as the decade when the trend line of these events headed aggressively upward after a noticeable rise in their intensity and frequency since the 1970s.

Global warming has contributed to warming oceans, more moisture in the air, and higher sea levels, but scientists have been cautious about attributing a flood or storm to climate change. Even so, papers have argued that the intensity of the 2011 Great Flood in Thailand and of Super Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines are owed in part to changing climate. More recent work has been even more pointed: global warming is shown to have made Japan's unusually hot summer this year 1.5 to 1.7 times more likely.

A consensus, too, is building that climate change has roots in human actions (IPCC 2015). We have known for a long time that weather events turn into disasters for human-made reasons. More people are hurt when they are exposed in harm's way, and when they are vulnerable and unable to cope. But now we also know that the intensity and frequency of the hazards themselves are greater because of human-made global warming.

This understanding profoundly affects how countries engage in disaster risk reduction. Economic growth projections are contingent on addressing climate change. Yet few of the forecasts for global and country growth take into account the impacts of climate change that are already evident, or the massive investment and resources that will need to be mobilized for climate action. Such forecasting is missing from the current estimates for growth, for example, of around 3.0–3.5 percent in 2017 and 5.5–6.0 percent for Asia and the Pacific.

Countries and regions need to build contingency plans into their economic programs. Floods and storms in recent years inflicted sizable economic losses in Australia, China, Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam. After the financial crisis, governments and multilateral institutions intensified their efforts to anticipate future crises, carrying out stress tests of the

vulnerability and resilience of their banking systems. In the same way, we now need stress tests that can reveal how well countries can withstand the impact of rising natural disasters.

In many respects, such country actions bring both global and local benefits (GEF 2016b). Reducing black carbon emissions that blight so many cities (like Beijing and New Delhi) is a case in point. Phasing out the use of fossil fuels that present the greatest danger to our environment is another. India and Indonesia recently slashed fossil fuel subsidies. Investments in solar photovoltaics in China and Japan and in onshore wind across Europe are pointing the way for increased use of renewable energy.

The five cities most vulnerable to natural hazards are all in Asia: Bangkok, Dhaka, Jakarta, Manila, and Yangon. All of them are overcrowded and in geographically fragile settings. Asia's growth has been characterized by increasing urbanization, making it imperative that climate-friendly urban management become a strategic thrust. And because the poor are hit harder by the effects of climate change than the rest of the population, building resilient communities will be an essential element of poverty reduction strategies.

Climate-related natural disasters are no longer one-off occurrences; rather, they are systemic events that need preventive action. Disaster risk reduction needs to be seen as an investment, going beyond relief and reconstruction to a dual approach of prevention and recovery. Japan invests some 5 percent of its national budget in disaster risk reduction, and this has been shown to reduce human and economic losses when disasters strike.

The main message is that to deliver sustained growth and well-being, we need to value natural capital, recognize the human hand in climate change, and take preventive action against climate-related calamities.

THE DANGER OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is the greatest known threat to economic growth and well-being and its impacts go far beyond natural disasters (Stern 2006; Uitto, Puri, and van den Berg 2017). To confront this peril, world leaders, especially of the large economies, must commit to much stronger cuts in carbon emissions than currently envisaged at the United Nations conference in Paris. But the challenge is bigger. To bring about lasting change, countries will need to reform the way their economies generate growth.

What makes this difficult is political leaders' differing beliefs about what generates growth. After all, carbon-intensive production created wealth in the past, so many still see a change in this recipe as inimical to expansion. Yet the reality is just the opposite. In the face of mounting disasters linked to human-made global warming, a low-carbon path is the only way to progress.

To appreciate why, note that the current growth path within a quarter century will push carbon concentrations in the atmosphere to the critical 450 parts per million. Beyond this threshold, temperatures will rise above 2 degrees from pre-industrial levels, with catastrophic impact. Just-released data warn that we are already halfway to that dreaded mark. 2016 has surpassed 2015 as the hottest on record. Asia is on the front line of climate-related disasters.

To dodge this dangerous scenario, energy-related emissions alone need to fall by 40–70 percent below 2010 levels by 2050. With energy accounting for two-thirds of emissions today, the required shift from reliance on fossil fuels is huge. Currently, two-thirds to four-fifths of electricity relies on fossil fuels in China, Japan, Russia, and the United States. China and India continue to ramp up coal-fired power stations.

Industrial countries were far and away the main cause of past carbon build-up. But developing countries in Asia is now the origin of some 37 percent of global emissions. Some countries, like Canada, generate relatively low total but high per capita emissions, while others, like India, generate a relatively high total but are low in per capita terms. Among those at the high end in total, Japan is moderate in per capita terms.

Regardless of the historical and current sources, what is clear is that business as usual will sink everyone. We need an economic transformation that is not only in the global interest but also in a country's own interest. Evaluation must take on board this reality, and be especially cognizant of five trends (Office of Evaluation and Oversight 2015; Thomas 2017).

First, renewable energy sources—solar, wind, wave, tidal, geothermal, and biomass—need to expand vastly, supported by research and development and exchange of knowledge. Battery storage, smart grids, and demand measures have to improve. Demand for renewable energy can be augmented by a carbon tax that reduces demand for dirty fossil fuels. Cap and trade schemes can also help, as China plans for 2017. There is a heightened policy debate in Japan about raising the ratio of electricity from renewable and other nonpolluting energy, including the role of nuclear plants.

Second, countries need to move much more quickly out of using polluting fossil fuels. Fossil fuel subsidies in financial terms might amount to some \$550 billion globally. But when their negative effects are incorporated, the effective subsidies are much higher (IMF 2015). These subsidies have to be slashed, as India and Indonesia have started to do. The Obama administration's decision to reduce carbon emissions from power plants by 32 percent below 2005 levels by 2030 is positive, but it now needs to be maintained under the Trump administration. Japan is trying to encourage cleaner energy, including via hybrid and electric engines, and is promoting export of cleaner technology.

Third, dealing with local pollution also helps climate mitigation. Abatement of air pollution is urgent in Delhi and Beijing. Some 3 million people die each year from outdoor air pollution. Urban congestion can be lessened with intelligent transport systems, as in Seoul. Corruption and greed damage developed countries too: Volkswagen's cheating on automobile emissions, for example, is a colossal scandal.

Fourth, to withstand destruction from global warming, we need to strengthen roads and embankments, build in safer areas, and invest in rain harvesting, drainage, and early warning, as Japan has been doing. Countries can tap new financing such as the Green Climate Fund, as Fiji just did. It received a \$31 million Green Climate Fund grant for a project supported by the Asian Development Bank.

Fifth, we need to protect coastal zones, agricultural land, and forests. In Indonesia, haze from slash-and-burn agriculture to clear areas for palm oil

every year spreads through Southeast Asia, ruining people's health, biodiversity, and economic activities. These fires, on the worst days, emit more carbon than the U.S. economy.

Evaluators have been slow to send this message, but it is now urgent that the discipline come to grips with it. It is only with a swift response to climate change that countries can sustain economic growth and well-being. As a major contributor to the discussions of development effectiveness, evaluation should account for climate effects and provide evidence on social, economic, and environmental costs of delayed action.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

The value of having environmental and social safeguards is a major area of inquiry. Some studies have pinned the cost of having these safeguards as less than 3 percent of the administrative budgets of projects (IED 2016; IEG 2010b), while their benefits in terms of avoided losses have been far higher.

The demand for safeguards (to manage environmental and social trade-offs) emerged in the 1980s in response to a number of controversial projects funded by the World Bank. Two examples of these projects are the Polonoroeste's BR-364 Amazon highway program in Brazil, which affected indigenous communities, and the Narmada Dam in India, which displaced 90,000 people. These resulted in the crafting of environmental and social policies at the World Bank to ensure a "do no harm" approach in its projects. The regional MDBs followed with similar policies.

MDBs' safeguard policies aim to promote the sustainability of projects by protecting people and the environment from the potential adverse effects of development. For example, the Asian Development Bank's safeguard policy lays down key requirements, including: (1) identify and assess environmental or social impacts early in the project cycle; (2) develop and implement plans to avoid, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for the potential adverse impacts; and (3) inform and consult affected people during project preparation and implementation. The crucial question for evaluation is how effective the practices are.

The independent evaluation units of the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank (IED 2016; IEG 2010b) document some successes and important gaps. Both discuss strengths in the design of safeguards that must not be diluted and point out weaknesses in implementation and supervision of safeguards, especially for moderately risky projects. They support the eventual use of country systems when they are more equivalent and comparable to MDB systems, signal the need for great caution in switching to them, and recommend continued efforts to strengthen local capacities.

Evaluation must take on board four principles to govern the use of safeguards.

- Safeguards must be legally binding, and compliance should be enforceable. Standards that are to be met flexibly during a project's life will not suffice in ensuring protection against spillover damages. Sure, flexibility can speed up project approval, but for risky projects, the resulting damages could just delay project completions.

- International policy should govern safeguards, rather than national systems that by law or in practice are not yet equivalent. Recent years have seen several disasters under national systems; for example, the collapse of a garment factory near Dhaka, Bangladesh; a mining disaster involving a dam burst in Minas Gerais, Brazil; and explosions at a container storage station in Tianjin, China.
- It is not enough to have systems in place; implementation and oversight need strengthening. In particular, downstream supervision of how safeguards are being followed on the ground needs to be bolstered, but without weakening upstream regulation. Monitoring of impacts is essential, not by the investor alone but also by an independent party.
- The efficiency with which processes and procedures are followed can usually be improved a great deal. Greater differentiation in the treatment of high- and low-risk projects can help. Project processing can be speeded through such efficiency improvements, and not through a weakening of the regulation.

Effective safeguards are needed more than ever both for the established lenders and the newcomers. How the international banks apply these defenses will be an indication of their true commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris climate accord.

Going forward, MDBs will have to focus more and more on the positive potential of their safeguard policies, i.e., move away from a “do no harm” philosophy to a more proactive stance of harnessing safeguards to “do good” on social and environmental issues. MDBs will also have to support strengthening member countries’ capacity in implementing safeguard provisions.

The tensions raised in considering safeguards also provide one of the most powerful illustrations of trade-offs that evaluators must lay out—but which they often sidestep, at least explicitly. Those who have worked on safeguards over the years naturally recognize the uphill battle involved in taking on special interests who would rather not be burdened with adherence to any safeguards. The Trump administration’s public statements are a case in point. Proponents of safeguards also have anecdotes and stories, if not quantitative evidence, of how much gain to society sound safeguards bring.

But on the other side, some operational staff in organizations, and certainly special interests, use anecdotes, if not quantitative evidence, of how much safeguards weigh down investment operations. They often minimize the gains that safeguards bring as well.

Clearly there are inherent trade-offs and also different sets of interests driving people’s perceptions and even evidence. The role of sound evaluation under these circumstances cannot be overstressed. One way forward is the application of cost-benefit analysis that takes into account both private and social benefits and costs (IED 2016). Data are a constraint in applying such analysis, but where it has been done reasonably well, social benefits of most safeguards (i.e., avoided damages) far outweigh the social costs of having such safeguards (IEG 2010a). That does not mean costs can be reduced further with greater efficiency in executing safeguards. The policy implications

would be to adopt safeguards where net benefits are positive but to continue improving efficiency such that the net benefits are increased further.

CONCLUSION

An overarching implication of all this is the need for an introspective look at evaluation in the context of sustainable development. To remain relevant and effective, evaluation must not favor a risk-averse standpoint of doing what is easy and conventional. Evaluation should encourage innovative thinking and methods that shepherd the dynamics of sustainable development. In addition, systematic identification, analysis, and scaling-up of successful interventions are necessary actions to move forward sustainable development and growth.

Related to this, an equally important activity is developing further evaluation capacity at the country level, as promoted by an increasing number of countries. Implementation is expected to be the key test for the Sustainable Development Goals, and monitoring and evaluation will be an important part given that the development initiatives and related evaluations will be country led.

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Chapter 2

No One Left Behind - A Focus on Gender and Social Equity

Marco Segone and Florencia Tateossian

Abstract. *This chapter presents the importance of evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a focus on gender and social equity. It analyzes the transformative nature of the new 2030 Agenda, due to its focus on making sure that “no one is left behind.” It explains how the SDGs expand and build on the Millennium Development Goals, as well as how heads of states from all over the world have made a commitment to ensure a systematic follow-up and review of the SDGs that is “robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated” in order to track progress, and argues that to ensure that no one is left behind, the follow-up and review should be informed by country-led evaluations that are equity focused and gender responsive. This should be accompanied by strengthening national evaluation capacities through a systemic approach that looks at the enabling environment and at both institutional and individual capacities, from the supply as well as the demand side. Finally, it argues that strengthening national evaluation capacities to evaluate SDGs in such a way as to ensure that no one is left behind is a common endeavor that requires strong partnerships among various actors, such as national evaluation systems, parliamentarians, voluntary organizations for professional evaluation, and civil society.*

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A TRANSFORMATIVE AGENDA FOR “THE WORLD WE WANT”

We live in a world where a massive concentration of wealth and privilege exists in the hands of a few: the richest 1 percent of the population owns 40 percent of the world’s wealth, while the poorest 50 percent of the population owns only 1 percent of the world’s wealth. The three richest people in the world own wealth equivalent to the combined gross domestic product (GDP) of the world’s 49 poorest countries. It may seem that this is only related to income, but a similar situation exists in the statistics concerning human development as well. Human development indicators from 2015 show that 793 million people are still malnourished (FAO 2015), and that one in three women will be beaten, raped, abused, or mutilated in their lifetimes.¹ These are just a few examples of the many that illustrate the current inequity in the world.

The question is: is this the world we want? Or would we like to live in a world in which inequities have been banished for all humans—everywhere, anytime? Most would agree this is a common goal: so how do we get there?

The good news is that the countries that endorsed the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda recognize the importance of long-term equitable and sustainable development: more and more countries are implementing social and public policies to try to decrease the gap between those with the most (the best-off) and those with the least (the worst-off) (UN 2015b). In September 2015, leaders from around the world adopted the ambitious 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at a historic United Nations (UN) Summit.² Agenda 2030 calls for global transformation that focuses on ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all. In January 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to implement this agenda came into force. These new goals—built on the success and the unfinished agenda of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—call on all countries to mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities, and tackle climate change, while ensuring that “no one is left behind.”

How do the SDGs expand upon and continue the work of the MDGs? There are a number of key differences, both in the process through which the SDGs were identified, as well as the content.

First, the SDGs were identified in a broad and inclusive process. For more than two years, governments, civil society, the private sector, and thought leaders from around the world negotiated and discussed the development of the SDGs. For the first time, 8 million people voted on which of the SDGs were most important to them. This inclusive and participatory process has also encouraged each country to adapt the SDGs to their own national contexts. This will make the level of ownership of the SDGs much stronger.

¹ UN Women, “Facts and figures: Ending violence against women,” <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>.

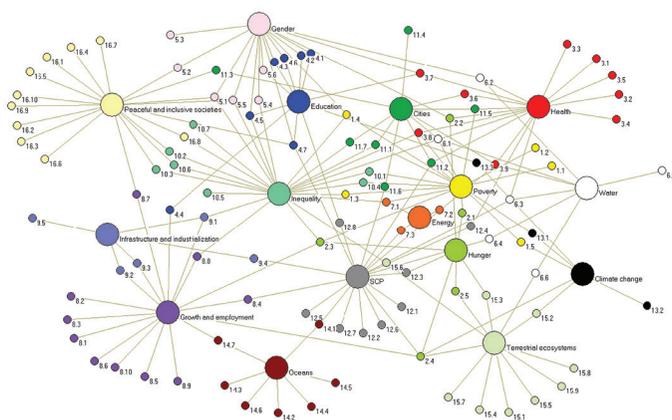
² The United Nations Summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda was held in New York, September 25–27, 2015, and convened as a high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

Second, the SDGs are universal. Unlike the MDGs, which had a strong focus on the developing countries (with seven of the eight goals devoted to them), the SDGs are relevant to any country of the world. Rob D. van den Berg, president of IDEAS, has reminded us that “from the perspective of the SDGs, all countries are developing countries.”³

Third, the SDGs are comprehensive and integrated. While some have noted concern over the large number of goals (17), this also encourages sweeping transformation across a broad number of areas, and encourages the use of partnerships to accomplish these goals. To improve communication and ensure that people understand the ultimate intent of the SDGs and Agenda 2030, the UN has clustered them into “five Ps”: people (human development); prosperity (inclusive economic development); planet (environment and climate change); peace (a key component of all development); and partnership (one of the few ways to achieve such sweeping transformation).

As shown in figure 2.1, the SDGs are interrelated and interlinked, which adds to their complexity, but also to their dynamic interaction.

FIGURE 2.1 The SDGs as a network of targets



SOURCE: Le Blanc 2015.

Fourth, gender equality and reduced inequalities among and within countries are both stand-alone goals, and they are both mainstreamed to all SDGs. The principle of “no one left behind” is the key principle informing every SDG, and is mainstreamed throughout the entire structure of Agenda 2030.

³ Rob D. van den Berg, opening speech at 2015 IDEAS Conference, Bangkok.

Fifth—and very important to those in the evaluation community—Agenda 2030 and the SDGs include a follow-up and review mechanism, operating at the national, regional, and global levels. The principles for this mechanism are voluntary and country-owned; open, inclusive, and transparent; support the participation of all people and all stakeholders; are built on existing platforms and processes; avoid duplication; respond to national circumstances; and are rigorous and evidence-based, informed by data that is timely, reliable, and disaggregated. Most important for those in the evaluation community, the follow-up and review mechanism will be informed by country-led evaluations, and calls for strengthening national evaluation capacities.

THE GREATEST OPPORTUNITY AND THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FOR THE GLOBAL EVALUATION COMMUNITY

This is the first time in the history of international development that a follow-up and review mechanism to assess the implementation of a development agenda was adopted unanimously. This high-level and far-reaching commitment will enable a surge in the demand for country-led evaluation. Key policy makers will request their own national evaluation systems so that they can produce high-quality evaluations to inform the national SDG reviews that countries will be presenting at the UN High Level Political Forum. This is therefore an unprecedented opportunity for the evaluation community.

On the other hand, evaluation of these broad-reaching goals with a central focus on “no one left behind” presents a number of unique challenges:

- How do we evaluate equitable development interventions?
- What are the best questions to use in order to assess whether interventions are relevant, and are having an impact in decreasing inequity, and in achieving results for the worst-off groups?
- What are the methodological, political, social, and financial implications of designing, conducting, managing, and using evaluations that are responsive to issues of social equity and gender equality?
- How can we strengthen the capacities of governments, civil society organizations (CSOs), and parliamentarians to evaluate the effect of interventions on equitable outcomes for marginalized populations?

EVALUATING THE SDGS WITH A “NO ONE LEFT BEHIND” LENS THROUGH EQUITY-FOCUSED AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE EVALUATIONS⁴

The 2030 Agenda made a commitment to ensure a systematic follow-up and review of the SDGs that would be “robust, voluntary, effective, participatory, transparent and integrated,” and that would “make a vital contribution to implementation and will help countries to maximize and track progress in

⁴This section is drawn from Bamberger, Segone, and Tateossian (2016).

implementing the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure that no one is left behind” (UN 2015b). Country-led evaluations will be a central element used to inform SDG reviews and, together with strong monitoring data, will help support national policy decision making.

Gender equality and reducing inequalities between and among countries are central to the SDG principle of leaving no one behind. This recognizes the need to go beyond aggregate indicators, which only estimate the proportion of the population who have benefited from a particular intervention. There is evidence that aggregate indicators of progress can conceal the fact that some marginal or vulnerable groups are being left behind. In this context, the goal of the SDGs in reducing inequalities is to

- Identify groups that have been left behind;
- Understand why this has happened; and
- Identify strategies to promote more inclusive approaches that will include these groups.

While strengthening the national statistical system is of paramount importance in order to be able to produce disaggregated data that go beyond national averages, the evaluators will have to explain why certain groups have been left behind, and how this can be corrected. This is why equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation (EFGRE) is vital.

UN Women, the UN entity for advocating for gender equality and women’s empowerment, defines gender-responsive evaluation as having two essential elements: what the evaluation examines, and how it is undertaken. Gender-responsive evaluation assesses the degree to which gender and power relationships—including structural and other causes that give rise to inequalities, discrimination, and unfair power relations—change as a result of an intervention. This process is inclusive, participatory, and respectful of all stakeholders (rights holders and duty bearers). Gender-responsive evaluation promotes accountability regarding the level of commitment to gender equality, human rights, and women’s empowerment by providing information on the way in which development programs are affecting women and men differently, and contributing to the achievement of these commitments. It is applicable to all types of development programming, not just gender-specific work (UN Women Independent Evaluation Office 2015). UNICEF, the UN agency for children, defines equity-focused evaluation as a judgment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of policies, programs, and projects that are concerned with achieving equitable development results (Bamberger and Segone 2011). This approach involves using rigorous, systematic, and objective processes in the design, analysis, and interpretation of information in order to answer specific questions, including those of concern to the worst-off groups. It assesses what does work to reduce inequities, and what does not, and it highlights the intended and unintended results for the worst-off groups, as well as the gaps between the best-off, average, and worst-off groups. It provides strategic lessons to guide decision makers and to inform stakeholders (Bamberger and Segone 2011). The UN

Evaluation Group, the professional network of evaluation offices of UN agencies, says in its guidance document that integrating human rights and gender equality in evaluations provides a valuable resource for all stages of the formulation, design, implementation, dissemination, and use of the human rights and gender-responsive-focused evaluations (UNEG 2014).

ROLES OF THE VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS IN THE SDG FOLLOW-UP AND REVIEW MECHANISM

The key agencies responsible for the implementation of country-led evaluations within each country are the national governments. Since national SDG reviews (see box 2.1) are voluntary, the commitment of governments is critical, particularly as they are the ones who have to decide how to prioritize their limited financial and technical resources among many different development priorities—which are supported by different groups of international and national stakeholders. Given the broad scope of the SDGs, almost all government agencies will potentially be involved, and the national government will play an important coordinating role. One of the challenges is to avoid the “silo mentality” that has been seen in many of the MDG monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities, where each sector agency works on its own sector-specific studies, with very little coordination between sectors.

At the national level, donor agencies, UN agencies, CSOs, advocacy groups, and foundations can all play important roles in determining the evaluation agenda. But there is always the danger that each donor agency, CSO, and UN agency will conduct their own studies, often with only limited coordination and comparability of data between entities, and with significant duplication. The Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDGs is seeking to avoid these issues by advocating for a global indicator framework for SDGs that would be agreed upon by all member states, with national and subnational indicators used for more localized policy interventions at the country level.

CSOs, including voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs), will play an important role in the country-led evaluations at both the national and local levels, and their contribution will be critical in ensuring a truly inclusive consultation and participatory approach. While many governments collect data on local communities and are willing to involve these communities in the data collection process, government agencies are often less willing to involve them in the interpretation of the findings and in the discussion of the policy implications. Civil society, and particularly human rights and feminist groups will have an important role to play in ensuring that the voices of local communities and marginalized groups are heard.

STRENGTHENING NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY FOR SDGS⁵

Using country-led evaluations to inform the SDG follow-up and review mechanisms goes hand in hand with strengthening national evaluation capacities.

⁵This section is drawn from Segone and Rugh (2013).

BOX 2.1 Principles of SDG follow-up and review mechanisms

The SDG follow-up and review mechanism will:

- a. Be voluntary and country led;** will take into account different national realities, capacities, and levels of development; and will respect policy space and priorities. Since national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development, the outcome from national-level processes will be the foundation for reviews at the regional and global levels, given that the global review will be primarily based on official national data sources.
- b. Track progress in implementing the universal goals and targets,** including the means of implementation in all countries in a manner that respects their universal, integrated, and interrelated nature as well as the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- c. Maintain a longer-term orientation; identify achievements, challenges, gaps, and critical success factors; and support countries in making informed policy choices.** This will help mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships; support the identification of solutions and best practices; and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system.
- d. Be open, inclusive, participatory, and transparent for all people;** and will support reporting by all relevant stakeholders.
- e. Be people centered and gender sensitive; will respect human rights; and will have a particular focus on the poorest, most vulnerable, and those furthest behind.**
- f. Will build on existing platforms and processes where these exist; will avoid duplication; and will respond to national circumstances, capacities, needs, and priorities.** These will evolve over time, taking into account emerging issues and the development of new methodologies, and will minimize the reporting burden on national administrations.
- g. Will be rigorous and evidence-based, and will be informed by country-led evaluations and data that are high-quality, accessible, timely, reliable, and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, and geographic location and other characteristics that are relevant in national contexts.**
- h. Will require enhanced capacity-building support for developing countries, including the strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programs,** particularly in African countries, least developed countries, small island developing states, landlocked developing countries, and middle-income countries.
- i. Will benefit from the active support of the UN system and other multilateral institutions.**

SOURCE: UN 2015, paragraph 74; emphasis added.

Country-led evaluations are essential in order to bring evidence together with monitoring data to inform the review of the SDGs.

The United Nations General Assembly resolution on national evaluation capacity building (UN 2015a) has set the stage for an understanding of the importance of evaluation capacity development.

This resolution emphasizes the importance of building capacities for the evaluation of development activities at the country level. It calls for interaction and cooperation among all relevant partners, including those of the UN system, and both national and international stakeholders, to coordinate efforts to further strengthen member state capacities for evaluation. Most importantly, the resolution emphasizes that national ownership and national priorities form a strong base for building national capacities to manage and oversee evaluations. Through this resolution, the member states agree that evaluation is an important component of development processes, and recognize evaluation as a country-level tool that can help strengthen and support development results toward the achievement of the SDGs.

National evaluation capacity development is a complex field in which different stakeholders have different roles to play, based on their respective value added. This complexity encourages the use of a systemic approach to national evaluation capacity development, while fully recognizing that each country has its own unique context and realities. This makes it necessary to not only look at actors at different levels and across sectors, but also, crucially, at the network of relationships or connections between them in each country. Such a viewpoint illustrates the fact that weaknesses in capacity at any level, or with any key actor, will affect the capacity of the whole system to deal with a problem in order to achieve a goal. Therefore, a country-specific systemic approach to national evaluation capacity development is needed, particularly when addressing evaluation capacities for country-led evaluations of the SDGs that are equity focused and gender responsive.

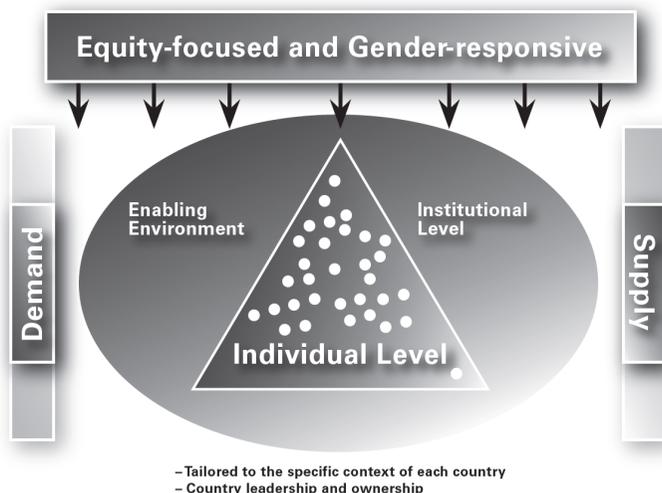
Individual and Institutional Evaluation Capacities Enabled by a Supportive Environment

In the past, evaluation capacity development focused on strengthening the capacities of the knowledge and skills of individuals. However, it is by now clear that capacity development should be based on a systemic approach that takes into account three major levels (individual, institutional, and external enabling environment); and two components (demand and supply⁶), and that both should be tailored to the specific context of each country (figure 2.2).

The enabling environment for evaluation is determined by a culture of learning and accountability, by which we mean the degree to which information is sought about past performance; and the extent to which there is a drive to

⁶“Supply” refers to the capability of professional evaluators to provide sound and trustworthy evaluative evidence. “Demand” refers to the capability by policy makers and senior managers to request sound and trustworthy evaluative evidence, with the aim of using it in strategic decision-making processes.

FIGURE 2.2 A systemic and integrated approach to national evaluation capacities development



SOURCE: Segone and Rugh (2013), 5.

continuously improve, and to be responsible or accountable for actions taken, resources spent, and results achieved. Such a culture is embedded in tacit norms of behavior, and an understanding of what can and should—or should not—be done; and in many cases, by behaviors being role-modeled by leaders.

An enabling environment is also supported or created through governance structures that demand independent evaluation, be it through parliaments or governing bodies, and that is further enhanced through VOPEs that set standards and strive toward greater professionalism in evaluation. Therefore, VOPEs should be supported, so that they can foster indigenous demand for and supply of evaluation, including by the setting of national evaluation standards and norms. There are also examples of governments soliciting the advice and involvement of VOPEs, not only in formulating evaluation policies and systems, but also in the implementation of evaluations that are consistent with those policies.

The institutional framework for evaluation ensures that a system that can implement and safeguard the independence, credibility, and utility of evaluation within an organization exists. Such an institutional framework has the following characteristics:

- Includes a system of peer review, or assurance that the evaluation function is set up to safeguard and implement the principles of independence, credibility, and utility
- Establishes safeguards to protect individual evaluators, evaluation managers, and the heads of evaluation functions

- Puts in place a multidisciplinary evaluation team that can ensure the credibility of evaluation by understanding multiple dimensions of evaluation subjects and combining the necessary technical competence
- Secures the independent funding of evaluations at an adequate level, to ensure that the necessary evaluations are carried out, and that budget holders do not exercise inappropriate influence or control over what is evaluated and how
- Combines measures for impartial or purposeful selection of evaluation subjects to ensure impartiality on the one hand, and increased utility on the other, by making deliberate choices linked to decision-making processes
- Sets out a system to plan, undertake, and report evaluation findings in an independent, credible, and useful way (to increase objectivity in the planning and conduct of evaluations, systems that increase the rigor, transparency, and predictability of evaluation processes and products are needed)
- Institutes measures that increase the usefulness of evaluations, including the sharing of findings and lessons learned that can be applied to other subjects

An evaluation environment is essential to support country-led evaluations of the SDGs. The UN resolution on capacity building for evaluation at the country level, and the strong commitment of evaluation to support the follow-up and review of the SDGs, are key drivers to enhance evidence-based policy making to achieve the SDGs.

At the individual level, a capacity development strategy should strengthen the ability of senior management to strategically plan evaluations and to identify the key evaluation questions, to manage evaluations for their independence and credibility, and to effectively make use of evaluation results. Mackay underlines the importance of identifying and supporting leaders or natural champions who have the ability to influence, inspire, and motivate others to design and implement effective evaluation systems (Mackay 2007). Leadership is not necessarily synonymous with a position of authority; it can also be informal, and can be exercised at many levels. Therefore, the evaluation capacity development strategy should, especially in the initial stages, identify and support as appropriate, national and local leaders in public administration and intergovernmental monitoring, as well as in evaluation groups and national VOPEs. It should also be linked to the national processes that focus on the country-level review of the SDGs. By giving national M&E departments or agencies responsibility for SDG follow-up and review, evaluation can become a key source of support for these national reviews. On the supply side, a capacity development strategy should enhance behavioral independence—*independence of mind and integrity; knowledge of and respect for evaluation standards; and agreed-upon evaluation processes and products*—as well as professional competencies through formal education, specialized training, professional conferences and meetings,

on-the-job training such as joint country-led evaluations, and communities of practice and networking, for example VOPEs.

Fostering Demand for and Supply of Evaluation

A distinction should be made between the capacity of policy makers and advisors to use evidence, and the capacity of evaluation professionals to provide sound evidence. While it may be unrealistic for policy makers and advisors to become competent experts in evaluation, it is both reasonable and necessary for such professionals to be able to understand and use the evidence produced by evaluation systems in their policies and practices. Integrating evidence into practice is a central feature of policy-making processes, and in this case, for integrating it into the follow-up and review mechanisms of the SDGs. An increasingly necessary skill for professional policy makers and advisors is to know about the different kinds of evidence that are available; how to gain access to them; and how to critically appraise evidence. Without such knowledge and understanding it is difficult to see how a strong demand for evidence can be established and, hence, how to enhance its practical application. However, it is also important to take into consideration that the national SDG review process is a political process, informed by evidence. The use of evidence in national SDG reviews depends on the combination of the capacity to provide quality and trustworthy evidence on the one hand, and the willingness and capacity of policy makers to use that evidence on the other. The extent to which evidence is used by policy makers depends, in turn, on the policy environment. To strengthen an enabling policy environment, policy makers may need to provide incentives to encourage policy makers and advisors to use the available evidence. These can include mechanisms to increase the “pull” for evidence, for example, requiring spending bids to be supported by an analysis of the existing evidence base, as well as to facilitate the use of evidence, such as integrating analytical staff at all stages of the policy implementation. CSOs, including VOPEs, should play a major role in advocating for the use of evidence in policy implementation. Think tanks, with the help of mass media, can also make evidence available to citizens, and citizens can demand that policy makers make more use of it.

CONCLUSION

The way forward is complex, but one thing is clear: there is no single ministry or organization that can do it alone. Evaluating the SDGs to ensure that no one is left behind is a common endeavor that requires strong partnerships among a variety of actors.

EvalPartners—a global partnership for evaluation capacity development that brings together approximately 60 organizations, including regional VOPEs, UN agencies, multilateral banks, academies, CSOs, and governments from around the world—was launched in March 2012, with the purpose of strengthening evaluation capacity. In 2013, at the Third International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities in Brazil, EvalPartners declared 2015 the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear). EvalYear was a global,

bottom-up movement acknowledged by the UN General Assembly. It advocated for and promoted demand and use of evaluation in evidence-based policy making and positioned evaluation in the policy arena. It also kicked off the launch of several more initiatives, including The Global Parliamentary Forum for Evaluation, three new networks (EvalGender+, EvalYouth, and EvalSDGs), and the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016–2020. EvalPartners, together with EvalYear and the new networks, are part of an enabling environment to enhance the use of evaluation to inform SDGs follow-up and review mechanisms.

Because evaluation can be a powerful agent of change, it will be up to evaluators, policy makers, and leaders around the world to make Agenda 2030 a reality. Therefore, we encourage everyone—evaluators, commissioners of evaluation, policy makers, and parliamentarians, among others—to be ambassadors of evaluation within their departments, organizations, and countries. This is essential in order to make the ultimate goal of evaluation a reality, and to help enact the change from the world we have to the world we want.

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Chapter 3

Evaluation for Improving People's Lives

Mallika R. Samaranayake and Asela Kalugampitiya

Abstract. *This chapter focuses on the evolutionary process of the acceptance of the use of evidence for policy formulation and decision making. An effective evaluation system and enabling environment are required for achieving such objectives. The complementarity between the demand for evaluation findings and the capacity to meet that demand is of paramount significance. A strong enabling environment for evaluation encourages the generation of impartial, technical, strategic, and citizen-based information to ensure that national planning and budgeting reflect the needs of the people. Evaluation provides a means to enhance participation of civil society groups, as well as an opportunity for stakeholders to interact with members of parliament and improve consultation and representation. The engagement of parliamentarians with evaluation is becoming increasingly important in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Parliamentarians are responsible for passing policies and laws, and for prioritizing and endorsing budget allocations, all of which requires evidence as a basis for national decision making. Parliamentarians are also well positioned to question disparities in society and approve the resources needed to overcome them, again requiring access to sound and comprehensive evidence to aid decision making and better serve those who are left behind. A growing movement of parliamentarians involved in this process can help lead the way.*

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Over the years, development cooperation has operated on the principle of promoting social justice through the transfer of resources to the poor. The global system of social justice provides long-term consideration of how to do this while a country is going through a process of development, even if there are no expectations that this will accelerate economic development. National governments and donor agencies have a long way to go in developing the ability to make transparent and evidence-based policies and decisions so that investments become more effective. This requires greater recognition of the various dimensions of poverty reduction, based on evaluation findings.

Poverty is related to other problems of underdevelopment. It has become a major global issue that affects more than half the world's population. In 2015, the World Bank revised the international poverty line: the new threshold is \$1.90 per day. This is a very low margin: the people who live under this threshold are considered to live in extreme poverty. The World Bank's mission is a "world free of poverty." As such, the role of evaluation cannot be underestimated in understanding the causal factors of poverty and identifying appropriate interventions in addressing such issues.

EvalPartners, in collaboration with other stakeholders, developed and launched the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016–2020, according to which national evaluation policies and systems play an important role at the country level. This agenda builds on support from the United Nations (UN) General Assembly Resolution GA/RES/69/237 (UN 2015a) and the more than 90 events that were organized around the globe in celebration of EvalYear 2015.

EvalAgenda 2020 (EvalPartners 2016) highlights the importance of strengthening an enabling environment for evaluation by developing institutional capacities, including voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs); individual capacities for evaluation, focusing on evaluators, commissioners, and users of evaluation; and the need for developing links among stakeholders. Such an approach ensures that "no one is left behind" in the evaluation process, and that interventions are designed for sustainable development.

In the above context, evaluation is not a "stand-alone." The complementarity between the demand for evaluation findings and their use, and the capacity and ability to supply the respective services, is of paramount importance.

This chapter focuses on the historical factors and evolutionary process of acceptance of evaluation as a means of providing much-needed evidence for policy formulation and decision making. As such, utilization-focused evaluation, as well as equity and gender-focused evaluation, have come to be accepted progressively. Achievement of such objectives is envisaged through an effective evaluation system supported by an enabling environment, and institutional and individual capacity development so that in time "improving people's lives" with "no one left behind" will become a reality.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are the world's time-bound and quantified targets for addressing extreme poverty in its many

dimensions—poverty, hunger, disease, lack of adequate shelter, and exclusion—while promoting gender equality, education, and environmental sustainability. They are also basic human rights—the rights of each person on the planet to health, education, shelter, and security.¹ In September 2000, the leaders of 189 countries gathered at UN headquarters and signed the historic Millennium Declaration, committing to achieve a set of eight measurable goals that ranged from the reduction of extreme poverty and hunger by half, to promoting gender equality and reducing child mortality by the target year of 2015. Despite the progress made in reducing poverty, the number of people living in extreme poverty globally remains unacceptably high, and given global growth forecasts, poverty reduction may not be fast enough to reach the target of ending extreme poverty by 2030. According to the World Bank, in 2013 10.7 percent of the world's population lived on less than \$1.90 a day, compared to 12.4 percent in 2012, and 35 percent in 1990. This means that in 2013, 767 million people lived on less than \$1.90 a day, compared to 881 million in 2012, and 1.85 billion in 1990.² While the trend is certainly positive, as the Bank notes, "The effort to end extreme poverty is far from over, and there are many challenges remaining."

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 (Rio+20) stimulated a process for developing a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals were formulated in a highly participatory process; and they were subsequently approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2015. This is the new global plan for improving people's lives: it is comprised of 17 goals and 169 targets aimed at resolving major socioeconomic issues. It will cover the next 15 years. The SDGs have replaced the MDGs, which expired in 2015. While the MDGs focused primarily on poverty and health, the SDGs also cover the environment, human rights, and gender equality, among other new goals.

In this context, many organizations will integrate the SDGs into the development programs that will be carried out with the goal of improving peoples' lives around the globe from 2016 onward. Measuring and evaluating these programs will help donors, implementing agencies, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders to identify trends, measure changes, and capture knowledge in order to improve the performance of programs and increase transparency. A fundamental principle underpinning this process is giving a voice to the people themselves. This highlights the need for participatory evaluation processes, methods, and tools as part of the capacity building of evaluators, institutions, and other stakeholders.

¹ United Nations, <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/bkgd.shtml>.

² World Bank, "Poverty," <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/overview>.

THE NEED FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN PROMOTING EVALUATION

The emergence of global partnerships, reflected by the Fourth International Conference on National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) Global Assembly in 2015, which were conducted in parallel, can be considered a great achievement and a contributory factor in achieving the Global Evaluation Agenda. The NEC Conference addressed the issue of integrating evaluation principles with human development practices. The IDEAS conference focused on evaluating sustainable development by enhancing evaluation capacities, both institutional and individual. These two initiatives complemented each other in reaching toward the final goal of improving people's lives.

In the context of the SDGs, it is necessary to assess how such goals are being realized in the developed world as well, since the SDGs are being adopted by *all* countries, both developed and developing. With this paradigm shift toward supporting the SDGs, it is prudent to examine how evaluation will be able to provide evidence of such support in achieving the SDGs.

As emphasized by the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the follow-up declarations of Accra, Busan, and—more recently—Nairobi (in the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation),³ the need for international cooperation to support development in partner countries in line with priorities that reflect those of the people is now well established: this includes the role of evaluation, and is a major breakthrough. It represents a paradigm shift from donor-driven evaluations to country-owned joint evaluations.

Conceptual Framework

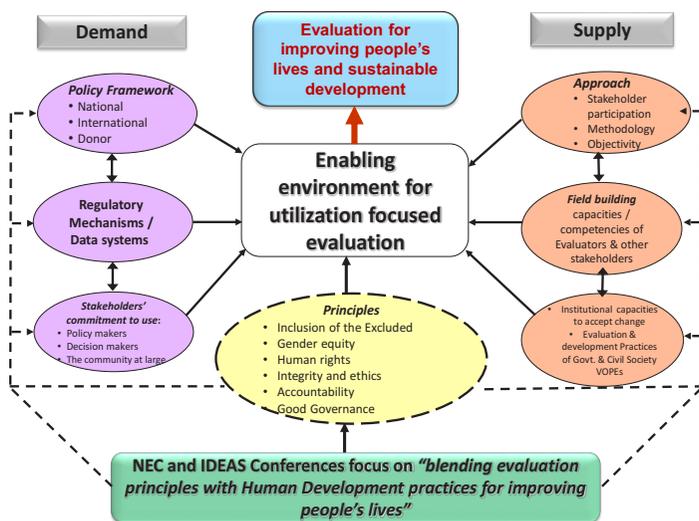
The current situation can be reflected upon in the context of two fundamental questions for better understanding:

- How can the SDGs empower evaluators to provide evidence that the lives of people are being improved in a more sustainable way?
- How can the paradigm shift toward sustainability ensure that people can achieve a balance between their economic, social, and environmental needs, both for the present and for the future?

A conceptual outlook on these two questions can be shown in diagrammatic form, depicting the demand and supply aspects within a utilization-focused evaluation framework, as captured in figure 3.1.

³ See <http://www.oecd.org/dac/effectiveness/thehighlevelforaonaideeffectivenessahistory.htm> for Paris, Accra, and Busan; and <http://effectivecooperation.org/events/2016-high-level-meeting/> for Nairobi.

FIGURE 3.1 Demand and supply aspects of a utilization-focused evaluation framework



SOURCE: M.R. Samaranyake.

Demand for Evidence-Based Evaluation

The demand for evaluation and the use of its findings are very much dependent on the perceptions and understanding of various stakeholders regarding the added value evaluation can bring to the policy formulation and decision-making processes. The commitment of policy makers to transparency and the use of evaluation findings in policy formulation is considered a significant factor underlying the development agenda. In this context, there is an increasing focus on the role of parliamentarians in these processes.

Demand for evaluation is created through an enabling environment comprised of policy frameworks at the national, international, global, and donor levels. In this context, cooperation and partnership for promoting evaluation of both public and private sector programs, including the commitment of policy makers to promote and use evaluation findings in policy formulation, become critical factors. Thus:

- **Regulatory mechanisms** such as results-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems need to be in place, to ensure that the milestones are being achieved as planned, with evidence being used for decision making.
- **Stakeholders' commitment** to using evaluation findings is another crucial factor in making evaluations matter. This involves policy makers, decision makers, implementers, and the overall community. There is an emerging trend of civil society organizations moving

from service delivery to advocacy, in order to secure more sustainable, widespread change. More important in the context of the SDGs is the involvement of the people themselves, since the final goal is improvement of their lives. A crucial element to be considered is the willingness and commitment of the commissioners of evaluations (i.e., government and donor agencies) for independent evaluation findings, both positive and negative.

- **Community participation** in the evaluation process becomes an important underpinning factor, allowing the voices of the people to be heard.
- **Political will** for the use of evaluation findings and for providing space for the involvement of the people should prevail. The involvement of parliamentarians as policy makers is crucially significant in order for political will to use evaluation findings and influence policy.

A PARLIAMENTARIAN MOVEMENT FOR EVALUATION

Developing and strengthening evaluation policies in countries is important for good governance and effective development. Moreover, it is implicit in UN General Assembly Resolution GA/RES/69/237 (UN 2015a) and the SDGs and their guiding framework, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015b). The SDGs focus on country-led evaluation in line with identified priorities for the SDG targets that are most relevant to national and local contexts. This has emphasized the need for countries to strengthen their data collection, analysis, and review processes. The importance of evaluation is highlighted in the 2030 Agenda, which states that review of the SDGs will be “rigorous and based on evidence, informed by country-led evaluations,” and calls for “strengthening of national data systems and evaluation programs.” One of the key principles of the SDGs, “no one left behind,” points to the importance of achieving equity-focused sustainable development. In many countries, one of the challenges is that disadvantaged communities sometimes do not receive the benefits of development. This is why equitable development needs to be emphasized through equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation.

According to the Parliamentarians’ Forum for Development Evaluation mapping study, as of 2015, only 20 countries had established national evaluation policies (PFDE 2015). This shows how far there is to go. The Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) plans to advance this important work on national evaluation policies and systems (box 3.1).

Among Asian countries, only two, the Philippines and Malaysia, have endorsed national evaluation policies. In addition, Malaysia has a strong integrated results-based management system that is used in all governmental ministries. Although the Philippines has endorsed a national evaluation policy (NEDA and DBM 2015), it is yet to be operationalized. Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have draft policies that were developed through stakeholder consultations and have been submitted to their governments for endorsement. Out of these four draft policies, the Afghanistan policy includes a section on equity and gender (section 3.3). In Nepal and Sri Lanka, the draft

BOX 3.1 Key facts on the Global Parliamentarian Forum for Evaluation

A movement by parliamentarians toward the use of evaluation has grown rapidly in the past few years. Particularly during 2014–15, regional parliamentarian forums were created in the Africa, East Asia, Latin America, and Middle East and North Africa regions. The first-ever parliamentarians' panel on evaluation was held at the Community of Evaluators of South Asia's Evaluation Conclave 2013 in Nepal. This was a historic milestone, as it was the first time parliamentarians raised their voices to advocate for national evaluation policies and to commit to put evaluation at the core of the country-level agenda. The Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation (PFDE) was established in South Asia in early 2013. Thereafter, parliamentarians were featured in many international evaluation events promoting national evaluation capacities. One of the key milestones in this regard is a study mapping the status of national evaluation policies, which was conducted by PFDE with support from EvalPartners, the global movement to strengthen national evaluation capacities (PFDE 2015). This helped promote national evaluation policies, including through regional consultations.

The African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE) was initiated at the African Evaluation Association conference held in Yaoundé, Cameroon, in March 2014, a year after the initiation of PFDE. APNODE is hosted and supported by the African Development Bank, and is the most formal group among all the parliamentarian forums currently active. In 2015, regional parliamentarians' forums were initiated in other regions.

More importantly, the first-ever national parliamentarians' forum for evaluation was initiated in Nepal by a group of parliamentarians representing all political parties. In Kenya, a caucus for evaluation was initiated to advocate for evaluation in the Kenyan Parliament. In this context, the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) was launched on November 25, 2015, at the Parliament of Nepal, on the occasion of celebrating the International Year of Evaluation (EvalYear).

SOURCE: GPFE website, <https://globalparliamentarianforum.wordpress.com/>; used with permission.

policies are being reviewed by stakeholders for inclusion of equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation. Nepal is the only country in the region that has evaluation included in its Constitution, and in which the national evaluation policy will be formalized through an act of Parliament. The Evaluation Community of India has formed a task force to work on its national evaluation policy. Bangladesh and Pakistan are planning to work on their national evaluation policies as well.

In Nepal, all stakeholders, including parliamentarians, the government (through the National Planning Commission), VOPEs, development partners, academia, and the media are supporting the national evaluation policy and its formulation process. Nepal was the first country to initiate a National Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation. In this forum, most Nepalese political parties are represented, and it actively supports the case for evaluation in the country. Another example of working with stakeholders is in Sri Lanka, where the National Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, the government, VOPE, and development partners all work together in stakeholder consultation meetings. Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam have established in-country VOPEs. In Cambodia, the VOPE, the government (through the Ministry of Planning), and parliamentarians are working together. Pol Ham, who is a member of the National Assembly and of the Steering Committee of the GPFE, is also the chair of the Parliament's standing committee on planning. He therefore will be able to officially support evaluation activities through the parliamentary system.

The VOPE in Mongolia is very new, and VOPEs in Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam are also in their emerging stages. None of these countries have national evaluation policies and systems in place, nor have they even begun the process. Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam have been part of EvalPartners' Peer-to-Peer projects; and Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Vietnam are part of one project in the fourth round of the Peer-to-Peer program. This participation will give these countries a chance to further advance evaluation culture within their countries and to strengthen VOPEs.

Cambodia, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are the three countries in the region that are involved in the EvalGender+ network-supported projects on evaluating SDGs through an equity and gender lens. Cambodia has developed guidelines on equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation, and the final draft of these is available. In Nepal, under this project, a workshop was conducted on "Evaluating SDGs in Equity and Gender Lens" for all stakeholders; the country has also developed a national evaluation agenda and conducted various other activities, including development of an online repository that documents tools and methods, national networking meetings, etc. The Sri Lankan project has conducted a national stakeholder consultation to develop a national evaluation plan, held two meetings for parliamentarians, initiated the Sri Lanka Parliamentarians Forum, and conducted a training of trainers program for potential evaluators from the public sector. Interestingly, a young parliamentarian from Sri Lanka has submitted two motions, one on national evaluation policy, and one on the allocation of resources for evaluation from the national budget, to the Parliament.

SUPPLY FOR EVIDENCE-BASED EVALUATION

In order to meet the demand for evidence-based evaluation, there is a dire need for evaluation capacities to be developed and made available. Methodologies that ensure the active involvement of the people require an approach

that allows space for them to voice their views. Evaluators need to integrate participatory evaluation methods with systems analysis. Economic, social, and environmental sustainability requires that these systems interact with each other. To manage such integration, evaluators need to provide evidence of what people need, together with evidence of how far a particular solution would work both for the present and the future. The methodology should be comprehensive enough to allow for free expression of views by all stakeholders concerned: this is the challenge for evaluators.

Evaluation field building refers to the process of improving an organization's ability to use evaluation to learn from its work and improve results. Organizational evaluation approaches and practices need to be strengthened and the knowledge, attitudes, and skills of individual evaluators improved. The competencies of evaluators include coaching and training on the principles and techniques of evaluation, experience in conducting evaluations, on-the-job training, the appropriate use of tools and techniques, and the exchange of experiences among peers in different projects and different countries for the purpose of learning from each other. In this context, Fred Carden, Evaluation Director of the International Development Research Centre in Canada, emphasizes building evaluation capacity, as well as the need for improving the evaluation quality (Carden 2010). Concerns about evaluation capacity in international development are raised at many different levels: the small number of trained evaluators in many developing countries; the nature and location of training; the cultural, linguistic, and political differences that have to be considered in the evaluation process; and the capacity of evaluators to meet the needs of both donors and the specific countries.

Institutional capacity building to accept change also requires attention. Change that strengthens the organization's standing, influence, formal presence, or ability to achieve its goals, and the ability to address the demands from the state, civil society, the private sector, and the community when necessary are essential capacities to be developed in order to meet the demand for evidence-based evaluations. There is a demand for more training; funds are being established by some donors to support evaluation capacity building, and more organizations are trying to understand how they can play a useful role in addressing these gaps.

Evaluators can reflect on the principles, and suggest strategies to ensure integration with the human development practices that are included in the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016–2020, and that contribute to developing national capacities to evaluate sustainable development. It is pertinent to consider how inclusion of the excluded, gender equity, and human rights could be included in the evaluation process. Evaluator integrity and ethics are important aspects of moral character and involve a commitment to intellectual honesty and personal responsibility. Evaluation for accountability and governance are significant aspects on which the capacity building of evaluators needs to be focused.

These are some of the key challenges that evaluators will face:

- How policy change can be addressed to prevail positively for evidence-based decision making

- Bridging the gaps between the commissioners, practitioners, and users of evaluation
- How evaluators can provide evidence that improves the lives of people in a more sustainable way
- How the shift toward sustainability can ensure that civil society and people can achieve a balance between their economic, social, and environmental needs for both the present and the future, and can use data to hold the state accountable
- How to engage with people concerning their future needs, and how they see a sustainable balance emerging from their economic, social, and environmental needs
- How to bring the time dimension into their evaluations in blending evaluation principles and practices to support the SDGs
- How to provide evidence for the continuity of changes that need to be taken into account in improving people's lives, as required by the SDGs.

THE GLOBAL EVALUATION AGENDA 2016–2020

The Global Evaluation Agenda 2016–2020, also called EvalAgenda 2020, was formally launched at the Parliament of Nepal on November 25, 2015 (EvalPartners 2016). This agenda explains the demand as well as the supply implications for evidence-based evaluation. It is clear that evaluation as a tool for effective governance is becoming increasingly respected and implemented: evaluation has become so embedded in the vision of good governance that no policy maker or manager will imagine excluding it from the decision-making toolbox, dare to hold an important meeting, or reach an important decision without having first reviewed relevant evaluation information. It is also increasingly true that evaluators, whether internal or external, will use whatever methods and approaches are most appropriate to the situation to generate high-quality, ethical information that is pertinent to the issues at hand.

At the same time, it is envisaged that evaluation will help to amplify the voice of all stakeholders, particularly the marginalized and disadvantaged. Experience shows the difference evaluation can make in illuminating the realities of specific contexts by unpacking the complexity that people, organizations, and communities face as they struggle to address a variety of economic, social, and environmental issues. Experience shows the beneficial impact that principled evaluation can have in democratic settings when evaluators work in a neutral way, with all stakeholders contributing data, analysis, and insights in order to assess results, identify innovations, and synthesize learning toward improved outcomes.

Four essential dimensions of the evaluation system make up the core of EvalAgenda 2020: the enabling environment for evaluation; institutional capacities; individual capacities for evaluation; and links among these first three dimensions.

A **strong enabling environment** reflects the demand for evidence-based evaluations:

- All sectors of society understand and appreciate the value of evaluation
- Evaluation is explicitly required or encouraged in national evaluation policies and other governance and regulatory instruments
- Sufficient resources are allocated for evaluation, at all levels
- Credible, accessible data systems and repositories for evaluation findings are readily available
- Stakeholders are eager to receive and use evaluation information
- Evaluation receives due recognition as a profession and
- The ownership of public sector evaluations rests with national governments based on their distinctive needs and priorities, and with full participation of civil society and the private sector

Strong institutional capacities include the following:

- A sufficient number of relevant institutions, including but not limited to VOPEs, government agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and institutions generate and share relevant data to develop and support evaluators and evaluation
- These institutions are capable of appreciating and facilitating quality evaluations
- They are skilled at collaborating with other relevant and involved institutions
- They are able to resource quality data generation and evaluations as required, make information readily accessible, and are ready to follow up on evaluation findings and recommendations
- They are able to continually evolve and develop as the evaluation field advances and
- Academic institutions have the capacity to carry out evaluation research and run professional courses in evaluation

Strong individual capacities for evaluation include the following:

- Developing individual capacities for evaluation will be relevant not only to evaluators, but also to the commissioners and users of evaluation
- Commissioners and users of evaluation have a sound understanding of the value of evaluation the processes for conducting high-quality, impartial evaluations and more commitment to using evaluation findings and recommendations
- Sufficient numbers of qualified evaluators, drawn from a diversity of relevant disciplines, are available to conduct high-quality evaluations in all countries and all subject areas
- These evaluators have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to make appropriate use of generally accepted evaluation principles, theories, methods, and approaches

- Evaluators have integrated the values discussed above, and are culturally sensitive and
- Evaluators continually learn, and improve their capabilities

Strong links among these first three dimensions include the following:

- Governments, parliamentarians, VOPEs, the United Nations, foundations, civil society, the private sector, and other interested groups dedicate resources to joint ventures for the conducting of evaluations, innovation in the field of evaluation, and evaluation capacity building
- A common set of terms exists in all languages to disseminate and share evaluation knowledge
- Multiple partners in evaluation regularly attend national and international learning opportunities
- The “no one left behind” principle stated in the SDGs is embedded as a key value that goes across the three fundamental building blocks of an evaluation system: an enabling environment institutional capacities and individual capacities for evaluation

These four dimensions do not operate in isolation, but are connected in diverse ways in different countries, sectors, and situations. The relationships are dynamic, with overlapping influences, partners, and drivers; yet at the same time, all dimensions are working like a vortex, pulling the various dimensions ever closer to better outcomes. Each of the partners (institutions, individuals, and evaluation users) contribute a distinct part to the whole through the mutually supportive and interconnected dimensions of the agenda.

It is a collective hope and intention that by advocating for the many initiatives and activities outlined in the Global Evaluation Agenda, the global evaluation community will be able to make significant contributions to attaining EvalAgenda 2020, and all the SDGs, for the benefit of humankind. Each partner in the global community, including but not limited to parliamentarians, donors, governments, VOPEs, CSOs, the media, and the private sector, will have their role to play, and all of the stakeholders will be willing to work with parliamentarians to promote evaluation.

Parliamentarians can play a significant role in this process by demanding high-quality evaluations to ensure accountability. Parliamentarians can take the lead in promoting national evaluation policies and systems, and all parliamentarians and parliaments are expected to join hands with the evaluation community in this effort. Together, parliamentarians and evaluators can proceed toward achieving EvalAgenda 2020.

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