

The background of the top half of the cover is an abstract, textured composition. It features a central globe-like shape with a grid pattern, overlaid with golden, ornate arches and patterns. The colors are primarily teal, blue, and white, with golden accents. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

FOR THE GLOBAL CRISES OF OUR TIMES

Rob D. van den Berg

Cristina Magro

Marie-Hélène Adrien

EDITORS



IDEAS

KNOWLEDGE CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT NETWORKING

TRANSFORMATIONAL EVALUATION

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PART VI

THE
PRAGUE
DECLARATION





CHAPTER 18

The Prague Declaration: Meaning and Testimonials

ROB D. VAN DEN BERG, DANIEL SVOBODA, ADA OCAMPO,
JUHA I. UITTO, SILVIA SALINAS MULDER, RASHMI AGRAWAL
AND JOSEPHINE WATERA

The International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) has a long history of discussing global and international issues in development. From 2015 onwards this focused on how evaluators should take up sustainability issues in their work (Bangkok, October 2015), to how evaluators could support progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (Guanajuato, December 2017), to how evaluation could contribute to transformational change to solve the global crises of our times (Prague, October 2019). In Prague, the IDEAS Global Assembly was joined with the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development, organized by the Community of Practice EarthEval and the Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility. This led to a 'perfect storm' of ideas on how evaluation could support and strengthen transformational change, from economic, social to environmental issues, taking into account equity and equality as well as working in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. Many voices from the Global South were welcomed in Prague and special sessions were held to discuss local issues with global consequences and global problems impacting on local conditions. The time was ripe to harvest insights, connections and opportunities.

The Prague Director of the two conferences, Daniel Svoboda, proposed at an early stage to think about the possibility of adopting a 'Prague Declaration' at the end of the meeting. A first discussion of this idea took place at a meeting of the Czech Evaluation Society. Furthermore, it was taken up as a pre-conference workshop, where brainstorming could take place to discuss the possible content of the declaration. A special session was also planned during the conference to fine-tune the draft declaration, attended by a large group of interested evaluators. The resulting text was presented at the closing session of the conference – read by Rob van den Berg and Juha Uitto to all present participants – and accepted by acclamation.

This chapter first presents the Prague Declaration. It then gives the floor to Daniel Svoboda for his personal perception of the Declaration and what it meant for him and for countries in transition in Central and Eastern Europe. After this, three short testimonials of colleagues are presented to add perspectives. The last section of this chapter brings short reflections of the current President of IDEAS, Ada Ocampo, of Juha I. Uitto, Director of the Independent Evaluation Office of the GEF and of Rob D. van den Berg, President of IDEAS at the time of the conference.

Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformational Change

ADOPTED ON FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER 2019

We, the evaluators, commissioners, parliamentarians and other evaluation users, gathered in the IDEAS Global Assembly and the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development, recognize the need and urgency of systemic change from local to global levels to address the global crises endangering our future. Having discussed the role of evaluation in promoting learning, systemic and transformational change, we agree on the following statements.

1. Promote Transformational Evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals

We commit to evaluations that help us learn, understand and support the transformational and systemic changes needed in our countries and the world, as agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. A sustainable balance between the social, economic and environmental domains is crucial in light of the existential threats of the climate crisis, mass extinction of species, growing local and global inequity, and ultimately unsustainable use of the resources of the planet.

2. Work in partnership

We will promote partnerships among evaluators, based on applied ethic codes and professional standards, and on mutual trust.

At the same time, we commit to engage and recognize new evaluators and collaborators from many different disciplines and fields of work, including young and emerging evaluators, students and interns in evaluation teams whenever possible, in order to promote mutual learning and to discover and leverage new views and skills.

3. Explore power relations and promote inclusiveness

We will deal sensitively and effectively with the unequal power relations that are apparent throughout intervention and evaluation processes. We

commit to applying approaches that include the marginalized, and to respecting the need to engage local stakeholders in consultations about the purpose of evaluations, evaluation questions, and preliminary conclusions and recommendations. Looking towards a connected future of evaluation, we commit to co-designing and co-conducting evaluations that include indigenous and local ways of knowing with conventional and transformational methodologies.

4. Respect for rights and responsibilities

In all our approaches, communications and deliverables, we commit to respecting privacy, equity, gender equality, minorities and indigenous peoples, the dignity of people and environmental integrity. We commit to respecting and advancing human rights and responsibilities, as well as the rights of societies and of nature.

5. Support for professionalization and capacity development

We advocate a transformational change of evaluation itself. We will support efforts to bring knowledge and capacities to commissioners, evaluators, development partners and the diversity of stakeholders who can and do contribute to the practice of development evaluation throughout the world.

We support the development of an international evaluation academy to advance professionalization and promote the interaction between science, research and evaluation to enrich our profession and our efforts to support evaluation capacity at all levels.

6. Focus on sustainability

In all our evaluations, we commit to evaluating for social, environmental and economic sustainability and transformation, including by assessing contextual factors and systemic changes. We commit to assessing and highlighting, in all evaluations, unintended negative social, economic and environmental effects.

7. Focus on fragility, conflict and violence (FCV)

We commit to understand and work on the dividers and connectors of conflict and violence and apply evaluation approaches that are gender and conflict-sensitive and based on the principles of 'Do No Harm' as described in the IDEAS Guide on Evaluation in Fragility, Conflict and Violence, as discussed during the Global Assembly.

8. Support for transformational indigenous¹ evaluation

We commit to value and support the strengthening of and learning from indigenous evaluation by and for indigenous peoples.

9. Shared responsibility for results

We fully understand that the real result of an evaluation is not the evaluation itself but the use that is made of the evaluation in all of its phases. We commit where possible to work with the potential evaluation users, including on possible solutions for problems identified.

10. The challenge ahead

The discourse on evaluation for transformational change is challenging for evaluators working in systems, contexts and circumstances that are not yet open to or sufficiently enabled to commit to transformational evaluation, and challenging for commissioners, users and stakeholders. We continue to discuss and to deepen our understanding of the changes required for evaluation to contribute to tackling the crucial problems of our time.

¹ After the Prague conferences, the use of a capital for the word Indigenous became standard. While we have not changed the text of the Prague Declaration, we use the capitalized Indigenous elsewhere in this volume.

The Need for Partnership in Using Evaluative Evidence for Transition

DANIEL SVOBODA

Introduction

Partnership is an important word, widely used for decades, even centuries. Partnership in development is being redefined and gaining importance. Since the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was adopted in 2005 (OECD DAC n.d.), we have been officially using the term ‘partner countries’ instead of ‘aid recipients’. In 2008, the signatories of the Accra Agenda for Action confirmed their commitment ‘to eradicating poverty and promoting peace and prosperity by building stronger, more effective partnerships that enable developing countries to realise their development goals’ (OECD DAC n.d.). In 2012, all key development actors reached a consensus on the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC 2012), a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together all types of development actors to increase the effectiveness of their development efforts, deliver long-lasting results and contribute to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The United Nations (2005, 4) defines partnerships as ‘voluntary and collaborative relationships between various parties, both State and non-State, in which all participants agree to work together to achieve a common purpose or undertake a specific task and to share risks and responsibilities, resources and benefits’.

In the field of development evaluations, many evaluators have established strong partnerships with evaluation users and other development actors. Many evaluation users are cooperating closely with evaluators because they see the importance of good evaluations.

Partnership of diverse actors is the key precondition for any transformational change, as well as for reaching the SDGs. According to SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development:

A successful sustainable development agenda requires partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society. These inclusive partnerships built upon principles and values, a shared vision, and shared goals that place people and the planet at the centre, are needed at the global, regional, national and local level (United Nations 2015).

How virtual or how real are these proclaimed partnerships? Who are the partners? What are the common goals, shared responsibilities or hidden interests? What are the key principles of partnership? How can the partnerships help in using evaluations?

In this section of the Prague Declaration chapter, I propose possible responses and a few more questions. I would like to open a discussion about several important principles of partnerships, the diverse partners and special aspects of partnerships in evaluations. For illustration, several real-life stories from my professional career are added to each point.

We widely use some additional important terms: *transition, transformation, behaviour change*. What do these words really mean, and what do they have in common? How do they relate to partnership? Any sustainable change depends on peoples' behaviour. Even the most expensive technological solutions or perfectly substantiated evaluation results will not work effectively if people will not use them.

Evaluation is a potent tool for identifying the motivations, critical assumptions and barriers, and systemic challenges or imbalanced power relationships that can complicate any transformational change. Partnership in evaluation is a feasible way to overcome these challenges by using watertight evidence, informed analysis of contextual factors and the empowering role of evaluations together. Such partnerships call for mutual accountability and shared responsibility but also bring many mutual benefits, including from mutual learning.

In totalitarian regimes, any change can be enforced, regulated and controlled without evaluation. People and their families can be punished (and sometimes even killed) if they do not follow the rules, and supporters and informers can be rewarded (usually only in the short term, until they become enemies of the regime). Can such forced behaviour produce positive, sustainable development change? This is impossible for many reasons, among them:

- Such approaches abuse all fundamental human rights and freedoms; the people are not at the centre, and many actors are intentionally left behind.
- There is no ownership of the change – the objectives have not been agreed upon in a participatory way, and thus the people will not (and usually cannot) participate in the development process either.

- Neither the analyses of problems nor monitoring and evaluation can be impartial, and thus the decisions cannot be evidence based.
- No one is responsible for the results or sustaining the benefits.

Accordingly, the expert and facilitation roles of evaluations are crucially important in fragile and transitioning countries, where support for transformational change is most needed.

Case 1: Speaking from the Czech experience, our development evaluations started in 2003, jointly with the effort to transform the Czech Official Development Assistance system, fragmented at that time under 11 sectoral ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs commissioned these first evaluations, but the line ministries as the anticipated evaluation users were not engaged in preparations of these evaluations and not always interested in their results. At that time, the United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Central Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States managed the evaluations.

This methodological (and financial) support enabled creation of a small evaluation unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a few years later. It then took several more years to adjust the evaluation system, including establishing the Working Group on Evaluations within the Council for International Development Cooperation, creating the Reference Group on Evaluations, introducing new templates, formalizing the system for consultations between stakeholders to finalize the evaluation results, publishing the evaluation reports on the website and presenting the recommendation tracking system to all key stakeholders.

All these achievements would have been much more difficult without multi-stakeholder dialogue and international support and exchange of experience.

Significant changes are also necessary for sustainable development at the global level – to protect our Blue Marble Planet and mankind. The unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that has affected all of us has highlighted the interconnectedness of our lives and thus the need for global solidarity and global responsibility. On the other hand, the pandemic has also brought a unique opportunity for reconsidering our priorities and introducing new ways of cooperation.

Most of the key aspects of partnerships in evaluations are reflected in the Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformational Change (IDEAS 2019). The consensus that diverse development actors reached at the 2019 IDEAS Global Assembly is a promising start on the way forward.

Key Principles of Partnership in Evaluations

Nobody can simply decide what is right and what is wrong, and nobody can succeed alone. Working together is the only chance for any transformational or systemic change. We must work in partnership with like-minded people, we must learn from each other and we must be open to communication and cooperation with all development actors.

All partnerships have some rules and principles, and there are many definitions of core partnership principles. These are usually based on aligning the interests of partners around a common vision (*convergence of interests and motivations*), combining their complementary resources and competencies (*complementarity of resources and approaches*), sharing accountability and risk (*mutual accountability*), maximizing value creation to achieve common goals and delivering benefits to all partners (*shared values*) (see e.g. The Partnering Initiative and UN DESA 2020; UN University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability 2018; World Bank 2004).

The above principles respond to the questions WHY (common motivations to reach the foreseen goals and shared values) and HOW (everybody must contribute and be accountable). All these principles are necessary and can be confirmed in written partnership agreements, but they are not sufficient. I would like to highlight some 'soft' principles that are necessary at the operational level but cannot be achieved merely by signing an agreement. I also propose some (quasi) indicators (in *italics*) of whether these principles are working. The importance of these aspects is documented using several real-life examples and by my personal opinion (in boxes).

Mutual Trust

The first soft principle of partnership is *mutual trust*. It usually takes years to create trust, and trust can disappear in a minute, after a single mistake. Without trust, cooperation needs to be enforced, and the right to take the initiative is missing. Lack of trust undermines the effectiveness of the whole process and upsets the balance of the power.

For measuring trust, I propose the following quasi-indicator: The partners are not afraid to confess their own mistakes

It is definitely good if the partners share a vision, but there is a question: 'Whose vision is it really?' It is probably better if the partners keep and adhere to their own visions (if these are not contradictory) and can still trust each other and work together to reach common goals. The visions are usually anchored in a historical heritage of habits, fears and dreams, as well as in actual context (economic, social, environmental, political). Such heritage can hardly be shared. 'How can an evaluator, who is often an outsider, understand the underlying values associated with the heritage and build on those to identify and report on what actually matters to the people?' (Aronsson and Hassnain 2019, 92).

Case 2: We have been working in Vietnam for many years, and our cooperation was quite successful when considering the official indicators, but the clearest evidence of trust was a moment when our local partners admitted that both sides made some mistakes. It took two years from project implementation. Only after that were we able to confirm the common goals and to agree on the most effective ways to reach them.

If we cannot trust our partners, we must do most of the work ourselves and cannot exploit the benefits of partnership.

Fairness

Then it would be easy to use the proposed indicator: The partners can rely on each other.

A closely related principle is *fairness*. The partners must have similar ethics and code of conduct (not necessarily the formal one, hanging on the wall), avoid biases and be honest in communicating their own expertise and limitations. There must also be sufficient transparency at all steps during the evaluations (see e.g. IDEAS 2014).

Case 3: I remember a junior evaluator who participated in my training. A week later, she submitted her bid to a tender where she mentioned that she had organized that training.

Dishonest persons cannot be fair evaluators.

Shared Responsibility for Results

Another principle, complementing mutual accountability, is *shared responsibility for results* (foreseen and unintended impacts of each evaluation). The partners must work together with the same aim, and they must trust and defend their joint results. Those who will apply them should be consulted in the development of recommendations of any evaluation to ensure their applicability. The evaluation users should be included in the partnership schemes.

Proposed basic indicator: The partners are aware of the use of their results.

Opinion 1: One of the easiest steps is publishing the evaluation results (without classified information). Then everybody can easily assess their usefulness and monitor the application of evaluation recommendations.

Evaluators should follow how their results have been used.

Professional Standards and Using Lessons Learned

The partners must apply *professional standards* and be interested in *using lessons learned* for continuous improvement. This is usually an integral part of any professional code of conduct (see e.g. IDEAS 2012).

There must be a learning mechanism in place. It can take diverse forms: internal quality assurance or formal checklists on the quality of the evaluation reports, consulting a reference group during the evaluations, voluntary peer reviews, any kind of accreditation. In my opinion, voluntary peer reviews and consequent use of lessons learned is the best way to learn.

Proposed quasi-indicator: Partners are ready to correct their own mistakes together.

Case 4: I worked for many years in the Reference Group on Evaluations of the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Many young and emerging evaluators were grateful for the feedback they received, and they improved substantially afterward, but many renowned evaluators (with certified quality management systems) repeated the same mistakes and held the same biases every year. This can be also seen in the mandatory responses to the comments from the Reference Group in the published evaluation reports.

Any expertise needs a continuing learning.

Inclusiveness

Finally, the evaluation partnerships must be *inclusive*. No one can be left behind, and no critical assumption or contextual factor can be omitted. These factors cannot be properly identified without engagement of local actors and evaluation users.

Proposed indicator:
All key stakeholders
have been engaged
in the evaluation
process.

Directly engaged groups in an intervention have the greatest knowledge of the overall context. They can recognize the real successes and failures and identify sustainability issues. The evaluation users should be aware of the needs of, positions of and constraints on other groups, and likewise, the evaluators should be aware of their clients' and evaluation users' situation. Working together from the beginning of the evaluation process can increase the impact of the evaluation.

Case 5: One of my first international evaluations was on a large, 10-year-long project in Palestine. The ministry responsible for this project (the main addressee of the evaluation recommendations) did not wait for the return of the evaluation team from the field mission and launched the call for continuation of the project without any reflections on the evaluation findings, conclusions and recommendations. One of the main reasons for ignoring the evaluation results was that this ministry was not sufficiently engaged in preparation of the evaluation design and even refused to participate in the field mission.

The principle of inclusiveness concerns not only the target groups of an intervention, but also the final users of evaluation results.

Partners in Evaluations

Who are the partners in evaluations? There are many levels of partnerships, but not all have been sufficiently supported.

Partnership within the Core Evaluation Team

Do all members of the team know the real purpose of their evaluation? Do they trust each other? Do they back up and defend each other? Do they discuss their mistakes and correct them?

Evaluation is teamwork. It is difficult to work in a team if there is no previous experience of cooperation, no trust established and no rules regarding responsibility established. Some commissioners select evaluation team leaders and team members independently, according to their biographies or financial offers. This is a lottery that might be useful for a sampling strategy but will not contribute to reliable evaluation results.

Evaluation cannot have useful results if the chemistry within the team does not work and the people do not know and trust each other.

Case 6: A few years ago, I was working on an international evaluation team of which all members were selected independently. Unfortunately, the team leader did not follow his duties and deadlines, and even more, he distorted the findings from his own surveys (replacing the real responses with his own opinion). This complicated the work of the team and the relationships with the target groups of the evaluated intervention. At the end, I had to take over responsibility for triangulating the surveys, completing the evaluation and presenting and defending its results.

Team leaders are responsible for the results and must be responsible for selection of their team.

Partnership with Local Partners

Does the core team work with local partners (experts, Indigenous people, target groups of development interventions)? Does the core team trust them and vice versa? Do they consider each other's concerns? Do they discuss and correct identified mistakes?

Many commissioners have introduced special budget lines for junior evaluators and local experts. This is good practice; experienced evaluators work as mentors and take responsibility for coordination of an evaluation while young and emerging evaluators perform a significant part of the work. Training by doing and mutual learning are the best ways to test, create and enhance capacities, including the capacities of evaluation leaders.

Case 7: I became a member of IDEAS in 2003, at the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) in Ottawa. For four weeks, we had opportunities to work and enjoy together (Play hard, work hard!) and create strong friendships. Thanks to this experience and to all further joint events and working assignments, I can always ask my IPDET friends for personal recommendation of the best people for a concrete evaluation in their country, and vice versa, I am happy if I can work for my friends or recommend a person who fits their needs better than I do.

Personal experience matters much more than curricula vitae.

We have all probably received an e-mail asking for a curriculum vitae two days before a deadline because the terms of reference requested local (or international) experts. Like for independent selection of evaluation team leaders and team members by evaluation clients, it is a lottery, and because of time limitations, there is usually weak ownership of the evaluation design by individual team members. On the other hand, it might be an opportunity to recognize new people and learn from them.

Case 8: I remember the first consultations on country-led evaluation systems in 2005/06. Nowadays, all donors encourage country-led evaluations, but there are still challenges related to capacity development or use of evaluations for transformational change at the national level. Quite often, donors are still in the driver's seat.

Nobody can learn driving from the back seat.

Partnership with Ordering Parties

Is there sincere cooperation between the evaluators and the ordering parties? Are they aware of each other's visions and concerns? Do they share and correct mistakes? Do they respond to recommendations and lessons learned?

Administrative barriers, public procurement rules and hypothetical or real conflicts of interest complicate partnership with ordering parties, especially with public bodies. On the other hand, there is a common goal – to bring reliable evidence and reasoned arguments for improving or expanding results of development interventions (projects, programmes, strategies).

Therefore, close cooperation is necessary and cannot be built merely on client and supplier relations.

Case 9: The Czech Evaluation Society, in collaboration with the Ministry of Regional Development, prepared Guidance on Contracting the Evaluations (CES 2018). Our Code of Ethics (CES 2011) and Standards for Conducting Evaluations (CES 2013) are referenced in most open tenders on evaluations.

We are engaged in the Reference Group on Evaluations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and helped introduce the evaluation system for international development cooperation. Several representatives of public bodies are active members of our association.

Mutual cooperation of commissioners and evaluators significantly improves the evaluation culture and the impact of evaluations.

Partnership with Other Evaluators

Does the partnership work between diverse evaluators from the private, public, academic and non-profit sectors? Are they candid enough? Do they speak and listen to each other? Do they support and defend each other? Do they share their experience and learn from each other? Do they cooperate in national or international associations?

There are two contradictory factors – the evaluators are competitors, but they need increasing demand for evaluations.

Case 10: A few years ago, within the Czech Evaluation Society, we conducted a voluntary peer review of evaluations completed in the previous three years. This was a very useful test of the applied standards on conducting evaluations. Later, we became engaged in reference groups or in mentoring for new or ongoing evaluations. These activities are valuable not only for mutual learning, but also for proving integrity and unbiased approaches.

Voluntary participation in peer reviews is valid proof of an evaluator's self-confidence and responsibility.

The quality of evaluations and the use of evaluation results should be a common goal of competing evaluators, across companies and sectors. To

reach this goal, we need more effective cooperation among public bodies, the academic sector and evaluation practitioners; more lecturers or mentors ready to share their expertise and mutual trust.

Opinion 2: Methodological and advisory work, conferences, training events, consultations and mentoring contribute to a better evaluation culture, but active engagement of many more actors is still needed. Many evaluators proclaim their expertise but do not participate in evaluation events or advocacy efforts.

Active engagement in national and international evaluation associations should be considered a key competency of professional evaluators.

Partnerships with Newcomers

How open are evaluators to newcomers – students and interns, young and emerging evaluators from diverse sectors? Do they engage them in evaluations? How honest are the newcomers? How responsible are they for reaching the best results and protecting the whole team (and the target groups)?

Creating and nurturing capacities requires strong, predictable national and international support and enough time for testing and learning. Evaluation is a long-term process, requiring not only expertise and true commitment from all actors, but also sensibility and empathy.

Many young people are activists in diverse sectors (e.g. environmental protection and climate), but they often use ‘recycled’ arguments from secondary sources (including fake news) or from populist leaders. Engagement in evaluations is a great opportunity to triangulate their sources and methods, discuss the opinions and problems of other stakeholders and identify new ways to contribute to transformation in their countries or communities. At the same time, evaluations need new views, new expertise, innovative approaches and technologies, and especially, engagement of people who care about the future of their societies and are ready to devote their energy to influence the future.

Case 11: In the Czech Republic, we have started the fourth year of an evaluation competition for university students. The winners are invited to international competition and receive vouchers to special evaluation trainings, and some have been working as interns or experts in concrete evaluations.

On the other hand, there is considerable fluctuation of interns in evaluation teams, not only because of a lack of funds, but also of time to create a sense of belonging and solidarity.

Engaging young and emerging evaluators is challenging but brings mutual benefits for both sides.

Specific Aspects of Partnership

Long-Term Partnerships

The COVID-19 pandemic disclosed more clearly than ever before that we cannot succeed alone, in a 'quarantine' of closed communities. We depend on each other. We must be able to nurture contacts and long-term partnerships with other development actors and not just ask for their opinion in one-shot surveys or engage them in one-off contracts when we need them to succeed in a tender. We must 'touch and feel' our findings, not just re-interpret them from statistics. This cannot be ensured using remote sensing or sophisticated teleconferences. Many key respondents do not speak our language, some have poor Internet connections and some belong to marginalized or remote groups. Moreover, body language is much more important than answers in an interview or a questionnaire. For discovering real motivations, causes of problems or overall context, we need reliable team members, facilitators and interpreters in the field. Such people are key assets of stable evaluation teams and cannot be drawn by random sampling in last-minute calls. Teams established on the principles of long-term partnership usually achieve better results.

Case 12: It often takes several failed attempts to find a facilitator or interpreter who understands our mission and can read between the lines. These people are invaluable members of the team.

I remember many cases when body language and eye contact helped reveal key challenges. Online communication cannot replace this experience. I also remember cases when using an unreliable expert or biased interpreter destroyed several months of effort of the whole team.

Recognizing the right people and their true motivations is the most important part of the evaluation profession. Likewise, evaluation is a great opportunity for recognizing the right people.

Working with people is the best incentive and the best reward of the evaluation profession.

Mixed Evaluation Teams

Routine approaches can miss important signals, so we must be open to including new people, unbiased researchers and observers in our evaluation teams. Without feedback and skills from newcomers, 'outsiders' and amateurs, our evaluations would stay old-fashioned, would not reach the right people in the right way and would not reflect real-life and emerging challenges.

Opinion 3: Asking the right questions is an art. Asking the right questions in the right way is difficult. Operational blindness often conceals the fact that respondents do not understand our standard evaluation questions or approaches, which thus cannot bring the hoped-for results.

Business as usual cannot effectively identify the challenges of rapidly changing circumstances.

Associations of Evaluators

Voluntary organizations for professional evaluations can include national, regional, sectoral, international and global associations of evaluators. They are essential for improving and defending the evaluation culture. Their influence must have internal and external dimensions. They must protect their members and create an enabling environment for them, but they must also guarantee their professional integrity. This is not easy.

Everything depends on people. Even a few devoted people can contribute to important changes, and a few unfair people can destroy long-term efforts.

Case 13: An evaluator wanted a new position. When he did not succeed because he violated the election rules, he falsely accused the competitors and the whole organization of racism and personal revenge and made many other allegations.

People who lie or attack other people because of their own hidden interests cannot be unbiased evaluators. All professional associations must have an effective mechanism to defend their ethics.

Cooperation of Associations

Especially at the foundation or transition stage, national and regional evaluation societies need assistance from their international peers. Sharing experience, experts, and advisory and moral support and cooperating on events are a few easy steps that can be decisive for the future of evaluations in a region. Several associations connect evaluation networks from different countries or structures (e.g. Network of Evaluation Societies in Europe, African Evaluation Association, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, IDEAS).

Case 14: IDEAS significantly helped us in starting the European Program for Development Evaluation Training (2007–17) and helped establish the Czech Evaluation Society (2008). Our cooperation continues, and we believe that we support IDEAS as well.

Helping others helps us.

Engaging People

It is necessary to bring evaluations closer to the people. This requires appropriate formulations of key messages and an attractive presentation. Decision makers and target groups (people affected by the evaluated intervention or evaluation results) must understand the findings, conclusions and recommendations. All of us face problems with missing translations, too many unexplained acronyms, too complicated text or too many inconsistencies in reports.

Opinion 4: If evaluators are persuaded that their messages are critically important, they must remember these messages and their justification, without looking to notes, long annexes or lists of abbreviations.

The recommendations 'Keep it simple and short' and 'Make it attractive for your audience' are valid for any influential evaluation.

Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformative Change

Based on experience from national and international evaluations, the Czech Evaluation Society prepared a draft declaration, 'Together for Change', to identify commitments that are critical for promoting further use of evaluations for sustainable transformational change. This draft influenced the final declaration, as presented above. All 10 points address engaging people in evaluations and, directly or indirectly, the partnership principles, as I show below in my comments.

Re1. Promote transformational evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals

If evaluations are to help us learn, understand and support changes, all actors must be engaged, including the most marginalized and the most affected by existential threats. At the same time, all evaluators must know how and why their evaluations have or have not contributed to anticipated changes.

Re2. Work in partnership

Partnership of evaluators is a core principle of influential evaluations. Ethics codes, professional standards, mutual trust and engagement of diverse actors with the aim of mutual learning are explicitly mentioned here, but support from and engagement of commissioners and other actors are also necessary.

Re3. Explore power relations and promote inclusiveness

Inclusive evaluation approaches call for engaging local stakeholders and Indigenous people and incorporating local ways of knowing. This requires partnership with these actors because they must be engaged in all stages of evaluations that concern their lives, and they must share responsibility for the results. Evaluations have a strong empowering role in developing local capacities and can help change power relations.

Re4. Respect for rights and responsibilities

All partners must apply codes of ethics and professional standards when conducting evaluations. A proper monitoring mechanism must also be in place.

Re5. Support for professionalization and capacity development

In addition to the professional training events and supporting role of the International Evaluation Academy, the potential for mutual learning for all evaluation stakeholders and cross-sectoral sharing of expertise and experience must be considered. Professionalization of evaluations requires professional feedback and using lessons learned. Voluntary peer learning among partners is a valuable tool.

Re6. Focus on sustainability

Good evaluators must assess all relevant contextual factors and be aware of all pillars and assumptions of sustainable development, including placing people and planet at the centre and leaving no one behind. Cross-sectoral partnerships are necessary in this regard.

Re7. Focus on fragility, conflict and violence

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the importance of new aspects of fragility that affect all countries – the importance of supporting community resilience, of strength and solidarity and of engaging local partners.

Re8. Support for transformational indigenous evaluation

The role and expertise of Indigenous people should be reflected in the partnership schemes of evaluations, based on brainstorming and co-creation (see The Partnering Initiative and UN DESA 2020). These partnerships should go beyond the first four levels of 'informing, consulting, involving and collaborating' to the fifth level of 'empowering' (see UN DESA and UNITAR 2020).

Re9. Shared responsibility for results

Mutual cooperation of evaluators and evaluation users is crucial for the use of results and thus determines the usefulness of each evaluation.

Re10. The challenge ahead

Emerging development challenges (including the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic) call for transformational changes more than ever before. All the unprecedented challenges need partnerships with engagement of all development actors. The evaluators are often in the frontline of these efforts... or should be.

Conclusions

I have a very special personal experience. From 1968 to 1989, I was living in a totalitarian regime under the military occupation of the Soviet Army. I could not do what I wanted, I could not read and listen to what I wanted, I could not study what I wanted, I could not select my profession and I could not travel to non-communist countries. On the other hand, I had the unique opportunity to contribute to the most important transformational change in our region – from communist totalitarianism to open democracy. In my case, it started with petitions and protests in the streets, continued with establishing a private company and several non-profit organizations and then with contributions to several national strategies and international guidelines and has culminated with my engagement in international development cooperation, and evaluations in particular.

Case 15: Experience is untransferable.

When my wife and I married in 1985, we asked the State Security (secret police) for a permit to spend our honeymoon week in Yugoslavia. (One had to have a reason even for travel to this Eastern-bloc country, and a honeymoon seemed to be a legitimate reason.) I received the permit, but my wife did not. We stayed home.

The 'Velvet Revolution' in 1989 and the peaceful divorce of the former Czechoslovakia in 1993 cannot be easily replicated. Moreover, some people still hate these transformations. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia do not exist anymore, yet tensions remain. We have historical evidence of the inhumanity and absurdity of totalitarian regimes at the cost of millions of destroyed lives, but people are still suffering in many regions of the world. All people matter...

Transformation is not an easy process, and it cannot be imposed from outside. Neither can happiness. Evaluations can discover the genuine drivers for change and show the way.

I was living in a country with a totalitarian regime that became an aid recipient and a country in transition and is now a member of the European Union and the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. This does not mean that our democracy works perfectly and that our transformation is complete. It will

take at least one more generation to transform the totalitarian mindset of many people. Global turbulence may slow this transformation even further.

This experience is invaluable. I can understand some issues that people who did not live through a similar situation cannot easily understand. I also believe that I have a stronger motivation to contribute to systemic changes than people without transition experience.

Nevertheless, my experience is still limited because I am only human. I can provide neither definite guidance on how true partnerships should work to bring the best results nor the answers to many of the above questions, but asking the questions is a basic evaluation tool. Any opinion, experience or personal concern can be a good start for discussion.

The best solutions usually come from brainstorming and teamwork. Effective solutions then need transformational (systemic) change and the personal commitments and joint efforts of many devoted people from diverse sectors. I can confirm that interdisciplinary and multisectoral partnerships really work, although we usually have diverse and opposing roles. I have worked for or with the state authorities in several countries, the academic sector, non-profit organizations, the private sector, international agencies, financial institutions and Agent Orange victims. All that experience has confirmed the indisputable laws of sustainable development: 'Everything is linked to everything else' and 'Everything depends on people'. If we speak and listen to each other, are fair and empathetic and strive to make a better life for our families, communities, countries and the planet, how much easier everything will be.

I wanted to share several messages – burning questions – from our discussion of the main theme of the 2019 IDEAS Global Assembly: 'Evaluation for Transformative Change: Bringing Experiences of the Global South to the Global North':

- Do we return again to the paradigm of North and South, donors and recipients? Where is the place of the Czech Republic, being a Western country until the Second World War, becoming an Eastern country within the Soviet bloc afterward and then an aid recipient and thus part of the Global South after 1989 and now being a part of the Global North? We did not move; we are still in the centre of Europe.
- How can the Czech Republic and other recent transition countries contribute to development? Although we do not have as much money as more experienced donors, we are not eligible for donor funds anymore, but we have strategic experience of transition, we

succeeded and failed in many transformational efforts (and partially learned from the failures), we have empathy for our development partners and we can improvise quite well. Is it enough?

- What can we do to strengthen partnerships between diverse development actors? Can we draft a declaration that could name the key issues and propose a way forward? Can we contribute to implementation of the agreed-upon commitments? I believe so. The first step – approval of the Prague Declaration – was successfully completed. The second step has started as well – we are providing a country office for administration of IDEAS, and we truly believe that IDEAS can become even more attractive to the global evaluation constituency and more influential. Together, we can make it.

In this chapter, I discussed principles of effective partnerships in evaluations for transformational change. I also explained why I consider the 10 points of the Prague Declaration important and how closely they relate to necessary joint efforts and partnerships of all development actors. To document my opinion and recommendations, I used real-life stories from my career. I am ready to receive any feedback from my peers.

I am proud to be a member of the IDEAS family.

Testimonials

Silvia Salinas Mulder

I am a Bolivian anthropologist, evaluator, innovator, feminist and human rights activist. Bolivia is a country where more than 60 per cent of the population is Indigenous and approximately one-third lives in poverty and where colonial relations persist and shape daily life. It is also a country with one of the highest rates of femicide in Latin America. In addition, Bolivia has been rated as the most distrustful country in the region.

My multiple interlinked identities, the reality of my country and my self-reflection and learning processes have influenced my career as evaluation practitioner, activist and leader. To be honest, I do not clearly identify how or when I became an evaluator, because like most Bolivian evaluators, I am self-taught, but I am absolutely sure that it had to do with my ambition to contribute to making the world a better place for everyone.

I find the Prague Declaration very relevant, and it resonates for me as an invitation to individual self-reflection and change. I strongly believe that the world – and consequently evaluation – will not change unless we all start taking charge of our ways of thinking and doing, our attitudes and beliefs. Can we challenge ourselves and transform the Prague Declaration into an individual self-assessment?

Power, rights and inclusion are at the centre of the Declaration. Although some statements are dedicated specifically to them, I think that their implications are especially relevant for all statements and are at the heart of the role of evaluation in 'promoting learning, systemic and transformational change'. COVID-19 has reaffirmed the urgent need for profound systemic change in our human paradigms. It has also confirmed the potential role of evaluation in guiding those transformations; the need for change in how we think, do and use evaluation is also evident and is a necessary condition for its potential to be unveiled. This implies questioning the global evaluation architecture and the assumptions that govern the understanding, relations, decisions and budgets, which tend to be Northern, Western, adult and male-biased.

In recent years, a group of female evaluators from the Global South dedicated ourselves to influencing international dialogues and opening a discussion about the nature and underlying power relations of the international evaluation architecture and agenda. We advocate for a South–North horizontal dialogue that enables the evaluation paradigms to be reinvented

while recognizing the contributions and rights of the Global South. There are many yet unveiled and taboo issues in the evaluation arena that we need to address in a frank, open dialogue; as the Prague Declaration states, 'we continue to discuss and to deepen our understanding of the changes required for evaluation to contribute to tackling the crucial problems of our time'.

Partnerships and collaboration, addressed in statement 2, are vital to creating a viable future but are only possible if we recognize and respect diversity and are capable of focusing on complementarity beyond affinity. We must also understand inequality and recognize our co-responsibility in the reproduction of multiple biases, discriminatory behaviours and hierarchical power relations.

In recent weeks, we were challenged to find 30 Latin American, English-speaking Indigenous evaluators to be sponsored to attend the upcoming Conference of the Canadian Evaluation Society. Despite our efforts, we were unsuccessful. Indigenous people are not expected to be evaluators but evaluated 'beneficiaries', and the few that have managed to overcome the discriminatory structures do not speak English. This encourages us to apply the 'no one left behind' Sustainable Development Goal mandate in the evaluation field, addressing exclusion factors such as education and language and transforming the systems and relations. On a personal level, although I commit to statement 8, 'to value and support the strengthening of and learning from indigenous evaluation by and for Indigenous peoples', I must recognize that, as a white, urban evaluator, I have reproduced colonial, paternalist relations with Indigenous rural female 'beneficiaries'. Even my awareness and good will are not enough to change history, perceptions and centuries of colonial mindsets and relations. From another perspective that contributes to understanding the complexity and multifaceted nature of power relations, I also recognize that being female has implied facing sexist attitudes and even disrespect of male rural Indigenous authorities.

Power and ethics are interrelated. In 2000, I published with other colleagues an article titled 'Unethical ethics?' addressing experiences and reflections in intercultural research practices. I think that 'unethical ethics' is common in evaluation; I have witnessed lack of respect, sexism, colonialism and other types of unethical, more or less explicit behaviour in evaluations, with no implications. Despite advancements in establishment of ethical codes and procedures, ethical compliance often remains as a formal aspect that does not penetrate the 'evaluation DNA'; it is not integrated into the evaluation activities, relations and organizations, and we seldom reflect on it.

Self-reflection, from my perspective, is a critical but not frequently considered evaluation competency, probably because it also relates to the

idea of being humble...and this contradicts conventional ideas about our role and power position. In 2015, I was part of an exercise to compare three evaluation competency profiles. The main finding was that the ideas about the desired evaluation competencies, the underlying assumptions and the image of a good evaluator differed dramatically. Although human-centred competencies have increasingly been considered in evaluator competency profiles in recent years, professionalization and certification programmes still do not pay sufficient attention to competencies needed to address power, ethics, diversity, gender and inclusion in evaluation practice.

My final reflection relates to the voluntary organizations for professional evaluation and in general to the different organizations, partnerships, coalitions and initiatives that shape the rich, although complex and competitive, global evaluation ecosystem. My recent experience as chair of the regional Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network of Latin America and the (Spanish-speaking) Caribbean, president of the International Organization for Professional Evaluation since 2020 and co-chair of EvalPartners starting in January 2021 has reinforced my idea that organizations must practice what they preach; we must all walk the talk and make our own Prague Declaration self-assessment!

Rashmi Agrawal

The Prague Declaration is a succinct expression of intent on the part of all partners in development to promote and use evaluation as a tool to bring about the transformational changes needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Transformational changes need, apart from material resources, behavioural changes that bring about universal respect for the environment, a healthy life and learning. It is important, therefore, that evaluations look closely at assessing desirable changes in mindsets and that evaluators look closely at effective means of such assessment. Personally, I have always been fascinated by qualitative methods that directly involve participation of stakeholders at all stages of evaluation have always fascinated me. I have been, for instance, arguing for story-telling by and analysis of the narrations of participants as an approach that holds considerable promise. I had, at an earlier IDEAS Global Assembly in Guanajuato, introduced this approach in a pre-conference workshop.

Evaluation of transformational change requires new and systemic approaches. Dissemination of this newly acquired knowledge using wide-spread initiatives to develop national evaluation capacities is of the utmost

importance. Through the activities of the Evaluation Community of India (ECOI), an association of professional evaluators of which I am a founding member and continue to be part of a core group managing its affairs, we have been pursuing this goal over the past five years. Our approach has been to encourage emerging evaluators to innovate and share their products with a wide range of stakeholders. The Innovation Bazaars, organized as a part of our EvalFests (event-facilitating meeting of stakeholders in evaluation) in 2018 and again in 2020, have attracted many ideas and much talent from young and emerging evaluators. In all these events, we have provided ample space for youth, and the opportunity was used with excellent results. The launch of EvalYouth India Chapter as part of ECOI has opened opportunities for participation of young and emerging evaluators (YEEs) in helping generate evidence for decision-making. A collaborative initiative of the APEA along with other associations of evaluators was the Asia Pacific Virtual Winter School 2021 for YEEs.

ECOI did not look only at new entrants to the evaluation profession. My interactions with a Delhi college (India) indicated immense interest on the part of the students to learn the basics of monitoring and evaluation, beyond their regular curriculum. In an extension of our efforts to cater to this emerging need, in collaboration with the faculty and administration of the college, we organized training of its students in the faculty of management studies in the principles of monitoring and evaluation. We intend to continue and expand our efforts in this area.

The onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic has not deterred the evaluation community from evaluations or evaluation capacity development. As the pandemic posed immense challenges to the application of usual methods of generating evaluative evidence, resilience on the part of the evaluation profession opened doors for newer approaches to data collection and transmission of knowledge. An exercise that I have personally undertaken with a few friends assessed the psychological effects of the prolonged lockdowns and the changed life and work styles on people using web-based surveys. Increased use of technology in evaluations has widened the range of information available for decision-making.

The Prague Declaration emphasizes working in partnerships between evaluation stakeholders. My engagement in partnerships did not end with learning interactions with young evaluators and students. We have forged collaborative partnerships with other voluntary organizations of professional evaluators. For example, ECOI has entered into memoranda of understanding with the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association, Sri Lankan Evaluation Association, Indonesian Development Evaluation Community

and Afghan Evaluation Association. These partnerships have yielded rich dividends, particularly in evaluation capacity development. A series of joint webinars on wide-ranging topics of current relevance has helped evaluators in these countries learn a lot. Some of the topics covered included those relevant for transformational change, such as evaluation of climate change, Blue Marble Evaluation and gender-focused evaluations.

Parliamentarians hold the key for demand for evaluation and use of its results. ECOI has therefore engaged with legislators in its deliberations on various topics connected with evaluation in EvalFest 2020. We intend to carry forward this mutually beneficial dialogue to create an evaluation-friendly eco-system in the country. A similar initiative is the partnership with state agencies. A statement of intent has recently been signed with the Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office, the nodal agency for monitoring and evaluation in the national government, with ECOI and a few other organizations to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation system in the country.

An immediate follow-up to this partnership has been the participation of ECOI in the National Conference on Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning that the National Institution for Transforming India organized. A panel presentation that ECOI sponsored at this conference that I moderated addressed professionalization of evaluation. ECOI has also been partnering with the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association and several other voluntary organizations of professional evaluators in the Inter-Regional Initiative for Professionalization of Evaluation, components of which include developing a definition of professionalization, competency frameworks and ethical standards. The outcomes of this initiative will feed into the work on professionalization proposed in the Prague Declaration that the International Evaluation Academy will take up. I was a member of the panel that discussed the need for such an academy at the Prague Global Assembly of IDEAS.

We hope that this momentum in strengthening the demand and supply sides of evaluation will enhance the quality of evaluations and their relevance for evaluating transformational changes and lead to a greater degree of evidence-based decision-making that would help in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Josephine Watera

The IDEAS Global Assembly, held in Prague 2019, was a successful, highly memorable event. I was excited to attend the conference. The theme, the discussions, the keynote speakers and the choice of location offered nothing but the best. The highlight of the assembly was the adoption of the Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformational change. This milestone proved that, when we come together, we grow and develop together. The declaration calls for commitments from all well-meaning individuals, organizations and societies to advance the discourse of evaluation for sustainable change.

As an evaluation practitioner in the parliament of Uganda, I observed that parliamentarians more often than not address crises that urgently require evaluation information and action: epidemics; pandemics and socioeconomic, environmental and political crises. The Prague Declaration reminds me that I must be intentional in promoting transformational evaluation for realization of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Partnership is specifically of great importance to me today, considering the great contribution of professional bodies, civil society organizations and academia in generating evidence to inform transformational change in Uganda. These bodies largely advance expert knowledge and objective research, which is critical for this declaration. Conversely, committees of parliament offer an open platform for supplying evidence, but evaluators do not always use this opportunity; even when evaluators appear before committees of parliament, the mode of communicating evaluations is still highly technical and not very usable for quick decision-making. The Prague Declaration's call for support for professionalization and capacity development seeks to address this gap; hence all efforts must be put in place to make the International Academy a reality and translate the same efforts at regional and national levels.

In Uganda, there is a strong focus on local content, which is in line with the third article of the Prague Declaration: designing evaluations that include Indigenous and local ways of knowing with conventional and transformational methodologies. This shift in mindset has significantly changed how my role is perceived and attention given to evaluations containing Indigenous 'know how' methodologies. With such efforts of knowledge transfer and promotion of Indigenous knowledge, the journey towards sustainability, with specific focus on contextual and system perspectives, seems ensured. The Prague Declaration commits to valuing and supporting

the strengthening of and learning from Indigenous evaluations by and for Indigenous people.

As the Prague Declaration states, I concur that the real result of an evaluation is not the evaluation itself but the use that is made of the evaluation. I have played the role of knowledge broker to bridge the information gap for evaluations to inform the business of parliament. There are targeted efforts to ensure that evaluations are available in a timely, usable manner. Specific efforts in place are: a framework for civil society participation in parliament business, open parliaments with access to live streaming of parliamentary sessions, access to the order paper (daily agenda of parliament) and annual parliamentary calendars. This has helped evaluators know what is happening in parliament, what evaluation is needed and how to use it in decision-making.

The Prague Declaration recognizes the challenge of awareness of and understanding the discourse on evaluation for transformational change in some working systems. This is not different in Uganda, where the field of evaluation is still growing, and even more critical in parliament. The Declaration is a continuous reminder of my role and the role of other practitioners in increasing awareness at every opportunity.

The Prague Declaration has therefore proved not just timely, but also a focused and very relevant instrument of global transformational change. If all of us can draw our energies and commitments towards this Declaration, we shall live to see the change, the transformational change, for current and future generations drawn from evaluations. What a world this would be.

Statements

Ada Ocampo, President of IDEAS

The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. The pandemic has had negative consequences in all dimensions of societies. It has changed our lives, as well as how we do business. Between March and July 2020, organizations and experts wrote about and embarked on continuous discussions about the need to approach evaluation differently during the pandemic. Proposals for new approaches and ways of working rapidly emerged. Vibrant discussions led to more questions than answers. In the midst of a crisis during which fear and uncertainty permeated our lives, there was an opportunity to review evaluation and to discuss and agree on ways to ensure that evaluation as a function and a profession will remain relevant. This period was very exciting. I was elected President of IDEAS during this period. Although I was eager to start my new position, the pandemic forced me to remain in New York for much longer than expected. I was not able to join the IDEAS Board formally until 2021.

The pandemic posed similar challenges to the one I faced to evaluators throughout the world, especially evaluators working internationally and evaluations taking place in several countries and regions. It was no longer possible to organize field visits for all team members or to have physical meetings of the team to discuss the evaluation and, perhaps more importantly, to meet with policymakers, stakeholders and local communities or to organize focus group meetings. This sudden and unexpected challenge was met with high degrees of improvisation and discovery of new ways of working together, and we should applaud the ingenuity and resourcefulness of evaluators in ensuring the quality, relevance and usefulness of their work in these circumstances.

The pandemic thus put the response of the international evaluation community to the Prague Declaration in a new and unexpected light. IDEAS has been the birthplace of the Prague Declaration, but it was facing new challenges when carrying this forward. Follow-up actions to the Prague Declaration were also delayed or changed in nature. A Wilton Park meeting on transformational change was foreseen in July 2020 but had to be postponed. This meeting in turn was supposed to provide input for the negotiations for climate action at the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change, expected to take place in November 2020 but postponed until November 2021.

By necessity, the follow-up work based on the Prague Declaration has been virtual, in writing, as perhaps best expressed in this book. For IDEAS, a key element in transforming evaluation to support and strengthen transformational change is professional capacity development. IDEAS has worked on a framework for professional competences for evaluators, managers and commissioners and has adopted a code of ethics, both finalized in 2012–2014, before transformational change became a rallying call in Agenda 2030 (United Nations 2015). Together with other partners, IDEAS must update these documents and make them relevant for our times. I see this as an important agenda item for IDEAS to take up.

Furthermore, as the Prague Declaration states in various places, we must act together, which means enhancing our approach to partnerships, as Daniel Svoboda so ably voiced in his statement in this chapter. One of the organizations coming directly out of the Prague Declaration is the International Evaluation Academy, as proposed by IDEAS. Keeping aligned with the Prague Declaration, we are embarking on strategic joint ventures with EvalPartners, the United Nations Children’s Fund, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank and others. The International Organization for Professional Evaluation, the umbrella organization of voluntary organizations for professional evaluations, and IDEAS, the only global professional association for international evaluators, are increasingly cooperating on evaluation challenges. Last but not perhaps most important, IDEAS has members in many countries and will continue to aim to be relevant to them and support them in their struggles to increase their capacities in national monitoring and evaluation systems and on the ground. We look forward to continuing to work together to meet the challenges of transformational evaluation.

Juha I. Uitto, Director, Independent Evaluation Office of the Global Environment Facility

Much has happened in the relatively short time since the adoption of the Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformational Change in October 2019. The COVID-19 pandemic broke out just a few months later and turned the world upside down, devastating lives and wreaking havoc on economies. Meanwhile, climate change has continued unmitigated, its impacts becoming increasingly clear in our everyday lives as hurricanes, wildfires and weather anomalies add to societal stress around the world. We continue to lose biological diversity and valuable ecosystems at unprecedented rates. Poor people and minorities are especially vulnerable to the

impacts of the pandemic and environmental changes. Societal polarization is greater than in decades. All of these trends underscore the importance of what the Prague Declaration advocates for evaluation.

The pandemic, at its root, is an environmental crisis. The virus causing COVID-19 is zoonotic, meaning it has crossed to humans from non-human animals. Such spill-overs are increasingly common – and dangerous – because of how humanity infringes on the natural environment. Research clearly shows how deforestation and habitat destruction favour disease-transmitting species (e.g. rats and bats) and bring them into ever-closer contact with people. Globalization and rapid movement of people facilitate the spread of pathogens. Wildlife trade is another factor that destroys the environment and poses a hazard to human health. An evaluation of the Global Environment Facility's Illegal Wildlife Trade programme by my office highlights the need to take a comprehensive approach to such problems. Promoting local livelihoods in source countries to discourage poaching is important, but it is also necessary to address demand in destination countries in Asia, Europe and North America and to address enforcement and corruption throughout the transit chains. Evaluating such complex programmes requires an inclusive perspective, varied approaches, knowledge and partnerships.

The sixth principle of the Prague Declaration commits evaluators to focus on social, environmental and economic sustainability and transformation, given the close interlinkages between the three dimensions that also underlie the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The pandemic, as well as climate change, have highlighted that we humans are part of the broader ecosystem and that environmental health and human health are intertwined.

Another important principle in the Declaration is its seventh point: focus on fragility, conflict and violence. This is an area about which we at the Global Environment Facility (GEF) must learn more. As our recent evaluation of GEF support in fragile and conflict-affected situations unequivocally demonstrates, these characteristics influence programme and project performance and sustainability through various pathways. These are also situations in which people are the most vulnerable, not only to political, security and economic risks, but also to the impacts of environmental change.

Conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the GEF to feed into the quadrennial intergovernmental negotiations to replenish the fund has had its challenges during the pandemic. The comprehensive evaluation consists of 34 separate component evaluations and studies, ranging from the

impacts of the GEF's various programmes to organizational effectiveness. As always, collecting evidence from the field is critical. Fieldwork had to be put on hold when the pandemic hit, but we needed the perspectives of the governments, civil society and the people intended to benefit from the GEF interventions. We responded by engaging our network of consultants living in partner countries who could still conduct field visits and interviews safely. At the same time, we employed tools such as remote sensing and geospatial analysis to detect changes in the natural environment, land use and other variables that could be tracked remotely. Both approaches were successful and demonstrated that serious evaluations can be conducted this way and with a smaller environmental footprint for the evaluation itself.

At the Independent Evaluation Office, our evaluation practice reflects the values and principles embedded in the Prague Declaration. Our goal is to bring evaluative evidence for learning and for promoting systemic and transformative change for the benefit of the global environment and we people who depend entirely on the health of the planet. Evaluating at the nexus of natural and human systems is an area where I think the evaluation community still has much to learn. Taking the principles of the Prague Declaration to heart is a good start.

Rob D. van den Berg, former President of IDEAS (2014–2020)

A long time ago, when I started as Director of the Policy and Programme Evaluation Department in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I had the great experience of seeing an evaluation in my department come up with a highly relevant insight into how global change in some cases is initiated and takes shape. This was long before we called fundamental changes 'transformational'. This evaluation was focused on new institutional perspectives on sustainable management of water resources. During the 1980s, the view gradually emerged that an integrated approach was necessary that would not just deliver drinking water to households, but also include management of groundwater resources, drainage, irrigation support and sanitation. This integrated perspective was agreed upon internationally at international conferences in Dublin (1992) and the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992).

In 2000, when the evaluation was published, it concluded that the new, integrated perspective, which included social, economic and environmental issues, took on average five years, from 1992 to 1997, to become visible in adopted policies in countries; this average was the same for countries in the Global North as for those in the Global South. Early adopters of

the new concept had a similar time gap of five years between approving a new policy and showing changes on the ground. Upon reflection, this was a transformational change in management of the water sector that took years to develop into an international agreement, reached in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, and then took on average of five years to seep through into national legislation and budgeting, leading to more years before the new policies were visible on the ground.

The global crises of our times, as in the title of this book, are addressed in only a scattered and fragmented body of international agreements, and where agreements have been reached, they tend to be aspirational rather than concrete, underfunded rather than fully budgeted and without fully coordinated international action. An example is the global response to COVID-19; countries were often thrown back on their own resources. Borders were closed. Competition for medical equipment and development of vaccines was rife. President Trump found the pandemic a good reason to stop U.S. funding of the World Health Organization. President Biden has turned this around, but the rise of populism in the world does not bode well for international cooperation and action.

A relatively small, but ever growing, group of people is fully discussing and endorsing transformational change for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and for climate action. IDEAS is a good example of how long it takes for new ideas to capture the imagination and lead to new paradigms and, above all, action. When I became president of IDEAS in 2014, the Sustainable Development Goals were being drafted. Reading these drafts, many of us thought the United Nations would never agree to these goals. They were too aspirational, too integrated and perhaps most importantly, too transformational. For a short while, we lived in a dream world, when in September 2015, the United Nations unanimously adopted Agenda 2030, which starts with the rallying call to 'transform our world' and includes the SDGs in full – not in a watered down version, but with all the transformational and system perspectives included.

IDEAS prepared a Global Assembly in Bangkok in November 2015, and while this preparation was taking place, we did not have any clear perspective on how Agenda 2030 would take shape. We decided to focus on sustainability – the underlying concept of the SDGs and the underlying reason for the global crises of our times. Looking back, one may wonder why we did not focus on transformational change and how evaluation could support it in November 2015. In other words: why wait until October 2019, at our Prague Conference? The reason is the slow maturation of ideas and concepts; they take time, even when there is hardly any time left. In

2015, the international evaluation community was not yet fully focused on systems and thought of transformational change as something they were not involved in, and many had hardly heard of complexity science, systems thinking or non-linear, chaotic, risky developments in the real world.

This book is testimony to what we have learned since 2015. The IDEAS publications of 2017, 2019 and now this volume show a transformational perspective on the challenges of our times and the role of evaluation. Although the first publication, *Evaluation for Agenda 2030* (Van den Berg et al. 2017), moved in the direction of highlighting regional and national Southern perspectives, it covered new ground, such as impact investing and sustainability of impact, in only a few chapters. The second publication, *Evaluation for Transformational Change* (Van den Berg et al. 2019), explored new ways of approaching evaluation, from Osvaldo Feinstein's proposal for dynamic evaluation to transformational evaluation in the Global South, value-based evaluations, lessons from the environmental funds and systems thinking in evaluation. This publication increases that diversity and aims to inspire evaluative action for transformational change, because the global crises of our times demand it.

It has been a personal honour to be involved in this voyage from initial recognition of aspirations, without a full understanding of what this means, to a wide array of chapters that show the full range of what is needed, coming from a broad spectrum of writers, from experienced to young and emerging, from all regions of the world, including Indigenous perspectives, leading to a smorgasbord of inspiring and aspiring approaches, ethics, methods and tools, as well as institutional thinking of how this could become a reality. One may hope that, while the world is slowly breaking free of the clutches of the COVID-19 pandemic, this book may function as a source for rethinking and transforming evaluation to better serve the world.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the enormous challenges humanity is facing. It has been facilitated by other crises as climate change, biodiversity loss, economic exploitation, and increased inequity and inequality. The UN Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement on climate change call for transformational change of our societies, our economies and our interaction with the environment. Evaluation is tasked to bring rigorous evidence to support transformation at all levels, from local to global. This book explores how the future of the evaluation profession can take shape in 18 chapters from authors from all over the world, from North and South, East and West, and from Indigenous and Decolonized voices to integrative perspectives for a truly sustainable future. It builds on what was discussed at the IDEAS Global Assembly in October 2019 in Prague and follows through by opening trajectories towards supporting transformation aimed at solving the global crises of our times.

By combining practical experiences with perspectives drawn from new initiatives, this book offers invaluable insights into how evaluation can be transformed to support transformational change on the global stage.

Indran A. Naidoo, Director of the Office of Independent Evaluation of IFAD

Across continents, educational systems, and historical complexities, this book builds up the language we all should speak about our field. A mandatory read for all young evaluators.

Weronika Felcis, Board member of EES and Secretary of IOCE

After reading these chapters you will have a sharper look at what is relevant when managing or doing an evaluation, and you will notice that 'business as usual' will no longer be an option.

Janett Salvador, Co-founder of ACEVAL, Former Treasurer of ReLAC

This book offers original, visionary discourse and critical perspectives on the challenges evaluation is facing in the post COVID-19 pandemic era.

Doha Abdelhamid, Member of the Egyptian Academy of Scientific Research and Technology

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