Evaluation in evaluation ecosystems

Ian Goldman
30 September 2022

1. The development paradigm has failed – trickle down, consumerism, ‘modernization’ is destroying the planet, fuelled by vested interests.

2. There are regenerative models, but we need to move beyond exploitation to apply head/heart and hand to make a regenerative world happen, now.

3. All too often the evaluation field has been complicit in the development failure.

4. To be part of the solution, evaluation needs to be transformed, from what worked to what will work.
   ▶ Evaluative practice needs to be contextually relevant, embedded in local systems, taking a wider systemic perspective, include climate, ecosystems and equity, and in demand by policy makers.

5. To systematize and use the evidence we need transformed evaluation (eco)systems, with evaluation integrated into management and decision-making.
1.
The development paradigm has failed – trickle down, modernization......
How steep the drop has to be for 1.5°C

We are the 9% - with cars, houses, eating lots of meat, consuming clothes, electronics, flying……our lifestyles have to change, our development models need to change.
The trickle down model does not work

Where has the Western mindset got us?

- The world has been colonized, not just economically, but in our mindset
- Above all turned into materialists and consumers – not people who relate to others (ubuntu) or to the sacredness of the world around us
- Everything is to be exploited for the benefit of humans, and a few at that
- Taught that is normal, inevitable, and that benefits will trickle down
- And where has that got us

![Wealth Distribution in South Africa](image)
2. Regenerative models
Using evidence. What have we learnt? What do we feel? How do we relate? What do we need to do?

From fake news to science
Feeling the urgency From exploitation and fear to relationship to people and planet
From anomie to collective action – we have the answers – do it, now

How steep the drop has to be for 1.5°C

Source: Climate Action Tracker
Analysis: 4 May 2021

Southern Africa is warming at double the global rate. So we are headed for 6 degrees of warming by 2100.
3. Has the evaluation field been complicit.......

Chaplowe and Hejnowicz, Evaluating outside the Box: Evaluation’s Transformational Potential
4. Evaluation needs to be transformed......

- Traditionally role in querying what is working/not and why
- Needs to consider what will work in the future, taking into account more complex systems than we are used to looking at, unintended outcomes of interventions and contributing to foresight
- Must consider issues of climate/ecosystems and equity
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.

It also needs using a broad understanding of evaluative practice with a diversity of tools which feed into adaptive management, are adaptive and rapid, and linked to decision-making.

**Importance of context**

- for evaluation to contribute it needs to be contextually relevant, embedded in local systems, and in demand by policy makers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance of the policy challenge/question</th>
<th>Commitments made to international or regional agreements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High levels of financial investments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal requirement for legislative review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalysts of change</th>
<th>Crises</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure from development partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pressure from civil society</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broader political and socio-cultural environment</th>
<th>Timing, for example, proximity to election period</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space for public participation and civil society engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Level of interest and engagement of stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional environment</th>
<th>Systems and processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence champions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mandates and capacities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture – Learning and accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Linkages and relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goldman and Pabari, Evidence Use in Policy and Practice – lessons from Africa
Some ideas for evaluations which go beyond the plumbing to state of the house

▸ Expand the scope: look further than short-term results and immediate accountability, towards generational accountability, what will work.

▸ Seek to evaluate outside traditional silos: across issues/sectors; across funding streams/donor priorities; across thematic areas and SDG objectives.

▸ Ensure diversity of perspectives and experiences in evaluation teams, and in methods used.

▸ Require evaluations to identify, recognize and map the environment in which programmes and evaluation operate. Identify the climate, environment and equity implications linked to that place.

▸ Look at problems through a global lens and re-value local solutions, including ancestral ones. Advocate for programmes to systematically consider ancestral indigenous knowledge and support them in embedding potential solutions in interventions and systems.

5.

To systematize evidence we need evaluation ecosystems
Ecosystem and system

- An ecosystem is a community of organisms/organisations interacting with each other and with their environment.

- A system is a collection of organized things; a whole composed of relationships among its members.

What do we mean by an M&E System?

When we talk about GEI’s focus on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) “systems” we do not mean just the feedback systems that may guide program implementation or discrete evaluation studies that may be done.

What we mean is a country’s overall ecosystem around M&E – all the structures, attitudes, incentives, approaches, policies, laws, behaviors, skills and abilities that contribute to whether robust monitoring, evaluation and evidence use happens.

Evaluation systems recognise:

1. An ability to provide sound evidence (the supply side)
2. Capacity within the system for individuals and institutions to use information (the demand side)
3. Role of intermediaries like M&E units who broker demand and supply of evidence, and sometimes co-creation (knowledge brokers)
4. Other elements eg training (unis), evaluators, advocacy (eg VOPEs, CSOs)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System Type</th>
<th>Possible elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formalised/informal systems</td>
<td>• The system is either recognised or not recognised through formalisation of a policy/practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Mexico formalised, Zambia informal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralised/decentralised</td>
<td>• Central institution coordinating the whole system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Or decentralisation of the system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Or no control and system fragmented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• SA – centralised institution but degree of decentralisation to provinces and sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ghana - fragmented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectoral evaluation systems</td>
<td>• Often sit within the broader system systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Common in education and health eg South Africa, Kenya, and Zambia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project systems</td>
<td>• 3ie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational systems</td>
<td>• donor systems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**We need systems fit for the future**

- adapted to address emerging development challenges, e.g. climate and ecosystems breakdown and equity, and to question failing developmental models
- From doing things right to doing the right thing?
- Variety of evaluative tools, for different timescales:
  - Evaluative thinking models for rapid inputs, throughout the programme cycle
  - Rapid evaluations
  - Longer more rigorous where needed
- And agencies need to support these systems, not undermine them
Not an orphan - integrated into the policy/programme cycle

Analysis of the problem and options

Options for addressing the problem

Theory of change

Diagnosing

Understanding root causes

What is known about the problem

What is the change – desired and undesired?

Value for money?

Are planned outcomes being achieved?

Intervention

Operational plan and resourcing

Design

Diagnosing

Operational plan and resourcing

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Selecting intervention

Theory of change

Design

Operational plan and resourcing

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda

Policy/Programme Planning/design

Policy/programme outcome and impact

Implementing the plan

Monitoring the plan, environment and budget

Review, refine and continue

Agenda setting

Agenda
6. Summary

1. The development paradigm has failed – trickle down, consumerism, ‘modernization’ is destroying the planet, fuelled by vested interests.

2. There are regenerative models, but we need to move beyond exploitation to apply head/heart and hand to make a regenerative world happen, now.

3. All too often the evaluation field has been complicit in the development failure.

4. To be part of the solution evaluation needs to be transformed, from what worked to what will work.
   > Evaluative practice needs to be contextually relevant, embedded in local systems, taking a wider systemic perspective include climate, ecosystems and equity, and in demand by policy makers.

5. To systematize and use the evidence we need transformed evaluation (eco)systems, with evaluation integrated into management and decision-making.
We are living in a mass ‘delusion of normalcy’ that is socially transmitted. Everyone is acting normal so it must all be ok so I’ll just go with the flow. How do we intervene in this ‘delusion of normalcy’?

Margaret Klein Salamon

We must question our practice now and start making the changes - which conference will I not go to?

Professor Ian Goldman
President: International Evaluation Academy
Advisor: Evaluation and Evidence Systems, Global Evaluation Initiative/CLEAR Anglophone Africa, University of Witwatersrand
Adjunct Professor, Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, University of Cape Town

Email: ian.goldman@wits.ac.za;
Twitter @iangoldmanSA
www.ieac.global/