

First, I want to thank Ada Ocampo, President of IDEAS, for having asked me to speak at this closing session of a most interesting 2022 online conference. Also, I want to congratulate the organisers and panelists of the conference for their substantive contributions.

According to the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, the global umbrella organisation, there are some 160 recorded evaluation organisations active at the national, regional, and global levels. Hence, one may ask *what makes the International Development Evaluation Association unique? What needs to be done to sustain the systemic influence of IDEAS?*

The mission of IDEAS is to improve and extend the practice of development evaluation, refining knowledge, strengthening capacity building, and expanding networks and partnerships for development evaluation.

I will examine IDEAS in the evolving international context and will position IDEAS in generations of development of evaluation organisations. After, I will review IDEAS' tremendous assets and will examine major challenges faced by IDEAS.

The International Development Evaluation Context

The context of international development evaluation has evolved tremendously over the last decades. In the sixties, when I started in international cooperation, the basic model consisted of *transfers* of resources and know how. It was an evaluation era when we were assessing the efficiency with which the *inputs to development* were conducted. We soon realised that there was a lot of waste and misuse of the resources provided, because there was no proper institutional capacity to absorb and manage the massive transfers of resources.

In the seventies, to provide a better management framework that ensured the effective transfer of resources and knowledge, the paradigm of *project* management was applied to focus the transfer of development inputs toward the achievement of *development outputs*. The evaluation of the degree of achievement of the targeted development results gave a sense that impacts were being achieved and that resource transfers were a sound investment.

In the eighties, it became evident that development projects were a plethora of development activities. Although good intentions by themselves, projects represented a lot of duplications in their mosaic approach. Hence there was a need to articulate approaches that were more comprehensive and made explicit the links between interventions and project ventures so that greater developmental impact could be achieved. *Programme* approaches were developed so that *development outcomes* could be attained. This involved partnership collaboration so that sectorial structural challenges could be addressed. At the time, the donor community propelled international development. Then, came the country-based programme approaches. It involved the countries, the donor community and civil society contributions. Evaluation was faced with the challenge of conducting joint evaluations.

In the nineties, it became evident that projects and programmes results without a proper policy framework could be jeopardised, if there was no development vision at the country level. A greater importance was given to the coherence of development policies and the articulation of a rigorous

national development plan and budget. The donor community was encouraged to rally, to support the achievement the objectives of the national development plan. Evaluation focus moved from project and programme to the policy level.

The year 2005 Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness set the stage for a renewed approach to international cooperation. Over one hundred developed and developing countries agreed to change the way they do business. The Paris Declaration contains fifty-six partnership commitments organised around five principles that make aid more effective. The five principles are:

1. Ownership: Developing countries set their own development strategies, improve their institutions, and tackle corruption.
2. Alignment: Donor countries and organisations bring their support in line with these strategies and use local systems.
3. Harmonisation: Donor countries and organisations co-ordinate their actions, simplify procedures and share information to avoid duplication.
4. Managing for results: Developing countries and donors focus on producing – and measuring – results.
5. Mutual accountability: Donors and developing countries are accountable for development results.

The Paris Declaration brought home the need for countries to develop their institutional capacities. It states that *country structures are to be used to implement aid programmes rather than parallel structures created by donors*. It also points to the need for countries to put in place national evaluation capacity to assess the achievement of clear strategic priorities of their national development plans. The Paris Declaration heightened the importance to doing evaluation involving all stakeholders. As well, this highlights the importance of the performance of *development actors* and the need to conduct institutional evaluations.

In 2015, when the United Nations set up the sustainable development goals for 2030, it brought about a change in thinking in international development, along the lines of the leitmotiv “Think globally, Act locally”. Sustainable development is a broad term to describe policies, projects and investments that provide benefits today without sacrificing environmental, social, and personal health in the future. No clear practical definition of sustainable development exists to guide politicians in solving challenges at the global, regional, and local levels.

The 17 SDGs address the global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. The goals are integrated and indivisible to achieve sustainable development at the global level. One can see these concepts as being partial, segmented approaches. The real situation is that humanity is now exceeding several planetary boundaries¹. Pragmatically, the health of the entire planet and the general condition of the people are considered and then

¹ See : <https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/research-news/2015-01-15-planetary-boundaries---an-update.html>

implemented in local communities and cities, but in many cases, it is necessary to think locally and act globally which means to start from a specific place and then proceed globally.

In this new international development context, evaluation is being challenged to change. From its structured approaches assessing development activities, project, programmes, policies and institutional perspectives, evaluation must now embrace a more complex systemic understanding of the elements at work in international development. It must embrace a wholistic panoramic, multidimensional understanding of the plethora of factors at play at the various levels of development. Evaluation must transform itself and become *systemic*.

What is IDEAS?

IDEAS is a worldwide evaluation association formed by individuals. It is a voluntary, inclusive & pluralistic, professional association of evaluators facilitating the exchange of knowledge and fostering capacity strengthening in evaluation. It is the home for evaluators working worldwide on global issues, with a human perspective. It engages in strengthening and promoting the evaluation profession, fostering capacity development, and improving and advancing evaluation theories and practice, methods, and use of evidence. It a voluntary organisation for professional evaluation; what *EvalPartners* calls a VOPE.

Credit goes to Robert (Bob) Picciotto who was Director general, Operations Evaluation at the World Bank for the creation of IDEAS. At the time, the World Bank was hosting annual conferences on “Evaluation and Development”. The events were think-tanks on current development challenges for evaluation. Thanks to its convening power, Operations Evaluation Office was able to gather top thinkers on development evaluation. This set the stage for IDEAS to become an association willing to face current development challenges and to be a forethinking community.

IDEAS was launched in September 2002. There was a need for an expert affiliation giving a home to dynamic development evaluators across the world. Throughout the years, tremendous change occurred. Worldwide organisations and evaluation practice groups were shaped, permitting joint endeavours in development evaluations. The changing motivation from Millennium Development Goals to Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, the Coronavirus pandemic, and the quickly changing landscape of financing for development pose major challenges. Within this changing context, IDEAS positions itself as the only global professional evaluation association which focuses on international sustainable development.

What is IDEAS unique contribution to international development evaluation thinking?

IDEAS upheld the challenge by having bold and avant-garde conferences and publications which highlighted innovative evaluation thinking and practices that emerged in response to the shifts in the way development is conceptualized and implemented. Through its choice of themes, IDEAS recognized the crucial role that evaluation can play in contributing to poverty reduction, equity and equality, human security and in advancing the sustainable development agenda.

IDEAS has addressed important topic of concerns such as sustainable evaluation capacity development, evaluation in the contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, climate and health, developing countries

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climate change adaptation and mitigation readiness, transformational change – evaluating environment and development, engaging parliamentarians in monitoring and evaluation, gender mainstreaming and equity-focused evaluation, a voice for the voiceless – citizen-based service delivery monitoring and governance, social impact assessment, sustainability of country-led governance evaluation systems, the role of evaluation associations in nurturing monitoring and evaluation systems, professionalising M&E for improved performance and integrity, knowledge management, evaluation challenges and opportunities for emerging evaluators and the future of evaluation. In this regard, the themes of IDEAS's conferences are evidence of the relevance of its contribution.

- In 2005 in New Delhi, India – Evaluation for Development – Beyond Aid Objectives
- In 2006 in Prague, Czech Republic – A workshop on Country-led evaluations: Experiences in Central and Eastern Europe
- In 2007 in Niamey, Niger _ A workshop on Country-led evaluation: Experiences in Africa
- In 2008 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – A workshop on Impact Evaluation: Challenges for Decision-making, Accountability and Quality
- In 2009 in Johannesburg, South Africa – Getting to Results: Evaluation Capacity Building and Development
- In 2011 in Amman, Jordan - Evaluation in Turbulent Times: The Crises of Food, Fuel, and Finances.
- In 2013 in Barbados - Evaluation and Inequality: Moving Beyond the Discussion of Poverty
- In 2015 in Bangkok, Thailand – Evaluating Sustainable Development
- In 2017 in Guanajuato, Mexico - Evaluating for the SDGs
- In 2019 in Prague, Czech Republic – Evaluation for transformative change: Bringing experiences of the Global South to the Global North – Evaluating Environment and Development
- In 2022 online with Deval - Power of Evaluation: Influencing Decision Making for a Better and More Equal World

The 2022 online Conference themes were:

- Power of evaluation for a better and more equal world
- Partnerships for sustainable development
- The future of evaluation: A perspective from Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEE)
- Evaluation within national ecosystems
- Gender and equity responsive evaluation for better evidence and policies.

IDEAS in the VOPE development spectrum

Let me position IDEAS in the spectrum of VOPE development. Drawing from my experience of collaboration with evaluation networks and associations, I have classified VOPE development at four levels.

First generation – focus on initiation

- The VOPE aims at awareness about the usefulness of evaluation,
- It creates a community of *evaluophiles*,

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It enables professional exchanges,
It offers informal learning,
It gathers providers and users of evaluation.

Second generation – focus on demystification

The VOPE aims at demystifying evaluation to make it a useful management tool,
It facilitates the harmonisation of evaluation concepts and tools,
It enables the appropriation of evaluation approaches and techniques,
It offers basic training in evaluation,
It rallies a community of evaluation practitioners and users.

Third generation – focus on utilization

The VOPE promotes the better utilization of evaluation by stakeholders,
It fosters the production of evaluation of quality,
It facilitates working groups on topics that are new challenges for evaluation (R&D),
It provides methodological evaluation guides,
It sets norms and standards for evaluation,
It offers specialized training in evaluation.

Fourth generation – focus on professionalization

The VOPE plays a normative role,
It sets a deontology,
It identifies the required professional competences,
It offers an evaluation training programme based on professional competencies,
It awards professional designation.

Based on IDEAS' activities we can conclude that throughout the years, IDEAS has played a role at each level of the classification. Nowadays, IDEAS clearly belongs to the fourth generation of VOPE. Since 2010 there is an IDEAS Competencies for Development Evaluators, Managers and Commissioners. Members are guided by a Code of Ethics adopted in 2014. Following numerous conversations in different professional contexts, IDEAS must put out greater efforts about certification *and qualification*. This will be a major contribution of IDEAS to the community of development evaluators and provide recognition of worldwide leadership.

The 2019 IDEAS' conference enabled an important event: The Prague Declaration on Evaluation for Transformational Change. The Declaration "recognizes the need and urgency of systemic change from local to global levels to address the global crises endangering our future". Participants in IDEAS Global Assembly and the Third International Conference on Evaluating Environment and Development agreed to:

1. Promote Transformational Evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals
2. Work in partnership
3. Explore power relations and promote inclusiveness

4. Respect for rights and responsibilities
5. Support for professionalization and capacity development
6. Focus on sustainability
7. Focus on fragility, conflict, and violence
8. Support transformational indigenous evaluation
9. Share responsibility for results
10. Continue to discuss and to deepen our understanding of the changes required for evaluation to contribute to tackling the crucial problems of our time.

Noteworthy is point five pertaining to supporting professionalization and capacity development of evaluation, because the three hundred participants to the Declaration advocate a transformational change of evaluation itself. They also supported “the development of an international evaluation academy² (IEAc) 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.”

In the light of the above contribution of IDEAS, there no doubt that IDEAS is unique and needs to proceed ahead in fulfilling its mission.

Ten challenges faced by IDEAS

The first challenge in international development is the alleviation of poverty. There are some who say they do not need to give to charities that assist the poor. They pay taxes and governments at all levels provide assistance to those in need. There are others who say we should give to everyone who asks, regardless. Should we instead support charities rather than individuals. Do we give a hand up or hand out. Or both? It is an interesting debate, not to be resolved in this conference. Whether we give or not, there is the issue of dignity: to see the dignity of another human being. We can be within an arm’s length of someone yet be in two completely different worlds. A rich man meeting a beggar on the street is not cruel to him or to her. He does not call him/her names or throw chilly water. He ignores him/her... He ignores him/her. How can developmental evaluation address indifference? How can transformational evaluation play its advocacy role in favor of “leaving no one behind”? Will development evaluation become more than a tool that describe and measure developmental impacts? Will it “walk the talk” and contribute to transformational systemic change in favour of poverty reduction?

The second challenge that IDEAS must overcome is to maintain its foresight and position itself as an evaluation organisation recognized and valued for providing leadership by means of its systemic influential contribution. This may be achieved by continuing to provide inspirational pathfinding conferences and by publishing state-of-the-art development books. Also, this implies that IDEAS continues to seek partnerships with development think-tanks and avant-garde thinkers. IDEAS must be an active evidence and knowledge broker.

² See the video made by Michael Quinn Patton for the Conference of the Czech Evaluation Society, 2022
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCYmyK-KN8PVds1cV7VaxBg>

A third challenge for IDEAS is to have the private sector involved in the international development evaluation agenda. At present, evaluators thinking about the sustainability of international development emanate from academia, nongovernmental advocacy organisations and international governmental organisations. IDEAS has the challenge to muster private sector volunteers and resources to conduct impact evaluations of private sector activities on the sustainability of the earth.

The fourth challenge that IDEAS ought to address is the need for transformational reform of IDEAS itself. The organisation has a bureaucratic structure and behave in a tradition fashion. IDEAS must evolve to become a result-oriented network, borrowing from lessons of the *Evalpartners* model. At present, the too few active IDEAS members are overstretched. involved in multiple topics and many organisations. Overall, there is a limited number of members who really contribute to the substantive dynamism of IDEAS. Hence there is a need for greater openness, involving more inclusively the membership and reaching out to new members.

A fifth challenge for IDEAS also pertains to the need for transformational reform of IDEAS itself. It is the need to facilitate a continuous flow of reflection and action. IDEAS should not be active only from one conference to another and be visible only from one book to another. It should have an agenda of action covering the multifaceted dimensions of its core mandate being poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability. This can be achieved by having a permanent watch on activities conducted by other evaluation organisations and by informing IDEAS members about them. It should consider the possibility of being a one stop shop of outstanding evaluations, a broker of development knowledge.

A sixth challenge for IDEAS again pertains to the need for transformational reform of IDEAS itself. If IDEAS wishes to honour and include diverse, multiple, alternative ways of knowing in respectful dialogue and deliberation, it must be able to interact using other languages and not only English. I applaud the efforts made during this conference to provide translation. There is a need to go further and facilitate working groups exchanging in various languages. This makes me think of more than two thousand graduates from PIFED, the French version of IPDET³, who are being denied access to IDEAS because of IDEAS unilinguism.

A seventh challenge is the strengthening IDEAS global reach through partnerships and close collaboration with regional and national associations. Joint conferences have been successful ventures. A key asset of IDEAS has been creativity via networking. It needs to permeate the agenda of other evaluation networks and associations to influence them to be involved in evaluation sustainable development at all levels of society.

An eighth challenge is the need to systematize a privileged collaboration with the key advocates of international organisations. leaders like Deval, UNICEF, IFAD, UN-Women, UNDP, the World Bank, ALNAP⁴ to name a few. There should be a shared vision on the future of evaluation. IDEAS should also be initiative-taking within *EvalPartners*.

³ IPDET is the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training

⁴ ALNAP is the Active Learning Network on Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action

A ninth challenge is the nevralgic normative role that IDEAS has. It is to assume worldwide leadership as a professional association setting standards for the qualification and certification of development evaluators. The challenge is to go beyond talking about this, like other evaluation organisations. It is time for IDEAS to take concrete measures and do it. The certification programme has been waiting too long, some twenty years.

A tenth challenge is the decision that IDEAS must make to facilitate the provision of evaluation training based on the requirements of the certification programme. IDEAS can look at three options.

A minimal requirement approach would be for IDEAS to formally associate itself with the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training Programme (IPDET)⁵. I was told that IPDET graduates represent a high percentage of the new members of IDEAS. The main advantage of this option is the existence of a large community of six thousand graduates across the world. IPDET is available in Arabic, Chinese, English and French. It also maintains a thriving alumni community which is linked to the Global Evaluation Initiative.

The second option would be a partnership with the International Society for Evaluation Education launched by *EvalPartners*. The main advantage of this option is the convenient online free conference sessions model with an opportunity for IDEAS to make a significant contribution and gain recognition and visibility.

The third option is for IDEAS to collaborate closely with the International Evaluation Academy. The Academy was born in Prague at the same time of IDEAS conference. When I read the Academy charter, I was surprised that it set itself up based on individual trusteeship as an independent standalone organization with no formal link with IDEAS. The Academy has the ambitious vision of being an inclusive activist venture designed to promote evaluation excellence, advocacy, social relevance, scientific credibility, and cultural responsiveness. The Academy aims at establishing and elevating evaluation as a scientific endeavour, discipline, and trans-discipline. It wants to build a cumulative, credible, and useable body of knowledge about the process and consequences of development interventions aimed at changing the world for the better. All these aspirations are at the heart of IDEAS *raison d'être*. Hence there is an opportunity for IDEAS to establish a genuine preferential partnership with the International Evaluation Academy.

Conclusion

IDEAS is living in exciting times. There is a new wind for development evaluation taking it at a much higher height. We should all be eager and committed to make things happen.

Thank you!

⁵ See a video with Brenda Barbour of the World Bank on IPDET at <https://ipdet.org/about-ipdet/>