

TRANSFORM

Gender Responsive Evaluation: A call for action to leave no one behind

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Dear Readers,

As we enter 2016, we also officially enter the era of the 2030 Agenda. This means we need to collectively shift from planning for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to implementing them. Evaluation, and more specifically gender-responsive evaluation, has an important role to play throughout the implementation process in ensuring that these ambitious targets are met, while leaving no one behind.

However, gender-responsive evaluation can only play this role if evaluators and the global evaluation community agree to integrate gender equality in their evaluations. In this issue, we look at how global partnerships for evaluation, UN system-wide coordination on evaluation and UN Women's evaluation function can all contribute to making this a reality. We hope you find this information useful for better understanding the importance of gender-responsive evaluation in the context of the SDGs and how the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office will be working to support its integration at the global, regional and national level.

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A key to accelerating progress on the Sustainable Development Goals





By PHUMZILE MLAMBO-NGCUKA

Executive Director, UN Women

We kick off 2016 with a strong focus on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We worked hard to place gender equality at the heart of this new global agenda through a standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (Goal 5) and the integration of gender equality targets within the other goals. Our focus now must be on harnessing that momentum and ensuring that we are on track to deliver on our commitments.

Crucially, the 2015 reviews also showed that our monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the MDGs were not robust enough to alert us to the slow pace of implementation and the bottlenecks faced, and did not provide sufficient insight into how to overcome these barriers. At UN Women, we place strong emphasis on the importance of evaluation and regular reporting on results. Close scrutiny can be uncomfortable, but it is an essential aspect of well-managed progress. Using gender-responsive evaluation for the SDGs gives us the tools to monitor our commitments and ensure that words become actions.

We now begin SDG implementation with targets and indicators that are more gender-responsive and a global focus on improving national capacities on data, statistics and evaluation among all stakeholders. This will give us evidence-based insights into what is working and raise alarm bells when the pace of progress is too

slow so that we can course-correct. It will give us a better understanding of how to overcome obstacles, while identifying the ingredients that sustain gender equality and women's empowerment across all SDGs in the long-term.

In addition to our internal evaluation function, UN Women also advocates for and supports coordination of gender-responsive evaluation within the UN system and among national evaluation policies and systems. This helps us all to align, strengthen, and prioritize all of our work, in line with supporting the achievement of the SDGs.

We have made bold commitments, and now is the time for action, implementation and evaluation. If evaluations conducted by governments, UN system entities, civil society and the private sector all integrate gender equality and women's empowerment, together we can ensure that our ambitious goals become reality.



A call for action to leave no one behind

In 2015, the “evaluation torch” celebrating the International Year of Evaluation linked 92 events all over the world to discuss the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 (EvalAgenda). EvalAgenda—officially launched at the Parliament of Nepal in November 2015 in the presence of the Nepali Prime Minister and Parliament Speaker, 100 Parliamentarians, and 50 leaders of the evaluation community—is a call for action to ensure evaluation is fit for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development endorsed by 193 heads of state at the UN General Assembly in September 2015.

The overriding message of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is “to leave no one behind” and to ensure “targets are met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society.” How can evaluation help to achieve this commitment?

The vision of the thousands of evaluators who took part in the EvalAgenda 15-month global consultation is that evaluation is an integral part of all efforts by governments, civil society and the private sector to improve the lives and conditions of

their fellow citizens.

At the same time, EvalAgenda envisages that evaluation will help to raise the voice of all stakeholders that are impacted by such decisions, particularly those of the marginalized and disadvantaged. Evaluation should therefore be driven by values of human rights, gender equality and social equity.

EvalAgenda, which builds on the success of the International Year of Evaluation, is further impetus to the global trends described below.

Rebalance of leadership in the global evaluation community

Until 15 years ago, the best national evaluation systems were in the global North (i.e., the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada). The big majority of voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs) were in the global North. The demand for evaluation was in the global North. Today, this is changing dramatically. Several excellent national evaluation systems are in the global South (i.e., Mexico, Colombia, Chile, South Africa, Morocco, Benin, Kenya, Uganda and Malaysia). The big majority of the existing 150+ VOPEs



By MARCO SEGONE

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are in the global South. Regional parliamentary forums for evaluation now exist in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America (but not in Europe or in North America). In the future, demand, supply and use of evaluation will truly be universal.

Stronger demand for evaluation, particularly equity-focused and gender-responsive ones

The first ever Global Evaluation Event held in a national parliament is a strong signal of the new trends of policymakers' demand for evaluation. The official launch of the Global Parliamentary Forum at the Parliament of Nepal is a clear indication that parliamentarians are becoming new evaluation leaders. In parallel, the strong call by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development for leaving no one behind and, accordingly, the positive response by the evaluation community with equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluations, is another positive development. This led to the creation of EvalGender+, a multi-stakeholder movement to ensure evaluation will meet the expectation to inform policies that leave no one behind. EvalGender+, led by

UN Women and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), and whose members are the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), VOPEs, 16 UN agencies, multilateral banks and the Global Parliamentary Forum for Evaluation, is launching an inclusive process to develop guidance to evaluate the Sustainable Development Goals with an equity-focused and gender-responsive lens. In the future, demand for equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation will be the norm.

Complexity is the new normal

The 17 goals and 169 targets included in the 2030 Agenda are interconnected and synergic. While this is necessary, it also adds complexity. In addition, the focus on "no one left behind" means that socio-cultural-political contexts, as well as power relationships, are critical to evaluating sustainable and equitable development. In the future, evaluation theory and practice will decisively move to the evaluation of complexity, adopting system-thinking and network analysis.

In the future, demand, supply and use of evaluation will truly be universal.

A stronger movement for professionalizing evaluation

The challenges noted above will accelerate the need to professionalize evaluation. Several VOPEs (including the European Evaluation Society, the UK Evaluation Society, the Canadian Evaluation Society, the Japanese Evaluation Society and the International Development Evaluation Association), are leading this process. UNEG is exploring this area too, and UNEG members (i.e., UN Women and the International Labour Organization) already launched professionalization initiatives. In the future, evaluation will become a mature profession.



92 events of the EvalYear



Events organised:

- by Evaluation Associations (VOPEs)
- by UN agencies
- by Governments
- by Parliamentary Forum
- by Multilateral Banks
- by Universities
- by Think Tanks

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