# Foreword by the Evaluator General

> **You must learn to make the whole world your school.**
>
> Martin Fischer

The African Development Bank's Ten-Year Strategy places the Bank "at the heart of Africa's transformation". Achieving transformation requires not only investments and policies, but also a change in mindset that draws on what works, what does not work – and why – to succeed. Transformation also calls for enhancing requisite capacities – both individual and institutional-, an essential aspect in today's fast changing and very competitive world, and central to delivering on well-intentioned policies. In essence, Africa needs to learn from experience and results.

With this in mind, we at IDEV organized the AfDB Development Evaluation Week 2016 on the theme of Driving Africa's Transformation. We decided to open the debate on evaluating this transformation through the High-5s: *Light up and power Africa, Feed Africa, Industrialize Africa, Integrate Africa, and Improve the quality of life for the people of Africa,* and how evaluative knowledge can help the Bank improve the implementation of the High 5s.

The premise was that 'good-fit' approaches to evaluating complex initiatives taken to induce the continent's transformation would ensue from the intertwining of viewpoints and positions, experiences and skill-sets. Hence, we convened fellow development stakeholders to share evidence-based knowledge and expertise from their countries and backgrounds. The number of panel discussions that overran into coffee and lunch breaks are a good indicator of the symbiosis formed between panelists and with the audience, and the enthusiasm that the discussion sparked.

On a personal note, it was heart-warming for me to meet up again with fellow evaluation experts who have over the years become "friends in development", and an honor for me to have an armchair "one to one" discussion with our Senior V.P. Frannie Léautier on how we can improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.

The dialogue forum attracted over 250 participants – from MDBs, the private sector, public institutions, policy makers, academics, evaluators, development practitioners, students, media, etc. Presentations and panel discussions, grounded in evaluative evidence, and enhanced by invaluable input from the audience, focused the dialogue while privileging the voices of all.

Questions debated included: What evidence exists on what works, what does not work, and why? What lessons emanating from AfDB and partner interventions can inform the design and implementation of policies and operations in the five priority areas? What innovative solutions out there can inform the success of planned initiatives? What should success look like, and how should we measure and evaluate success/failure? How




**Frannie Léautier,** speaks to Rakesh Nangia.

**"There is a very tight link between evaluation and innovation. Innovations that succeed are those where you have tried, failed, recovered, re-structured, learned from that and moved on. As many innovations fail, it is important to draw lessons from those failures, which in turn can fuel further innovations."**

Frannie Léautier

appropriate, effective, and sustainable are AfDB's envisioned monitoring and evaluation strategies/measures for the High-5s? How can we put more emphasis on questions that matter to society such as inclusion, gender, equity, efficiency and sustainability?

While focused on evidence and results, the event made room for light moments too. Monday's very interactive and iterative Knowledge Café and Evaluation Capacity Development Workshop helped participants break the ice and get to know each other around the discussion table. On Tuesday, I was assigned the role of "father" of IDEV at the Akwaba Ceremony. In Côte d'Ivoire, Akwaba means "welcome" and I therefore welcomed "guests from all the corners of the globe" in a traditional way; though I was relieved that the IDEV team had organized professional entertainers to round up the ceremony! The *Akwaba* ceremony was indeed an opportunity for guests to admire the precision of traditional dancers' footwork and contortions, and drummers' rhythmic flows.

This edition of *eVALUation Matters* is dedicated to Development Evaluation Week 2016, and synthesizes viewpoints and reflections on evaluative knowledge expressed during the week. Editorial contributions are compiled from eminent keynote speeches and recordings of

panelist discussions, verbatim from the Knowledge Café, Evaluation Week award winners and lunch-time presenters. Each, in their own way, provides a nuanced and granular understanding of contemporary Africa and the evaluation landscape.

Looking ahead, I am confident that we will build on the momentum of Evaluation Week and be bold in forging ahead; that countries will not only enhance their capacity choices but also their policy options; and that we will collectively work at using evaluation lessons to eliminate the bottlenecks and meet the targets of the High-5s for the benefit of all the people of Africa.




## Author's Profile



**Rakesh Nangia** is the Evaluator General at the African Development Bank. Prior to joining the AfDB, he spent 25 years at the World Bank where he held several positions including Director of Strategy and Operations for the Human Development Network and Acting Vice-President for the World Bank Institute. He attended the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi and Harvard University and holds degrees in business administration and engineering.