eV ALUation Matters

Is a quarterly publication from Independent Development Evaluation at the African Development Bank Group. It provides different perspectives and insights on evaluation and development issues.

Editor-in-Chief:
Monica Lomeña-Gelis, Principal Evaluation Officer, IDEV

Acknowledgments:
IDEV is grateful to all contributors, reviewers, editors, and proofreaders who worked on this issue, in particular:
- Grace Gabala, communications consultant, IDEV
- Candice Joanne Lewis, Senior translator/reviser, AfDB
- Najade Lindsay, Knowledge Management and Communication consultant, IDEV
- Jacqueline Nyagahima, Principal Knowledge Management Officer, IDEV
- Karen Rot-Münstermann, Evaluator General (acting), IDEV
- Editing and translation: Melora Palmer, Agnes Derelle

Design & Layout:
Créon (www.creondesign.net)

Photos credits:
- Independent Development Evaluation at African Development Bank (IDEV)
- African Development Bank
- United Nations
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women)
- World Bank
- Cover: Girl before a mirror © Succession Picasso 2019

About Independent Development Evaluation

The mission of Independent Development Evaluation at the AfDB is to enhance the development effectiveness of the institution in its regional member countries through independent and instrumental evaluations and partnerships for sharing knowledge. Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication belong solely to the authors, and not necessarily to the authors’ employer, organization or other group or individual.

Disclaimer:
The views expressed in this publication belong solely to the authors, and not necessarily to the authors’ employer, organization or other group or individual they might be affiliated with.
First Quarter 2019

Despite substantive progress made on gender equality and women’s empowerment at the global level, women continue to suffer significant economic, political, legal, social and cultural disadvantages in almost all societies. For this reason, evaluations of projects, programs and policies must take into account these disadvantages and provide stakeholders with sound and compelling evidence to better inform the planning and implementation of future development interventions.

Given the interest shown by the community on gender issues, and based on the unprecedented number of quality proposals submitted for the Evaluation Matters Quarter 4 2018 edition that focused on Gender in Evaluation, this new edition comes as a continuity to that volume. While Gender in Evaluation Volume 1 presents theories and efforts by selected organizations to mainstream gender into their projects, programs and evaluations, this edition provides examples of how selected individuals and institutions have been able to concretely integrate Gender-Responsive Evaluation approaches into their work.
4 From the Acting Evaluator General’s Desk
Karen Rot-Münstermann, IDEV, African Development Bank
In this second volume of the edition on Gender and Evaluation we selected articles showcasing examples of using Gender-Responsive Evaluation approaches in and from Africa.

8 Young or old woman? Paradigms matter
Victor Tsang, United Nations Environment Programme
This article emphasizes the importance of having a comprehensive gender paradigm and through practical examples introduces a “gender framework” for evaluators’ consideration.

16 Equity focus and gender-responsiveness: shedding a light on critical blind spots for transformative change: Africa and beyond
Chloé Naneix, Moroccan Evaluation Association and Svetlana Negroustoueva, IDEV, African Development Bank
This article presents some preliminary results of the integration of equity and gender equality issues in the Sustainable Development Goals voluntarily national reviews (VNR) reports, which will be further expanded in forthcoming reports and dissemination products.

24 The AGDEN M&E Approach: Rights Responsive Evaluation
Bintou Nimaga, Chair of AGDEN and Florence Etta, Vice Chair of AGDEN and General Secretary of the Nigerian Association of Evaluators
This article explains the approach, describes how it was developed and highlights the distinction between AGDEN's “Rights Responsive Evaluation” and similar approaches, including gender-sensitive evaluations, equity focused evaluation and feminist evaluation.
36 Assessing Gender Equality Results at Country Level:
The Experience with UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations in Eastern and Southern Africa
Caspar Merkle, United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment
This article examines UN Women’s experience with its new Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE), an approach introduced in 2015 to assess the contributions to gender equality results at country level.

48 An African approach for gauging the gender responsiveness of national monitoring and evaluation systems
Cara Waller, Parfait Kasongo and Angelita Kithatu-Kiwekete, Twende Mbele
This article presents the findings from a diagnostic study used to determine the gender responsiveness of national monitoring and evaluation systems in Benin, South Africa and Uganda.

60 News in pictures

62 Hot off the press

“If paradigms are the lens through which we look at things, the way we see the world, the key message is simply that evaluations should adopt a wider lens to examine gender issues beyond just women’s vulnerabilities”

Victor Tsang
This second volume of the edition on Gender and Evaluation showcases examples from various experiences using Gender-Responsive Evaluation approaches in and from Africa. We find that efforts to mainstream gender into development operations in order to contribute to more inclusive growth are growing on the continent, and interest in learning from evaluations is strong. At the recent 9th international conference of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, the strand on “Integrating Gender and Equity in Evaluation” saw high attendance at the sessions. The conference culminated with the adoption of an outcome statement in which many individuals and organizations, including Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation, made pledges to better integrate gender in evaluations.

For the past two decades, the AfDB has consistently shown its commitment to gender equality, through various institutional and operational advances. Following the approval of the Gender Policy in 2000, the

"Similar to other independent evaluation offices, IDEV continues to incorporate gender into its work and work program. We are promoting greater attention to gender in evaluations, with regular reminders and support from IDEV Gender Champions."
AfDB also included gender equality under inclusive growth, one of the two overarching objectives of its Ten-Year Strategy (2013-2022). Other milestones were the adoption of the AfDB Gender Strategy in 2014, and the review of the gender dimension in project designs before Board approval. In 2017, the AfDB established a Gender, Women and Civil Society Department, building on previous units and the Office of the Special Envoy on Gender. The same year, the Mid-Term Review of the Gender Strategy noted advances in several of its pillars. To strengthen these results, gender specialists have been deployed to almost all AfDB regional offices. Finally, the Bank recently launched a Gender Marker System, a mechanism which sets targets for gender mainstreaming in its operations and tracks and reports on gender results (see the article by Apolo Kyeyune in Volume I of this edition).

Similar to other independent evaluation offices, IDEV continues to incorporate gender into its work and work program. We are promoting greater attention to gender in evaluations, with regular reminders and support from IDEV Gender Champions. This year we are updating our 2012 evaluation synthesis on gender mainstreaming and complementing it with additional internal evidence in order to inform the development of the Bank’s new Gender Strategy. This is at the express request of the AfDB’s Gender Department, which recognizes the value that evaluative knowledge can bring to the development of new policies, strategies, processes and operations.

We start this second volume with a reflection on the influence of paradigms on the way evaluations are framed and conducted, by Victor Tsang from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In his article, Victor posits that paradigms matter, and reflects on the need to embrace a holistic gender paradigm when conducting monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Since his article was submitted, we have sadly learned that Victor was among the victims of the crash of Ethiopian Airlines flight 302 on 11 March 2019. We would therefore like to take a moment to pay tribute to his memory. Victor was invited to submit the article because he had been involved in the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) Gender Partnership, and was passionate about the intersection of gender and M&E. He responded enthusiastically to our invitation to share his thoughts and insights, and the editorial team remembers him as cheerful in their exchanges. We were fortunate to have him contribute and to share his views with our readers. We express our heartfelt condolences to Victor’s family and friends, the colleagues at UNEP, and the gender and M&E community. We felt that the best way
to honour Victor would be to publish his article posthumously, as his last contribution to the discussion on a topic which was so dear to him.

Next in our showcase of experiences with using Gender-Responsive Evaluation approaches in and from Africa, Chloé Naneix and Svetlana Negroustoueva discuss Africa-centred results of the assessment of Voluntary National Reviews of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which examines how equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluative evidence is incorporated into SDG reviews. After that, Florence E. Etta and Bintou Nimaga from the African Gender & Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) introduce “Rights-Responsive Evaluation” and its tailored evaluation criteria. The UN Women experience, which assesses contributions to gender equality results at the country level in several African countries, is explored by Caspar Merkle. Finally, Cara Waller, Parfait Kasongo and Angelita Kithatu-Kiwekete from the African peer-learning partnership on Monitoring and Evaluation, Twende Mbele, present the findings from a diagnostic study to determine the gender responsiveness of national M&E systems in Benin, South Africa and Uganda.

As always, we hope that the articles in this edition of Evaluation Matters put forward new or different perspectives, provide food for thought and stimulate discussion, and contribute to the ongoing discourse in the development and evaluation communities on this important topic. We will inform you about the publication of our updated evaluation synthesis on gender mainstreaming in due course. In the meantime, we look forward to any feedback you may have.

About the Acting Evaluator General

Mrs. Karen rot-Münstermann is the Acting Evaluator General of the African Development Bank. She joined IDEV in 2014 as manager of its Knowledge Management, Outreach and Capacity Development Division, after spending five years at the Bank's Resource Mobilization and Partnerships Department, where she was among others responsible for coordinating the three-yearly ADF replenishment processes. Before joining AfDB in 2009, Karen was a Senior Policy Advisor at the Dutch Ministry of Finance (Treasury, Foreign Financial Relations Department). She holds degrees in Political Science, European Studies, and Economics.
Using the analogy of how paradigms shape the way people assess and interpret data and information, this article seeks to encourage evaluators to adopt wider gender lens when framing evaluation questions. The article argues that the gender paradigm should go beyond women’s vulnerabilities to include men’s privileges and weaknesses. It emphasizes the importance of having a comprehensive gender paradigm and through practical examples introduces a “gender framework” for evaluators’ consideration.
It was more than 15 years ago when I first read the bestseller “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®.” With more than 25 million copies sold worldwide, I figured the book must have some important lessons worth reading about. It opens with images and stories on the importance of paradigms, which “are powerful because they create the lens through which we see the world. If you want small changes in your life, work on your attitude. But if you want big and primary changes, work on your paradigm.” Paradigms are thus the lens through which we look at things, the way we see the world; they are more powerful than characters, personalities and anything else that shape our behaviors. In the rest of the article, the word “paradigm” is also used interchangeably with “lens” and “framework”.

An example of the influence of paradigms in our own day-to-day behavior helps to illustrate the idea. For instance, even if you are a highly compassionate and ethical person, you probably will not offer your seat to someone on public transport if you see the person is a young woman. However, if that the woman is an elderly, fragile woman, would you change your mind and offer your seat to her? The book “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People” used the two classic images below - a young woman and an old woman to explain how paradigms shape the way we think and behave.

Image 1: Images from “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People®”. Whether you see a young woman, or an elderly lady is a matter of perspective, and your predisposition prior to seeing the image.

Similarly, when evaluating gender issues, one should assess the gender lens of the people involved in the project: the project manager, project team members, and other relevant stakeholders. One should also take into account the gender lens of a project when it was first designed. In fact, evaluators should first examine their own gender lens too.

This article has two purposes. First, to emphasize the importance of having a more comprehensive gender paradigm and second, to introduce a “gender framework” with examples as a practical tool for evaluators to consider.

If you were to reduce gender to an equation, what would be the variables on the right-hand side of the equation sign? While a large number of policy...
documents, campaigns, projects and academic literature still tend to associate as follows: “Gender = Women”, or more precisely “Gender = Women’s Vulnerabilities”, I would like to put it as: “Gender = Women’s Vulnerabilities + Women’s Power”.

Women do work as managers, lawyers, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, scientists and ministers, although often in much smaller proportions than their male counterparts. But even when they perform paid or unpaid care work, women should not be considered weaker contributors. Their role as caregivers often endows them with important knowledge on key development issues from health and nutrition to safety and biodiversity. Therefore, when framing evaluation questions or when conducting interviews with women, no roles, knowledge or agency should not be overlooked.

However, consideration of merely a women’s perspective does not provide a complete picture. When considering the issue of women’s vulnerabilities, it should be noted that men’s privileges present the flip side of the same coin – what I term the “inconvenient truth”. This truth is barely mentioned in gender-related literature. For instance, while some girls are discouraged from pursuing science and engineering in colleges and universities, boys, conversely, are encouraged. While women and girls face higher risks of sexual harassment and assault, men and boys are at lower risk of such aggression. While women are perceived negatively when expressing ambition and acting competitive, men are viewed positively for the same behavior. This would, therefore, be a more appropriate gender equation: “Gender = Women’s Vulnerabilities + Men’s Privileges + Women’s Power”. Evaluators should not overlook men’s privileges otherwise gender inequality may be perceived as a woman’s problem alone.

In many societies, men are often portrayed as physically strong and dominant, in both personal and professional lives. In textbooks, news articles and films, it is not uncommon for men to appear as superheroes, mountain climbers, business executives, scientists, priests and political leaders. However, men, too, can be weak and vulnerable, they can fail, they can lose control, and they can be manipulated. For instance, during wars and conflicts, they have a much higher chance of being enlisted as soldiers or rebels, both voluntarily and involuntarily.

"If paradigms are the lens through which we look at things, the way we see the world, the key message is simply that evaluations should adopt a wider lens to examine gender issues beyond just women’s vulnerabilities".

Men appear particularly vulnerable when they fail to meet society’s expectations, such as earning an income and providing a decent living standard for their families. Interestingly, the result of such weakness is usually frustration, and the expression of such frustration may manifest itself in aggression and uncalculated risk-taking, such as drinking, speeding, gambling, migration to unfamiliar places, and even resorting to violence and illegal activities. I consider such aggression and risk-taking a form of loss of control, a form of weakness. I would therefore expand the gender equation to: “Gender = Women’s Vulnerabilities + Men’s Privileges + Women’s Power + Men’s Weaknesses”.

From October 2017 to April 2018, I conducted fieldwork in Laos, Nepal,
South Sudan and Uganda to support the gender analysis of four climate-change adaptation projects. Funded by the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility, these projects attempt to reveal the impacts of climate change on women and men to inform their design. My fieldwork and gender analysis experience in these countries enabled me to test my proposed gender framework and assess the practical implications of climate-change impacts on women and men, as summarized in Table 1. However, it is important to note that the framework serves as a reference only. Dynamics between women and men can neither be generalized nor over simplified, since such dynamics vary across contexts and over time.

In Uganda, I designed my questionnaires in a way that positions women as key informants to harness their power. With support from Uganda’s Ministry of Water and Environment as well as local governments, I visited several communities in the Kamwenge and Isingiro districts in the western part of the country. When our enumerators conducted interviews and focus groups with the women, they revealed their unique vulnerabilities incurred by prolonged dry seasons and more intense rainfall. These impacts include, for example, a decrease in farm production, ailing or dying livestock, longer hours of work and increased exposure to domestic violence.

In addition, our team sought to know the agroforestry options available to women, its impacts on their household members, and how best to engage them in wetland restoration activities. The women interviewed were thus positioned as knowledgeable resource people, who were ready to assist in the important tasks of restoring ecosystems as a way to adapt to the effects of climate change.

The men’s involvement was no less important in our gender analysis work in Uganda. Our enumerator team learned that, because of prolonged droughts, heavy rainfall and floods - and ultimately a loss of income, men exhibited quite different coping behaviors. While some men simply spent idle time chatting with friends and playing billiard games, some resorted to negative behaviors such as drinking and domestic violence, while others chose to move to other communities for income opportunities. These coping behaviors revealed both men’s privileges and vulnerabilities.

On one hand, men’s privileges were exemplified by their greater freedom in terms of the use of their time (chatting and playing), mobility (migration), physical force and their claim over the dominant role at home (domestic violence). On the other hand, these behaviors also revealed their vulnerabilities as their masculinity was perceived to have weakened, i.e. failing to perform their traditional role as men.

### Table 1: Gender paradigm in practice (in the context of climate-change adaptation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women’s Vulnerabilities</th>
<th>Women’s Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work longer hours; less time for rest and leisure</td>
<td>Hands-on with farm work; Are thus the best resource people for restoring degraded land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited savings to cope with emergencies</td>
<td>Strong social network; participation in group activities and support structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject to more domestic violence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men’s Weaknesses</th>
<th>Men’s Privileges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When fail to perform traditional male roles to provide for families (such ability is undermined by changing climatic patterns), may resort to negative, aggressive and risk-taking behaviors such as drinking, domestic violence and migration for economic opportunities</td>
<td>More freedom in terms of time use (more leisure time) and mobility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater financial means to cope with emergencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Considered heads of household and decision-makers; frustration vented on spouses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Young or old woman? Paradigms matter
to provide for their families, thereby having to resort to negative behaviors of drinking and commanding physical force. Some had to resort to the risky endeavor of migrating to new and unfamiliar places for work. Men tended to adopt such negative and risky practices in a bid to reaffirm their masculinity, and maintain a show of strength, ability and control.

While the gender paradigm discussed so far is a useful framework for rethinking gender issues, it does not tell the full story. Women’s and men’s advantages and disadvantages, their social status and life choices are enhanced or constrained by structural factors, such as a country’s laws, a society’s culture, a tribe’s customs or a religion’s teachings. These structural factors are often deeply rooted in a society, and can therefore be invisible, and less easily discerned simply by observation or enumeration. They are like the roots of a tree, as illustrated in the Tree Diagram for Gender Analysis below.

When conducting evaluations, one should assess whether the projects or policies concerned have considered all elements within the gender paradigm or equation, which is “Gender = Women’s Vulnerabilities + Men’s Privileges + Women’s Power + Men’s Vulnerabilities + Structural Factors behind these dynamics”.

Another way that the gender paradigm can be used in an evaluation is to use it as a guide to provide recommendations. For instance, if a capacity-building project considers gender simply as the number of women versus men in workshops, the evaluation can recommend that future projects address the structural causes of a low participation rate among women by providing incentives or setting quotas. If a climate-change adaptation project designs its activities assuming that all women are victims to climate-change, the evaluation can recommend that future projects promote women as leaders in planning and decision-making. In this manner, they may be seen as resource people to identify the

The tree diagram for gender analysis

The leaves and branches of a tree
– the visible part – are the observable part of gender issues, such as the proportion of women vs. men serving as ministers, village chiefs and engineers.

The roots of a tree
– the invisible and deeply entrenched part – are the structural factors that constrain or enhance a woman’s or a man’s choices and social status.
best agroforestry practices or the ideal locations for setting up a conservation area. Acknowledging the gender paradigm means that women should be viewed in relation to both their vulnerabilities as well as their power. Needless to say, the evaluation can also recommend future projects to promote changes in behavior, such as sharing unpaid domestic care work, among men.

In conclusion, the author wishes to acknowledge that a gender paradigm which considers women's power along with men's privileges and weaknesses is still a relatively new and emerging perspective. The purpose of this article is by no means to impose a particular view. If paradigms are the lens through which we look at things, the way we see the world, the key message is simply that evaluations should adopt a wider lens to examine gender issues beyond just women's vulnerabilities. Or, allows one to see both a young and old woman in the same image.
In 2007, Victor Tsang started his career in data collection, assessment, monitoring and gender mainstreaming. He was Policy Officer on Sustainable Development for the United Nations Environment Programme, UN Environment (since mid-2018), and previously, Gender Officer for UN Environment (2015-2018) and for the World Food Programme (2011-2015). He had particular interests in conducting fieldwork, developing gender-sensitive indicators and visualizing data to highlight gender dimensions and beyond.
Equity focus and gender-responsiveness: shedding a light on critical blind spots for transformative change: Africa and beyond¹

Human rights, gender equality and the commitment to “leaving no one behind” are core principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), launched in 2015. Three years after the launch of 2030 Agenda, in 2018 44 countries committed to presenting their voluntarily national reviews (vNRs) on implementation and progress at the High-Level Political Forum, EvalGender+, in partnership with EvalSDG and IIEED, examined the extent to which equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluative evidence has been incorporated into vNRs. This article presents some preliminary results of the integration of equity and gender equality issue in the vNR reports, which will be further expanded in forthcoming reports and dissemination products. The briefing provides selected key lessons from regional – based analysis of the vNR reports, for eight countries in Africa. Overall, there is a lack of evaluative evidence, and gender-responsive evidence in particular. Challenges in addressing gender inequality are acknowledged, including broader challenges with data use for policy development.

¹ The briefing provides selected key lessons from regional analysis of the vNR reports, for eight countries in Africa. Overall, there is a lack of evaluative evidence, and gender-responsive evidence in particular. Challenges in addressing gender inequality are acknowledged, including broader challenges with data use for policy development.
Human rights, gender equality and the commitment to “leaving no one behind” are core principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda), underpinning efforts to prevent conflict, overcome divisions and address the root causes of inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations. Integrating an equity and gender equality perspective into the implementation and for the SDG follow-up and review processes is therefore crucial for ensuring alignment with those principles.

The 2030 Agenda was adopted in 2015. Within three years, between 2015 and 2018 102 countries presented their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) against SDGs at the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). In 2018, EvalGender+ joined forces with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and EvalSDG and, building on IIED/EvalSDG work in 2016 and 2017, in VNR reviews, examined the extent to which equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluative evidence had been incorporated in 44 (of the 102) VNRs presented at the 2018 HLPF. Among the 44, eight countries in Africa were included: Benin, Cabo Verde, Guinea (Conakry), Mali, Namibia, Niger, Senegal, Togo.

The EvalGender+ review adapted the methodology used by IIED/EvalSDG in 2016 and 2017. Dimensions from a rapid check of minimum standards in gender inclusion for national VNRs, were incorporated in the original review template. These minimum standards were developed by an expert group at the Latin-American and Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network (ReLAC), and validated at the National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Conference and at the workshop “Gender and SDGs” at the IDEAS/ReLAC Conference in 2017.

“Despite selected reference to sex-disaggregated monitoring data, evaluation receives little attention, and evaluative evidence, particularly related to equity and gender equality, is not commonly used to inform policymakers in the Voluntary National Review processes reviewed”.

Data were collected using quantitative and qualitative methodologies, focusing on seven criteria: 1) use of Evaluation and Gender related keywords in the VNRs; 2) mention of a reporting system for measuring progress towards the SDGs; 3) description of a methodological framework for M&E; 4) evidence that evaluation is integrated into follow-up and review systems and into the general governance system; 5) evidence that gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluative evidence is integrated into follow-up and review systems and into general governance systems; 6) evidence that gender equality is incorporated in national policies and systems; and 7) evidence that marginalized voices (Leave no one behind) are included in the voluntary national reviews. Regional teams conducted the assessment against the criteria.

The findings were relatively consistent across regions. This facilitated drawing conclusions and validating recommendations of global nature.
Equity focus and gender-responsiveness: shedding light on critical blind spots for transformative change: Africa and beyond
which would still be applicable regionally and locally. The following are selected findings from the regional review of the eight African countries:

- Selected countries (Namibia and Togo) highlighted challenges in achieving national priorities in the VNR executive summary, including safe land tenure rights, decentralization, digitalising the economy, setting up a national statistical system, strengthening human-resource capacity and financing the economy.

- Gender equality is highlighted in some SDG reports beyond related to SDG 5, for example SDGs 3, 4, 10, 15. For example, Senegal and Benin each highlighted gender equality in three SDGs, with both referencing GE in SDG 2 on Food security (Zero Hunger). Senegal mentioned elements related to gender equality in the reports of SDGs 11 and 13.

- Gender equality is highlighted in some SDG reports beyond the one related to SDG 5, such as in the reports about SDGs 3, 4, 10, 15. For example, Senegal and Benin each highlighted gender equality in three SDGs. Senegal referenced GE in SDG2 on food security (Zero Hunger) and reports of SDG 11 and 13.

- Reporting against gender-sensitive targets, including SDG 5, tends to rely on ‘proxy’ indicators, rather than on the SDG target indicators; reporting against SDG 5 drew on indicators relevant to other goals, which could be considered as a sign of mainstreaming the concept of gender equality. Namibia partially reported on the two SDG 5 related indicators belonging to target 5.5, whereas no other SDG indicators were disaggregated in the reporting. Other sex-disaggregated indicators used in reporting were not in fact SDG indicators. Furthermore, worth noting, is the reference of SDG 3.2.6 under progress reporting for SDG 5.

- Primarily, VNR reports highlighted gender disparities, drawing on disaggregated data. Understandably, the easiest sex-disaggregated SDG indicators were consistently on employment, education and the proportion of women in leadership positions. Some reports tended to highlight specific women-focused activities/projects/interventions, such as highlighting vocational training and drawing on disaggregated data on poverty and employment. For example, Mali reported on proportions of jobs by (private and public) sector taken up by women and men, while the report from Guinea (Conakry) disaggregated all the baseline indicators.

- A limited number of countries integrated or reported on elements of gender-responsive assessment or gender analysis. In many cases, reports included annexes with sex-disaggregated data but without relevant analysis in the body of the report itself. No explicit gender responsive evaluative evidence was found.

- Some reports acknowledge the lack of disaggregated data, overall lack of data including evaluative evidence. For example, while not specific to gender, Namibia VNR report, as part of the content under SDG 17, acknowledges the need for good data to inform evidence-based policy, planning, decision-making, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of national development plans, programs and projects at every level.

- Reference to treaties around Gender Equality was mentioned by three countries (Cabo Verde, Namibia
and Senegal). The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was the most cited, followed by the Beijing Platform, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of women, and selected national legislation.

Many reports highlight marginalised groups. For instance, the Benin VNR reports on social protection, social safety nets, legislation and balanced specialisation (decentralisation); Cabo Verde’s Single Social Registry quotes their permanent instrument for mapping vulnerable families and monitoring the situation of families. However, none of the reports demonstrates how the perspectives from those groups were included during the development of VNR reports.

Collaborative approaches to VNR processes were referenced in several countries, and included the use of existing platforms. They often involved national multi-sectorial ministerial representation, Statistical offices and, sometimes, civil society, as well as the UN agencies. Benin included two representatives of women’s organisations in the VNR steering committees to integrate the SDGs into public policies. The rest of the reports do not indicate the involvement of women-led or women-focused institutions in shaping how the countries will seek to achieve the SDGs.

Engagement of the Volunteer Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) or other Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)-related professional communities in the VNR processes was not cited in any of the reports.

Lastly, there appeared to be a limited recognition of importance of MEL, but recognition of MEL related capacity gaps.

The overarching conclusion is that despite selected reference to sex-disaggregated monitoring data, evaluation receives little attention, and evaluative evidence, particularly related to equity and gender equality, is not commonly used to inform policymakers in the VNR processes reviewed. A gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers an opportunity for transformative change. Bringing evaluative evidence on gender equality and equity needs to be strengthened and/or established, to go beyond the use of disaggregated data. Comprehensive qualitative and quantitative evidence is necessary to indicate the status of progress, and to understand the reasons behind the successes and the challenges in achieving gender equality in the SDG era and beyond.

The following African countries are supposed to present their VNRs in 2019: Ghana, Lesotho, Mauritania, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tunisia, and United Republic of Tanzania. Findings from this analysis can be used regionally and further to advocate for gender-equality and equity-focused evaluation for SDGs. Agencies in charge of VNRs are strongly encouraged to engage with VOPEs and gender machineries, to integrate the principles of gender equality and “Leaving no one behind” for Agenda 2030. Likewise, with support from EvalPartners, EvalGender+, African Gender Development and Evaluation Network (AGDEN), and others, VOPEs and gender machineries can become...
Equity focus and gender-responsiveness: shedding light on critical blind spots for transformative change: Africa and beyond
partners in country VNR processes to strengthen attention to the principle of leaving no one behind, and specifically, to strengthen comprehensive reporting on SDG 5 and other cross-cutting SDGs.

The selected findings and conclusions above are intended to illustrate how equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluative evidence has been incorporated in 2018 VNRs in African countries. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of global nature have been published by IIED and EvalGender+, with EvalSDGS in February 2019.

1. This paper is based on an upcoming draft to be published by IIED on Gender Equality in the 2018 VNRs.
2. EvalGender+, the global partnership to promote the demand, supply and use of Equity-Focused and Gender-Responsive Evaluations.
5. SDG5 target 5.5 aims to ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life
6. SDG 3. Indicator 3.3.2 “Tuberculosis incidence per 1,000 population”

Endnotes
References


Chloé Naneix, a Morocco-based emerging evaluator, has almost five years of experience as an independent evaluation consultant, combined with 8 years in project management. A passionate gender advocate, she strives to place gender equity at the center of her evaluation practice. She has designed and conducted eleven project reviews in the fields of women empowerment, youth employability, green economy and social entrepreneurship. Most recently, she has been working on developing a Gender Analysis concept for a Swiss NGO supporting women’s organizations in the MENA region and conducted a pilot study with a youth development project in Morocco. She is a member of the Moroccan Evaluation Association (AME), AEA, RFE-e, and EvalYouth EvalMena Chapter.

Svetlana Negroustoueva recently joined AfDB’s Independent Evaluation Office as a Principal Evaluation Officer. Previously, as an M&E and Learning expert at the Climate Investment Funds (CIF)/World Bank, she managed and quality assured 21 evaluation and learning activities. She has over 15 years of experience with MEL and research for various implementing entities, across such areas as environment, health, food security and social inclusion. Through her work for CIF, Global Environmental Facility, UN and USAID-funded projects she maintained a gender lense to her M&E assignments. Her authored and co-authored work includes Advancing towards SDGs with Gender-responsive Evaluations and Professional Evaluation Associations” in UN Women’s Transform magazine; “Gender as a Safeguard – The Human Rights Approach” under ECG Evaluation Cooperation Group; Haiti Gender Analysis, Feminist Evaluation on Better Evaluation platform; and “Compendium of Gender Equality and HIV Indicators”. Svetlana is a Co-chair of EvalGender+ and an active member of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). She holds a Masters degree in Public Affairs from the University of Texas, USA.
The African Gender & Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) has since 2006 been engaged in research, development and the practice of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach located at the nexus (or intersection) of human rights, gender and development. It deploys a human rights framework embedded within feminist ontology, epistemology and methodology to assure that design, implementation as well as evaluation of development projects, programmes or policies are responsive to gender equality, women’s empowerment and social equity.

This article explains the approach, describes how it was developed and highlights the distinction between AGDEN’s ‘Rights Responsive Evaluation’ and similar approaches including gender-sensitive evaluations, equity focused evaluation and feminist evaluation.
**Introduction**

The African Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) was created to fill a gap and instigate transformation. AGDEN was established in 2002 by the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) and UN Women with the aim of strengthening the effectiveness and gender responsiveness of development programmes and projects to human rights. As a special interest group of AfrEA, its history is closely tied to this Pan-African evaluation association. AGDEN's mandate is to "develop and promote the use of participatory monitoring and evaluation (M&E) based on gender and rights in Africa". A central element that guides AGDEN's vision in its research remains in the principle that, "evaluation reiterates that women and men have a role and a responsibility to ensure sustainable development" (AfrEA, 2004).

**Background and Context**

It is incontrovertible that the last four decades have witnessed steadily growing rhetoric and concern with human and peoples' rights.

The 1970s heralded global attention to issues of women in development, which morphed into gender and development (Bunch & Frost, 2000). Representatives of 171 nation states to the UN conference on human rights adopted the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action by consensus. This Declaration affirmed that 'human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of governments'.

The influence of the rights discourses on development action seeded by these events and history, increased the tempo and amplified the voice for rights in development in the early years of the millennium but not in the evaluation of development. Joachim Theis of Save the Children (2003) observed that:

"A rights-based evaluation is not just a technical exercise in data collection and analysis. It is a dialogue and a democratic process to learn from each other, to strengthen accountability and to change power relations between stakeholders”.

Stephen Porter (2009) reported the gap in the literature concerning the use of human rights to frame evaluations stating that, 'within the discipline of evaluation, work that embraces human rights is patchy - it is there in principle, but there is little substance to hold onto and mark out' (2009:1). By this time, AGDEN had established at least two powerful reasons for this trend; namely, unfamiliarity with how to integrate human rights practically into M&E and unwillingness or resistance to do so.

To date, attempts to mainstream human rights into development, especially M&E, have not been hugely successful. In 2005, the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) issued guidelines for integrating human rights perspectives and gender equality into evaluations. This guidance document was re-issued in 2011 and 2014 ([http://www.uneval.org/document/download/UNEG_HRGender_web_final](http://www.uneval.org/document/download/UNEG_HRGender_web_final)). Although the document is much improved, it is directed more to evaluation commissioners and managers than to evaluators.

The AGDEN M&E Approach: Rights Responsive Evaluation
After the 1995 5th Beijing World Conference on Women, and following the Millennium Declaration of 2000, the UN system has pursued gender mainstreaming as an operational strategy for both human rights and gender equality. In 2012, UN Women as the coordinator of the UN SWAP spearheaded the assignment of common performance standards for the gender-related work of all UN entities, in order to achieve greater coherence and accountability. It is unequivocal that the ‘UN has played an important role in setting the normative, policy and development agenda for human rights and gender equality in countries’ (UNEG, 2011 p.2). But the speed of change has been painfully slow and the desired transformation is still largely elusive (Epita, 2018). The UN continues to spearhead gender equality and social equity through the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development with its principle of leaving no one behind.

Despite the rhetoric on human rights and the monumental investments in resources and effort to date, evaluations which genuinely respond to human rights, especially of programmes and projects, remain few. AGDEN has addressed this gap since its creation through research, training, publications and support of the practice of evaluation that is responsive to gender and human rights.

**Rationale for the AGDEN M&E Approach**

AGDEN’s research found that one of the reasons for the difficulty in engendering evaluation practice within the development community and evaluation constituency, is the success of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (AGDEN 2012 & 2018). The OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability are wildly and widely popular in programme evaluation, more than the less known standards and principles. Until very recently, the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria have been unchallenged.

AGDEN found that none of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria (1986, 1991, 2000) reflects key ideas or notions from the human rights and gender discourses, despite efforts to change this. Development evaluation originated from, and is still closely associated with, the evaluation of aid and, within this perspective, the criteria make complete sense (Etta, F E, 2004). They are at the service of and generally take the side of the programme developer and without a doubt, the funder. In the last decade and a half however, since the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action on Aid Effectiveness, development action has greatly broadened the scope of evaluation to include and respond to equity as well as mutual accountability in the evaluation of development. Efforts have been made to integrate gender sensitivity into the use of the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. These have come to a head with a global engagement with their reviewing currently ongoing.

"The AGDEN M&E Approach is composed of four principles and one law. The four principles are expected to be applied principally during programme planning, design, implementation and to a lesser extent during programme evaluation while the law is to be used for programme monitoring and evaluation".

Some approaches such as gender-sensitive evaluation (UN Women), equity-focused evaluation (Segone & UNICEF) and feminist evaluation (Podems) have attempted to respond to gender-based discrimination in development and programme evaluation. However, none of these was found
to be without gaps (Etta, F.E. 2012). All these efforts were offering usually quite good advice and explanations of what was missing, including what could be added, but very little concrete steps on how to ‘add’, ‘integrate’ in the commonly used evaluation plan or model. In some cases, the advice was tilted in favour of evaluation commissioners and managers (UNEG).

The AGDEN Approach (principles and law) was developed principally for evaluators by isolating and extracting key notions, concepts and ideas from the thematic areas of human rights, gender and development, refined by feminist ideals and methods, and infusing these to create the monitoring and evaluation approach. The rest of this section describes in brief how the approach was developed.

The Human Rights-Based Approach is a programming approach supported by the principles of equality, equity, empowerment, non-discrimination, transparency, responsibility and participation of human rights. It promotes justice, equality and freedom, and tackles the power issues that are at the root of poverty and exploitation by using the norms, principles and methods of human rights and social activism in development (Theis, 2003). The human rights norms found in different instruments, resolutions, interpretations as well as declarations, conventions and judicial or quasi-judicial recommendations made by the competent institutions such as national and international courts, judicial commissions, etc. are encapsulated in a simple mnemonic – the ‘ENTAP Standard’. It stands for ‘Equality, Equity, Non-Discrimination, Transparency, Accountability and Participation’. This standard represents both the spirit and letter of human rights because it holds that, ‘all human beings are equal in nature’, and these principles which should apply to all are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. This standard is a critical human rights dimension to which the AGDEN Approach responds.

The four AGDEN principles affirm that the processes in the women in development (WID), women and development (WAD) and gender and development (GAD), feminist evaluation literature as well as the human rights approach to development are all applicable and useful for gender responsive and equity-sensitive programme, project and policy development i.e. design, implementation and monitoring. The AGDEN law i.e. evaluation criteria, was developed through a process of systematic interrogation, analysis and syntheses of human rights (HR) principles and standards, the Human Rights-Based Approach to development programming, gender and development (GAD) principles as well as feminist notions. This process resulted in the identification and isolation of five key criteria namely: empowerment, participation, inclusion, non-discrimination and accountability.

The AGDEN Approach to M&E: Rights Responsive M&E

The AGDEN Approach was piloted between 2011 and 2012 and has been practiced by members and trainees since 2013. However, it is still relatively little known and it has not been widely publicised because of resource limitations. Currently, only a few evaluators have the skills and expertise to use it fully.

The AGDEN Approach, in summary, is composed of four principles and one law. The four principles are expected to be applied principally during programme planning, design, implementation, and, to a lesser extent, for evaluation. On the other hand, the law is to be used for monitoring and, to a greater extent, evaluation.

**Principle 1 – Programme/project preparation (conceptualisation/ risk assessments/design**
etc.) include gender and power analysis of context and beneficiary populations: This implies that project or programme developers need to undertake analyses of the nature of power and relationships between men and women, boys and girls and other groups in the project location involved with or affected by the planned intervention.

Principle 2 – Programme/project/ Monitoring Evaluation and Learning staff understand local laws that frame the program/project and the human rights they affect or influence: National laws, policies and regulations provide the backdrop for rights and the canvas for lived experiences reflecting the degree to which human rights principles and standards are upheld. It is important for project or programme developers to have some knowledge of those rights that frame the work in which they are engaged. For instance, if a programme is in education, project staff ought to understand the major educational laws, policies or strategies in the jurisdiction of their interventions.

Principle 3 – Programme/project/MEL staff identify and address relevant (Programme and project related) duty bearers: Institutional structures, arrangements, organizational policies and practices are upheld, maintained and/or changed by officials (State or non-state) charged with duties and responsibilities, which impinge on the lives and well-being of populations. Programme implementers need to know the key institutions and individuals with authority over their projects or localities. For example, if a programme is in education, project staff ought to identify and know the institutions individuals with educational responsibility in their project/intervention area.

Principle 4 – Programme/project/MEL staff engage, involve and ‘educate’ rights holders: Programme or project beneficiary populations and host communities sometimes require stoking of their agency to improve clarity around their rights; to navigate the labyrinth of institutions, laws and policies that suppress, oppress or deny rights; or simply to find the voice (when necessary) to express themselves as rights holders. For example, if a programme is in education, project staff ought to identify and get to know some of the schools; teachers, parents, and students in their project/intervention area for purposes of related ‘education’.

Law (a) – Evaluation managers, commissioners and evaluators use AGDEN Evaluation criteria in all programme, project and policy evaluations.

Law (b) – All evaluations use participatory & empowerment methods

AGDEN Evaluation Criteria

The innovation in the AGDEN Rights Responsive M&E Approach is to be found in the law and specifically, the evaluation criteria. Their application requires that the criteria are taken in pairs and interrogated in an interrelated/relational dimension; that is, one AGDEN criterion paired with an OECD/DAC one. Systems thinking highlights and values interrelationships and different perspectives. This is what the AGDEN criteria intend and evoke as shown in Table 1. The other contribution of the AGDEN criteria is that the focus is not any longer solely on the programme, project or policy or indeed their funders, but on the beneficiaries or intervention targets, as well.

The AGDEN approach is applicable to all the stages of an evaluation; planning, design, data collection and analysis.
reporting and use. The principles are applied at the start-up phase of the evaluation, i.e. the planning and design stages, to ensure adequate voice and reach for rights holders as well as duty bearers. The criteria are applied in identifying the evaluation questions and indicators. The first part of the AGDEN Law identifies the twinned criteria and the second part suggests that evaluation methods, reporting and use need to be sensitive to issues of power, status and rights; identifying the use of methods relevant and responsive to these elements.

Table 1 shows the 4 out of 5 AGDEN criteria paired with the OECD/DAC ones. The table signifies that while assessing the OECD/DAC criterion of ‘Relevance’ of a programme or a project, for instance, the twinned AGDEN criterion ‘Empowerment’ should also be simultaneously assessed. Relevance is thus seen in the light of the degree to which the intervention being assessed has been empowering for women, or any others considered as marginalized groups, in the context of the intervention. In other words, how relevant the intervention is in changing gender relations (equality) or social equity. A project, programme etc. can be deemed relevant for gender equality to the extent that it makes rights holders aware of and act in ways to protect or uphold their own rights if they are a discriminated group (such as certain women groups). On the other hand, if the project makes duty bearers understand, uphold, promote and protect these rights, then the project is relevant for gender equality and human rights of the disempowered. Other dimensions of relevance can be assessed but the AGDEN - a rights responsive evaluation approach - hold that this is a critical one.

The next pair of criteria, that is ‘Effectiveness’ with ‘Inclusion and Participation’, should seek to determine the effectiveness of inclusion and participation of rights holders and duty bearers in the project or programme.

The pair of ‘Efficiency’ and ‘Non-Discrimination’ draws attention to the possibility that the pursuit of efficiency could influence, or be a source of, discrimination for a certain group and thus asks if the programme or project took any steps to mitigate that potential outcome.

The pair of ‘Impact’ and ‘Accountability’ addresses the idea that impact is to be seen if and when duty bearers and rights holders routinely demonstrate accountability (responsibility) for change in the gender and social relations as a result of the project, programme or intervention.

---

**Table 1: Correspondence between OECD/DAC & AGDEN Evaluation Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria</th>
<th>AGDEN Evaluation Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inclusion &amp; Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

The AGDEN M&E Approach: Rights Responsive Evaluation
The AGDEN Approach proposes that the criterion of sustainability be interrogated for all the criterion pairs by assessing the durability, longevity and stability of all the changes found in the other criteria.

Conclusion

AGDEN has made a significant contribution to research, development and practice of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approach that is located at the intersection of human rights, gender and development. The proposed monitoring and evaluation approach is based on practical hands on experience. The Rights Responsive M&E approach attempts to give practical usable tools and techniques for the broad spectrum of evaluation activities to favour the participation of beneficiary communities. Therefore, it supports transparency in data collection, through considering the rights of beneficiaries as well as programme staff. The approach allows users to identify and respond to the power relations around interventions - a major stumbling block to successful development action, gender equality, women’s empowerment and social equity. AGDEN believes that the widespread use and application of the ideas in the AGDEN Rights Responsive M&E Approach will usher in an era of genuine transformation in development action.
Endnotes


References


AGDEN, (Fazeela Hoosen, Alexis Salvador Loye & Madri Jansen van Rensburg), 2018, Developing a Culturally Responsive Curriculum on Gender Transformative Evaluation based on best practices: A South to South Collaboration – Africa: Including the voices of Young and Emerging Evaluators


Corinna Csáky, 2008, No One to Turn to The under-reporting of child sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers and peacekeepers, Save the Children Fund.

Etta, F., October 2018, Amplifying the Agency of Women and Girls through Gender Responsive Evaluation, Commissioned article in Transform Magazine, UN Women

Etta, F., April 2018, Safeguarding Oxfam’s Failures: Ethical MEL Practice? Commissioned Paper


International Human Rights Network, 2005, Human Rights Based Approaches: An Introduction

Podems, D., August 2010, Feminist Evaluation and Gender Approaches: There’s a Difference? Journal of MultiDisciplinary Evaluation, Volume 6, Number 14


https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B9uTDrpkrkkgRUDGeWRIoVR2NTF


Seigart, D., & Brisolara, S., Editors’ notes. New Directions for Evaluation, 96, 1-2, 2002

Srilatha, Batilina and Alexandra Pittman., 2010, Capturing Change in Women’s Realities, AWID, Toronto


Theis, Joachim., April 2003, Rights-based Monitoring and Evaluation; A Discussion Paper, Save the Children


UNIFEM & Carleton University, July 2009, Evaluation Training CD
Bintou Nimaga, is a Socio-environmental consultant with more than twenty years’ experience in monitoring, evaluation and gender disciplines. In her professional career, she has occupied positions of responsibility in public and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Ms. Nimaga has organized and facilitated several training sessions for managers and development agents in gender approaches to development, planning monitoring and evaluation. She has led several teams and has conducted various research studies on the gender equality approach. Ms. Nimaga has also acted as an expert and specialist in various short-term projects and program evaluations in Mali her home country and internationally.

Florence E. Etta is an award-winning evaluator. She is currently CEO and Principal Consultant with GRAIDE International Consultants, a monitoring, evaluation and research enterprise devoted to supporting CSOs and NGOs, and bridging the CSO-Government divide in Africa. Florence has been vital to the growth of the Africa Gender & Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN) - one of the foremost associations committed to gender responsive and human rights sensitive evaluation. AGDEN has contributed to the knowledge and training in this specialized niche. Florence is currently the Chair of UN Women Global Evaluation Advisory Committee to which she was invited in 2015 in recognition of her work in gender responsive and human rights sensitive evaluation in Africa.
This article examines the experience with the new Country Portfolio Evaluation (CPE) approach that UN Women (UNW) introduced in 2015 to assess the contributions to gender equality results at country level. It explains the key elements of the theory-based CPE design and methodology, which focuses on a participatory process geared towards learning and strengthening evaluative thinking amongst UNW staff and partners. The article confirms the importance of evaluation governance arrangements and the value of a standardized evaluation approach for improving evaluation quality and for using the evaluation process as an opportunity to strengthen capacity for gender-responsive evaluation.
Introduction

Since their introduction in 2015, UN Women has conducted nine Country Portfolio Evaluations (CPEs) in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region: Mozambique, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, Sudan, South Sudan, Rwanda, Kenya and Burundi. The article explores how far the CPE evaluation approach has been effective with regard to the following two dimensions: (a) assessing gender equality results at country level and (b) the experience with applying the CPE approach and methodology in the different countries.

Gender-Responsive Evaluation in UN Women

Characteristics of a Gender-Responsive Evaluation

The UNW Evaluation Policy (2012) lays out the purpose of evaluation in UN-Women and the principles and standards that guide its practice. The UNW evaluation principles are: National ownership and leadership; UN system coordination and coherence; Innovation; Fair power relations and empowerment; Participation and inclusion; Independence and impartiality; Transparency; Quality and credibility; Intentionality and use of evaluation; and Ethics.

According to UN Women, a gender responsive evaluation includes looking at two dimensions: (1) What is evaluated. This is done through the assessment of results and power relations, which may give rise to change in inequities, discrimination and unfair power relations as result from an intervention; (2) How the evaluation is being undertaken. This requires that the evaluation process is inclusive, participatory and respectful to both rights holders and duty-bearers.

The application of these principles requires:

1. the application of an analytical framework that helps to understand the underlying structural and cultural barriers to achieve gender equality and the realization of human rights, fair power relations and access to resources and agency;

2. the development of gender-responsive evaluation questions and indicators that go beyond sex disaggregation and the use of gender-responsive data collection techniques i.e. mixed methods;

3. an evaluation team that has experience with human rights and gender analysis, is gender balanced and possesses experience in the specific cultural context;

4. evaluation governance and management arrangements that allow for effective stakeholder engagement during the evaluation process.

Country Portfolio Evaluation Design and Methodology

CPEs are designed to ensure both the accountability of UNW to donors and partners and to facilitate learning about what works in different contexts to improve the performance of UNW interventions over time. As explained in the UNW Guidance on Country Portfolio Evaluations (2016), CPEs assess all aspects of the UNW triple mandate that is (a) Policy and normative work; (b) Coordination of UN inter-agency work on gender equality and (c) Programmatic work to advance gender equality. UNW Strategic Notes (SNS) are the multi-year programming
Assessing Gender Equality Results at Country Level: The Experience with UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations in Eastern and Southern Africa
Instruments at country level which usually cover a four-year cycle aligned with the respective country-level UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). CPES evaluate SN’s achievements during this four-year period and consider both developmental and organizational results. CPES are conducted in the last year of a given UNW SN to inform the next programme cycle. They are focused on the medium to higher level results, beyond project level evaluations.

CPES follow a standardized evaluation approach and management arrangements while being flexible enough to adjust to specific contexts. They are based on a default evaluation design and methodology that calls for the explicit use of Theory of Change, a partnership analysis and a contribution analysis.

The scope of the CPE analysis includes both the assessment of organizational effectiveness results and development results. The underlying question is: ‘How well is UNW strategically positioned at country level to create results for gender equality and women’s empowerment?’ The evaluation methodology utilizes elements from the Outcome Mapping approach (2001) taking into account that UNW does not produce results directly but through partners. The analysis of UNW partnerships at country level hence becomes essential for understanding how change happens. The combined evidence on organizational effectiveness, relationships with partners and development results help assess to what extent the original Theory of Change for the UNW programme has worked in a given country. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

The UNW Guidance on Country Portfolio Evaluations (2016) provides a list of 37 generic evaluation questions structured under the criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability, human rights and gender equality.
A consultative process is applied in the beginning of the evaluation process to contextualize and filter this initial set of generic questions. Following this, the evaluation team applies a reduced number of questions during primary data collection for an in-depth analysis of fewer selected topics. The UNW Guidance on CPEs also provides templates for the evaluation TOR, evaluation inception report, evaluation report as well as analysis tools i.e. tables for the evidence and contribution analysis.

**Findings**

**Understanding Gender Equality Results, Organizational Effectiveness and Partnerships**

This section illustrates some key findings from CPEs carried out in ESA region between 2015 and 2018. They are structured around the key questions underlying the CPE design explained above.

**Contribution of UNW interventions to gender equality results at country level**

The CPEs in several countries (e.g. Mozambique 2015, Ethiopia 2016, Kenya 2018) have found that the UNW portfolio has contributed to addressing the root causes of gender inequality and changing the dynamics of power relations. However, gaps remain to achieve long-term results because root causes are intrinsically related to social norms and contextual factors e.g. cultural barriers and patriarchy. The analysis of the Theory of Change in the Rwanda CPE (2018), for example, revealed the importance of involving men for addressing attitudes and behaviors in the family milieu. It also showed that UNW contributions are limited by the length of engagements in the context of a 4-year programming cycle. In countries such as Ethiopia (2016), Tanzania (2016), South Sudan (2018) and Kenya (2018), CPEs have confirmed the role of UNW in providing effective leadership for positioning gender issues at national level and amongst UN agencies, coordinating gender work and contributing to a stronger GEWE enabling environment. However, efforts are sometimes constrained by limited partner capacity in terms of human and financial resources and a weak gender machinery which is likely to affect the sustainability of results.
Looking at the question of organizational effectiveness, CPEs in Ethiopia (2016), Tanzania (2016) and Rwanda (2018) have established that despite small teams, the offices managed to achieve substantive results through deploying competent and motivated staff. Several offices, however, are yet to develop or strengthen their Results-based Management (RBM), M&E and Knowledge management systems. This has implications not only on donor and results reporting but also on the ability to document lessons on ‘what works’ and establish UNW as knowledge hub at country level for issues around GEWE. CPEs in Mozambique (2015), South Sudan (2018) and Rwanda (2018) have identified limited financial resources and/or a single source funding base with dependency on a specific donor as constraints to a long-term engagement with partners and the full realization of GEWE results.

Role of UNW partnerships for delivering results

CPEs have confirmed that UNW has been effective in creating a wide range of strategic partnerships with UN agencies, the Government, civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector, universities etc. For example, in Ethiopia (2016), Tanzania (2016) and South Sudan (2018) UNW has been strong in facilitating dialogue and cooperation between partners and bringing them together around GEWE related topics. The multi-pronged partnership approach has been a significant enabler of results for gender equality through pulling together diverse and often limited resources and leveraging them for better outreach and impact. Effective relationships with strong partners were also regarded as key factors for sustainability to continue GEWE initiatives in the country beyond UNW support. At the same time the CPEs illustrated potential risks with regard to engaging with a large number of partners. First, the transaction cost for managing partnerships can become very high for UNW and with limited staff available UNW may spread itself too thin, as illustrated in Tanzania (2016) and Kenya (2018). Second, national and local partners sometimes lack institutional, human and financial capacity. In the context of short UNW funding cycles there may be limited scope for UNW to effectively strengthen their capacity. In such cases CPEs have called for a more rigorous partnership review to select fewer partners who can be instrumental in delivering long-term GEWE results at country level.

Experience with applying the CPE approach and methodology

Participatory evaluation approach

The number of CPE reference group members varied between 10 to 30 members and is composed of representatives from government, civil society, UN agencies, donors etc. The experience with CPEs in ESA region confirms the importance of an effective evaluation reference group during the evaluation process. Evaluation teams involved in the CPEs highly appreciated the evaluation reference group as a sounding board and key resource for information during the evaluation process. The engagement of the evaluation reference group was essential to fill data gaps during the evaluation. It facilitated the
understanding of partner relationships and dynamics and ensured that evaluation recommendations were relevant, grounded in reality, feasible and useful.

**Evaluation governance and evaluation team composition**

The methodological advice provided by the UNW Regional Evaluation Specialist (RES) and his/her participation in the evaluation data collection during the field mission proved to be essential to guide the evaluation team and ensure the consistent application of key elements of the CPE methodology. Experience shows that evaluation consultants are not necessarily familiar with applying Theory of Change and a gender analysis in an evaluation that assesses different dimensions of policy, coordination and programmatic work, as well as organizational effectiveness and efficiency. Feedback from CPE evaluation teams indicates that the RES helped to understand the building blocks of the CPE methodology and ‘take away the fear’ that might result from just reading the CPE guidance. In addition, and given CPEs are commissioned and funded by UNW Country Offices, the RES played a key role in safeguarding the independence of the evaluation process.

**Use of Theory of Change in the evaluation**

The default agenda for the participatory evaluation inception workshop includes a group discussion on indicators for effective partnerships and the validation of the reconstructed UNW Theory of Change including its assumptions. This discussion with partners was considered very useful for a critical reflection amongst partners on how change happens for achieving GEWE results at country level. The analysis around the Theory of Change helped to understand the key pillars for an effective GEWE programme at country level. It also helped the evaluation team to develop a relevant analytical framework for assessing progress in the different areas of the UNW triple mandate that includes normative, coordination and programmatic work.

The refined Theory of Change is used again in the debriefing workshop as framework to present initial evaluation findings and validate them with partners. The debriefing workshop also includes a participatory group discussion on potential recommendations for UNW and partners to improve future GEWE initiatives at country level.

Feedback from the different CPEs on this participatory process indicates that it is perceived as very effective for creating ownership of evaluation findings and recommendations. In addition, and very importantly, it helps to strengthen critical and evaluative thinking amongst UNW staff and partners. This demonstrates the potential value of the CPE approach for capacity building on gender-responsive evaluation both within the organization and amongst partners. The co-management arrangement of CPEs by the Country Office and the UNW IES through the RES allowed for a collaborative learning process as opposed to a ‘top-down’ and less participatory evaluation process.

Experience shows that a few hours discussion on the Theory of Change during the evaluation inception workshop was not always sufficient to comprehensively unpack the UNW Theory of Change and its assumptions. CPE evaluation teams have indicated that more time to validate the UNW Theory of Change, i.e. at least one full working day, should be factored in at the beginning of the evaluation mission for a participatory reflection exercise with UNW staff and partners. The process requires an evaluation team with explicit expertise in Theory of Change and with strong facilitation skills.

**Evaluation methodology and quality of the CPE**

Feedback from the evaluation teams involved in CPEs indicates that the templates for the evaluation
Assessing Gender Equality Results at Country Level: The Experience with UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluations in Eastern and Southern Africa
The inception report and evaluation report in the CPE guidance are very useful to structure the thinking and overall approach of the evaluation. Evaluation consultants also pointed out that their exposure to the CPE methodology allowed them to learn and use some of the CPE analysis tools such as evidence and contribution analysis tables in other non-UNW evaluation assignments.

In terms of CPE quality, all UNW completed evaluation reports go through an external evaluation quality assessment based on the GERAAS (Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System) methodology (2015). This results in a rating on a scale from “Unsatisfactory” to “Very good”. Amongst the nine completed CPEs in the ESA region, three were rated “Very Good” and two were rated “Good”. The external quality assessment for recent CPEs will only be available in Q1 of 2019. In terms of evaluation utilization, UNW Strategic Note documents show that the evidence from CPE recommendations and lessons has systematically been used to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Quality Rating</th>
<th>Use of CPE</th>
<th>Highlights from GERAAS assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>SN 2016-20</td>
<td>A CPE report with a clear methodology and evaluation framework that follows a coherent logic and rigorous data analysis. The section on Conclusions can be improved through providing deeper insights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>SN 2017-20</td>
<td>A very good quality report that can be used with confidence. Unexpected findings should be more clearly identified and the Executive Summary needs to be further synthetized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>SN 2017-21</td>
<td>A good quality report which however has weaknesses in presenting the Theory of Change, and quantitative methods are not included in the CPE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>SN 2018-21</td>
<td>A strong report that is technically complete. The CPE could provide more information on how evaluation ethics standards were implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>SN 2018-21</td>
<td>A CPE report with a good quality theory-based and participatory methodology. It would be useful to complete the information in the Annexes and in the Evaluation Matrix.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Sudan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Forthcoming in Q1 2019</td>
<td>SN 2019-21</td>
<td>Forthcoming in Q1 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>SN 2019-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SN 2019-22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SN 2019-23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: UNW GATE system
inform UNW interventions in the subsequent programming cycle.

Conclusions

The CPEs carried out by UN Women in the ESA region since 2015 demonstrate the value of the CPE approach for analyzing both the contribution of UNW to gender equality results at country level as well as the challenges related to changing social norms and cultural barriers that hinder progress on GEWE. The CPEs also confirm the validity of the analytical framework that systematically looks at dimensions of organizational effectiveness and the role of partnerships for delivering GEWE results. Assessing changes in gender and power relations can be challenging and the application of a Theory of Change approach has proven useful to understand how behavioral change happens. The CPE methodology can be considered innovative as it integrates different analytical frameworks and tools in a comprehensive and standardized evaluation approach. In terms of timing and content, all CPEs analyzed have proved valuable for providing evidence and lessons for the next UNW programming cycle.

The experience with CPEs in ESA region ascertains that evaluation governance arrangements have important implications on evaluation quality, levels of stakeholder engagement and the potential use of the evaluation findings. It also shows that the evaluation process is as important as the final evaluation product. The CPE approach, which calls for an active engagement of evaluation stakeholders, has shown the potential of using the evaluation process as a learning opportunity. For example, the participatory reflection on the Theory of Change during the inception and debriefing workshops has proven effective for introducing evaluative thinking amongst UNW staff and partners, which ultimately should contribute to strengthening national evaluation capacity. The active engagement of national governments and civil society representatives in the evaluation process is hence an important opportunity to strengthen national ownership, demand, and capacity for gender-responsive evaluation. Finally, the theory-based evaluation design is useful for broadening the evaluation analysis and explicitly looking at unexpected results and medium to long-term changes instead of short-term changes only.

However, to add value the CPE approach requires considerable evaluation team expertise combining experience and familiarity in gender analysis, Theory of Change, organizational assessment etc. Default evaluation tools provided in the CPE guidance, such as the tables for the evidence and contribution analysis, undoubtedly help to enhance the methodological and analytical rigor of CPEs. The use of a standardized evaluation approach and templates facilitates comparison across evaluation reports. The fact that elements of the CPE methodology are being replicated by evaluation consultants is very encouraging. This finding and the positive external quality ratings confirm the overall credibility and utility of the CPE methodology for assessing GEWE results at country level.

Endnotes

1. Responsibility for the information and views expressed in this paper lies entirely with the author. The content of this paper does not reflect the official opinion and position of UN Women.

2. Gender machinery is the institutional governmental structure set up to promote women’s advancement.
References


Caspar Merkle works as Regional Evaluation Specialist with the UN Women Regional Office for Eastern and Southern Africa. He brings 16+ years of experience in Strategic Planning, RBM and M&E across different UN agencies including the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Volunteers (UNV). Current responsibilities include the strengthening of decentralized evaluation systems, leading M&E capacity building initiatives for staff and partners and UN coordination on gender-responsive evaluation methods and processes. Caspar has published various articles on experiences with developing evaluation systems, enhancing evaluation quality and on measuring the contribution of volunteering to development. He has a background in Geography with specialization in Development Studies and Demography.
The importance of strengthening national evaluation systems is gaining traction with more states investing in developing the evaluation capacity of their institutions and systems for improved program delivery. Embedded in that approach, is the development of homegrown evaluation tools to conduct country-driven evaluations to improve overall government efficiency and effectiveness. Mainstreaming gender into evaluation policies and processes and involving national gender machineries should be part of the “modus operandi” of national evaluation systems. A national gender machinery monitors government actions to promote gender equality (Testolin, 2001). In Africa, Twende Mbele is a regional initiative that supports and documents the collaborative and individual efforts of state-led evaluations. Furthermore, Twende Mbele emphasizes gender mainstreaming as a cornerstone of national evaluations. This article presents the findings from a diagnostic study used to determine the gender responsiveness of national monitoring and evaluation systems in Benin, South Africa and Uganda. The conclusion is that while the three countries have implemented national evaluation systems, these systems need to be complemented with inputs from the existing national gender machinery in order to make a meaningful contribution to state evaluation policies, institutions and processes.
Introduction

The importance of strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems (NMES) is gaining momentum with more states investing in developing the evaluation capacity of their institutions and systems for improved program delivery. Embedded in that approach, is the development of homegrown evaluation tools to conduct country-driven evaluations to improve overall government efficiency and effectiveness. Establishing and building NMES within government processes has gained traction over the last decade with the intention of:

- **Generating knowledge** such that government can judge and improve service delivery and government performance more generally;

- **Enhancing accountability** for government to determine how much has been spent on financing policies and programmes; and

- **Improving decision-making** within governments because of the quality of information on service delivery available.

It is imperative that gender is integrated in the NMES to work towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women in society.

**Tracking gender commitments in African national processes for monitoring and evaluation**

Gender equality and the empowerment of women has been a principal goal of the global development agenda since the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, and more recently, of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2015.

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the “Maputo Protocol” and many other regional instruments, such as the recently adopted East African Gender Protocol and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Gender Protocol, compel African member states to adopt and implement policies that will help them to achieve this important sustainable development goal. As a result of these initiatives, often building on existing gender equality and feminist movements within each country, African states have established national gender machineries to assist in mainstreaming gender into government policies and programmes.

Notable are Uganda’s Gender Policy adopted in 2007, and South Africa’s Constitution and institutional framework for promoting gender equality, established in 2000. The expectation has been that country national gender commitments will complement emerging government policies and programs to ensure an engendered mode of service delivery. However, the literature (and experiences of the authors of this article) shows that gender machineries continue to work on the periphery of government programs.

This issue has been revealed through the evaluation of governments’ gender mainstreaming efforts. Various capacity constraints and patriarchal values attributed to this persistent paucity is covered elsewhere (CGE, 2015; UNECA, 2017). It is also worth noting that the evolving nature of evaluation methodologies and approaches in Africa covers diverse aspects of gender that cannot always be captured in an individual evaluation. Hence, this calls for a more robust multi-dimensional and flexible approach (Adu, 2017; United Nations, 2015). To this effect, the United Nations Entity for Gender
Equality and Women’s Empowerment (UN Women) has adopted “an innovative systemic evaluation practice” intended to capture the complexities and prioritize issues related to the gender equality agenda (Stephens, et al, 2018: 6). These developments in evaluation present an opportunity for the development and use of an indigenous methodology and approach for national evaluations that can capture developmental aspirations and citizens’ concerns such as gender equality.

The Twende Mbele Initiative is a peer-learning collaboration between African governments in South Africa, Uganda, Benin, and more recently Ghana, Niger and Kenya, to work together to strengthen their national monitoring and evaluation systems. CLEAR-AA and the Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) of the African Development Bank are core institutional partners providing strategic and technical support. The Programme, funded by DFID and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, seeks to enhance the technical and institutional monitoring and evaluation capacities of African partners through an approach that utilizes networks and peer learning. As a country-driven programme, the strategic mandate of these countries has been to ensure that NMES embody the ideals of gender equality and the empowerment of women in society. To this end, Twende Mbele undertook a diagnostic of the gender responsiveness of the government-wide monitoring and evaluation systems in Benin, Uganda, and South Africa. The diagnostic tool was designed in collaboration by the African Gender and Development Evaluators Network (AGDEN).

Overview of African National Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

The evolution of NMES in Africa follows a trajectory that is based on a model that was developed by Holvoet & Renard (2007) and adapted to developing countries context. A key part of this model is the national evaluation policy, that prescribes the national evaluation plan and the role that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plays in government programmes. The

"In 2017, Twende Mbele commissioned a diagnostic study to assess the level of gender responsiveness of the National Monitoring and Evaluation System for Benin, Uganda and South Africa, using a home-grown tool based on a robust, participatory and iterative approach".
An African approach for gauging the gender responsiveness of national monitoring and evaluation systems
national evaluations guided by their respective national evaluation policy and processes (see Table 1). National evaluations have been conducted to inform the state of delivery of services, pointing to critical areas of concern with relation to individual national development priorities. A unit or department that is situated within the Presidency or the Office of the Prime Minister coordinates the policy framework in each of the three countries. South Africa began national evaluations in the 2012/2013 financial year, Benin in 2013, while Uganda commenced in the 2014/2015 year once the NMES were in place.

Gender Diagnostic of Selected African National Evaluation Systems

In 2017, Twende Mbele commissioned a diagnostic study to assess the level of gender responsiveness of the NMES for Benin, Uganda and South Africa, using a home-grown tool based on a robust, participatory and iterative approach (Jansen van Rensburg & Blaser-Mapitsa, 2017). This AGDEN gender diagnostic matrix was used as an analytical tool to assess the extent to which provisions to consider gender within the National M&E Plan and the NMES are evident, as well as the level of functionality of those mechanisms for improving gender mainstreaming.

The two components were assessed through six pre-identified criteria, whereby each of the criteria was investigated through a set of questions that were answered from the document review of policies and legislation and from information garnered through interviews with identified stakeholders in the NMES. The selected criteria are:

1. Gender equality: it refers to the equal rights, roles, responsibilities and priorities assigned to the different categories of women, men, girls and boys. Evidence of this criteria was sought in the national evaluation policy and NMES;

2. Gender-responsive budgeting: it is related to integrating the gender perspective in all the phases of the budget and restructuring revenue and expenditure to promote gender equality;

3. Participation looks at the mechanisms that allow both women and men to represent their interests and to express their opinions to influence decisions and programmes that affect them;

4. Decision-making examines who is empowered to make decisions in general and decisions related to gender as well as to implementation of NMES;

5. Evaluation and revision checks whether and how national evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Evolution of country national evaluation systems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Goldman et al., 2018
policy is examined and evaluated from a gender perspective;

6. Sustainability refers to whether the benefits of an activity are likely to be maintained over the medium term and measure whether NMES can support gender mainstreaming in future particularly for sustained financing.

Using the above criteria, a gender diagnostic matrix is used to evaluate country performance. The matrix interrogates two levels, representing the policy and system, with the advocacy dimension embedded in both levels. Fifty-seven (57) questions which target equity and gender-responsive criteria with performance scales were used to populate the matrix and present the findings for the gender diagnostic of the three country NMES.

**Findings from the Gender Diagnostic study**

The gender diagnostic reveals that Benin, South Africa and Uganda have areas that need improvement to enhance the gender responsiveness of their NMES. These challenges include: lack of provision or clear guidelines for gender mainstreaming; insufficient involvement or influence of national gender machinery to support national evaluation processes; a deficit in the competence for gender mainstreaming of key actors in the NMES; and limited areas for voluntary organizations for professional evaluators (VOPES) and gender equality advocates in evaluation processes.

In **Benin**, the NMES does not have an appropriate mechanism to effectively ensure that gender is integrated into evaluations. This state of affairs is the consequence of the virtual absence of appropriate expertise to make gender responsive evaluations at the level of the ministries and agencies responsible for national evaluations. A major effort is made by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis to disaggregate data by sex. In addition, the Gender and Social Protection Technical Group effectively supports gender mainstreaming in the Country Poverty Reduction Strategy review and evaluation processes. Finally, the role of civil society in national evaluations is quite developed in Benin, where the civil society’s expertise supports the development of the national evaluation plan.

For the case of **Uganda**, the results indicate there is no specific mention of gender equality in the policy for national monitoring and evaluation. The policy seems to address the ‘what’ and is silent on ‘when’ and ‘how’ gender can be mainstreamed in evaluating public policies. The evaluation policy does not provide guidelines on gender responsive evaluation – it does purport adherence to standards in data collection, analysis and reporting, including disaggregating data by sex, which will improve future evaluation. It also emerged that the policy mentions that participatory approaches should be used in evaluation, though it does not specify which groups should be involved and if gender should be considered to choose them. Despite having a long-standing Gender policy, gender equality advocates have so far been excluded from processes related to the evaluation design or forums to influence the gender responsiveness of national evaluations.

In **South Africa**, an established constitutional and institutional mandate prescribes for gender parity in government departments as well as in delivery of social services. This mandate affords the national department for M&E (DPME) the leverage to ask for gender reporting per sector. Nonetheless, the diagnostic found gender to be weakly reflected in the critical checkpoints that guide government delivery. South Africa’s case also raised some debate around the polarities between i) assigning responsibility
An African approach for gauging the gender responsiveness of national monitoring and evaluation systems
for gender equality oversight to separate departments, departmental units and constitutional bodies, or ii) ensuring that gender becomes the responsibility of all sector departments at all levels against a set of guidelines and standards. The diagnostic found that this responsibility of gender mainstreaming the NMES can well be managed from the DPME and should be centralised to this department.

In Table 2, the results show how the three countries fare in terms of engendering the national evaluation plans and NMES using the five criteria mentioned above: gender equality, decision making, participation, review and sustainability. The country performance remains average (50%) or below average for most of the criteria under ‘national evaluation policy’. However, the average performance for review and revision of the national policy sits at 28%. Benin and Uganda score 17% and 22 % respectively, while South Africa scored 47%. The diagnostic reveals that the review processes for the national evaluation policy are not specific for gender mainstreaming, a concern for the national gender machinery, and are not able to measure the advance towards a more equal society. This shows that an opportunity to engender the national policy may not fully utilised by the NMES.

Although NMES is a state-led initiative, other stakeholders, such as development partners and civil society organizations, including VOPEs, should be engaged to facilitate gender mainstreaming in the NMES. Overall the NMES performs better in the areas of ‘participation’ with South Africa and Benin scoring 78% for involving VOPEs, gender equality advocates and institutions that specialize in knowledge for evaluations. In Benin, for example, civil society and gender equality advocates participate in the validation workshops. Uganda scores the highest, at 83%, for sustainability because future funding for NMES is guaranteed, although it may not be directed toward the enhancing gender equality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component/Criteria</th>
<th>Country performance rate</th>
<th>Average performance rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National evaluation policy</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review &amp; Revision</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National monitoring and evaluation system</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Budgeting</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision Making</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Twende Mbele, (2018c: 3, 4)
The inference that can be drawn from the Gender Diagnostic study is that more synergy is required from the NMES and the national gender machinery. The diagnostic found that the national evaluation policy for the three countries was adopted after the creation of a national gender machinery. However, these policies did not take advantage of the existence of this machinery to improve the level of gender responsiveness of NMES. The diagnostic proposes that national gender machineries must be actively involved in the development and implementation of crucial policies such as the NMES.

Given the status of gender within the national development goals, NMES can maximize the premium of the gender machinery to engender its policy and processes. Some suggestions that are drawn from the gender diagnostic are proposed here to make NMES more gender responsive.

**Recommendations for improved Gender responsiveness of NMES and national evaluation policies**

The gender diagnostic study suggests that there is potential to enhance the gender responsiveness of NMES. To ensure that Africa achieves SDG 5, governments need to engage the respective national gender machinery and actors involved in the NMES to facilitate purposeful gender mainstreaming in their national M&E processes. We present a few suggestions that could assist country-led national evaluation systems to become (more) gender responsive.

**NMES aligned to the national strategy and policy**

The three countries hold gender equality as an ideal in their development priorities as stated in their national strategies or policies, which must be incorporated into the evaluation strategy. It is important to review M&E systems and processes in order to improve their level of gender responsiveness, and put in place clear guidelines for gender mainstreaming into national evaluations. This could be reinforced by the development of clear and compulsory guidelines for gender mainstreaming in national evaluation. It will also be useful to improve the gender responsiveness of the national assessments tools, which are used by the NMES for monitoring and evaluation, by introducing gender-sensitive indicators in all sectorial programs and policies.

**Capacity development**

Explicit efforts should be made to develop or strengthen the capacities of officials and stakeholders within the NMES. Targeted training and resources should be made available to facilitate gendered analysis in evaluations. As a result, skills and competencies are transferred to the relevant actors and decision-makers of NMES as well as in the various sector departments. A case may be made to integrate gender focal points in the design of programs and policies and to conduct evaluations at the sectorial levels. This will strengthen the capacity of key actors and of the NMES on gender mainstreaming and gender analysis at all levels of government. It is equally important to allocate adequate (human and financial) resources required to evaluate and monitor gender-mainstreaming activities in national programs.

**Mechanism to monitor gender responsiveness of evaluations**

It may be useful to establish a mechanism to monitor the gender responsiveness of national and sector evaluations within the NMES. The Gender Focal Points in government departments could be used to assist, guide, monitor and report on gender mainstreaming with the NMES. This will encourage the national gender machineries to play a more active role of ensuring that evaluation practices respond to national gender imperatives. This mechanism ...
can include the involvement of civil society actors with gender expertise.

**Conclusion**

The article concludes that the three countries have a NMES that operates in parallel to their respective national gender machineries. As a result, this effort has not been systematically used in engendering NMES. The national M&E policy of each of the countries needs to be reviewed to include aspects that are relevant to gender mainstreaming, as well as to mandate the NMES to enhance the level of gender responsiveness of evaluations. This article recommends that the NMES be aligned to national development imperatives for gender equality by providing policy direction and guidelines, increasing the capacity for gender mainstreaming, and providing a mechanism that can monitor the gender responsiveness of the NMES.


References
Cara Waller is the Programme Manager of the Twende Mbele African Partnership programme. She has been working in the evaluation space in South Africa for five years, coming previously from a career in Australia. With a Masters in International Health and Evaluation, she has worked in evaluation for over ten years, primarily in health promotion and youth development.

Parfait Kasongo is the most recent addition to the Twende Mbele team, and is the Communications & Learning Coordinator. He started life as an Engineer and has recently discovered his passion for facilitating story-telling and sharing new knowledge. His research interests include regional politics and governance, which he is pursuing through a law/international relations degree at Wits University.

Angelita Kithatu-Kiwekete is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, CLEAR AA/ Twende Mbele. Her research interests include the innovations and constraints in which governments operate. She is conversant with gender issues and works to provide strategic linkages conceptually and practically between vulnerable women in community; policy and development processes. She has authored knowledge pieces as well as made presentations on this topic. She has conducted research and published on the supra, national and local political and economic landscape of the continent. She holds a PhD in Public Financial Governance from the University of Witwatersrand, South Africa.
CODE discusses IDEV Strategic Directions

In January 2019, the Committee on Operations and Development Effectiveness (CODE) of the AfDB's Board of Directors discussed the strategic directions for IDEV, as the Independent Evaluation Strategy which guides IDEV's work was coming to an end. To prepare this discussion, IDEV had initiated three key reviews to assess its performance and draw lessons and recommendations from its current practices: i) a self-evaluation of the implementation of the 2013-2017 IES; ii) an external quality assessment of its evaluation products; and iii) an Independent Peer Review as a means of supplementing the self-evaluation. Overall, the self-assessment concluded that the implementation of the Strategy was satisfactory. It identified areas where progress was made and the factors that have hindered progress, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of IDEV.

The independent quality assessment of evaluation products showed a notable increase in the quality of evaluations over the Strategy period. The Independent Peer Review examined the extent to which IDEV's products, activities and institutional context align with the international evaluation principles of Independence, Credibility, and Utility. It concludes that IDEV performed relatively well in terms of independence and credibility, but the assessment of utility (in particular the use by Bank Management of evaluations) remains less than satisfactory. The report makes several recommendations to the AfDB Board of Directors and Senior Management, and to IDEV, to which they prepared a Joint Response.

CODE encouraged IDEV to follow up on the recommendations made by the various reports, paying particular attention to: i) ensuring the harmonization and quality of evaluation methods; ii) better reflection of cross-cutting issues in evaluations; and iii) wider dissemination of evaluation results. It encouraged IDEV and Bank Management to work together to strengthen the evaluation culture within the Institution and to ensure concrete and systematic implementation of IDEV's recommendations as well as greater use of evaluation results. 

IDEV makes a strong contribution to the 9th Afrea International Conference

The African Evaluation Association (AfEA) concluded its 9th biennial International Conference, themed “Accelerating Africa’s Development: Strengthening National Evaluation Ecosystems,” in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire on Friday 15 March, 2019. Over 650 participants from more than 65 countries attended the conference, which ran from the 11 to 15 March and where eight IDEV staff contributed to the weeklong event as trainers, session organizers, panelists and chairs.

The Conference was organized around 12 dynamic thematic strands, covering current issues such as: agriculture and food security, Made in Africa evaluation, gender, education and health, integrating Agenda 2063 and 2030 in evaluation, climate change, capacity development, and the Fourth Industrial Revolution.


The African Development Bank (AfDB)'s Independent Development Evaluation (IDev) conducted an evaluation synthesis of Lines of Credit (LOCs) in response to a request of the Board for an independent review of the effectiveness of the Bank’s LOCs. The synthesis found that:

- LOCs are relevant for International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and client Financial Intermediaries (FIs), but the relevance to the end beneficiaries is open to debate.

- The design of LOCs is often not underpinned by sufficient analytical work.

- The effectiveness of LOCs is often questionable because of the lack of reliable information at the end-beneficiary level for analyzing the development results.

- The efficiency of LOCs is satisfactory when measured in terms of their profitability for the IFIs and FIs, disbursement rates, and time.

- The sustainability of LOCs is not well investigated in the literature.

- The enforcement of environmental and social standards considerations is problematic.


To inform the Bank's new country strategy for Cabo Verde, IDEV undertook a country strategy and program evaluation, which encompasses two Country Strategy Papers (CSPs): the CSP 2009-2012, extended to 2013, and the CSP 2014-2018.

It covers 26 operations, primarily in the areas of governance, infrastructure, agriculture/water management, environment, energy and statistics; and examines questions such as:
- To what extent the specific interventions have been relevant to answer the needs of the country?
- To what extent sustainability issues were considered during the design of the strategy and its monitoring?
- And to what extent the AfDB strategy in Cabo Verde has been designed to promote Gender Equality and Social Inclusion?

The evaluation main recommendations to AfDB’s management are:

1. The Bank should continue to support government-led reforms aimed at boosting inclusive growth and fiscal sustainability, but this should be underpinned by a better understanding of binding constraints.

2. The new CSP should identify ways to maximize synergies across the Bank’s strategy pillars.

3. Strategic results should be agreed upon with the national authorities and be regularly tracked.

4. The new strategy should put more emphasis on project quality and sustainability.

5. Scale-up Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) interventions and reforms to boost employment and to make the growth process more inclusive.

6. Make watershed management programs more sustainable by integrating agricultural value-chain development and mainstreaming climate change adaptation/mitigation.

7. Strengthening the Bank’s in-country presence for policy dialogue is encouraged, at least with a Portuguese-speaking focal point based in Praia.

Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) has published an evaluation of the Country Strategy and Program (CSP) of the African Development Bank (AfDB) for the Republic of Mauritius over a ten-year period (2009–2018). During this period, which encompasses two strategic cycles (CSP 2009–2013 and CSP 2014–2018), the funds committed by the AfDB to Mauritius amounted to approximately USD 854 million (excluding equity funds and some trust funds). The bulk of the AfDB’s operations over the evaluation period focused on the governance, finance, and power sectors.

The evaluation’s main findings, over the period in review, are:

- The relevance of the AfDB’s strategies and programs in Mauritius was deemed satisfactory. The AfDB’s country strategies are aligned to the strategic plans of the Government of Mauritius (GoM).

- The effectiveness of the AfDB’s strategies over the evaluation period presented a mixed picture. This performance dimension was rated unsatisfactory, as many of the planned operations did not materialize, mainly due to the GoM’s cap on sovereign loans.

- The efficiency of the AfDB’s assistance to Mauritius was found unsatisfactory, as most of the projects faced implementation delays, in particular Technical Assistance, leading to extensions of the completion dates.

- The Bank’s interventions in Mauritius are likely to be sustainable. Over the decade under review, all the Bank’s interventions had either been sustainable or had the potential to pave the way for other sustainable projects in the country.

- While the Bank’s interventions have supported inclusiveness, the country continues to face challenges with respect to the issues of youth participation and gender gaps in employment.

Past issues

Fourth Quarter 2018: Gender in Evaluation Volume 1
This edition of Evaluation Matters seeks to contribute to the debate around some of these questions, including: what types of approaches and methods that meaningfully include gender in evaluation have shown promising results? What type of information should an evaluation seek in order to assess the different impacts of development interventions on women and men at all levels? How could evaluation approaches support the change in mindset required to achieve wider societal impacts (transformative gender equality and women's empowerment practices)?


Third Quarter 2018: Evaluation Week Special
Strengthening Development Impact was the theme selected for AfDB Development Evaluation Week 2018. This edition of Evaluation Matters captures the images, discussions and knowledge shared during the three-day knowledge event on the crucial role of evaluation in facilitating the achievement of Africa’s transformation agenda.


Second Quarter 2018: Building supply and demand for evaluation in Africa Vol. 2
This edition of Evaluation Matters also focuses on the theme of developing a supply and demand for evaluation in Africa. While Evaluation Matters Quarter 1 2018 looks at the critical role played by evaluation in the effective implementation of good governance structures in Africa, in promoting accountability, learning, development effectiveness, and sustained and rapid economic growth, this edition showcases experiences from various evaluation stakeholders, focusing on peer learning and different views on building the supply and demand for evaluation at country and institutional levels.


First Quarter 2018: Building supply and demand for evaluation in Africa Vol. 1
Supply and demand is one of the most fundamental concepts of economics and serves as the backbone of a market economy. This concept is easily transferable to the governance of countries and institutions where the practice of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) serves as one of the most important tools for accountability, lesson learning and results orientation. The supply and demand of evaluation actors, institutions, systems and processes in Africa is critical for the improvement in good governance and achievement of development results.

Have you checked out the AfDB Evaluation Results Database (EVRD)?

The EVRD is maintained by Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV).

evrd.afdb.org

Access over 1,017 evaluation documents, 3,751 recommendations and 3,500 lessons learned in one central place.

Filter your results by report type, sector, region and country.

Each evaluation in the EVRD provides a quick overview of the program, project, or policy under scrutiny; the evaluation findings and recommendations as well as the link to the full report.

The EVRD is maintained by Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV).