Evaluation in the era of the SDGs

Third Quarter 2017
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:
Kate Stoney, Communication Consultant.

Acknowledgements:
IDEV is grateful to all contributors, reviewers, editors, and proof-readers who worked on this issue, in particular:
❙ Mireille Cobinah-Ebrottie, Evaluation Knowledge Assistant
❙ Najade Lindsay, Consultant
❙ Karen Rot-Munstermann, Manager
❙ Agnès Derelle, Independent translator

Design & Layout:
Visual Identity Creative Ltd.
Director: Jonathan Newham
Editorial design: Francisco Marrero

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.

Evaluator General:
Rakesh Nangia  r.nangia@afdb.org

Managers:
Rafika Amira  r.amira@afdb.org
Samer Hachem  s.hachem@afdb.org
Karen Rot-Munstermann  k.rot@afdb.org

Talk to us:
Phone (IDEV) +225 2026 2041
Phone (AfDB standard) +225 2026 4444

Write to us:
01 BP 1387
Avenue Joseph Anoma,
Abidjan 01, Côte d’Ivoire

E-mail us:
idevhelpdesk@afdb.org

Find us online:
idev.afdb.org
afdb.org

© 2017 – African Development Bank (AfDB)
The transition from the MDGs to the SDGs has steered African countries in the revision of their national development strategies, and consequently changed the focus of development programs and investments. Whereas MDG targets took into account national averages to measure progress, evaluating progress towards the SDGs will require an assessment of whether that progress is equitable, relevant and sustainable. Furthermore, if development is to be inclusive and leave no one behind, human rights principles and standards should also be considered.

Contributors to this issue discuss the challenges of dealing with this paradigm shift. Are evaluators sufficiently equipped to address the broader set of issues? Are the current OECD/DAC evaluation criteria capable of addressing the complexity of the SDGs and how they are achieved? Should evaluators add human rights to their set of baseline criteria? In short, what should the world of evaluation do differently in the era of the SDGs?
4  From the Evaluator General’s desk

Rakesh Nangia, African Development Bank

There is hope, and ample evidence, that evaluations can change the trajectory of development efforts. The furthest behind on our continent do have a chance, by 2030, of seeing a significant improvement in their condition.

8  Evaluation: a crucial ingredient for SDG success

Thomas Schwandt, Professor at University of Illinois, Zenda Ofir, Independent Evaluation Specialist, Dorothy Lucks, Co-Chair EVALSDGs, Kassem El-Saddick, Vice-Chair of EVALSDGs, Stefano D’Errico, Monitoring, evaluation and learning lead at IIED

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for follow-up and review processes that examine progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such processes are needed at international and regional levels, but especially at the national level.

16  The Sustainable Development Goals, Development Effectiveness and Development Evaluation Criteria

Marc Cohen and Olivier Shingiro, Quality Assurance Department, African Development Bank

This article looks at the SDGs from the perspective of development effectiveness, highlighting some of the challenges, risks and opportunities that come along the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

30  Current evaluation methods and the limits of their application in evaluating the SDGs

Jean Yves Adou, Head of the African Peer Review Mechanism

Assessing development is increasing in complexity given the interdependencies and new requirements of development initiatives. Is the evaluator community equipped to meet the paradigm shift? The adoption of the SDGs in 2015 has provided an opportunity to review evaluation approaches and criteria.
The disparity between sustainability concepts in the two approaches (SDGs and DAC Evaluation) leads to different conclusions about what is a successful project.

Alba Serna Gonzalez
The evolution from the Millennium Development Goals to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has injected renewed vigour into the international development world and given us food for thought in IDEV. In addition to providing indicators of sustainable impact on the environment, human rights, partnerships, equity and gender equality, we should above all now encompass the moral principle that no-one, no group and no country should be left behind.

SDG challenges are everyone’s challenges. The responsibility is not limited to countries receiving official development assistance, but shared by developed and developing countries alike. In the context of the SDGs, evaluators need to adapt their methodologies to measure and compare the inequalities which trap individuals, communities and entire countries in cycles of poverty and exclusion. Even in the most advanced economies, growth has not always been inclusive. Why are some left behind and how can they escape the poverty trap?

Evaluation is acknowledged in Agenda 2030 as crucial to the follow-up and review processes for SDG progress – which will be informed by country-led evaluations.
and data which is high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable. Evaluators can, and should, make a real difference to SDG achievements by helping point in the right direction for investment efforts.

At IDEV we are strengthening our efforts to provide countries with the capacity to effectively evaluate their strategies at national level so that they can pursue their own sustainable development with a solid evidence base for their decisions. Discussing the demand for capacity development in the evaluation area earlier this year with Caroline Heider, IEG Director-General, led to some good ideas. One of the ways forward is to increase resources focused on capacity-building programs. The Government of Finland is already supporting IDEV in strengthening capacity in both Ethiopia and Tanzania. But much more is necessary. Since the SDGs’ need for strong M&E will not wait, ensuring close involvement of countries in our own evaluation processes – from design, through conduct to applying lessons - can also support capacity development.

The idea behind dedicating this edition of Evaluation Matters to evaluating the SDGs was to provide a gateway for development stakeholders to voice their views on how evaluation can help Africa meet its SDG objectives and for them to share suggestions of pragmatic ways forward. Authors have seized the opportunity. There is strong underlying consensus among the contributors...
that evaluators should tackle the over-arching SDG prerogative of eradicating extreme poverty. One author has chosen to share case studies in his country, Ghana, while another advocates lesson-learning from countries which have succeeded in meeting MDG challenges. From insight into water and sanitation sector development to exposing issues in leadership and methodology, we hope you enjoy the wide range of inputs to the SDG evaluation discussion in this edition of IDEV’s Evaluation Matters.

There is ample evidence that evaluations can change the trajectory of development efforts. If evaluation plays its role well, it should be able to contribute to significant progress towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

Happy reading!

About the Evaluator General

Rakesh Nangia is the Evaluator General for Independent Development Evaluation at the African Development Bank. Prior to joining the AfDB, he spent 25 years at the World Bank, where he held several positions including Director of Strategy and Operations for the Human Development Network and Acting Vice-President for the World Bank Institute. He attended the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi and Harvard University and holds degrees in business administration and engineering.
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for follow-up and review processes that examine progress toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Such processes are needed at international and regional levels, but especially at the national level. To be maximally useful to policymakers and citizens, review processes must incorporate rigorous, country-led evaluations that examine policy and programme implementation and effectiveness, and build well-reasoned and supported cases for claims of progress.

At present, there is considerable focus on how to measure progress using indicators, but evaluation must go beyond measurement, to consider whether progress is equitable, relevant and sustainable. Such evidence will help demonstrate public sector accountability and accelerate change by focusing attention on enhancing learning and innovation.
The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agreed to internationally in 2015 offer a turning point for transforming our planet into a more prosperous and sustainable world. The 2030 Agenda, the SDGs’ charter, calls for all countries and stakeholders to collaborate to achieve ambitious development targets. It also gives a central role to reviewing and following up processes at the country, regional and international levels. These processes should take a long-term view and focus on identifying achievements (what is working, for whom and under what circumstances), as well as identifying challenges, gaps and factors crucial for continued improvement. Above all, the review process must be informed by rigorous, evidence-based, country-level evaluations. Of course, regional and international evaluation of policy and strategy coherence, resource flows, and the effectiveness of regional and global systems will also be important – especially where these serve as enabling environments for addressing shared issues such as food security and clean water.

What is evaluation?

Evaluation combines evidence with sound ways of thinking about value-based criteria, or sometimes principles. Essentially, it is critical thinking. It aims for reasoned judgments of the merit, worth or significance of policies, programmes, strategies and systems. Good evaluation informs policy-making, facilitates adaptive management, enhances government and organisational learning, demonstrates accountability, and informs and empowers citizens. It can help improve people’s lives and the planet’s well-being.

In addition to using effectiveness as a criterion, an evaluation might employ economic criteria (efficiency in terms of costs and benefits), equity and equality criteria (who benefits, who doesn’t), as well as criteria related to sustainability, cultural and contextual relevance and appropriateness, and sometimes other criteria negotiated with stakeholders. In some situations, an evaluation adopts a principle-based approach. For example, analysing different perspectives on the meaning of sustainable development might yield principles such as resilience and social justice (as found in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development) that could be used as a basis for assessing sustainability. Alternatively, an evaluation of an initiative to support healthy families and communities within an indigenous people might be based on culture-specific principles, such as the principle that community-based organisations must aim for a deep
IDEV evaluators Mabarakissa Diomande and Michel Tano Aka with water user associations, beneficiaries of the Kimira Oluch water project, Kenya.

understanding of the communities they serve, or that participants’ world views must be incorporated into programme design. Evaluation is related, but not identical, to research in the social and natural sciences. Research examines the origins, causes and extent of, as well as potential remedies to, social and environmental problems. Research knowledge can be helpful in designing an evaluation and building decision makers’ capacity for evaluative reasoning. Good evaluation practice takes into account existing knowledge and multiple points of view on the nature, contexts, and solutions to social and environmental problems.

Evaluation is also related, but not identical, to monitoring. Monitoring is a management tool concerned with tracking ongoing progress in programme implementation, in outputs (were target numbers for participants reached?) and in outcomes (what has changed as a result of the policy or programme?). Evaluation can make use of such monitoring data but is primarily concerned with how well implementation outcomes were achieved, as well as with determining long-term development impact. For example, monitoring might ask “How many people in the targeted communities did the programme reach?”.

The corresponding evaluative question is “How adequate was the programme’s coverage?”. The review and follow-up processes for the SDGs emphasise monitoring progress towards targets. Evaluations can help answer ‘why’ targets are achieved or not achieved, and can help identify what can be done to improve the success of future initiatives.

### Evaluation and the SDGs

The SDGs are aspirational and are accompanied by broad targets. In determining whether targets are being met, particular attention should be paid to at least the following six key aspects of evaluation. The first two relate to building knowledge; the next two to using that knowledge to improve decision making; and the final two to building capacity that will help achieve the SDGs.

*The review and follow-up processes for the SDGs emphasise monitoring progress towards targets. Evaluations can help answer ‘why’ targets are achieved or not achieved, and can help identify what can be done to improve the success of future initiatives.*

1. **Measurement is not enough**

There is an extensive focus within the international development community on measuring progress towards the SDGs. The 17 goals are accompanied by 230 targets, each tied, in turn, to multiple indicators. The entire ‘measurement apparatus’, so to speak, is very important in the worldwide effort to track whether SDGs are being achieved. That apparatus includes, among other important aspects, specifying targets so as to ensure measurability; developing measures of policy implementation as well as policy outcomes; determining whether to use existing indicators or to develop new ones; ensuring the availability and integrity of data for indicators; providing capacity to collect, analyse and interpret data; and ensuring database compatibility, and so on. All this is certainly necessary. But it is far from sufficient. It is also crucial to evaluate the policies, strategies and programmes that are intimately tied to accomplishing the 17 SDGs and their targets, whether
Evaluation: a crucial ingredient for SDG success

1. Evaluation matters

Such initiatives relate directly to one or many SDGs. We must take care that national M&E systems do truly include both ‘monitoring’ and ‘evaluation’.

Good evaluation can help improve people’s lives and the planet’s well-being.

2. Evaluation addresses the complexity of the SDGs and their achievement

SDGs are deeply interrelated in complex ways – i.e. in unpredictable and largely uncontrollable ways. For example, one cannot neatly separate the aim of reducing income inequality (SDG 10) from the aim of ensuring healthy lives and well-being (SDG 3). Similarly, Goal 2 (end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture) couples natural processes with social and economic processes. It moves in the same direction as Goals 1, 3 and 4, but also involves trade-offs with Goals 6, 7 and 13. This complexity means the link between any given policy or programme and the achievement of an SDG cannot be neatly captured in a linear, straightforward cause-effect relationship. Whether, and how well, SDGs can be achieved is a highly contextual matter subject to various internal and external factors that practitioners and stakeholders cannot always control or influence.

However, evaluation practices are increasingly drawing on methodologies from systems thinking and complexity science to examine whether and how outcomes and impacts are achieved in these highly complex and contextually-dependent circumstances (see Box 2). Moreover, evaluators use these approaches to go beyond basic monitoring of progress to generate data and insights that help decision makers to manage change and improve situations while in pursuit of the SDGs’ targets.

3. Evaluative thinking is indispensable for informed choices

To remain relevant, the follow-up and review processes associated with Agenda 2030 require evaluative reasoning. Policymakers, parliamentarians and knowledgeable citizens will be asking the classic evaluative questions, “Are we doing things right?” and “Are these the right things to do?”. Answering these questions requires evaluation that analyses arguments, interrogates evidence and assesses claims. This ‘critical thinking’ is indispensable for making informed and reasoned decisions. Such capacities are essential not simply for good government but also for society’s continued well-being.

Box 1: About EVALSDGs

EVALSDGs (Evaluation – adding Value And Learning to the SDGs) is a network of interested and skilled policymakers, institutions and practitioners who advocate for evaluation of the SDGs and support integration of evaluation initiatives into national, regional and global SDG feedback and review systems. The network operates as part of EvalPartners – a global partnership that aims to influence policymakers, public opinion and other stakeholders so evaluative evidence and reasoning and values of equity and effectiveness are incorporated in policy and planning. EVALSDGs members work to support the evaluation community to be prepared for evaluating initiatives towards better outcomes for the SDGs and ultimately, the ‘World We Want’.
Most of the problems we face in society, whether in education, health or the environment, are what are commonly referred to as ‘wicked problems’. Problems are considered wicked for several reasons.

First, they resist a single solution because they are formulated differently in different places — poverty in southern Chile is similar to but different from poverty in a Midwestern US city, for example.

Second, the fact that contexts change means that any solutions are themselves usually only temporary, which makes an adaptive management approach important to allow solutions to evolve in line with changing conditions.

Third, initiatives designed to address such problems are often themselves complex.

They may involve long causal chains with many intermediate outcomes, or outcomes that can only be understood using a ‘causal package approach’ that examines contributions from multiple interventions, contexts or agencies (sometimes further complicated by those agencies having conflicting agendas). Similarly, policies designed to address wicked problems often affect other policies, or show dynamic and emergent effects that were not easily predictable. Evaluation practices are increasingly drawing on ‘systems thinking’ in order to attend carefully to complex circumstances and to judge the value of interventions.

New tools are allowing evaluators to better describe and analyse the boundaries, interrelationships and perspectives involved in complex situations. Such tools include causal loop diagrams, system dynamics and outcome mapping. Similarly, techniques such as soft systems methodology and critical system heuristics are providing ways to bring together perspectives and reach a way of framing value judgments.

Box 2. Evaluating ‘wicked’ problems

IDEV evaluator Mabarakissa Diomande speaks to stakeholders in Kenya during a mission to evaluate the Kimira Oluch water project.

4. National policy evaluation is essential

Achieving the SDGs will inevitably involve national governments developing sectoral, thematic and holistic policies that reflect their commitment to Agenda 2030. These policies will need to be evaluated to determine whether they are being implemented well and to document the achievement of both outcomes and longer-term impacts. Evaluation examines whether a problem was correctly identified in the first instance, whether intended effects were achieved and whether unintended effects (both positive and negative) occurred. Policy evaluation builds policymakers’ knowledge of problems and potential remedies; demonstrates a government’s accountability to its citizens; and informs decision making. Good policy evaluation requires knowledge of the political policy-making process and the place of rigorous evidence in that process.

5. Evaluation builds solid evidence for claims.

Policymakers and parliamentarians, as well as everyday citizens, make claims about programmes and policies. In the context of the SDGs, claims such as: “We have successfully reduced gender inequality in employment opportunities”; “This rural vaccination programme has drastically reduced infection rates”; or “Far more of our citizens living in Y now have access to clean water” may be heard. Evaluation builds the case for such claims. It often involves combining evidence from descriptive questions (how many? how much? how often?) with evidence from explanatory questions (e.g. are observed outcomes attributable to this policy?) and normative questions (is the policy or programme implemented according to agreed-upon technical, legal and ethical standards?).

6. Building capacity for evaluation is crucial

Strengthening societies’ capacity for evaluation can be understood in several different yet related ways:

- Developing the knowledge, skill, personnel, institutions and resources to design and operate effective and efficient M&E systems for policies, projects and programmes.
- Developing the skills of evaluative thinking and evidence-based decision making within both government and civil society.
- Capturing the knowledge generated from evaluation processes and sharing it across sectors and goals.
- Capitalising on these processes so learning feeds into more effective policies, projects and programmes as well as more useful evaluations.

In conclusion, achieving the SDGs depends on country-led evaluations that produce evidence of whether outcomes and impacts of policies, programs and projects are equitable, relevant and sustainable. Such evidence is useful not only in demonstrating public sector accountability but also in focusing the attention of civil society and governments on enhancing learning and innovation. Put simply, evaluation doesn’t just identify ‘what works and what doesn’t’ or answer the question ‘did we or did we not achieve our objectives?’. Its real value is that it is coupled to learning, strategic planning and knowledge development, not just to accountability. Evaluation is a dynamic and ongoing process that continues to evolve and support improving activities, even when the context changes.
This briefing was developed in partnership between IIED and EVALSDGS, with support from the Government of Finland. Production of the Brief was supported by SIDA, DANIDA, Irish Aid and DFID, however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the views of funders.

The consortium has developed 7 briefings covering a range of topics related to evaluation and the SDGs, including: interlinked indicators, monitoring and evaluation; evaluating complexity of the SDGs; national evaluation capacities; evaluative thinking; evaluation in Voluntary National Reviews; the 2030 agenda and evaluation: challenges and opportunities for parliamentarians. The whole series can be found at: https://www.iied.org/effective-evaluation-for-sustainable-development-goals
Compared to the MDGs, which constituted a coherent basis for development planning efforts and for promoting the principles of effective aid, the SDGs present new challenges. They reflect the evolving aid architecture characterized by the diversification of the development finance landscape as well more complex and sophisticated aid modalities, instruments and partnerships. The SDGs come with the opportunity to devise new – more inclusive, integrated, equitable and sustainable – approaches to development and to better apprehend the diversity of development paths in their context. Development practitioners, policy-makers and evaluation experts will have to revisit the way they design and manage development efforts. Adaptability, equity and equality, coherence, and resilience will need to be factored into traditional development evaluation criteria.
Few development practitioners would debate the view that the MDGs played a critical role in furthering the development effectiveness agenda that evolved during their implementation period (2000–2015). The various statements issued at the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness and its successor Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation made numerous references to the need to accelerate the achievement of the MDGs. At the country level, and to a certain extent globally, the MDGs constituted a solid basis for operationalizing the principles of development effectiveness as described in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Harmonization (2005) and later refined in the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (2011). Working modalities of ownership and alignment, results-orientation, accountability and transparency, coordination and harmonization were clearly advanced through the mobilization of aid efforts around the eight MDGs.

Indeed, while criticized for their excessive simplicity and focus, the MDGs had a number of undeniable virtues for development planners and policy-makers.

The MDGs were coherent. Reflecting a “basic needs approach” to development thinking, the MDGs constituted de facto a coherent development agenda that was relevant to developing nations (poverty reduction, access to education and health services, eliminate diseases, promote gender equality, etc.).

The MDGs were focused and realistic. The limited number of (8) goals supported by well-defined (17) target indicators sounded ambitious but achievable, rather than purely aspirational. They also proved to be powerful communication tools.

The MDGs were effective for alignment and partnership. The goals and targets provided a sound basis for the alignment of donor interventions with national policies and programs; they played a crucial role in shaping aid policies and allocations, defining or re-defining partners’ priorities around multi-donor sector-wide approaches, and helping build or strengthen alliances as well as coordination modalities.

The MDGs were results-oriented. Importantly, the goals were resolutely oriented towards tangible development results and outcomes which facilitated sound monitoring and accountability mechanisms as well as costing. The targets were appealing because they were precise, measurable, and trackable.

Marc Cohen, Quality Assurance Division Manager and Olivier Shingiro, Chief Quality Assurance Officer, African Development Bank.
development effectiveness? Can they play similar functions in shaping the aid architecture and the development finance landscape? The rapid answer is probably “No”. In contrast with the above picture, the SDGs come with a number of conceptual and practical implementation challenges.

First, unlike their predecessors, the SDGs aim to reflect a universal and broad agenda, applying to all countries and situations in a holistic manner. This global agenda consists of no less than 17 goals, 169 targets and a very large number of indicators, which reflect in part the extent of consultations and the inclusive approach that was adopted in setting the post 2015 agenda. They also recognize the evolving aid architecture and development finance landscape, characterized by the emergence of “non-traditional” donors, south-south or triangular cooperation actors, and the growing influence of businesses and philanthropies, all of them joining the aid industry with new business models and priorities. On the flip side, the targets of the 2030 agenda do not provide a clear sense of priority or selectivity; to many development professionals, they read like a mere wish list. Some nations may perceive a lack of relevance or sense of urgency.

Moreover, such a broad agenda will ineluctably raise the question of the dilution of development aid, perceived as a major constraint to effectiveness. Aid flows are likely to be spread over a larger spectrum of sectors and themes, and donors may face limited opportunities for synergies.

Second, the SDGs are not grounded on a well-articulated development theory; they actually illustrate the diversity and often times divergent views of development thinking: basic needs; growth with equity; human rights and capabilities approaches; ecological and sustainable development and green growth; development through industrialization; etc. The positive side is that the SDGs definitely represent an inclusive agenda, integrating the perspectives and priorities of diverse stakeholders. At the same time, there are inextricable contradictions and inconsistencies across goals.

Numerous trade-offs are not explicitly considered, the most obvious one concerning economic growth (goal 8) and industrialization (goal 9) vs climate change action (goal 13) and air quality and sustainable cities (goal 11). Similarly, biodiversity (goal 15) is likely to be endangered if forests are cut down to expand agricultural production for food security (goal 2).

If there are competing and conflicting interests across the SDGs, there are also numerous synergies: addressing certain goals can help address others. Actions regarding climate change for instance, has co-benefits on health, environmental preservation and biodiversity. Poverty and vulnerability are rightly addressed in their multifaceted forms (income, delivery of social services, access to assets, human rights, etc.) through complementary and mutually reinforcing goals.

“The SDGs are so encyclopedic that everything is top priority, which means nothing is a priority”  
(Easterly, 2015 a)
Third, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

First, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

Goal trade-offs

![Goal trade-offs diagram](image-url)

Third, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

First, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

Goal trade-offs

![Goal trade-offs diagram](image-url)

Third, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

First, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

Goal trade-offs

![Goal trade-offs diagram](image-url)

Third, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

First, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”;

“healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

Goal trade-offs

![Goal trade-offs diagram](image-url)

Third, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

First, the SDGs are undoubtedly of an aspirational nature, as shown in their ambitious – and somewhat loosely defined – language: “peaceful and inclusive societies”; “safe and resilient cities”; “decent work for all”; “healthy lives”, “sustainable production and consumption patterns” etc. There can be different standards as to what is considered decent, inclusive, peaceful, safe, sustainable, etc. and achieving such goals can only be a matter of appreciation. Other goals, while more precisely defined and obviously very laudable, appear unrealistic: “ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions”, “ending all discrimination against women and girls everywhere”, “achieve universal health coverage” or “correct and prevent trade restrictions and distortions”. Many of the targets are also multidimensional. Target 1.4 for instance reads: “By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including micro-finance”.

Goal trade-offs

![Goal trade-offs diagram](image-url)
Fourth, the SDGs are not necessarily results-based, with means and ends often put at the same level in the formulation of targets and goals. For instance “Promote economic growth” as part of goal 8 or “Take action to combat climate change” under goal 13 are clearly not results. Formulations like “ensure mobilization of resources”, “create sound policy framework” “increase investments” or “adopt measures” are frequent across targets. They do not assign responsibilities either, except a collective one, and each government is free to set its own national targets. “The SDGs continue a venerable UN tradition in which nobody is ever individually accountable for any one action but all the leaders, UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies and numerous other private sector, nongovernmental and civil society actors are collectively responsible for all the outcomes”. (Easterly, 2015 b)

Last, on a practical note and as a result of the above features, the SDGs strike us as being virtually impossible to cost and plan for. So far, rough forecasts have been made, but there has been no serious attempt at conducting any solid feasibility assessment of the SDGs (financial, institutional, political, etc) either at the level of individual countries or globally. Some sector-level forecasts reveal astronomical figures. For instance, the World Health Organization estimates that the (67) low and middle-income countries would require new investments increasing over time from an initial US$ 134 billion annually to $371 billion by 2030 if they are to reach the health-related targets of the SDGs. Deficiencies in the indicators framework – such as the lack of baseline data, undefined targets, absence of clear definitions and standards for many indicators – also make costing and planning look like impossible tasks. These obviously reduce the credibility and utility of the SDG for policy makers and can only be detrimental to coordinated implementation efforts. To quote William Easterly again, a fierce opponent of the MDG and SDG approaches alike, “the SDGs are about as likely to result in progress as beauty pageant contestants’ call for world peace”. (Easterly, 2015 b).

Yet, because of their seemingly impractical features described above, the SDG framework presents new opportunities and challenges for development planners and policy makers. The SDGs not only reflect the evolution of the new development finance landscape, they also rightly signal that the effectiveness agenda has moved away from a narrow and donor-centered concept of aid effectiveness to a more ambitious and holistic concept of development effectiveness. SDGs thus allow a variety of development models and paths which do not rely on, or overestimate the role of, official development assistance (ODA). The SDGs are more endogenous, country-focused and call for new sources of finance and partnerships across sectors and disciplines.

“The SDGs continue a venerable UN tradition in which nobody is ever individually accountable for any one action but all the leaders, UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral aid agencies and numerous other private sector, nongovernmental and civil society actors are collectively responsible for all the outcomes.”

(Easterly, 2015 b)
The interlinked nature of the goals, while criticized, is the mere reflection of a complex reality. It can be seen as an opportunity to address development issues comprehensively and coherently both at the country level and globally. This brings into the debate the question of policy coherence and the need for maximizing synergies across policy actions while addressing potential conflicts and trade-offs. The issue of coherence is not new but it has received a growing attention, in part because of the potentially long term conflicting nature of the SDGs. At the global level, the SDG framework also explicitly mentions “policy and institutional coherence” as part of goal 17 (Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development).

Thanks to the SDGs, the concept of coherence has evolved into a more refined one of “Policy Coherence for Sustainable Development” (PCSD) defined as “an approach and policy tool to integrate economic, social, environmental and governance dimensions of sustainable development at all stages of domestic and international policy making” (OECD, 2015). PCSD thus, goes beyond a “no harm” approach towards one that seek synergies between development cooperation and other policies while trying to correct existing incoherencies. This may sound ambitious but the EU has been moving in this direction through its security / development nexus approach (EU, 2016).

“\textbf{The SDGs are about as likely to result in progress as beauty pageant contestants’ call for world peace}”

(Easterly, 2015 b)

Development Evaluation in the 2030 agenda era: Revisiting the Criteria

What are the consequences of the 2030 agenda for development practitioners and evaluators? How can they cope with such a broad and complex agenda? How useful are the traditional evaluation criteria and tools to assess performance with respect to the SDGs?

The SDGs, because of their diverse and inclusive nature, raise a number of issues regarding monitoring and evaluation. The deficiencies of the SDG indicator framework constitute a major impediment to any monitoring and evaluation effort, whatever evaluation criteria are being considered.

Numerous consultations took place throughout 2015 to define the list of indicators, leading to color-coding system that classifies indicators according to their availability and acceptability (agreement or not). There is a consensus that monitoring questions are complex and cannot be resolved in the short run. In March 2016, the UN Statistical Commission recognized that the development of a robust indicator framework was a process that will need to continue over time under the auspices of an Inter-Agency and Expert Group of SDGs. For a comprehensive discussion of the indicator framework, see “\textit{Indicators and a Monitoring framework for the Sustainable Development Goals: Launching a data revolution for the SDGs}” (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, 2015).

Another major issue is the ability of country and global systems to respond to the information needs required to effectively establish baselines and to track progress towards the SDGs. Data experts often share the view that the number of indicators should be limited because of the capacity challenges of national...
statistical offices: a maximum of 100 global indicators seems to represent a practical limit. (ICLEI, 2015). For a number of indicators, definitions and standards have yet to be developed; for others, refinements are needed. Measurement issues occur at all levels, from inputs and resources to outputs and outcomes. A report by the International Council for Science (ICSU) and the International Social Science Council (ISSC) finds that of the 169 targets beneath the 17 goals, just 29% are well defined and based on the latest scientific evidence, while 54% need more work and 17% are weak or non-essential. (ICSU, 2015).

The “measurement apparatus” appears as necessary but not a sufficient condition to conduct proper evaluation of the SDGs through the commonly used criteria (IIED, 2016a). This necessary condition is clearly not met; there are more challenges that evaluators will face in their attempts to apply the traditional criteria of relevance, effectiveness and impact, efficiency, sustainability.

The relevance criterion

The relevance criterion in evaluating the SDGs is clearly problematic; not because the SDGs are not relevant, but because they have been designed to suit all countries and donors alike. The SDGs are so broad and all-encompassing that relevance and alignment with any country and donor priorities is de facto. From the perspective of aid agencies, any intervention will correspond to the SDGs, irrespective of country settings, policies and priorities or beneficiary needs. Diluted aid flows over a large number of areas is, as already mentioned, a major risk of the SDG agenda. This can only weaken the applicability of the relevance criterion. As noted by Caroline Heider in her blog:

“In practice, evaluators often use policies of governments, donors and aid agencies to assess whether an intervention is relevant in that context. More often than not, these policies are written in ways that can justify a whole slew of different activities. Hence meeting the bar of relevance is not all that hard.”

(C. Heider, 2017)

The risk is that the SDGs will render the relevance criterion even less relevant to evaluation and learning. The relevance criterion also assumes that the needs of beneficiaries are homogeneous, aligned and well captured through government policies and programs. In practice, the relevance of development interventions for the direct beneficiaries or other groups of stakeholders is rarely considered by evaluators. The perception of relevance of a development intervention, program or policy largely differs between stakeholders: central vs local governments, public vs private partners, businesses vs trade unions, representatives of civil society or NGO vs government officials, etc. Evaluators come up against practical obstacles in integrating the diversity of needs, context and perspectives covered by the SDGs through their inclusive philosophy. How can these different perspectives be identified? What is their respective legitimacy? It possible to rank them by order of importance? If so, what criteria can be used? These are questions that evaluators of the 2030 agenda will need to address.
Another complex matter is that relevance does not take into account fast changing contexts. In other words, solutions and lessons which are so dear to evaluators can only be seen as temporary and tentative. Evaluators often consider that if development problems and objectives are well defined at the outset of an intervention (during the design stage), then relevance can be ensured. In a development landscape where situations and policies are fast changing, relevance can no longer be considered as a question of good design and quality at entry. In the context of the SDGs, evaluators will increasingly have to consider the “continued relevance” of development efforts throughout their life cycles. Questions of flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness to changing circumstances – rather than just relevance – will become critical in the SDG evaluation era. This is sometimes referred to as an “adaptive management” approach that “involves exploring emerging and alternative ways to meet objectives targets, and using knowledge from monitoring and evaluation to develop new understanding and new ways of acting” (IIED, 2016 b).

Impact and effectiveness criteria

The impact and effectiveness criteria are often considered separately, but they are so difficult to differentiate in practice that many evaluators have proposed to merge them (see for instance C. Heider, 2017). Impact and effectiveness will be more difficult to assess in the context of the SDGs for two main reasons. The first one is that, many of the SDGs targets – unlike their MDG predecessors – are not formulated as development results. This is obviously a major obstacle since effectiveness is commonly defined as the ability of an intervention to reach the intended results, mostly at the outcome level. How will we assess the effectiveness of “action to combat climate change” or the “mobilization of resources”?

The second reason is that the SDGs reflect complex realities rather than the simple theories of change which underpinned the MDGs. Development practitioners, and increasingly evaluators, acknowledge the limitations of linear models such as logical frameworks which oversimplify the cause – effect relationships. Interventions tend to have unintended and unanticipated effects (predictability issue), they can improve certain dimensions of well-being while deteriorating others (multidimensionality issue), their causality relationships – not to be confused with correlation – can be difficult to establish and assess (attribution issue), they can affect various groups differently (heterogeneity issue). The complex connections of the SDGs are difficult to apprehend using traditional evaluation models. Performance with respect to the SDGs is dependent on specific contexts and subject to various external factors that cannot be controlled. In response to these issues, some evaluators have called for a redefinition of the effectiveness criterion as well as changes in evaluation practices, increasingly drawing on systems thinking and complexity science (see for instance Michael Bamberger & al., 2016).

The efficiency criterion

Efficiency, by its very definition – a measure of the extent to which inputs are well-used for an intended output or as the capability to produce a specific outcome with a minimum amount of expense – is linked to the effectiveness criteria and suffers from the same flaws. To summarize, even where input-based targets are actually achieved, no inference can be made as to whether the inputs
have efficiently served the intended purpose or have constituted the best alternative to reach the desirable outcome. For example, it is possible to track the “proportion of domestically generated resources allocated by the government directly to poverty reduction programmes” (under SDG 1) but this will not answer the efficiency evaluation question.

Another issue related to efficiency is that commonly-used techniques such as cost-benefit analysis or economic rates of return which are well suited to the infrastructure sector or certain types of operations such as simple investment projects and revenue generating operations, are much less so to other sectors. Policy and budget support, technical assistance, guarantees, etc. or “soft” sectors (education, health, justice, etc.) entail more data constraints and complex qualitative issues. Economists have developed techniques and proxy methods for assessing the rates of return of social sector interventions, but these tend to be too costly and time-consuming to apply, especially at the level of individual operations. For many areas that form part of the SDG agenda, there is also very little experience to draw upon: how do we conduct a cost-benefit analysis of interventions aimed at promoting say “access to justice” (target 16.3) or a “culture of peace and non-violence” (target 4.7) or “human rights”? With more complex and multidimensional operations, the practice of cost-benefit analysis has declined. At the World Bank, it is reported that only 25% of projects included calculations of economic rates of return in the 1990s against 70% in the 1970s. (Heider, 2017).

Current considerations of efficiency are challenged to take long term impact into account. The SDG agenda emphasizes the sustainable and inclusive dimensions of development, the costs and benefits of interventions in terms of equity and distributional effects, social and climate justice, as well as environmental preservation and ecological diversity. An intervention that is considered efficient at the time of its evaluation may, in terms of sustainability and inclusiveness, turn out to be highly inefficient a few years later because of its persistent devastating effects on natural resources.

**The sustainability criterion**

The sustainability criterion, which requires assessing whether the benefits of an intervention are likely to extend beyond the period of implementation and financing flows, is by nature complex and multidimensional. It clearly extends beyond the environmental / ecological and financial dimensions (to which it is sometimes restricted) to encompass the institutional, political, economic, social and cultural aspects. It deals with issues of uncertainties and dynamics in the long run, compared to effectiveness which tends to focus on the delivery of outputs and outcomes during or immediately after the intervention.
In the SDG context, sustainability is increasingly associated with the more fashionable concept of resilience, which refers to the ability of a system to withstand and recover from shocks. While sustainability focuses on the ability to maintain an equilibrium in a certain context, resilience is mainly concerned with the ability to cope with stress and to adapt to changing environments, including unpredictable factors and catastrophes. Resilience is therefore a dynamic concept more suited to the SDGs. (Michael Bamberger & al., 2016).

Another issue with the sustainability criterion is that it fails to integrate the long-term policy coherence of the SDG framework. Evaluators can no longer solely focus on assessing aid policies and interventions; they also have to consider the impact of global and domestic policies, especially those from the OECD countries. Western World policies of agricultural subsidies, trade restrictions, financial flows, migration, etc. and the various ways they undermine development efforts, including ODA from these countries are also part of the picture. The question of policy coherence

“While sustainability focusses on the ability to maintain an equilibrium in a certain context, resilience is mainly concerned with the ability to cope with stress and to adapt to changing environments, including unpredictable factors and catastrophes. Resilience is therefore a dynamic concept more suited to the SDGs”.

(Michael Bamberger & al., 2016)
needs to become both a political commitment and an integral part of policy making and evaluation practices. The current approach which consists of assessing the impact of different policies on the effectiveness of aid is not sufficient.

“What is needed is a more ambitious conceptualization of policy coherence for development which considers the interaction of all relevant policies in a given context, with a view to the achievement of overriding development objectives. This implies that policy coherence is best served when actors responsible for policymaking in various domains engage in a process of designing and implementing comprehensive policy frameworks with strategic objectives in mind”. (EU Directorate general for external policies, 2016).

The challenge for evaluators – and of course for development practitioners and policy makers – is to develop the ability to construct such integrated approaches to analyze the coherence of economic, environmental, social and institutional reforms.

**Conclusion**

The synergies and also incoherencies that link the SDGs will make evaluation processes much more complex. This calls for a rethink of evaluation techniques, whereby simple linear models and cause-effects relationships have to be supplemented or at term superseded by systems approaches and complexity theories. At the same time, it calls for an overhaul of the traditional evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency, and sustainability in favor of new ones that focus on considerations regarding equity and social justice, adaptability, well-being, resilience and coherence.

---

**References & bibliography**


Bamberger M.; Segone M.; Florencia Tateossian F. (2016). Evaluating the SDGs with a no one left behind lens through equity focused and gender responsive evaluations. UN-WOMEN. https://www.evalpartners.org/sites/default/files/documents/evalgender/Eval-SDGs-WEB.pdf


Marc Cohen is currently Manager, Quality Assurance, at the African Development Bank (AfDB). Between 1998 and 2009, he worked for the Asian Development Bank (ADB), successively as team leader in operational departments, principal specialist of the results unit, and head and focal point for assistance in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

Olivier Shingiro is currently Chief Quality Assurance Officer in the Quality Assurance Division. Prior to that, Olivier was a Results Specialist in the Results Reporting Division at the AfDB.
Assessing development is increasing in complexity given the interdependencies and new requirements of development initiatives. Is the evaluator community equipped to meet the paradigm shift? The adoption of the SDGs in 2015 has provided an opportunity to review evaluation approaches and criteria. This article examines the different approaches as well as the challenges for an adequate assessment of SDGs, and suggests possible ways forward for truly sustainable development.
Historical context and definitions

The concept of development evolved in line with the increasing awareness of the phenomenon of underdevelopment, needed in order to “eradicate the evil of underdevelopment.” (Freyssinet J., 1966).

- Development is the combination of the mental and social changes of a population that make it capable of cumulatively and sustainably increasing its overall output. François Perroux

- Development consists of broadening the possibilities of success to those who wish to escape the balance of mass poverty and its cultures. J. K. Galbraith

- Development is the act of growing, progressing, expanding, becoming more complex over time. Maurice Byé

The persistence of poverty and especially of extreme poverty in some developing countries, despite the growth of their economies, has led to the emergence of a new "basic human needs" development concept, first expressed in speeches by Robert McNamara, President of the World Bank Group 1968–1981.

In 2000, the United Nations General Assembly approved the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with a view to addressing this problem by 2015. The assessment of these eight targets in 2015 highlighted many shortcomings. Consequently, the concept of sustainable development has gained ground.

- Sustainable development is “the transition from a relatively low per capita productivity structure to a relatively higher per capita productivity structure” Gérard de Bernis, 1994.

- Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs Bruntland, WCED, 1987.

Will the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, with a view to closing the gaps in the assessment of the MDGs, spur a change in evaluation methods and criteria? Are the current criteria used for evaluations sufficient to...
assess the achievement of sustainable development objectives? How can evaluations have a real impact on achieving the SDGs? What are the challenges to be addressed in the assessment of the SDGs?

This article first gives an overview of methodological approaches and criteria used in evaluation before moving on to identify their shortcomings in the context of the SDGs and the challenges to overcome to achieve a holistic and coordinated approach to their evaluation.

Some methodological approaches and their application in the evaluation of SDGs are:

**Formative evaluation or "monitoring evaluation"**

The aim of this approach is to provide the management team and other stakeholders with regular information on the implementation of an intervention to increase performance in working towards the objectives. Formative evaluation establishes a very close link between monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation team is involved in the implementation of the intervention. Formative evaluation is very often used for project steering and seems appropriate in the steering of specific SDG projects and programs.

**Summative evaluation or "Impact evaluation"**

Summative evaluation is very often used for accountability exercises. It focuses on the expected results chain, from immediate results to long-term impacts. It is a retrospective assessment that takes place at the end of an intervention. Unlike formative evaluation, and in order to guarantee the independence and objectivity of the evaluation, summative evaluation is carried out by evaluators who are not involved in the intervention. This approach is appropriate in assessing the impacts of policies, programs and projects in the context of the SDGs and could be very useful for accountability to financial partners, implementation stakeholders and beneficiaries.

**Evaluation of policy and strategy**

Policy or strategy evaluation focuses on how policies or strategies have been developed, implemented and to what extent they have achieved their development goals. This approach is often used retrospectively. It ensures the overall coherence of the interventions, their effectiveness, their relevance, and their efficiency. It can be applied in the evaluation of national or regional policies developed to achieve the SDGs.

**Developmental evaluation**

Developmental evaluation is an approach that is adapted to complex situations, in dynamic environments, on innovative, interdependent subjects and which have decentralized decision-making and control centers (Michael Patton, 2006). This approach appears to the assessment of SDGs which involve a high number of stakeholders, multiple results and decentralized management and monitoring of these results.

**The limits of current approaches and criteria**

Evaluating the SDGs implies the integration of the three interdependent dimensions of sustainable development, namely economic, social and environmental dimensions, as well as a number of principles and criteria necessary to achieve these objectives. These principles and criteria form the basis for the development of methodological approaches specific to each intervention. Each project, program, policy or strategy aimed...
Evaluation of the SDGs requires a flexible, multidimensional approach which takes into account the multitude of approaches and which deploys both qualitative and quantitative assessment techniques. The five-step approach to evaluating complex programs, proposed by Michael Bamberger, Marco Segone and Florencia Tateossian in their paper entitled “Evaluating the Sustainable Development of Goals with Equal Focus and Gender-Responsive Evaluation”, could be one way forward in achieving a consensual and harmonized approach to the assessment of SDGs.

This approach is based on an overall analysis to understand the different systems in which an intervention is implemented, followed by its subdivision into components. Appropriate methodologies are selected for each component for analysis, draws conclusions from specific evaluations of each component, and provides a synthesis of aggregated results for a coherent overview. Given its flexibility and adaptability, this approach could easily be applied in the context of the SDG assessment, providing the criteria is expanded to accommodate the evaluation criteria reflecting the fundamental principles of sustainable development and good governance which form the SDGs.

The community of evaluators faces four major challenges to effectively address the complexity of the SDGs. (i) the challenge of coordination; (ii) the challenge of harmonizing methods and criteria; (iii) the challenge of the availability of reliable data; and (iv) the challenge of capacity development.
The coordination challenge

Given the high number of SDG initiatives and decision-making centers, effective coordination is paramount to make full use of the results of evaluations. Such coordination should take place at the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. At each level, functional institutions on which to build an effective institutional coordination framework already exist. While there is no need to set up new institutions to achieve coordination, the participation of all stakeholders is required, namely civil society, the private sector, research institutions and evaluation organisations etc.

The harmonization challenge

Despite the existence of various approaches and methods according to evaluation types, a comprehensive, harmonized and integrated methodology would facilitate a cross-evaluation of different SDG interventions, as well as aggregations and summaries of evaluation results at each level. OECD Development Assistance Committee criteria should be broadened to include good governance, without which it will be difficult to respect the SDG time schedule. The principles, standards and criteria of good governance could be used as a basis for the determination of common criteria complementary to those of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD in the context of the SDGs.

The availability of quality data challenge

In many countries, the capacity of statistical institutions to produce regular and reliable statistics remains very limited. In the context of the SDGs, this data is needed to establish targets and to monitor indicators. The quality of evaluations, good accountability and adequate decision-making by policy makers at all levels are at stake.

The capacity development challenge

Capacity building is needed and should not be limited to statistical offices and evaluation agencies or institutions, but also extend to all other stakeholders such as the institutions who call for the evaluations to be carried out, the institutions financing the evaluations, and users of evaluation results.

Conclusion

Given the shortcomings of evaluations of the MDGs, the adoption of SDGs is a real opportunity for the evaluator community to review its evaluation methods and criteria. Independently, none of the approaches currently used for evaluations can meet the requirements of an evaluation of the SDGs. Similarly, the five evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee of the OECD do not sufficiently cover the fundamental principles and criteria for sustainable development and good governance. Evaluating the SDGs requires an integrated, multidimensional methodological approach with a set of criteria extended to include good governance.
Also, we need to overcome the four main challenges mentioned: the coordination challenge, the harmonization of methods and criteria challenge, the availability of reliable data challenge, and the capacity development of actors involved at all levels. If and when these conditions are met, evaluations within the framework of the SDGs can substantially contribute to real sustainable development.

References

Michael Bamberger, Marco Segone et Florencia Tateossian (2016) “Evaluating the Sustainable Development Goals – With the No one left behind lens through equity-focused and gender responsive evaluations”.

Geeta Batra, Juha Ilari Uitto, and Lee Cando-Noordhuizen. "From MDGs to SDGs: Evaluating Global Environmental Benefits”, eVALUatiOn Matters, Q3 2015, AfDB.


Karen Jorgensen “Responding to a changing development agenda: Challenges for evaluations”, eVALUatiOn Matters, Q3 2015, AfDB.


Zenda Ofrir “Evaluating for Development: Reshaping our evaluation criteria?” eVALUatiOn Matters, Q1 2017, AfDB.


Jean Yves Adou, Head of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) Knowledge Management, Monitoring / Evaluation and Review Process Support Division in Johannesburg, has over 20 years’ experience in development cooperation, 13 of them in international organizations, including the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA), the National Higher School of Statistics and Applied economics (CEMAC) and the African Union. He holds a statistics engineer’s certificate obtained from ENSEA in Abidjan and a masters’ degree in International Economics and Globalization, from Pierre Mendès France University, Grenoble.
Adapting monitoring and evaluation approaches to SDG #6

The SDGs embraced the important statement about the fundamental role of water in sustainable development. Consequently, the SDGs have a specific goal, number 6, dedicated to water and sanitation, which is to ‘ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’. National governments have been given the responsibility for transmitting monitoring data to UN agencies.

How will this affect the coordination and accuracy of water and sanitation access data? In terms of evaluation, the most frequently used methodology, of the OECD/DAC, dates back to 1991. Are the criteria still relevant to water and sanitation projects which aim at leaving no-one behind? Do the criteria cater for a mainstreamed Human Rights approach?
At the beginning of the new millennium, the entire world’s countries and all the world’s leading development institutions agreed to set eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to fight poverty in its many dimensions. Despite the achievements, such as increasing to 91% the global population using an improved drinking water source, MDGs have been considered as not sufficiently ambitious, lacking in vision of equitable development, too paternalistic and technocratic – being designed exclusively for developing countries – and not taking into account the economic, environmental and social dimensions of sustainability.

The design of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) intended to amend the limitations of the MDGs. Indeed, the MDGs only took into consideration access to safe drinking water, a target of Goal #7 which came under the broad heading of ‘ensure environmental sustainability’. In the MDGs initial version, sanitation was omitted; with the target to improve access to basic sanitation only added two years later, under the same Goal #7.

The SDGs embraced the important statement about the fundamental role of water in sustainable development and the post-2015 development agenda, made in the Rio+20 resolution: “water is at the core of sustainable development as it is closely linked to a number of key global challenges”. Consequently, the SDGs, with 17 global goals and 169 targets, have a specific goal dedicated to water and sanitation, Goal #6 is to ‘ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all’ (figure 1).

SDG #6 is an expansion of the MDG #7.C, previously focused only on drinking water and sanitation and now covering the entire cycle of water, including water management, wastewater and ecosystems resources (UN-Water, 2016a). Importantly, the SDGs have embraced the principle of leaving no one behind, meaning that targets have to be reached universally, for all sub-groups within the population, regardless of their age, income, gender, race, ethnicity, etc. (WHO, 2016d).

SDG #6 contains eight targets: six on outcomes in regard to water and sanitation and two on the means of implementing the outcome targets. Targets #6.1 and #6.2 are the direct continuation of target #7.C of the MDGs, with a higher ambition of achieving universal coverage on water, sanitation and hygiene. It is important to note that access to water in the SDGs includes, for the first time, aspects as equity, affordability, availability and ensuring safe drinking water (figure 2, from WHO 2016b). In other words, it includes the Human Rights dimensions in its description for the first time. This is an important difference in comparison with MDG #7.C, where improved water meant water from an improved source, without any consideration in terms of quality, availability or affordability. In the same way, access to sanitation has
### Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TARGETS</th>
<th>INDICATORS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1 By 2030, achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all</td>
<td>6.1.1 Proportion of population using safely managed drinking services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 By 2030, achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls and those in vulnerable situations</td>
<td>6.21 Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services, including a hand-washing facility with soap and water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally</td>
<td>6.3.1 Proportion of wastewater safely treated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.3.2 Proportion of bodies of water with good ambient water quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 By 2030, substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors and ensure sustainable withdrawals and supply of freshwater to address water scarcity and substantially reduce the number of people suffering from water scarcity</td>
<td>6.4.1 Change in water-use efficiency over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.4.2 Level of water stress: freshwater withdrawal as a proportion of available freshwater resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 By 2030, implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation as appropriate</td>
<td>6.5.1 Degree of integrated water resources management implementation (0–100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5.2 Proportion of transboundary basin area with an operational arrangement for water cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes</td>
<td>6.6.1 Change in the extent of water-related ecosystems over time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.A By 2030, expand international cooperation and capacity-building support to developing countries in water- and sanitation-related activities and programs, including water harvesting, desalination, water efficiency, wastewater treatment, recycling and reuse technologies</td>
<td>6.A.1 Amount of water – and sanitation-related official development assistance that is part of a government-coordinated spending plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.B Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management</td>
<td>6.B.1 Proportion of local administrative units with established and operational policies and procedures for participation of local communities in water and sanitation management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
been adopted through an integrated approach, considering the entire sanitation chain, from waste generation to final use and disposal, as stated in targets #6.2 and #6.3 (figure 1).

In light of the ambitious new concepts of universal access, affordability, equity or ecosystems introduced by the SDGs for water and sanitation, a change in the current paradigm is needed.

Achieving SDG #6 involves a shift from a project-based approach to a service-based approach, where the water cycle is managed in a holistic way, to include issues such as the price of water, stakeholder participation and service management.

The monitoring of the eight targets for the SDG #6 is led by “custodian agencies” from the United Nations, which are responsible for compiling and verifying country data and metadata (UN-Water, 2016b). Subsequently, data is sent to the United Nations Statistic Division for publishing in a UN database and used for thematic reporting (figure 3).

---

**Figure 2**: Extended interpretation of target #6.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#6.1 By 2030 achieve universal and equitable</th>
<th>Implies all exposure and settings including households, schools, health-care facilities and workplaces and progressive reduction and elimination of inequalities among population subgroups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>access</td>
<td>Implies sufficient water to meet domestic needs is reliably available close to home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to safe</td>
<td>Free from pathogens and elevated levels of toxic chemicals at all times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and affordable</td>
<td>Payment for service is not a barrier to access to or prevent people from meeting basic human needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drinking water</td>
<td>Water used for drinking, cooking, food preparation and personal hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for all</td>
<td>Suitable for use by men, women, girls and boys of all ages including people with disabilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Achieving SDG #6 involves a shift from a project-based approach to a service-based approach, where the water cycle is managed in a holistic way, to include issues such as the price of water, stakeholder participation and service management.**
UN agencies in charge of SDG #6 are divided as described in figure 4.

Unlike MDG monitoring, which was achieved from household surveys, SDG #6 monitoring relies on national authorities and their national statistical system (UN-Water, 2016b). It is left to each country to decide how much detail they want to share with the custodian agencies on each target. The minimum would be at least one aggregate per indicator and logically, the more detail they provide, the more credible and useful the data becomes. The decision on how much detail is to be given in monitoring data is aligned with the strategic priorities adopted by each of the countries, especially for targets such as #6.4, for which the milestone is to ‘substantially increase water-use efficiency’, without no clear reference to a quantitative milestone. In all logic, a country with severe water stress will put special emphasis on increasing water efficiency. Consequently, aggregates associated to monitoring will be larger and more detailed.

According to the classification made by the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG – SDGs), targets concerning access to water and sanitation could be monitored by most of the countries through their existing national statistic data (UN-Water, 2017c). The Joint Monitoring Program recommends population-based sources of data, such as censuses and household surveys, over administrative records such as infrastructure coverage, if that information is also considered important. Additionally, the SDGs have established a ladder of monitoring, suggesting the possibility to continue monitoring basic drinking water for those countries where more accurate data is not available (Schmidt-Traub et al., 2015).

This concession in the monitoring system can have serious consequences in the underlying concept for the SDGs. In the water and sanitation sector specifically, the revolutionary progress for the MDGs face to the MDGs was to consider the issues mentioned above – affordability, equity, service, etc.–, instead of simply considering infrastructure coverage.
If countries do not provide accurate data about pricing, water availability or water quality, it will not be possible to evaluate the achievement of SDGs in water and sanitation at national level. Evaluation, as for the MDGs, will be limited to measuring the access to infrastructures. Additionally, increasing the role of the national authorities in monitoring may jeopardize accuracy. Indeed, the monitoring systems require the coordination of authorities and actors at local and national level. In many countries across Africa, systems and human skills are outdated and weak, especially at local level, which may call into question the accuracy of data.

Exposing the flaws of current evaluation methodology

The most frequent principles used for Evaluating Development Assistance are the ones drawn up by the Development Assistant Committee (DAC) (OECD DAC, 1991): relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These five principles, described in figure 5, were set in 1991 by aid agencies for the evaluation of aid-financed activities, addressed to ongoing and completed activities (OECD DAC, 1991).

A close analysis of target #6.1, using the definition described in figure 2; reveals that the innovative core concepts related to Human Rights included in the target are not necessarily taken into account within the five principles of the DAC Evaluation.

Taking for example a drinking water project, one important aspect of the SDGs and excluded from the evaluation principles is the affordability of the service. In target #6.1, affordability is understood in a way that the payment for service should not be a barrier to access to or prevent people from meeting water access. However, within the evaluation principles, the price of the service should be considered under sustainability dimension, measuring the (financial, social, environmental) capacity of the service to continue after donor funding.

The disparity between sustainability concepts in the two approaches (SDGs and DAC Evaluation), leads to different conclusions about what is a successful project. In the case of a drinking water supply project in a low-income rural area with low demographic density, a successful project, from an SDG angle, would be one that guarantee water access to their dwellers at an affordable price, regardless of whether this is below the cost recovery price of the water system. This implies that additional financial resources should be made available, and therefore the right to water takes precedence over the financial sustainability of the system. From an evaluation standpoint, this project will be successful only if the drinking system is financially sustainable, which means that the water tariff could be higher than dwellers’ payment capacity. Application of a higher water tariff to achieve sustainability will exclude the poorest dwellers from using the system.

Another paradox between the SDG and the DAC Evaluation approach occurs under the concept of equity. Take for example a sanitation project in an urban school with 1200 students, of which 12 have reduced mobility. From an SDG angle, the project would be considered successful if the sanitation service can be used by all. This implies that if the project infrastructure is not suitable for the 1% of disabled people, the project would be considered a failure, because it is contrary to the principle of equity. From an evaluation point of view, a project that covers 99% of total target expected would definitely not be considered a failure, because the effectiveness of the objective is close to 100%.

JMP was the leading agency for monitoring progress made in targets concerning water, sanitation and hygiene since 1990 (JMP, 2017).

GEMI: Integrated Monitoring of Water and Sanitation Related SDG

Created in 2014, to integrate and expand existing monitoring efforts on wastewater treatment and water quality, water use and scarcity, integrated water resources management and water related ecosystems (SDG6, 2016a).

GLAAS: UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking-water

GLAAS initiative provides information on investments and the enabling environment, with a specific focus on targets 6.a and 6.b. In addition to monitoring the SDG, The dialogue and information that emerges from GLAAS reports enhances the understanding of linkages between water, sanitation, and economic growth, and promotes a culture of mutual accountability, partnership and shared responsibility (WHO, 2017).

Figure 5: DAC Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance (Source: OECD)

| Relevance | The extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor. |
| Effectiveness | A measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. |
| Efficiency | Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. |
| Impact | The positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators |
| Sustainability | Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. Projects need to be environmentally as well as financially sustainable. |
The efficiency criteria also gives rise to discrepancies between the SDGs and DAC evaluations. Indeed, one of the dimensions of the DAC is efficiency, as defined in figure 5. SDGs analyze the financial resources mobilized for target #6, in indicator #6.A, but not how they have been used. Efficiency is a key dimension for Aid Agencies but has little relevance from the SDG, or Human Rights angle.

These three examples show that the evaluation framework, as it is now, is not aligned to the SDG approach. While some aspects of the SDGs can be directly included in the five-dimension evaluation framework, such as universality – that can be included in the effectiveness assessment; equity or inclusiveness have to be addressed independently. Efficiency is arguably irrelevant to the SDG approach.

The solution proposed to this challenge would be to adapt the DAC evaluation approach. It means that the existing five dimensions could be kept, but other dimensions (see figure 6) have to be added in order to integrate the Human Rights Approach in the evaluation methodology. Each Human Right has different dimensions associated to it, meaning that the evaluation methodology approach should incorporate all these different dimensions. Then, each Development Agency, taking into account the project to evaluate and its own development mission, should do a selection of the criteria to be assessed.
Conclusion

A paradigm shift in evaluation is required, moving from the DAC approach to an evaluation approach that integrates Human Rights throughout the evaluation process, both for ongoing and completed projects. The paradigm shift has to be translated to each aid agency’s own methodology, and evaluation dimensions have to be rethought taking into consideration the different dimensions of each human right and the agency’s own development mission.
Adapting monitoring and evaluation approaches to SDG #6


Alba Serna is an engineer with an advanced master degree in Water Management, by the French University AgroParis-Tech. She entered the African Development Bank at the beginning of 2016 as a Young Professional and after a year in AHVP front office, she is currently in the Water Development and Sanitation Department, working mainly in the identification of non-sovereign operations. She has a solid background in development cooperation, having worked for more than seven years in project management, especially related to water, sanitation and hygiene, in South America and, for the last five years, in Africa.
This article centres on the apparent lack of leadership focus in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), an unfortunate mistake which is likely to reduce the chance, especially in Africa, to achieve them by the 2030 deadline. The argument advanced is that evaluation of SDGs should deliberately include the assessment of leadership practice with a focus on good governance leadership, skills set management and results-based monitoring & evaluation among other pro-development leadership elements. The conclusion is that leadership assessment should be mainstreamed in the SDG evaluation framework.
Introduction

While leadership is a well-researched phenomenon, its practical application to transform people’s lives still remains problematic. One of the most unfortunate assumptions made in the development and endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals, is to think that countries and organizations alike have results-based leadership for development. Judging from the conflicts, human-made environmental disasters and rising poverty levels in many parts of the world, there is no doubt that this assumption is fallacious. Results-based leadership has been defined in many ways but everyone agrees that it is leadership practice of a special type which focuses on positive change/transformation of people’s lives. In other words, the underlying motivation for a leader’s actions should be to respond to the needs of the people from a short-term to a long-term range in a sustainable manner (Burton 1990 and Staten Island Foundation 2015). There are many facets of results-based leadership but this paper will focus on three, namely governance, team competency and monitoring & evaluation in the context of the global desire to achieve the SDGs.

Good governance leadership

Normally what tends to come to mind when the term ‘good governance’ is mentioned are concepts like accountability, transparency and freedom of expression. Admittedly, these are key principles of the notion of good governance but it should be pointed out that the African continent is still far from achieving true good governance (Enwereonye 2015 and OECD 2001 and 2002). On this aspect, Enwereonye (2015) points out that unless countries and organizations in Africa have ethical leaders, it will continue to be a challenge to transform people’s lives. Unethical leadership is self-serving, induces violence, reduces the scope for citizens to exploit their potential, is paranoid to advice and has a know-it-all attitude.

The suffering of people in a community or country despite abundance of resources literally ‘under their feet’ has become to be known as the resource curse theory (Auty 1993, Bannon and Collier 2003). The theory refers to a situation where resources which should or expected to bring blessings to people’s lives turn out to cause untold suffering instead and this is no doubt indicative of unethical leadership. Generally, most African countries south of the Sahara have, regrettably, confirmed the relevance of this theory. This is judged from their poor development, despite the endowment of natural resources that characterize the continent (Bhattacharya et al. 2016 and Sebudubudu & Botlhomilwe 2011). Therefore, in the evaluation of...
**SDGs, ethical leadership assessment will be key** to ensure that countries and organizations alike have pro-development leaders to deliver on the agreed goals by 2030.

**Skills set management**

The ability to manage human resources is one of the tenets of effective leadership but, just like the leadership practice, it is without challenges of its own (Whetten and Cameron 2011). Common management skills include the aptitude for one to manage team dynamics, discipline and deal with conflict, delegate effectively, motivate personnel, communicate effectively, plan, solve problems, make decisions and develop the right people to achieve the goals of the country or organizations. The greatest challenge in the human resources management phenomenon lies in the skills set management. Put simply, skills management is the practice of understanding, developing and deploying people and their skills in a collaborative way in order to achieve high level of development results. Pillsbury (2009) extensively researched and documented this notion of skills set management and developed what is now known as the Aligned Contributions Theory, firmly located in effective leadership practice. The theory is diagrammatically presented in Figure 1 below.

The author (Pillsbury) puts forward that effective leaders are those who are able to work in alignment with others and take actions that contribute to acceleration and magnitude of results or growth in organizations and countries. As Figure 1 illustrates, a well-implemented skills set management practice is when a leader competently identifies the skills...
that job roles require, the skills of individual employees and any capacity gaps during the course of carrying out given work. In the context of evaluation of SDGS, it will be a vital consideration to include assessment of leadership competences in skills management as advocated by Pillsbury.

**Results-based Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation are integral components of every development initiative because they allow one to systematically establish the worthiness or significance (Scriven 1991, OECD 2002 and Royse, Thyer & Padgett 2006). Viewed from a different angle, monitoring and evaluation are checks-and-balance designed to ensure that actions of an individual or groups of individuals should always be steered to bring quality of life to people. This means that results-based monitoring and evaluation (RBME) should be a way of life for every pro-development or ethical leader in a country, community or organization. The fact that relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, outcome, impact, sustainability and lessons learnt are key evaluation standards, it is therefore imperative for leaders at any level in society to have RBME knowledge, skills and the right attitude. Results-based monitoring and evaluation are central descriptors in defining leadership phenomenon as well as in selecting pro-development leaders. In line with this proposition, there should be a deliberate effort to include leadership assessment as an important component in the frameworks of evaluating SDGs.

**Conclusion**

The discussion presented here was an attempt to locate leadership at the centre of the global discourse to achieve the set SDGs by 2030. The paper argues that at minimum, leaders should uphold ethics, be knowledgeable and skilled in results-based monitoring & evaluation and be competent in the management of skills. The overall recommendation is that these three elements be included in the evaluation frameworks of SDGs to increase the chance in their attainment across all UN member countries.
Results-based leadership as a vital consideration in the evaluation of SDGs

Dr. Pindai Sithole is a founding director of the Centre for Development in Research and Evaluation (CeDRE) International Africa based in Harare, Zimbabwe (www.cedreafrica.org) and co-founder and current President of the Zimbabwe Evaluation Society (www.zes.org). He is a development consultant and practitioner with 21 years of international experience in Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation, Social Research, Results-Based Strategic Planning. His experience is drawn from public, civil society and private sectors in Africa, Asia and the USA. Pindai is also a part-time lecturer of graduate studies at Africa University in Zimbabwe, in the Institute of Peace, Leadership and Governance (IPLG). Dr. Pindai holds an Associate Degree in Accounting (Richland Community College, USA, 1993), Bsc. in Finance with specialization in Management Information Systems (Millikin University, USA, 1995), MA. in Leadership & Management (Africa Leadership and Management Academy, Zimbabwe, 2007) and a PhD in Sustainable Development Studies with a special focus on Sustainable Community-Based Development (Witwatersrand University, South Africa, 2014).

References


OECD. (2002). Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results Based Management.


In Africa, there is a real demand for training in evaluation. But the analysis of the system of actors reveals a strong dependency of the continent on public development aid. As a result of changes in normative frameworks among donors, evaluation practices vary. In the era of SDGs where development requires in-depth knowledge of contexts and issues, this article provides elements of analysis in favor of relevant and coherent curricula for evaluators.
Introduction

The globalization of Evaluation of Public Policies is taking place, together with the emergence of national evaluation associations and the multiplication of specialized private offices. The trend is underpinned by a tangible international movement towards institutionalization. To this end, some countries have already given public policy evaluation a constitutional status.

Africa, thanks to the work of stakeholders devoted to the cause of evaluation, is also experiencing the effervescence of the trend in evaluation globalization. In only a short period of three months, the author of these lines participated as an expert in three major international meetings.

- The AfDB Evaluation Week (IDEV-AfDB) in Abidjan (7–11 November 2016);
- the 2nd International Forum of Francophone Evaluation Network (RFE) in Marrakech (13–16 December 2016) and
- the 8th AFREA conference in Kampala (27–31 March 2017).

This article is the result of attendance of the events and retrospective thoughts on the needs and challenges for Africa in terms of evaluation with the backdrop of the 2030 SDG Agenda.

Initially, the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF and the OECD–DAC were the major precursors. Subsequently, the AfDB emerged to play a leading role. Today, the AfDB contributes significantly to the dissemination of the culture of evaluation through its specialized IDEV (Independent Development Evaluation) department.

There is a strong demand for training in evaluation among stakeholders. The evocative name of “Emerging Evaluators (EE)” is one of the groups with high expectations in terms of qualifying training. Essentially young academics, members of the group wish to increase their skills and acquire a professional degree. The training would take into account the specificities of the continent in terms of culture and the nature of needs in Africa.

The underlying issues

The training currently on offer is almost exclusively reserved for technical and financial partners (TFP). African actors rely heavily on their TFPs, both in terms of technical knowledge and finance. Indeed, if the national evaluation associations work, they owe it to grants, fellowships, training workshops, forums and conferences funded by their TFPs.

The following extract illustrates the deep-rooted dependence of evaluation stakeholders on TFP.
“Our research has shown that there is no real demand for capacity building in evaluation in the countries of the South. The demand was clearly coming from development aid agencies, who saw evaluation as a positive reform for the countries of the South. The countries receiving aid were then strongly encouraged to replicate this request and to introduce evaluation as an object of policy reform in their national development plans. As part of the incentive, commitments to aid by States were conditioned by the setting up of evaluation systems. The development of evaluation capacity was part of the package of institutional reforms that donors were proposing to recipient countries to achieve what they considered to be a minimum level of good governance to ensure the effectiveness of aid programs. (Laporte, C., 2015, p.243–244)

In Africa, evaluation has therefore emerged in the context of public aid, in the intellectual and financial hold of donors from the North by means of cooperation agencies.

However, we know that the history of public aid to Africa is marked by a succession of failures and reorientations. It is also known that among the causes of failure attributable to the North is the irrelevance of the underlying development theories. Finally, while some reorientations of public aid have been dictated by the inefficiency of the programs, others have been changed according to the motivations of donors.

Thus, the observer who witnesses this effervescence in African evaluation circles can legitimately fear that the curriculum of training in evaluation will reproduce the same patterns of failure.

### Historical revelations

Historical background work has shown that evaluative practices in the cooperation sector have evolved cyclically in response to changes in public aid policies. Depending on donor vision and organizational and contextual constraints, the evaluators of aid programs and policies have alternately favored different approaches and methodologies.

- **The 1980s.** After the neo-liberal turn of events, preoccupied with assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of aid policies in the context of the Washington consensus, quantitative approaches were favored.
- **In the mid-1990s.** Following the failure of development aid, the 1980s are referred to as the “lost decade”. Social approaches targeting poverty alleviation, strengthening education and health systems, and promoting good governance are implemented with qualitative and participatory approaches. The nascent NPM (New Public Management) approach gives evaluation a function of accountability which favors a management approach to the evaluation of organizational efficiency.
- **The end of the 2000s.** The managerial approach is challenged by beneficiaries and NGOs calling for more partnership and mutual accountability. Qualitative and participatory designs are reintroduced.
A scientific analysis of the development phenomenon

Evaluating development amounts to evaluating the greatest link in intercultural relations between the North and the South. The vitality of indigenous cultures means that, in the face of the social change advocated by development policies, they create "compromise logics". (Rist G., 1985) In the countries of the South, only a scientific analysis of the "development phenomenon" can make the Analysis of Public Policies intelligible and, consequently, its evaluation. The development studies and the analysis of public policies research fields must develop African expertise which can then serve to develop expertise in the evaluation of public policies.

Africa, therefore, needs more than simple evaluators capable of designing and conducting evaluations. It needs development analysts / evaluators who are well trained in Development Studies and Public Policy Analysis and well-equipped in public policy evaluation.

Strengthening the stakeholder ecosystem

Universities, state bodies, local authorities, national and regional media all need to be involved in the ecosystem. Currently, with the exception of APNODE (African Parliamentarians’ Network on Development Evaluation), national republican institutions and state bodies responsible for public policy have only a weak presence in evaluation networks.

The role of Universities and Institutes of higher education

In addition to the development of research programs, institutions of higher education should set up Masters in Development Analysis and Evaluation (MAED), structured around teaching modules fed by scientific works from the three fields mentioned above.

From a common core, these modules will lead to three distinct certificates: one, in the Analysis of Public Policies; one in Development Studies and one in Public Policy Evaluation. It will be compulsory to obtain the three certificates, to pass the methodology modules, the practical training course and the thesis. Doctoral studies should also be catered for.

The role of States, Local Governments and Private Firms

The State and local authorities responsible for policy implementation and private practices should be encouraged to make arrangements to accommodate apprentices within the framework of the training program.

Dual training for effective evaluation of the SDGs

The 2030 agenda constitutes a real opportunity for evaluation, which has the support of the international community. It is therefore necessary to seize the opportunity to develop a dual system of vocational training in evaluation. Training for SDG Evaluation, based on an anticipatory "incentive to evaluation" approach, would consist of proposing offers of partner evaluations to program / policy managers who need evaluation in the context of the SDGs.

The partner structures would work together as soon as the evaluation benchmarks are drawn up. The relationship would be "win-win". Partners would find the opportunity to introduce evaluation into their agenda, while, in the spirit...
of Swiss dual training, this collaboration would support the program. The apprentices would be Master students or “emerging evaluators”. The program would be staffed by experts and one or more evaluation bodies that would work together to find the necessary funding, identify the structures that welcome apprentices, develop modules for the theoretical part of the training, supervise practice, evaluate applicants, etc.

Conclusion

In a context where evaluation is recommended by the International Community and has a consensual logical framework, Africa must seize the opportunity to found a continental school of Development Studies and Public Policy Analysis. This will involve intensifying the stakeholder system through the involvement of universities and state bodies. The innovative approach summarized above would enable us to take on the formidable 2030 agenda evaluation challenge.
Bibliography


Mourtala Mboup is an expert in development studies and public policy analysis and a graduate of the University and the IHEID of Geneva. Today, he is the President / Founder of BEVALDEV (Development Evaluation Office). He continues to teach Mathematics at the DIP (Direction of Public Instruction) in Geneva and is an independent consultant in Analysis and Evaluation of Public Policies. Previously, Mr. Mboup has worked as Professor of Mathematics in Senegal (graduated from the ENS), Assistant Professor at the University of Geneva and Researcher at the International Center for Migration, Health and Development "., Geneva (ICMHD) Mr. Mboup is the author of a book and several articles.
Partnerships for the evaluation of SDGs are critical for success. Though Africa’s ability to deliver on the SDGs will in part be determined by the strategic choices in evaluation capacity, leadership and policy, Africa needs to strategically map out and harness its opportunities with partnerships which can help guide efforts towards achieving the targets of the SDGs. By stepping into the vast learning potential arena of countries which performed remarkably well in achieving the MDGs, Africa will find short-cuts to the knowledge and skills which helped forge the MDG success stories.
Introduction

Problem statement

In 2000, the leaders of the world made a historic commitment: to eradicate extreme poverty and improve the health and welfare of the world’s poorest people within 15 years. The global mobilization behind the Millennium Development Goals has produced the greatest anti-poverty movement in history. The MDGs also generated new and innovative partnerships, galvanized public opinion and showed the immense value of setting ambitious goals. Some south countries such as China and Rwanda made good progress in achieving MDGs.

This article contends that China’s success with the MDGs, particularly its effort at halving the number of its poor population, holds invaluable learning potential for countries in Africa. Africa can, and should leverage China’s extensive experience in development planning and monitoring and evaluation. Additionally, African states should learn from each other’s experience in their efforts to achieve the SDGs. For example, countries such as Rwanda which performed remarkably well in achieving the MDGs, should share their learning in evaluation, data management, and reporting via south-south partnerships. In doing so, African countries can ensure accountability at national level, enhance the involvement of parliamentary bodies in the oversight of government action, and strengthen the power of the Court of Auditors.

In fact, China reduced its poor population from 689 million in 1990 to 250 million in 2011. The infant mortality rate 50.2% in 1991 dropped to 13.8 in 2009 and maternal mortality from 80 in 1991 to 31.9 in 2009. Primary school enrolment rose from 97.8% to 99.4% between 1990 and 2009. And since 2000, access to potable water reached an additional 467 million rural residents.

In Rwanda, a post-conflict nation, population below the poverty line dropped from 60% in 2001–02 to 45% in 2011–2012. Rwanda is a world leader when it comes to women in decision making with 56% of its parliamentarians being women.

Africa can, and should, leverage China’s extensive experience in development planning and monitoring and evaluation.
How did China and Rwanda get the MDGs right?

China

China developed a participatory planning process to make progress in achieving MDGs, with a number of five year plans which included MDGs as an obligatory indicator. China also made a conscious effort to promote development of key sectors (poverty reduction for rural areas, food-security, educational reform, etc.).

In 2003, SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) crisis heightened the demand for information transparency and accountability within the government. Premier Wen Jiabao repeatedly called on government departments at various levels to establish accountability systems and undertake monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities (Wen, 2004, 2005, 2006). In 2005 for example, Premier Wen pledged to “increase the transparency of government work and boost popular confidence in government...” and “…establish a scientific system for evaluating government performance and a system for comprehensively evaluating economic and social development.”

China’s efforts at data collection and monitoring, coordinated efforts in education, and women’s education, allowed it to achieve its MDG 4 goals.

Based on the mid-term review of the Tenth FYP, the NDRC decided to develop an M&E framework for the Eleventh FYP and to establish an M&E methodology and institutionalize arrangements for future plans.

The development of the M&E Framework followed an internationally recognized “Ten Steps” model (Kusek and Rist, 2004) and was jointly created by a team of international and domestic experts. Among other activities, the team reviewed the international experiences of the OECD and various developing countries and convened consultative meetings with both international and domestic experts. The model is based on a sequence of ten steps or activities that are considered critical for establishing a results-based M&E framework.

China has a history of helping other countries make progress in achieving MDGs. In fact, since 2000, China has carried out over 1,000 projects in more than 120 countries within the South-South cooperation framework.
**Rwanda**

In the case of Rwanda, the efforts were a focus on participatory planning process. In fact, at country level, Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy, Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002–2005, Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategies (eDPRS 2008–2012 & eDPRS 2013–2018) were developed. The focus was also on sector strategic plans (SSPs) & District Development Plans (DDPs). Rwanda also gave a priority to monitoring and evaluation.

At inception of a medium-term plan, a national M&E matrix was created: the eDPRS Results & Policy Matrix. Each line ministry created a matrix of indicators to measure its performance. An M&E matrix was also developed at district level to monitor the implementation of the eDPRS. The Government also promoted independent evaluation of Plans and use of sector evaluation: Independent Evaluation of the Implementation of the Public Financial Management Reform Strategy 2008–2012; Independent Final Evaluation of the Rwanda Education Alternatives for Children (REACH) Project.

The Rwandese Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MINeCOFIN) has played a major role in the country’s M&E system building process and has a policy of implementing performance-focused policies. Within MINeCOFIN, the Planning and Budget Departments have coordinated M&E activities initiated across the government, with the political support from the Offices of the President and the Prime Minister. MINeCOFIN also manages the M&E system. Specifically, the Planning Department manages eDPRS M&E systems and the Budget Department manages MTEF reporting and the less regular public expenditure evaluations.

Rwanda also acknowledged the importance of access to data by developing a data collection and management system, and investing in its National Institute of Statistics of Rwanda (NISR) established in 2005.

**What did China and Rwanda do in common?**

China and Rwanda both developed planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. Evaluation activities significantly helped them achieve their respective development goals. China and Rwanda both also encouraged donor harmonization in a bid for more efficient harmonization and coordination of aid.

**The SDGs**

The SDGs are broad and ambitious, each goal containing several targets (in total 169 targets!) to be achieved by 2030 and every goal is multidimensional, meaning that every goal implies the achievement of different aspects, which are all related and interconnected.

The multidimensionality of the SDGs makes them more difficult in approach and evaluation than the MDGs.

Development in the SDG era does not only imply the improvement of individual conditions, but is considered as a system to be achieved through multidimensional and interconnected layers.

**Alignment of SDGs with Africa’s priorities**

SDGs are aligned with the AU’s Agenda 2063 and also with the AfDB’s High-5s. The integrative potential of SDGs and Africa’s own development initiatives is real; but action at national level, and cooperation...
globally is imperative. For sub-Saharan Africa, the interrelated nature of SDGs suggests strong partnerships between governments, private sector, civil society.

**Bridging the M&E gap**

In many countries of the Southern hemisphere, there is lack of competencies to lead planning, monitoring and evaluation process. Technical assistance is important because it will give the opportunity to local and foreign experts to work together and local experts will learn by doing.

Going forward, it is important to foster partnerships, bridge gaps in implementation and M&E. It is necessary to establish M&E methodologies and institutionalize arrangements for National Development Plans, District and Local Plans.

It is also necessary to enhance data collection/gathering. To achieve this, we should give priority to Domestic Resource Mobilization over Foreign Direct Investment in order to drive & fund the transformative agenda. It is also important to develop principles of accountability, transparency, rule of law, participation and inclusion of non-state actors in the design and implementation of development activities, as well as to resolve existing conflicts, prevent new ones, and guarantee the security of people and businesses. The institutionalization of sustainability in planning at all levels and integration of M&E in Public Policy is also needed.

Financing M&E activities and data collection is still a big challenge in many south countries. Many south countries don’t give the priority to these M&E activities because they are very expensive and the government budgets to finance this kind of activities is limited.

Tracking progress in sustainable agriculture and forest management is challenging: distances are long, populations are sparse, interventions range from policies to crop and livestock practices, and the voice of the farmer is critical for success. Recent approaches focusing on climate impacts and land use pressures (climate-smart agriculture and landscape approach) add to the complexity and require efficient data collection and analysis methods. The systemization of information and communication technology (ICT) in the monitoring and evaluation (M and E) process enables accountability-from field staff to regional and central governments and development partners. Promotion of ICT especially mobile technology could represent a valuable tool for M&E of SDGs.

**Conclusion**

Africa can gain in transformative leadership, institutional capacity and experience-sharing from South-South partnerships with countries such as China and Rwanda, who succeeded in achieving the MDG objectives. South-South partnerships for evaluating SDGs should, in addition to providing technical assistance, financing M&E activities and data collection, focus on capacity development. Developing capacity in procuring and conducting evaluations can help raise the quality of the SDGs’ follow-up and review processes. Monitoring and Evaluation activities in Rwanda’s have shown that aligning evaluation with political priorities and national strategies help ensure buy-in, ownership and sustainability.
References

Julian Barr (Team Leader) ; Jing Gu ; Guo Yan ; James Keeley and Johanna Pannartz, China Country Programme Evaluation, Department for international Development, Evaluation Report EV 710.


Nathalie Holvoet and Heidy Rombouts, The politics of monitoring and evaluation under changing aid modalities: Towards a conceptual framework and selected findings from Rwanda’s health sector.

Adolf Kloke-Lesch, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Solutions Network Germany (SDSN Germany), The G 20 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) : Reflections on future roles and tasks.


R. Lance, Volume II, Issue 4–Fall 2007, the historical development of program evaluation : exploring the past and present.

Dorothy Lucks and Colin Kirk, EVALSDGs (Evaluation-Adding And Learning to the SDGs) A Concept Paper.

Vitalice Meja, Making South-South Cooperation Partnerships for Work for Africa: A situational analysis and policy recommendations.

Linda G. Morra Imas, Ray C. Rist, 2009, The Road to Results.

OECD, Evaluating Development Activities, 12 Lessons from the OECD DAC.


Thomas Schwandt, Zenda Ofir, Dorothy, Lucks, Kassem El-Saddick and Stefano D’Errico, April 2016, Briefing, iied, Eval SDGs, Eval Partners.

Anna Stobart, Hafton Consultancy, 22 June 2010, Approaches to Partnership.


Mei Wang, (Senior Economist, World Bank); Xu Lin, ( Director-General, National Development and Reform Commission, People’s Republic of China), China : Towards Results-Based Strategic Planning Mid-term Evaluation of China’s 11th Five Years Plan, December 18, 2008 Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, East Asia and Pacific Region.
Mr. Gninnakan Oumar Sako has been an expert in strategic planning at the Ministry of Planning and Development of Côte d’Ivoire since 2010. During his professional career, Mr. Sako has been actively involved in the activities of the Côte d’Ivoire Development Plan and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Plan. He holds a Diploma of Specialized Higher Education (DESS) in Economic Regulation and Project Management from Félix Houphouët Boigny University, Côte d’Ivoire. Mr Sako has carried out several complementary training courses in the field of economic and social development. In 2008, he obtained a certificate in development strategy from the Institute of Development Strategy (KDS) of South Korea, a certificate in participatory planning and sustainable development obtained from the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) of India and a certificate in development planning obtained at the African Institute for Economic and Social Development of Planning in Senegal. In 2016, Mr. Sako received a certificate in project evaluation and development programs from the World Bank and Carleton University in Canada.
The era of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) presents much bolder targets and requires not just a new approach to development thinking but also to how the goals are evaluated. This article reviews two social protection programs in Ghana. It examines key questions related to social protection, fiscal risks and the need for the development evaluator to reinterpret OECD/DAC’s principles for development evaluation in line with emerging issues. It concludes by emphasizing the need for evaluation practitioners to re-examine what it really means for a policy or program to be “relevant” or “sustainable”, in the framework of OECD/DAC’s principles for evaluation of development assistance.
Social protection, a development aid priority

The evolving consensus that social protection is key to ensuring that extreme poverty is eradicated by 2030 is perhaps reflected in the sector distribution of Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) to Africa over the years (see Figure 1).

The question that remains unanswered however, is the strategy needed to ensure that social intervention programs become self-sustaining. This is a very important issue because of the sustainability risk that social protection programs face as a result of fiscal uncertainties in some sub-Saharan economies. Evaluation practitioners must play a role in building a strong business case for continued fiscal support amidst the intensive competition for budgetary resources.

This requires closer collaboration between development partners, program managers and the general evaluation community.

The focus of this article is to use Ghana’s recent experience in implementing two key social intervention programs to highlight the fiscal risks and its

**Figure 1:** Total DAC countries contribution as % of multilateral finance

implications for program evaluation within the context of OECD/DAC’s evaluation principles.

**LEAP and LIPW: Will the anchor hold?**

Ghana has undergone four electoral transitions since the inception of democratic governance in 1992. Although the economy remains resilient, growth in recent years has slowed from a 5-year high of 9.3% per cent in 2012 to 3.5% per cent in 2016, exposing the economy’s vulnerability to shocks. The social sector, which is key to reducing extreme poverty and vulnerability, has not escaped the adverse consequences of fiscal tightening under IMF’s 3-year Extended Credit Facility, which is expected to wind up in 2018. That notwithstanding it [the social sector] continues to receive technical and financial assistance from bilateral and multilateral development partners with the intent of supplementing Ghana’s efforts towards extreme poverty eradication by 2030.

Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) are two of such programs that are funded by the World Bank. LEAP is a cash transfer program that mainly targets extremely poor persons; the elderly (65 years and above), persons with disability who cannot work, and Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC). Complementary services such as free registration with National Health Insurance Scheme are open to all beneficiaries while...
enrolment of school-going children is a mandatory for OVCs. The project is funded by the World Bank under the Ghana Social Opportunities Project.

Results from independent impact evaluations studies (for instance see Handa et al, 2013) suggests that LEAP has had some positive impact on beneficiary households in terms of non-consumption expenditures (savings), school enrolment and community social network. This notwithstanding, the authors acknowledge that ‘implementation of LEAP has been inconsistent’ due to irregular payment cycles (Handa et al 2013, p. 29). The program’s zero impact on curative care seeking behavior and mixed results for child morbidity also raises concerns. Given Ghana’s tight fiscal situation, value for money is of utmost importance to managers of the public purse. Further iterations of program design is required to reduce the incidence of adverse unintended outcomes and in order to boost public confidence in the program’s effectiveness.

In 2011, the Government of Ghana, with support from The World Bank, commenced implementation of another social intervention; Labour Intensive Public Works (LIPw) program. The objective was to improve social protection spending by creating employment opportunities for the poor in targeted districts. Following an impact evaluation study that analyzed data from 2,341 households, the researchers found that the ‘LIPw projects decreased unemployment rate in the intervention communities by 24.2 percentage points for feeder road sub-project, 18.5 percentage points for small earth-dam/dugout sub-projects, and 26.7 percentage points for climate change sub-projects’ (Osei-Akoto et al, 2016: p. 56). According to data from The World bank’s Implementation Status & Results Report (2017), US$102.2m (73.77 per cent) total credit proceeds had been spent by December 2016. As a project, LIPw officially ended on June 30, 2017 and is expected to be handed over to the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD) as the implementing body.

### Program sustainability risks

There are essentially three sources of risks that faces LEAP and LIPw at both the policy and project level:

1. Fiscal Uncertainties (policy and project level).
2. Efficiency gaps in project delivery.
3. Enforceability of Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Metropolitan, Municipality and District Assemblies (MMDAs), and local contractors under LIPw.

### Implications for evaluation practice

It is widely acknowledged that domestic political processes play a central role in shaping resource allocation decisions within government’s fiscal space (ODI, 2009). This has implications for the role that development evaluators must play to shape decisions in the political economy.

There may be various roadblocks that development evaluators may have to overcome in order to influence the public purse in favor of social programs. The first is effective dissemination. Dissemination of impact evaluation findings needs to be incorporated in a broader stakeholder engagement strategy as part of responsive evaluation practice. Sharma (2004) as cited by Owen (2007), affirms this view by arguing that ‘evaluators need to consider how recommendations are to be conveyed, and be active in encouraging clients to adopt them’ (p. 123).
The second is how to apply new interpretations to OECD/DAC’s development evaluation criteria, with respect to relevance and sustainability. Some researchers have cautioned against the use of program goals to evaluate relevance. For instance Chianca (2008) states:

[…] measuring the level of goal achievement cannot be considered a sound basis for an evaluation of an intervention because goals, if not grounded in a sound needs-assessment, reflect only the expectations of program designers, managers, and other stakeholders (p. 45).

The thrust of the argument is that relevance and sustainability seen through the program goals lens may reflect the values and expectations of development aid agencies but not necessarily that of local stakeholders.

Conclusions

As witnessed in Ghana’s social protection landscape, country-level development strategy that shifts emphasis "from taxation to production" without adequate provision for social investments, may create short-term shocks which will impede progress towards SDG# 1 (zero extreme poverty) and 10 (reduced inequality).

Also, weak internal resource generation capacity poses a sustainability risk to social programs that are mainly funded through Overseas Development Assistance (ODA).

Evaluating progress towards SDGs within the context of fiscal constraints requires policy and program evaluators to re-examine what it really means for a policy or program to be “relevant” and “sustainable”.

The transformation of social protection programs into a productive inclusion enterprise is the only guarantee of long term sustainability, given Ghana’s uncertain fiscal situation. This requires evaluators to pay close attention to program design. It also implies a greater participation in the political economy by evaluation practitioners.
References


Nkunimdini Asante-Antwi is the founder and director of Rural Heights Foundation, a nonprofit that advocates for responsive rural development policy in Ghana. He also manages the Foundation’s social intervention programs in the rural areas. His career experience spans banking, FMCG, real estate and non-governmental organization.

He has authored several articles, policy briefs and advocacy papers with special focus on economic policy and development evaluation. He holds a bachelor’s in Banking and Finance from Central University and a Master’s in International business with modules in Public Policy Analysis and Implementation from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Ghana. He is a member of the Ghana Monitoring and Evaluation Forum (GMEF).
The 3rd Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the African Parliamentarians’ Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE), held in Khartoum, Republic of Sudan from July 15th to 17th, attracted 47 participants from 17 countries. Among these were three Speakers of Parliament (from Sudan, Ethiopia and Uganda), emphasizing the support that the network enjoys at the highest levels. Development partners including UN Women, the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), and IDEV (which hosts the APNODE Secretariat) also participated.

The agenda of the APNODE AGM included presentations of activities undertaken by members of the network during the year to promote the use of evaluation in overseeing development spending and results in their countries and regions. New national chapters of APNODE were formed in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Tanzania during the past year, bringing the number of national chapters to 10. The third AGM also discussed and approved the Strategic Plan for the network for 2017–2020, as well as some amendments to the APNODE Constitution which clarify issues on the role of parliamentarians, as individual members, as opposed to that of parliaments, as institutions, in the network.

Finally, the AGM elected a new Executive Committee for 2017–2019. Six members of the previous EC were re-elected, and there are four new members.

Workshop on the Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results.

IDEV evaluators reflect on lessons learned from the Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results (CEDR) at a learning workshop held in Abidjan on 14th July 2017.


Twende Mbele mission to Niger

The Twende Mbele partnership (see News, Evaluation Matters Q1 2017) is exploring possibilities to collaborate with other African countries beyond the three current partners (Benin, South Africa and Uganda) to strengthen M&E for improved government performance. IDEV participated in a mission to Niger from 24–27 July 2017 (similar missions were also undertaken to Ghana and Kenya). The mission met with the Minister of Planning, various government departments, the National Assembly, the Court of Auditors and the national evaluation association, among others, to gain insight into the current state of the M&E system in Niger, its strengths and weaknesses. Stakeholders also identified areas where Niger would like support from Twende Mbele, including in developing the institutional framework for M&E (national evaluation policy, strategy, guidelines, etc.) and capacity building. The Twende Mbele Management Committee will consider the mission’s report and recommendations at its meeting in October.

http://www.twendembele.org/
IDEV part of the OECD-DAC EvalNet Task Team for Evaluation Capacity Development

“How can evaluation units of organizations for development cooperation help strengthen national evaluation capacities?” IDEV Division Manager Karen Rot-Munstermann discussed this issue with colleagues from government organizations from Sweden, Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Finland, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Japan. The OECD-DAC Task Team for Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) met at DEval in Bonn, Germany on the 12th and 13th of September. They drafted a common vision outlining the significance of evaluation in partner countries by 2022, and a mission statement for the task team. They agreed to strengthen the coordination of their efforts to improve evaluation capacities and to advocate for a stronger international recognition of evaluation as a pillar of good governance and the need to engage in ECD. The next steps will be for the task team to define the key partners to work with to achieve its mission, and to draw up a concrete action plan. The work of the task team will be presented at the next full meeting of the OECD-DAC EvalNet in November in Paris.

Fourth Quarter 2016: Evaluation Week Special

Achieving transformation requires not only investments and policies, but also a change in mindset. With this in mind, we at IDEV organized the AfDB Development Evaluation Week 2016 on the theme of Driving Africa’s Transformation. This edition of Evaluation Matters captures the images, the debates and the words of wisdom from experts at the event.


Second Quarter 2017: The Comprehensive Evaluation of Development Results: Behind the Scenes

A comprehensive evaluation refers to a question, series of questions, or an iterative task that is designed to appraise an activity’s goals, outcomes and impact. It is complex, not only in how it arrives at its outcomes, but also due to the context within which the evaluation is undertaken. It generates meaningful learning, such that its viewpoints and recommendations are invaluable to policy/decision makers and development practitioners.


First Quarter 2017: The Problem with Development Evaluation and what to do about it

Development evaluation has been around for a while now. However, the perception is that it does not garner its expected level of influence. Why is there poor assimilation of the lessons learned and recommendations from evaluation? Where do the problems really emanate? Is it from the users of evaluations, or from the evaluators? Is it from the policy or the process?


Third Quarter 2016: Value for Money in Development

The concept of value for money (VfM) in development work is the subject of much debate and confusion. In VfM analysis by development agencies, four key terms known as the 4 Es are often used. These are Economy – minimizing costs; Efficiency – getting more results for the costs; Effectiveness – successfully achieving the intended outcomes; and Equity – reaching different groups. How are these terms interpreted and applied by development practitioners? Are we getting value for money in development work – and that includes evaluation of development work?
