Let me begin by wishing all our readers a belated but happy and healthy New Year. IDEV and I look forward to another year of discussing, debating and learning on evaluation-related topics. We very much appreciate the insightful articles, views and comments from you. They stimulate thinking on not only subjects in evaluation, but development while contributing to the global body of knowledge.

This year, we start by examining the theme of Building Supply and Demand for Evaluation in Africa. Both sides of the equation are important. The call for contributions yielded such a wealth of material that we will devote two editions to this topic. Later in the year we intend to delve into another important current issue, namely gender and evaluation.

While living in Tanzania, I came across a quote from Mwalimu Julius Nyerere: “You cannot develop people. You must allow people to develop themselves.” At IDEV, we view the practice of evaluation and the promotion of an evaluation culture as key underpinnings and potent forces for development. That is why we contribute to building the continent’s capacity to undertake and use evaluations. Our approach to evaluation capacity
development rests on ownership by the people. African countries have to own and lead the process. Recognizing that both supply and demand are important, we place equal efforts in both. Increased transparency and availability of evidence will help citizens hold their governments accountable. And good quality evaluations will provide the necessary tools in this cause.

We also recognize that evaluation capacity development is a long-term process, and that long-term support is crucial to sustain gains. It is a huge task. Fortunately IDEV is not alone, as this edition of Evaluation Matters shows. Governments, parliaments, civil society organizations, academic and training institutions, development partners, and specialized agencies all have a role to play. As Africa seeks to transform by rapidly industrializing and integrating the continent, expanding access to energy, clean water and sanitation, improving its position on the global human development index, and feeding its growing population, promoting a culture of evaluation and accountability is ever more urgent to transform the lives of its people.

Evaluation plays a serious role in good governance, promoting accountability, learning, evidence-informed policies and programs, development effectiveness, and sustained and rapid economic growth. However, creating an evaluation culture requires more than just enacting a policy or having an evaluation unit. First there has to be political will, buy-in and cooperation from various stakeholders including ministries, departments and agencies, as well as parliamentarians and civil society. Then there must be a steady supply of high quality
evaluations (implying availability of evaluators), the demand for these evaluations in order to ensure their use, and the capacity to use them effectively. Yet Africa faces many challenges in both the supply of and demand for evaluations and evaluators.

This edition of Evaluation Matters delves into some of these issues, examining challenges both on the government and the legislative side in building an evaluation system. On the government side, we know of the experiences of countries on the issue of lack of a national evaluation policy and its consequences. On the legislative side, we focus on parliaments and parliamentarians. In ensuring accountability for public resources and overseeing the executive, they value the outputs of independent evaluations and assessments. Yet there are challenges and constraints limiting the demand for and use of evaluation in parliaments and by parliamentarians. The African Parliamentarians’ Network on
Development Evaluation is working to change the evaluation demand and supply dynamics.

We also hear different views on building the supply and demand for evaluation in Africa. Articles from Cameroon and Liberia assess the respective country contexts and how evaluation systems and structures have been adapted to be fit for purpose. In addition, we hear the regional perspective through the work of CLEAR-AA on evaluation and results in Africa, showcasing the current trends.

The next edition of Evaluation Matters (Q2 2018) continues on the theme of “Building Supply and Demand for Evaluation in Africa”, and will cover topics such as South-South Cooperation for peer learning and more views on building the supply and demand for evaluation at country and institutional levels.

Happy reading!

About the Evaluator General

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