National Evaluation Policies (NEP) are built on two principles: increasing demand for evaluation and the use of evaluations. When we talk of increasing demand and use of evaluations, we are faced with a chicken vs. egg query, which comes first? Should there be a NEP to guide demand for the use of evaluations? Or should there be a culture for evaluations that would demand a guiding policy?

This article looks at Tanzania, where the lack of a NEP has suppressed the emergence of a culture for evaluations. It argues for having a NEP to promote evaluation culture as well as presents a generation of evidence on policies and development programmes and how, eventually, this enhances accountability, effectiveness, efficiency and equity in development management.
The problem

Demand for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) results to inform decision-making in Tanzania is limited due to the absence of a NEP. Indeed, despite the existence of a National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty Monitoring Framework (NSGRP), there is no policy which guides and requires Chief Executive Officers in the government to seek M&E data leading to the evaluation of major and strategic development programmes. The current M&E framework in the country is fragmented across ministries and ministerial department agencies (MDAs) meaning there is neither a harmonized evaluation framework, nor an inbuilt M&E framework and evaluation culture to demand for and use evaluations. The absence of an NEP has led to ill-informed programmes and policy planning, inefficiency and ineffectiveness in policies and development programme implementation and accountability. Moreover, the few evaluations conducted in Tanzania are done sporadically based on the demand of funding agencies for development programmes.

There are two key important words to understand within the concept of NEP: Evaluation and Policy. Evaluation is a systematic, objective and impartial performance assessment on the efficiency, effectiveness and merit of policy or programmes (OECD, 1991). It is also defined as “an assessment of planned, ongoing or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability” (Valadez and Bamberger, 1994) with the intention to obtain and incorporate lessons learned into the decision-making process of policy cycle. Goldman (Goldman, et al., 2015) defines evaluation as a “systematic collection and objective analysis of evidence on public policies, programmes, and organizations to assess issues such as relevance, performance, value for money, impact and sustainability”.

“The absence of an NEP has led to ill-informed programmes and policy planning, in-efficiency and in-effectiveness in policies and development programme implementation and accountability”.

Evaluations are considered as tools to generate evidence for learning and improving the management of socio-economic development programmes and policies. Furthermore, evaluation is defined as a process for objectively determining the worth or significance of a development activity, policy or programme for its relevance to its intended output and outcome (UNEG, 2011). Evaluations therefore, help governments and organizations to
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On the other hand, policies are purposeful decisions made by authoritative actors in political or organizational systems, recognized because of their formal positions, as having a responsibility for binding choices among goals and alternatives for the society (Cochran and Malone, 1995). They are principles or rules to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes, as they are also defined as ‘systems of laws, regulatory measures, and actions concerning a given accountability, (ibid).

What is a National Evaluation Policy?

A NEP can be defined and equated to “a systematic and institutionalized M&E framework in several interdependent organizational entities with the purpose of informing decision-making and securing oversight function” (Hojlund, 2015). It is also a guide for the evaluation process, activities, resources, and utilization of evaluation results. An examination of South Africa, Uganda, Malaysia, and the Philippines as case studies, shows that NEPs are established with the objectives to “improve the performance of [the] public sector through strengthening of the operational, coordinated, and cost-effective production and use of objective information on implementation and results of national strategies, policies and programmes” (IOCE, 2015).

A NEP, therefore is a purposeful course of action for assessing strategic development policies and programmes. According to Bermudez (2015), a NEP is a framework to guide a purposeful conduct of evaluations in the public sector in support of good governance, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making. (Goldman, et al, 2015) define national evaluation as a “...a purposeful course of action that both governments and non-government organizations that are concerned with development management problems taking it to address problems through systematic means of problem identification, agenda setting, developing alternative ways of addressing socio-economic problems, and formulating the policy to guide evaluation functions in the country”.

Should Countries have a National Evaluation Policy?

The need for a NEP can be determined by asking these basic questions: Are there problems that require evaluation; What would evaluation add; and How would a NEP be necessary? To answer these questions, Mackay (1999) argues that evaluation is an important process which helps governments determine budget allocation and plan decision making. It generates data for policy managers to make informed decisions based on evidence. When we consider the complexity involved in the performance measurement of development programmes, such as measuring citizens’ access to safe and clean water and sanitation, or access to health services, quality education, reduction on poverty and inequality against targets, a NEP becomes a necessary tool for enhancing accountability, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the development management.

EvalPartners (http://evalpartners.org) describes ten reasons as to why countries need NEPs. Among these they argue that, “[NEP] sets standards for evaluations at [the] state level, guides state institutions and evaluation practitioners for, establishment of necessary evaluation mechanisms and systems, and carrying out objective...”
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and independent evaluations, it will emphasize evaluation as a requirement of development programming. (Goldman, et al., (2015) justifies why a national evaluation in South Africa was necessary as they found that, “by 2008 and 2009 over 13 million people were receiving social grants, however, inequality remained a major problem, there was dissatisfaction in the country with achievements not keeping pace with peoples’ expectations. The South African government saw M&E as a tool for improving government performance on social service delivery” (Ibid). NEPs therefore, become necessary instruments for guiding the practice of M&E within national development programmes as they provide principles and standards for data collection and management, utilization, financing, etc.

Why Tanzania needs a National Evaluation Policy?

Tanzania is implementing its second Five Year Development Plan (FYDP-II) 2016/17 – 2020/21 with the goal to industrialization through 100 targeted industries in each of 26 regions. Achieving this target requires M&E of the implementation process, evaluating performance and drawing lessons for further programming.

Similarly, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which lay out 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators, is described as the “unprecedented statistical challenge” (Lykketof, 2017). The immense spectrum of goals, targets, and indicators imply that the complexity of evaluating SDGs calls for systematic data collection and objective analysis on efficiency, effectiveness, equity, relevance and impact to the nation (Lykketof, Ibid). The UN General Assembly President describes this complexity for SDG M&E a challenge, and therefore highlights the need for NEP to guide M&E on national and global development frameworks in order to track SDG progress in respective countries. Mackay (1999) offers possible actions for strengthening national M&E systems such as, government demand for M&E, strengthening supply of M&E, and strengthened M&E systems. As such, these call for a NEP to guide demand and supply of M&E information as well as capacity development in the country.

As example, robust M&E is required to answer the question, to what extent has SDG goal 2 – end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition – been achieved? Data requirements would include targets and indicators as depicted in the following Table 1.

### Situational Analysis of Evaluation Policy in Tanzania

An Organizational Capacity Assessment conducted in 2016 and repeated in 2017 (TanEA, 2017) shows that there is no NEP in Tanzania to guide evaluation practice, accountability and learning, despite having a monitoring framework. Amongst mapped countries with NEP (Rosenstein (2015), Tanzania was one of 32 countries without formalized evaluation policies. The policy gap contributes to a low evaluation culture, essentially that there is no culture to demand and use evaluations in development management programmes. Lack of an evaluation culture comprises the demand for evaluations and use for evidence-based decision making.

### Developing a National Evaluation Policy

Formulation of NEP is a process that includes multiple stakeholders’ engagement and sequenced activities. In most cases, national policy formulation is a government function, whereby a responsible government agency initiates
# Table 1: Data Requirement for Evaluations for SDGs vs Tanzania FYDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than $1.25 a day</td>
<td>1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions</td>
<td>1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture</th>
<th>FYDP indicators</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective</strong></td>
<td><strong>Indicators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round</td>
<td>2.1.1 Prevalence of undernourishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving, by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on stunting and wasting in children under 5 years of age, and address the nutritional needs of adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women and older persons</td>
<td>2.2.1 Prevalence of stunting (height for age &lt;-2 standard deviation from the median of the World Health Organization (WHO) Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2.2 Prevalence of malnutrition (weight for height &gt;+2 or &lt;-2 standard deviation from the median of the WHO Child Growth Standards) among children under 5 years of age, by type (wasting and overweight)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source 1: IAEG-SDGs
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- the agenda and leads the process. In other instances, Non-State Actors (NSAs) may initiate an agenda and advice the government on the need for a policy. The government buys-in the agenda and takes it up into the institutional framework and engaging the wide spectrum of stakeholders. Formulation of a NEP therefore, is a consultative process that must include all major key actors. It must embrace principles and technics of all stakeholders’ analysis and engagement processes and engage key stakeholders with interest in M&E in development for improving efficiency, effectiveness and accountability.

The process for NEP formulation also requires the identification and engagement of a key coordination ministry for managing and aligning the policy to national interests and priorities.

A NEP is a process that requires resources (capacity, time, human, and finance), widely accepted by stakeholders, and formalization of a process following the policy making process. Mackay (1999) identifies Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) as a necessary step for building an NEP. The ECD requires identification of key ministries, diagnosis of public sector environment, understanding of factors influencing budget decision making, determining the extent of existing demand for evaluation, assessment of evaluation capabilities of the government, bilateral and multilateral assistance agencies and mapping out options for developing evaluation capacity development.

There are different approaches for developing NEP, however, best practice teaches us that a participatory approach involving all stakeholders in government, civil society, NGOs, Academia and Development Partners is likely to deliver all-inclusive policies. In the case of Tanzania, the major steps include:

- Step 1: Problem identification: Are there problems that require NEP in the country?
- Step 2: Stakeholders analysis for Tanzania’s NEP: Who are the key stakeholders of NEP in terms of use of evaluations?
- Step 3: Stakeholders engagement in developing NEP: How should the identified NEP stakeholders be engaged?
- Step 4: Prioritizing issues in the Tanzania NEP: What issues and steps should be prioritized in the NEP formulation process?

Identification of stakeholders becomes a critical point in the process, these are the people or institutions that are likely to support, benefit or obstruct the process of developing an NEP. Stakeholders’ analysis is a process of identifying and aligning people and institutions along the power-interest matrix. It is an important stage in policy formulation that informs whom to work with as they have interest and power, but also who are likely to be potential threats to the policy. The Power-Interest matrix shows those with High and Low power and interest. For example, with the Tanzania NEP, a stakeholders’ analysis is indicated in the following Figure 1.

According to Mackay (1999), the identification of key ministries should focus on those ministries whose main functions are likely to make a difference on resource allocation, policy decisions, reforms, investments, public programme implementation. For the case of Tanzania, key ministries attracting evaluation are the Ministry of Finance and Planning due to their role of financial resource allocation, President’s Office – Public Service Management (PO-PSM) due to their role on human resource (M&E) capacity development and management. The President’s Office Regional Administration and Local
Government (PORALG), is similarly a key stakeholder as it implements major development programmes in Local Government Authorities (LGAs). It is important to note that developing a NEP requires government and Parliament participation as the key users. Other stakeholders include national evaluation societies and national chapters of the African Parliamentarians’ Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE). This not only institutionalizes evaluation, but also promotes a culture for the demand and use of evaluation for enhanced accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in development management.

Challenges of Building a National Evaluation Policy

There are many challenges in having a NEP. In the first place, not every nation and every stakeholder will easily agree and adopt evaluations as a helping tool for enhancing accountability. Some have voiced and perceived evaluation as policing and therefore resist evaluations. The very critical challenge is getting government “buy-in” for evaluation. Observations from discussions at the 8th African Evaluation Association conference in Kampala Uganda, 2017, showed that evaluation is often seen as policing of [watch dog] government operations. This creates a mistrust and dislike of evaluations by the very organizations that should be the recipients of the positive impacts of evaluation. Contrary to the policing perception, evaluation should be positively taken as a helping tool for increasing efficiency, effectiveness, impact as well as learning for future development programming. Governments, being the major stakeholders and users of evaluations, represent key players on demand side for evaluation in all its sectors and development programmes. The International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) (2016) identifies developing a national evaluation policy as one of the critical challenge towards developing a national evaluation capacity. Therefore, it is critically important that the establishment of a NEP becomes an inclusive process of the government and other key stakeholders.

Having champions for NEP in the Parliament to initiate and support evaluation as a tool for improving accountability is key. The APNODE was established in 2007 and is the first national NEP in Africa. It is important to note that establishment of a NEP is a continuous process. It is therefore important to establish a mechanism for the continuous improvement of the NEP.
2014 during the 7th African Evaluation Association Conference, with the objective to increase Parliamentary oversight through evaluations (http://idev.afdb.org). Attending Parliamentarians committed to the establishment and strengthening of evaluation in respective countries including fostering NEP. The APNODE Tanzania chapter was launched in 2017, with 40 (10.3%) members of Parliament trained on the use of M&E for oversight functions and evidence-based decisions. These are key actors in the NEP process as well as future users of the output.

Conclusion

This article has presented the process of NEP formulation which requires national dialogue and engagement of key stakeholders. Identification of stakeholders in the government, Parliament, civil society organizations and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations is of key importance. A preliminary dialogue with stakeholders in the Tanzanian Ministry of Finance and Planning as well as the FORALG, indicated a desire to review the need for and establish an NEP in Tanzania. This article concludes that, in general, NEPs are likely to prompt demand and use of evaluations in countries. Building an evaluation culture enhances effectiveness, efficiency and accountability in the management of development policies and programmes. In summary:

- There is great consensus amongst M&E professionals and practitioners that there are gaps in demand for use of evaluations, standards, and regulating M&E standards.
- There is also a consensus that there are fragmented sectoral M&E frameworks that require a unified policy.
The Tanzania Evaluation Association as a VOPE is pioneering and working with stakeholders for the establishment of a Tanzania NEP.

The way forward for Tanzania to have a NEP is to build the desire for strengthening efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and accountability in development management. There is always synergy between countries having an operating NEP with good governance and accountability on development programmes. Tanzania’s Five Year Development Plan (FYDP-II) leads industrial transformations for becoming a Middle Income Country by 2025. This can be achieved with an enhanced culture of monitoring, evaluation and drawing lessons from processes and implementation of development programmes.

NEP is likely to prompt conditions which improve results for management, governance and accountability in development policies and programmes. It also ensures evidence-based decision making in the Cabinet, Parliament, and Local Government Authorities.

References


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