

The 2015 NEC Conference in Bangkok: Enhancing National Evaluation Capacities and Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

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Community of Practice (COP), with support from the UNDP International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) and the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO), promoted an online discussion³ linked to the upcoming NEC conference in Bangkok, on "How the 2015 NEC Conference in Bangkok: 'Blending Evaluation Principles with Development Practices' can enhance national evaluation capacities and help to develop and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"⁴. The following is a series of key ideas shared by participants.

A participant from **Cameroon** raised relevant points that could be addressed during the conference: how to promote national evaluation strategies with integrated methodologies, within the framework of budgeted programmes, following/promoting results-based management of national and public finances; how to use evaluations to avoid duplication of efforts and promote better aid coordination; sharing lessons learned in developing evaluation policies; how to use national mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), especially for programmes financed by international partners, which do not follow domestic procedures; and how to strengthen planning, by working on setting/using/producing baselines and workable/SMART indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

For a representative from **Guatemala**, exchanging lessons learned from achievements and limitations of M&E is essential to achieve the SDGs; there should be horizontal spaces to promote these exchanges. Suggestions for discussions at the conference included: linking evaluation results with policy decisions; capacity-building for people to properly interpret the results of evaluation; and promoting the connection between evaluation and civil society groups to use its results in the new areas of advocacy.

For a representative from **Kenya**, the conference could address the reasons for measuring (different kinds of) indicators of sustainability; analyse different frameworks that assist in the design and adaptation of (current) indexes or indicators in use (aggregates or sets of indicators), and assess their advantages and disadvantages; compare and establish the criteria for a useful SDG index or indicator, stressing the importance of data limitations; communicate lessons learned and capture best practices, to assess progress of the range of indicators towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); deliberate on how to localise official development aid; develop innovative and responsible ways for international finance institutions to support subnational governments in developing countries to increase resources for measuring and implementing the SDGs at the local level. Another idea is to strengthen linkages with stakeholders; first, between national M&E and data producers; second, between governments and Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs); and third, between national M&E and the national parliament, to increase the number of countries with evaluation policies.

From **Morocco**, a participant suggested that not considering evaluation for the construction of the SDGs and their indicators would risk developing an unsustainable framework to promote development. The need for regular and accurate data should be highlighted during the NEC conference. This could be done in partnership with developed countries, where analytical and statistical

capacities are more disseminated. The SDGs will probably result in institutional changes at the local level; decentralised cooperation would play an important role in supporting local collectives and improving governance and local development. Another participant from Morocco raised the questions: How to understand sustainable development? Which tools should be put in practice regarding the SDGs? Which are the main issues in evaluation, regarding the SDGs?

Lessons learned from the MDGs should be applied to the SDGs. In the **Asia and Pacific** region, national capacities in evaluation have improved, according to a local participant. New development intervention modalities—such as triangular cooperation or public-private partnerships (PPPs)—should continue to build proper evaluation capacities. In the future, results can be monitored and evaluated regarding their sustainability.

A participant from **Guyana** suggested to keep supporting capacity-building and development by strengthening statistical institutions—nationally and internationally—as well as within universities and civil society. These stakeholders are critical in developing the SDGs. On opportunities for young evaluators, joint evaluations allow for local/national capacity-building. This is also being discussed by the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS), which will collaborate with the conference and hold joint sessions.

Participants from **Algeria** agree with other country representatives regarding the need for a forum to exchange good practices and lessons learned from the MDGs to adjust for the SDGs. There are still challenges regarding the difficult access to data, poor national evaluation capacities and a lack of support from public policies. Development should be sustainable, focused on people and use participatory approaches.

A participant from **Malawi** highlights the strategic need to build evaluation capacities for governments. In that country, there has been a focus on the monitoring of projects and programmes whereas less is being done on conducting credible evaluations for them, which are necessary to ensure positive impacts. This requires building capacities for evaluators in government departments and institutionalising sound evaluation systems and frameworks. Suggestions for the country to achieve the SDGs include: having joint evaluations to ensure that skills are imparted to the local evaluators; raising awareness of the general public about the SDGs to create demand for evaluations; and building capacities for evaluation units or sections in government ministries and the statistics office.

The consensus among the COP contributions is that the NEC conference should dedicate space to the SDGs in addition to the exchange of good practices and lessons learned from the MDGs.

Notes:

1. UNDP/International Policy Centre for inclusive Growth.
2. UNDP Independent Evaluation Office.
3. See <www.unteamworks.org/nec>.
4. Indran Naidoo, Director of UNDP IEO; Ana Rosa Soares, Evaluation Advisor from UNDP IEO; and Haroldo Machado Filho, Programme Specialist and SDGs Specialist from UNDP Brazil were content moderators in this e-discussion.