



EVALSDGs INSIGHT 2: MULTI-STAKEHOLDER/JOINT INITIATIVES FOR EVALUATION AND THE SDGs: LESSONS LEARNED

PURPOSE: **INSIGHT 1** introduced the complexity of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which emphasize national ownership of implementation, follow-up and review processes. Consequently, the relationship among national governments and parliamentarians as country policy leaders, and a wide variety of other relevant stakeholders is an important dimension for evaluation of the SDGs. Cultivating this relationship requires a multi-pronged and multi-stakeholder approach. This INSIGHT provides guidance for establishing a successful approach based on the experience of past joint initiatives.

LESSONS LEARNED ON JOINT INITIATIVES:

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER APPROACH

With the launch of the global development 2030 Agenda, all governments are actively working to figure out how to address the indicators and targets for the associated SDGs. For many, this has involved considering the lessons learned from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), for example the Philippines and Nepal. Others are building on existing work in national sustainable development, for instance in Estonia and Japan, and some have not yet fully charted the way forward. Experience is showing that bringing together multi-stakeholder groups that cover different ministries within governments, parliamentarians, non-government organisations (NGOs), academia, private sector, and other stakeholders in one sure way to go. The role of national government statistical agencies is critical in SDG implementation. Other important players who must be involved are professional evaluators, usually organised in national Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs). It is also important to engage with other government officials, development partners, academic or research organizations, and private companies engaged in monitoring and evaluation (M&E).

When is the fastest progress in evaluation and the SDGs being achieved?

It happens when there are:

1. Opportunities for collaboration between governments and the evaluation industry on the SDGs
2. Active VOPEs engaging in a strategic and meaningful manner in national SDGs processes
3. Jointly designed country-led evaluation systems and policies
4. Partnership mechanisms among governments, parliamentarians, and VOPEs are in place and dialogue is regular.

Source: EVALSDGs, 2016.

2. ACTING NOW FOR THE SDGs INDICATORS, TARGETS, AND EVALUATION

Most countries are currently focused on monitoring the SDGs indicators and targets. But if the focus is only on monitoring, how will the status of implementation or the development success factors and barriers be identified? Evaluation plays an important role in helping analyse progress as it occurs. This provides accountability and learning, using techniques and approaches that can include the interests of many different stakeholders. Building and strengthening relationships among government departments, parliamentarians and VOPEs can be an

important first step in ensuring that good evaluation policies and systems are established and linked to the planning and implementation of national strategies, policies and processes and national decision-making.

3. PRIORITIZING NATIONAL EVALUATION SYSTEMS AND FILLING CAPACITY GAPS

The SDG Voluntary National Reports (VNRs) show that evaluation is not currently a top priority with many governments. However, it has been found that where opportunities for active multi-stakeholder dialogue exists, substantial progress is being achieved. For example, a UNDP-UNITAR supported training in Asia in partnership with EVALSDGs led to new relationships between government officials and VOPEs. The Asia-Pacific Evaluation Conference provided a forum, supported by the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation and UN Women, for parliamentarians, government officials and VOPEs to develop national action plans. In many instances, the demand and use of evaluation to inform policy-making is not as strong as it should be, because potential evaluation clients (policy makers and the public for example) do not understand how evaluation can improve policy-making. In some countries, the VOPEs are weak and this hampers their engagement with governments eager to move forward on evaluation of the SDGs but find that the local supply and capacities of professional evaluators is insufficient. The table below provides a rubric of examples for how VOPEs, governments and parliamentarians can work together, regardless of the extent to which national stakeholders are engaged in the development of evaluation processes for the SDGs.

VOPE	Government	Parliamentarians	Opportunities to strengthen joint initiatives on evaluation and the SDGs
Engaged	Less Engaged	Engaged	VOPE can organize training to explain the relevance of evaluation within the national policy and planning within the context of the SDGs for Government officials. The training should ensure the presence of key Parliamentarians to provide leadership, commitment, visibility and follow-up.
Less Engaged	Engaged	Engaged	Government and Parliamentarians can identify potential leaders of the VOPE and support them in capacity development activities, such as: attendance in key meetings for national planning and review in relation to the SDGs, and sponsorship to international conferences that have events related to evaluation and the SDGs.
Engaged	Less Engaged	Engaged	VOPE and national leaders can seek several 'champions' in Government with whom they can work to build understanding and capacity for evaluation and the SDGs. VOPEs may also develop an advocacy strategy for raising the profile of evaluation and the SDGs across different ministries.

- **KEY LESSONS:** The role of the national government statistical agencies is becoming more critical as multi-stakeholder groups are required to come together. Professional evaluators must be involved.
- National evaluation policies, systems and plans should be developed now so that baseline information can be generated and analytical processes established for measuring progress and moving forward.
- National governments commonly focus on indicators and targets rather than evaluation and there is a lack of understanding how evaluation can improve policy making. Advocacy is needed to address this.

About EVALSDGs INSIGHTS

EVALSDGs is a global network formed to add value and learning to the SDGs, as well as support processes to integrate evaluation into global and national SDGs review systems. EVALSDGs Guidance Group is a sub-group of EVALSDGs made up of evaluators ready to walk with you to support the evaluation of the 17 SDGs which is complex and requires strong collaborations and partnerships. It provides INSIGHT publications, trainings materials, and information on opportunities to strengthen the global and national evaluation capacity. It shares good cookies around the impact and sustainability of the SDGs and tells you which competencies you need. EVALSDGs INSIGHTS are short, light and easy to digest notes on topics related to evaluation and the SDGs. They present ideas and new information, and stimulate thinking to strengthen evaluation capacity.

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