



EVALSDGs INSIGHT 6: 2030 TOWARDS A MORE STRUCTURED UN APPROACH TO NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

PURPOSE: The 2030 Agenda encourages governments to develop National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) to ensure useful and rigorous evaluations of their implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To this end, the entities of the United Nations (UN) are called to contribute to supporting Member States in building evaluation capacities. INSIGHT 6 aims to show how some UN entities have supported National Evaluation Capacities Development (NECD) and offer some recommendations for a more structured approach.

NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT (NECD)

The UN system has created foundations to connect good evaluation practice to successful international development agendas. The United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) produced a report entitled "National Evaluation Capacity Development: Practical tips on how to strengthen National Evaluation Systems", (2012). This report offers a framework to better understand NECD and how the various UN agency' mandates, experiences, and capacities have shaped their NECD efforts.

Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 69/237 (December 2014), UN entities in January 2015 reaffirmed their commitment to support, *"upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation, in accordance with their national policies and priorities"*¹. There is however no systematized information on what UN Member States and UN agencies have done or indeed how they ought to promote NECD to guarantee the success of the 2030 Agenda.

The link between evaluation and Agenda 2030 was restated in the Bangkok Principles on NEC for the SDGs (October 2015). These principles highlight key initiatives such as: country-level 'SDG evaluation needs' reviews and diagnostic studies, establishing national evaluation legal frameworks - legislation and policies, developing clear national and local sub-national level mechanisms for independent evaluation of progress against the SDGs, strengthening national and local data systems to monitor SDG progress, establishing evaluation training programmes within academic and public sector professional training institutions and supporting national, regional, and global evaluation professional organizations.

UN SYSTEM AND NECD ACTIVITIES: WHERE ARE WE?

According to a 2017 UNDP survey of the UN development system, 7 out of 21 agencies which responded (UNDP, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNAIDS, ILO, UN Women and UNODC) have contributed to NECD, but not necessarily to SDG-related NECD initiatives. UNITAR has recently joined this group. The table below describes the different efforts by these organizations. UNDP and UNICEF have contributed to national environment and institutional improvements; UNODC, UNIDO and ILO have focused on regional and national interventions; UN Women and UNAIDS have invested in raising awareness of specific topics such as gender and health; while UNITAR has improved individual and organizational skills through short courses.

UN SYSTEM	NECD-RELATED ACTIVITIES
UNDP	-Biennial NEC Conferences since 2009 and pre-Conference training workshops -Baseline studies on the state of NEC in 43 countries

¹ United Nations (2015), Resolution 69/237: Building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level.

UNICEF²	-NECD interventions at country level to enable environment and institutional capacity
UNODC	-Pilot initiative through its Global Programme (GLO/H92) to strengthen NEC in Morocco
UNIDO	-Evaluation training workshops in Asia and LAC in 2014/2015, French-speaking Africa and Central America in 2016/2017
UN WOMEN	-Strategy for developing Gender-responsive NEC in alignment with the 2030 Agenda -E-learning programmes and open knowledge management systems to support institutional capacity of VOPEs and individual evaluators' capacities
UNAIDS	-Guidance documents on Capacity Building for HIV M&E systems and competency-based approach to M&E Curricula and Trainings
ILO	-Evaluation Clinics and Communities of Practices in the MENA region
UNITAR	-Executive Leadership Programme in Evaluation and the Sustainable Development Goals (ELPE), in partnership with the Claremont Evaluation Center - New York

SIX RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A MORE STRUCTURED UN APPROACH TO NECD

The number and variety of individual initiatives implemented by different UN agencies, programmes and funds, call for a more structured approach by the entire UN system. Evaluation capacity development is a complex endeavor that requires a long-term vision and perseverance. We recognize that UNEG is in a strong position to contribute to and coordinate such an effort. It is recommended that:

1. UNEG create a dedicated working group within UNEG on NECD and make NECD its new flagship project
2. Continue UNDP support for NEC baseline studies, update existing data pictures through training needs analysis and use the biennial NEC conferences for stock-taking UN NECD efforts
3. Feed Voluntary National Review (VNR) processes and annual High Level Political Forums (HLPF) with data, pictures, and information from the UNDP NEC studies
4. Combine efforts of UN agencies operating in country to develop joint strategies with other development actors including national and/or regional development banks, EvalPartners, VOPEs, Academia, Think-tanks and Governments in support of NECD
5. Structure NECD by duration (e.g. short-, medium-, and long-term), target group/s, intervention type, etc
6. Customize NECD initiatives to country specificities (e.g. legal and political context, and the capacity and 'capabilities' of national public administration entities in the country)³.

KEY LESSONS:

- There is no systematized information on what UN Member States and UN agencies have done or how they ought to promote NECD to guarantee the success of the 2030 Agenda.
- A more structured approach is needed, comprising of a UNEG working group on NECD; UNDP support for NEC baseline studies; provision of data and case studies to decision makers; collaborative approaches amongst UN agencies; restructuring NECDs and customising initiatives around country specificities.

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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² Mapping exercise on UNICEF support to National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD), Final Report, Submitted to UNICEF Evaluation Office, Presented by IDEA International, 30 April 2018.

³ Presentation Strengthening Evaluation Capacity of Nigeria in the context of supporting the achievement towards the SDG, Denis Jobin, Chief of M&E, UNICEF Nigeria.