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EVALUATION: AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES – Volume 1



EQUITABLE EVALUATION

VOICES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

EDITED BY Steven Masvaure, Takunda Chirau, Tebogo Fish & Candice Morkel

Evaluation: African Perspectives
Volume 1

EQUITABLE EVALUATION

VOICES FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH



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Evaluation: African Perspectives
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EDITORS
Steven Masvaure
Takunda J Chirau
Tebogo Fish
Candice Morkel



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Reina-Marie Loader, Programme Lead of the MA programme in Producing Film and Television and Lecturer in Film Production, Faculty of Media and Communication, Bournemouth University, United Kingdom

Siphamandla Zondi, Professor of Politics and International Relations, Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Stanley Murairwa, Professor and Head of the Department of Business Sciences, College of Business, Peace, Leadership and Governance, Africa University, Zimbabwe

Tembi Tichaawa, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Tourism, School of Tourism and Hospitality, University of Johannesburg, South Africa

Vusiwana C Babane, Department of Educational Psychology, Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

Zilungile Sosibo, Professor of Education, Faculty of Education, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

Peer-review declaration

The publisher (AOSIS) endorses the South African 'National Scholarly Book Publishers Forum Best Practice for Peer-Review of Scholarly Books'. The book proposal form was evaluated by our Social Sciences, Humanities, Education and Business Management editorial board. The manuscript underwent an evaluation to compare the level of originality with other published works and was subjected to a rigorous two-step peer-review before publication by two technical expert reviewers who did not include the volume editors and were independent of the volume editors, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the contributing editors or authors. The reviewers were independent of the publisher, editors and authors. The publisher shared feedback on the similarity report and the reviewers' inputs with the manuscript's editors or authors to improve the manuscript. Where the reviewers recommended revision and improvements, the editors or authors responded adequately to such recommendations. The reviewers commented positively on the scholarly merits of the manuscript and recommended that the book be published.

Research justification

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines equity as the absence of preventable or remediable disparities among various groups of individuals, regardless of how these groups are delineated, whether by social, economic, demographic or geographic factors. The goal of equity is to eliminate the unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive people of their rights. Therefore, inequities generally arise when certain population groups are unfairly deprived of basic resources that are made available to other groups. A disparity is 'unfair' or 'unjust' when its cause is the result of the social context rather than biological factors. Equitable evaluation contends that conducting evaluation practices with an equity approach is more powerful, as evaluation is used as a tool for advancing equity. It emphasises that context, culture, history and beliefs shape the nature of evaluations, specifically in the diverse and often complex African reality. Equitable evaluation can render power to the powerless, offer a voice to the silenced and give presence to those treated as invisible. Evidence from various sources shows that inequality is prevalent in the African continent, hence the need to focus on evaluative solutions that address the structural issues that contribute to the different forms of inequality, such as economic, political and social inequality. Despite a plethora of development interventions in the African continent, a large proportion of the population on the continent still lacks access to basic goods and services for survival. The effectiveness of developmental programmes in sub-Saharan Africa has been uncertain, to the extent that minimal inroads have been made in addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and, currently, the effects of climate change. The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa, supported by the Ford Foundation, commissioned two volumes on equitable evaluation in the Global South.

The book chapters explore the following:

1. It takes stock of what we know about inequality: What is inequality in the African context, and how does it affect the lives of the citizens of African countries?
2. What is equitable evaluation? How can the concept of equitable evaluation be adopted in evaluation practice?
3. What lessons can be learnt from evaluations of interventions that address inequality at various levels (sectoral, programmatic, project)?
4. What epistemological transformation in evaluation practice is needed to achieve an equitable society?
5. How have issues of inequality manifested within evaluation practice through organisations, institutions and international development?

This book is the first of two volumes of voices from the Global South on equitable evaluation. The predominant methodology utilised is qualitative in nature. This scholarly book aims to invigorate academic discussions surrounding development programmes, with the goal of generating insights that can be utilised by evaluation commissioners and decision-makers in development programmes. These insights will help in addressing inequality and promoting a more equitable society in Africa through improved evaluation processes. The target audience for this book is primarily academics engaged in the field of developmental programmes in sub-Saharan Africa. No part of this work was plagiarised or published elsewhere.

Steven Masvaure, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Takunda J Chirau, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Tebogo Fish, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Candice Morkel, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

ACMERET Solutions	Academic, Coaching, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Education and Training Solutions
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
AfrEA	African Evaluation Association
AfrED	African Evaluation Database
AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
APNODE	African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation
ART	antiretroviral therapy
ARV	antiretroviral
ASP	additional safeguard policy
BBBEE	Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment
BWI	Bretton Woods Institutions
CBT	cognitive behaviour therapy
CDA	critical discourse analysis
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CGIAR	Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers
CHEWs	community health extension workers
CHOs	community health officers
CIP	Crop Intensification Programme
CIARAN	Centre for International Research and Advisory Networks
CISDA	Changes in Integration for Social Decisions in Aging
CLEAR-AA	Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results, Anglophone Africa
CLEAR-FA	Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results, Francophone Africa
CMD	congenital muscular dystrophy
COFEM	Coalition of Feminists for Social Change
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019

CPHCs	comprehensive primary health care centres
CREST	Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology
CSA	climate-smart agriculture
CSC	collaborative stepped care
CSOs	civil society organisations
DFID	Department for International Development
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DSD	Department of Social Development
DST	Department of Science and Technology
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
EBA	ecosystems-based approach
ECA	educational credential assessment
ECD	evaluation capacity development
EPMS	electronic patient monitoring system
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FAP	Focus Area Programme
FDI	foreign direct investment
FSIN	Food Security Information Network
FTLRP	Fast-Track Land Reform Programme
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GBV	gender-based violence
GFATM	Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
GHP	global health partnership
GoZ	Government of Zimbabwe
GR	Green Revolution
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HMIS	health management information systems
ICC	intra-cluster correlation
IDEAS	International Development Evaluation Association
IFIs	international financial institutions
IKSs	indigenous knowledge systems
IMAGE	Integrated Mapping and Geographic Encoding System
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPCC	International Panel on Climate Change
IPV	intimate partner violence

IT	information technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
J-PAL	Jameel Poverty Action Lab
LCDAs	local council development areas
LEP	Look East Policy
LHW	local health care worker
LHWs	local health care workers
LMIC	low- or middle-income country
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAE	Made in Africa Evaluation
MDGs	Millenium Development Goals
MHCP	Mental Health Care Plan
mhGAP	mental health Gap Action Programme
NDA	National Development Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NEP	National Evaluation Plan
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NES	National Evaluation System
NGOs	non-governmental organisations
NPG	new public governance
NRF	National Research Foundation
PEPFAR	President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief
PHC	primary health care
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PICTA	Partnership for Information and Communication Technology for Africa
PLA	Participatory Learning for Action
PRs	principal recipients
PRIME	Programme for Improving Mental Health Care
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
OCSC	ordinary collaborative stepped care
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD–DAC	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPHID	Organization for Public Health, Interventions and Development

OXFAM	Oxford Committee for Famine Relief
QoL	quality of life
RBM	results-based management
RCT	randomised control trial
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Plan
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
SANGONet	Southern African NGO Network
SAPs	structural adjustment programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAT	Social Equity Assessment Tool
SMD	severe mental disorders
SPHC	selected primary health care
SWAPs	sector-wide approaches
TB	tuberculosis
ToR	terms of reference
TWG	technical working group
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAW	violence against women
VOPE	Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations
WACIE	West Africa Capacity-building and Impact Evaluation
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization
ZANU–PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

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Notes on contributors

Amy Murgatroyd
Centre for Sustainability Transitions,
Faculty of Economics and Management, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa
Email: amy.t.murgatroyd@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4718-9934

Amy Murgatroyd recently graduated with a Master of Philosophy degree (MPhil) in Sustainable Development, where her research focus was on understanding the role of the evaluator in implementing a Made in Africa Evaluation approach. Murgatroyd has seven years of experience in programme management and is the co-founder of KnowBetter Exchange, a specialised consultancy that provides transformative evaluation and capacity-building services.

Ayabulela Dlakavu
Twende Mbele,
Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: ayabulela.dlakavu@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9740-6298

Ayabulela Dlakavu is the programme manager of Twende Mbele, a multilateral peer-learning initiative between South Africa, Benin, Uganda, Kenya, Niger and Ghana, hosted by the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). Ayabulela is also a lecturer, researcher and analyst of public policy, foreign policy, international organisations, global and regional peace and security, political economy and international development. He holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree (PhD) in Political Science.

Candice Morkel
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: candice.morkel@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4188-9526

Candice Morkel is a global leader in the evaluation sector and the director of the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA). Morkel has 26 years of experience in government, academia and the non-profit sector, specialising in public sector governance and monitoring and evaluation. She leads CLEAR-AA's work in building national evaluation systems through institution building and capacity development. Morkel holds a PhD in Public Administration.

Cecile Feront[a,b]
[a]Graduate School of Business,
Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town,
Cape Town, South Africa
[b]Centre for Sustainability Transitions,
Faculty of Economics and Management, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa
Email: cecile.feront@uct.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2778-076X

Cecile Feront is a senior lecturer at the University of Cape Town (UCT) Graduate School of Business and a research fellow at Stellenbosch University's Centre for Sustainability Transitions (CST). Feront researches and teaches how individuals and organisations engage in change to promote social justice and environmental sustainability. She also explores research approaches that promote the co-creation and sharing of knowledge in service of systems change. Feront holds a PhD in Business Administration.

Desiree Jason
National Department of Social Development: Monitoring and Evaluation Unit,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: desireej@dsd.gov.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0008-8582-7539

Desiree Jason is a senior manager at the National Department of Social Development responsible for the monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. She holds a Master's Degree (MA) from the University of Pretoria (UP) and a postgraduate diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation from Stellenbosch University. She is a past board member of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA). She currently manages the implementation of a digital transformation project on linking social protection administrative data systems across government to improve services to poor and vulnerable citizens. She is extremely passionate about working on initiatives aimed at improving the lives of our most marginalised and vulnerable members of society – 'leave nobody behind'.

Ian Goldman[a,b]
[a]Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
[b]Nelson Mandela School of Public Management,
Faculty of Management, University of Cape Town,
Cape Town, South Africa
Email: ian.goldman@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6671-1118

Ian Goldman established the South African national evaluation system. He is a monitoring and evaluation advisor for the South African Presidency, Global Evaluation Initiative and CLEAR-AA. Goldman is also the president of the International Evaluation Academy (IEAc) and a professor at UCT, applying monitoring and evaluation to hasten a socially just transition to climate and ecosystems health.

Jennifer Norins[a,b]
[a]South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA),
Pretoria, South Africa
[b]MIET Africa,
Durban, South Africa
Email: jennorins@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-0989-5131

Jennifer Norins has over fifteen years of experience in project monitoring, evaluation and research in education, youth programming and community development. She currently serves as the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning (MERL) specialist of regional programmes at MIET AFRICA, a Durban-based non-profit organisation (NPO) that works in the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) region on youth development and education projects. Norins was a co-lead in the equity group for the 2021 South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) evaluation hackathon. A current SAMEA board member, Norins is the portfolio lead for monitoring and evaluation for Just Transition and facilitates the Evaluation for Just Transition Conference of the Parties (COP). She has an MA in International Affairs from the University of Massachusetts, Boston, Massachusetts, United States of America (USA).

Kguagelo Moshia-Molebatsi
National Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation:
Evaluation, Evidence and Knowledge Systems, Republic of South Africa Government,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: Kgaugelo@dpme.gov.za
ORCID: http://orcid.org/0009-0002-0247-5627

Kgaugelo Moshia-Molebatsi is a senior evaluation specialist in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) National Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) with extensive experience in coordination and management of research and evaluation in reproductive health, youth and gender. Over the past five years, Moshia-Molebatsi has played a key role in supporting the national departments and provincial offices of the premier in implementing the National Evaluation Plan (NEP).

Matodzi Amisi
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: michellematodzi@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5526-5837

Matodzi Amisi has extensive experience as a researcher and evaluator in government and public administration in South Africa. Amisi is a research associate at the CLEAR-AA, Wits, South Africa. She is also a senior research consultant in the Justice and Violence Prevention Programme at the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria. From 2005 to 2013, Amisi worked in the Commission on Gender Equality and the Departments of

Human Settlements and Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. She was part of the team that established the NEP in South Africa, working with the South African Department of Social Development and Department of Human Settlements.

Penny Parenzee
Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance,
Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town,
Cape Town, South Africa
Email: penny.parenzee@uct.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7790-5812

Penny Parenzee is the senior programme manager at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance at UCT. She has a background in law and social policy and has been involved in monitoring the implementation of various pieces of legislation and examining policy processes related to land, violence against females and sexual and reproductive health and rights in RSA, SADC and East Africa. Parenzee has managed European Union (EU) funded programmes, conducted research, led monitoring and evaluation initiatives, undertaken budget monitoring and expenditure tracking, as well as provided technical support to institutions seeking to strengthen their research and training efforts. Parenzee is a recipient of the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship. Over a two-year period, she completed two MA programmes at Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, USA. She holds an MA in Law and Social Policy and in Clinical Social Work. Parenzee was a PhD candidate at the Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance at the time of contributing to this book.

Samukelisiwe Mkhize
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: samukelisiwe.mkhize@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6381-662X

Samukelisiwe Mkhize is a researcher at the CLEAR-AA, Wits, South Africa. She holds an MA in Policy and Development Studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Mkhize has previous work experience in climate adaptation and mitigation in smallholder systems as well as supporting the development of climate-smart agriculture decision support systems. Her current research interests are around the conceptualisation of climate justice in complex socio-ecological systems and public policy responses to climate adaptation and mitigation in Africa.

Seán M Muller
Institute for Advanced Study,
Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: seanm@uj.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5892-0609

Seán M Muller is a senior research fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study, Johannesburg, South Africa. An economist by training with higher education training and degrees from UCT and the University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom (UK), his work nevertheless ranges widely from public policy to philosophy of science. Since 2010, Muller has developed an original, multifaceted critique of how randomised trials are used and promoted in economics and social science for policy purposes.

Sinenhlanhla Tsekiso
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: sinenhlanhla.tsekiso@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1178-4973

Sinenhlanhla Tsekiso has over ten years of experience in strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems in the public sector. She worked in different sectors and spheres of government in South Africa before joining CLEAR-AA. Tsekiso is currently the programme manager for evaluation systems at CLEAR-AA and is tasked with strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems within English-speaking countries.

Steven Masvaure
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: smasvaure@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4172-6206

Steven Masvaure is a senior evaluation technical specialist at CLEAR-AA, Wits, South Africa. He holds a PhD in Development Studies. Masvaure possesses more than fifteen years of working experience as a researcher and evaluator in the development sector across several African countries.

Sybert Mutereko
Department of Public Governance, School of Management, IT and Governance
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
Email: muterekos@ukzn.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7490-5943

Sybert Mutereko is a professor of Public Governance and the academic leader of Public Governance at the School of Management, IT and Governance. Mutereko acted as the dean and head of the School of Management, IT and Governance. Mutereko holds a PhD in Policy and Development from the UKZN.

Takunda J Chirau
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: tkchirau@icloud.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8506-7359

Takunda J Chirau is the Deputy Director at CLEAR-AA and leads the Evaluation Systems Programme at the Centre. Takunda has a PhD in Sociology from Rhodes University. Takunda has been working in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) discipline and has practised for over twelve years now. Taku has conducted several National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD) activities. Some of these activities have been through respective UNICEF country office and East and Southern Africa Regional Office. His contributions in the M&E discipline and profession are evidenced in countries of Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Liberia and Zimbabwe, to mention a few. He is a board member of SAMEA.

Tebogo Fish
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: Tebogo.fish1@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5765-8135

Tebogo Fish is a researcher at CLEAR-AA, hosted by the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM) at the University of the Witwatersrand. She holds an MA in Research Psychology and has been working in the M&E field for seven years. Her research interests include social issues in Africa, such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, education and skills development, as well as indigenous and equitable evaluation for transformative change in Africa.

Thandolwethu Lukuko
Climate Action Network South Africa (SACAN),
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: coordinator@sacan.africa
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3170-5298

Thandolwethu Lukuko is currently the coordinator of the South African Climate Action Network (SACAN), a network of fourteen NGOs working to address the challenge of climate change and climate action. He is also a director of Community Engagement at Mansa Advisory, a climate change and energy advisory services business. He has a passion for problem-solving,

especially as a means to address the socio-economic challenges faced by marginalised and disadvantaged groups. After completing his qualification in entrepreneurship, Thando pursued his interest in the business environment and established businesses in the mining, logistics and textiles industries. More recently, his work has been focused on working in low-income communities and developing strategies for co-creating and growing rural and peri-urban resilience.

Umali Saidi
Research and Innovation Division, Midlands State University,
Gweru, Zimbabwe
Email: saidiu@thedyke.msu.ac.zw
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6237-6789

Umali Saidi is the Postgraduate Studies Manager (Research and Innovation Division), a senior lecturer and the Editor-in-Chief of *The Dyke* (the institutional academic journal) at Midlands State University. He is a staunch and avid researcher with interests in knowledge management and indigenous knowledge systems, especially linked to monitoring and evaluation. His current research interests are around epistemes and how indigenous knowledge-based evaluation systems in Africa can support changes in governance for sustainable development on the continent.

Zacharia Grand
Department of Public Governance,
School of Management, IT and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Durban, South Africa
Email: zachariagrand@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0412-4328

Zacharia Grand is a public governance researcher at the School of Management, IT and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and a Public Policy lecturer at the College of Business, Peace Leadership and Governance, Africa University, Zimbabwe. He is also a senior public health and global development professional with a private consulting company Academic, Coaching, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, Education and Training (ACMERET) Solutions and has over seventeen years of experience as a development evaluation and capacity-building professional for government departments and non-governmental organisations in East, Central and Southern Africa. He has also worked for and with international organisations, including UN agencies and the government of Zimbabwe. His current research interests are around global health partnerships, partnerships for climate change and shared services in local authorities in South Africa.

Zulaikha Brey
DNA Economics (Pty) Ltd,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: zulaikha.brey@dnaeconomics.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0203-9410

Zulaikha Brey is a development economist at DNA Economics. She has a focus on driving robust programme design, efficient implementation and the measurement of performance – for government, donors, corporates and NPOs. Having completed more than 80 M&E and research studies to date, she possesses a diverse skillset of methodologies, applying such in key focus areas of trade, finance, health, education, entrepreneurship, employment and socio-economic development.

Acknowledgement

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Preface

Candice Morkel
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Addressing the challenge of inequality has been the 'holy grail' of global development programmes, and scholars and practitioners across various fields, such as economics, development, sociology and politics, have studied and ruminated on the solution to the pernicious challenge for decades. Almost 20 years later, the persistent resonance of the title of the book, *When will we ever learn*, by the Centre for Global Development (2006), is a stark reminder that though there has been a rapid increase in the availability of data on inequality, the evidence of 'what works', 'what does not work', 'for whom' and 'under what conditions' is much more complex. Despite the volumes of evidence that provide seemingly straightforward answers around, for example, the impact of cash transfer programmes, agricultural development initiatives or measures to improve access to health and education to underserved groups, the world continues to battle the protracted challenge of global inequalities. The World Inequality Report (2022)[1] states that, in terms of income inequality:

> [...] in every large region of the world with the exception of Europe, the share of the bottom 50% in total earnings is less than 15% (less than ten in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and MENA region) while the share of the richest 10% is over 40% and in many of the regions, closer to 60%. (n.p.)

Wealth inequality reveals similarly startling figures. The impact of the climate crisis has exacerbated the challenge, with the World Inequality Database (2023)[2] conveying the unequal distribution of climate impacts across the world and low- and middle-income countries suffering much more than their wealthier counterparts. This book, therefore, remains a necessary contribution to the continued advocacy and push needed to address the last frontier of colonialism and underdevelopment, and the need for global action across all sectors, by all actors, to dismantle the

1. See https://wir2022.wid.world/download/.

2. See https://wid.world/news-article/climate-inequality-report-2023-fair-taxes-for-a-sustainable-future-in-the-global-south/.

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harmful systems, practices and institutions that create the oppressive and protracted conditions for inequality to persist.

While the subject of this book is not new, the focus of the collection – the link between evaluation and inequality – to a certain extent is, and has been, left trailing behind research and reflections on inequality in development. Several authors from the Global South have therefore come together to examine the relationship between equity (fair distribution of wealth and resources), systemic inequality (the institutionalised, unfair treatment of people based on attributes such as race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, class and social status) and evaluation. It forms part of the growing discourse around transforming evaluation (which has also received a more candid focus on decolonising and indigenising evaluation as key factors that are fundamental to the need to transform in recent years). Over the last decade or so, evaluators have slowly begun addressing the issue of transforming evaluation and considering more than simply the success or failure of individual programmes on social change. This book presents a contribution to this and is a balanced collection that addresses the systemic nature of inequity and inequality, as well as the microcosm of evaluation practice and its role in supporting equitable development. For example, Chapters 1 and 3 unpack the global hegemony of the so-called Global North *vis-à-vis* the Global South and the historical power asymmetries that have their roots in colonialism and underdevelopment as introductions to understanding inequality and its manifestations. Chapter 4 challenges us to look more closely at the institutions that are the 'guardians' of development and the need to address unchecked hegemonic power in some cases. Chapter 2 considers what an authentic practice and living the principles of 'Made in Africa Evaluation' (MAE) would look like, and Chapter 7, for example, examines what works in addressing the issue of gender-based violence by learning from a South African evaluation of interventions.

The key question that this book raises for all of us is: how can our practice and study of evaluation shift the needle and achieve equity and equality for all? Our hope is in the persevering work of champions in government, parliaments, the private sector, civil society, international development organisations, academic institutions, research institutes, think tanks and numerous community-based organisations to do the work that is needed to tear down the oppressive systems and practices that generate inequality and to scale up the actions that are needed to achieve the goal of inclusive growth and development. For evaluators, the labour is to produce and work tirelessly towards the effective use of the evidence needed to do so. This book, therefore, stands as a contribution to the active and persistent work of the pursuit of social justice and the role of evaluation as a catalyst.

Introduction

Overview of the chapters

Steven Masvaure
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Takunda J Chirau
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tebogo Fish
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Candice Morkel
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2023, n.p.) defines equity as 'the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically'. The goal of equity is to eliminate the unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive people of their rights. Therefore, inequities generally arise when certain population groups are unfairly deprived of basic resources that are made available to other groups. A disparity is 'unfair' or 'unjust' when it is the result of the social context rather than biological factors. Equitable evaluation contends that conducting evaluation practices with an equity approach is more powerful, as evaluation is used as a tool for advancing equity. It emphasises that context, culture, history

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and beliefs shape the nature of evaluations, specifically in the diverse and often complex African reality. Furthermore, equitable evaluation can render power to the powerless, offer a voice to the silenced and give presence to those treated as invisible.

Evidence from various sources shows that inequality is prevalent in the African continent, hence the need to focus on evaluative solutions that address the structural issues that contribute to the different forms of inequality, such as economic, political and social inequality. Despite a plethora of development interventions in the African continent, a large proportion of the population on the continent still lacks access to basic goods and services for survival. The effectiveness of developmental programmes in sub-Saharan Africa has been elusive, to the extent that minimal inroads have been made in addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and, currently, the effects of climate change. The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results in Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), supported by Ford Foundation, commissioned two volumes on equitable evaluation in the Global South.

The two volumes seek to stimulate conversations among development evaluators, commissioners of evaluations and development programme decision-makers about the role of evaluation in addressing inequality and fostering an equitable society in Africa. The book chapters explore the following: (1) Take stock of what we know about inequality – what is inequality in the African context, and how does it affect the lives of the citizens of African countries? (2) What does equitable evaluation mean? In what way can the concept of equitable evaluation be adopted in evaluation practice? (3) What lessons can be learnt from evaluations of interventions that address inequality at various (sectoral, programmatic and project) levels? (4) What epistemological transformation in evaluation practice is needed to achieve an equitable society? (5) How have issues of inequality manifested within evaluation practice through organisations, institutions and international development?

In Chapter 1, Masvaure, Fish, Chirau, Morkel and Mkhize introduce the key terms that are key to understanding inequality. The chapter critically discusses inequality, inequity, equity, equality and the meaning of equitable evaluation. The chapter links inequality to the current development challenges in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the chapter examines the root causes of inequality in the Global South through situating inequality in the colonial history of the Global South. It examines how colonial history shaped the current levels of inequality in the Global South. The chapter concludes by highlighting the role evaluation plays in addressing inequality.

In Chapter 2, Murgatroyd and Feront explore how a Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) approach can enhance positive impacts for all stakeholders.

They argue that evaluations in Africa are typically conducted to serve the needs and interests of donors rather than local beneficiaries. This results in an extractive process whereby programme participants become the objects of data instead of being empowered to be active contributors in data-collection and analysis processes. The chapter is an application of the MAE approach and explores the experiences of key stakeholders in two youth development programmes operated by the African Foundation in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The key findings from the chapter are that participants' individual expectations of the development programme shape their experience of success or failure; that evaluations need to consider the impact on not only the individual but also their family, community and the environment; and that there is a willingness among participants to select the best elements of both a Western and Zulu culture to create an evaluation framework that best reflects their lived experiences. Further, they found that there is a growing number of donors who, if guided and supported through the process, are willing to adapt their current evaluation frameworks to better suit the African context.

In Chapter 3, Dlakavu argues that evaluation theory (transmitted through African institutions) and practice are dominated by Western neoliberal conceptualisations of what constitutes 'development' and how to measure it. Such Western monopolisation of evaluation knowledge and practice is a reinforcement of the Global North's neo-colonial dominance in Africa ideologically (inclusive of ideas of development), politically and economically. This chapter examines the dominance of Global North development theory and practice within African university curricula, African governments and non-state developmental stakeholders. He concludes this chapter by providing recommendations on how to dismantle the Global North's monopoly of development and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) discourse and practice.

In Chapter 4, Chirau and Umali argue that Marxist analysis of class offers a better understanding of how inequality emerged and sustained itself even to contemporary times. The class struggle is replicated by international institutions, albeit in new forms. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and its agents, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are no exception in perpetuating inequalities, particularly in the Global South. This is seen in how the Global North relates to the Global South in multilateral organisations. Chirau and Umali expose the hidden sources of inequality manifesting in the evaluation practice and space. The chapter hypothesises that the main nucleus of inequity and inequalities existing in M&E practices are traced to the operations as well as attitudes of the international institutions towards the Global South because these provide advice and recommend interventions. Their chapter concludes that there is no doubt that international organisations play an important

role in eliminating inequities and inequalities, but they must be aware of their impact to prevent unintentionally reinforcing inequalities and inequities. The chapter ends by providing recommendations that include the role of MAE and indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) in reducing the epistemological inequality between the Global North and Global South.

In Chapter 5, Masvaure demonstrates how the use of the intersectional approach in evaluation contributes to a better understanding of the climate injustice problem. Furthermore, the chapter explores how the various forms of inequalities influence climate change adaptation decision-making. The chapter adopts autoethnography and tells a compelling story of how one individual is affected by different types of inequities. The chapter deals in detail with the systematic nature of inequality and how individuals, communities and countries are affected by multi-dimensions of inequality. Masvaure emphasised the need for a holistic approach to addressing inequities in development if sustainable and impactful development is to be achieved. The chapter concludes by calling evaluators to action by employing appropriate approaches that address these multi-dimensions of inequalities.

In Chapter 6, Mkhize argues that evaluators' interrogation of the persistent colonial and neo-colonial agenda inherent in the framing of climate-smart agriculture programming. Her chapter reveals how CSA programming pursues distributive justice with limited forms of procedural, restorative and intergenerational justice, which remains largely unquestioned in evaluation. She illustrates how critical interrogation of confining framings and confronting injustices of climate change narratives and ideologies in development and evaluation can provide evidence for rethinking how CSA programming and evaluation are conducted in Africa. Her chapter also provides limitations and opportunities for evaluators seeking to centre equity in evaluative practice. The chapter highlights various evaluation approaches and methodologies that evaluators can employ to challenge politics, power and ideology. It concludes by cautioning against the view that evaluation alone can bring equity and justice in the highly political and contested CSA discourses in Africa.

In Chapter 7, Amisi and Parenzee explore the applicability and usefulness of gender inequality as the focus of interventions to prevent GBV in South Africa with its history of colonial and racial subjugation. The chapter synthesised a sample of intervention programme evaluations in a 2019 Evidence Map carried out by CLEAR-AA, the Institute for Security Studies and the Africa Centre of Evidence using the 'What is the problem represented to be (WPR)' analytical framework. The chapter highlights that evaluators focus on programmes as the unit of analysis in an evaluation, and this leads to a narrow definition of gender inequality.

Furthermore, evaluators are often guided by what the programme identified as a problem and what they intended to do to address the problem. They concluded by saying that it is imperative that we open up debates about how we understand gender inequality and its relationship to the forms of violence that manifest in public and private spaces. These debates present an opportunity to forge new analytical perspectives that reflect the lived experiences of those who occupy a given context.

In Chapter 8, Fish argues that evaluation is needed to facilitate the prioritisation of mental health equity in African countries. Fish stresses that mental health care is low on the public health agenda, as demonstrated by the scarcity of mental health care specialists, the existence of only a few outpatient and inpatient health care facilities or psychiatric wards in general hospitals with sufficient beds for mentally ill patients. One of the primary interventions in addressing this treatment gap in African countries is task-sharing (i.e. where non-specialist health professionals and lay workers receive training and supervision to screen for or diagnose mental illness and to provide treatment and monitor affected people). This chapter shows that the evaluations conducted in Africa available on the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) suggest that there are two different ways in which task-sharing interventions have been evaluated, using RCTs and a theory-based evaluation approach, both of which were problematic. The exclusionary criteria used for the RCTs meant that the success or failure of the interventions was measured using data from populations which were easier to study, and the effect on the most marginalised people, including the elderly and children from rural areas and those with severe mental illness, was ignored. The theory-based approach, on the other hand, did not use change theories from psychiatric or psychological fields to support the explanation of how change occurs. She concludes the chapter by stating that equity-focused evaluations should go beyond showing results only from the medical perspective but need to also consider the influence of social contexts on the problems themselves and the effectiveness of treatment.

In Chapter 9, Grand and Mutereko demonstrate how critical discourse analysis presents theoretical and methodological opportunities to identify inequalities in evaluations and their implications for policy and practice in Zimbabwe. The chapter indicates both negative and unintended impacts, including discourses promoting the exclusion of local voices from key evaluation findings. Excessive reliance on global health partnerships' financial and technical support has excluded local M&E knowledge systems as quantitative techniques, policies, indicators and targets define knowledge. The M&E partnership discourse also normalises the unequal power relations in which the government is presumed the weaker partner – an arrangement exploited, to their own advantage, by both parties. Consequently, the chapter

argues that there is a need for deliberate scientific and pragmatic discussions that problematise evaluation approaches supported through global health partnerships, such as results- and evidence-based evaluations explicitly focusing on its unintended effects.

In Chapter 10, Muller tackles the well-known concerns of randomised control trials (RCTs). He argues that the manner in which RCTs are being used could hinder social and economic development rather than advance it. The chapter focuses, in particular, on three RCT concerns. He argues that while RCTs are presented as 'scientific' and essentially value-free, they are heavily influenced by the worldview of those who decide on the design and implementation of the interventions and how the intervention is to be evaluated. Furthermore, he raised the concern that the special epistemic status given to RCTs contains strong (explicit or implicit) assumptions about what kind of knowledge matters and, therefore, whose knowledge in society ought to be given greater weight and attention. In addition, he raises the concern that the manner in which the RCT approach has been promoted and popularised reflects the exploitation of deep inequities – particularly between the Global North and Global South – in monetary, institutional and intellectual resources – in order to secure influence over public policy decisions. The direct negative effect of these issues is to create or compound epistemic inequities.

In Chapter 11, the authors focus on the development of a new, Made in Africa, Transformative Equity evaluation criterion. The authors argue that, given the importance of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's – Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) criteria in guiding the evaluation process, an explicit criterion is needed to promote greater equity in and through evaluations. The authors discuss the process of developing the evaluation criterion. The pilot process of integrating the criterion into the terms of reference and implementation process of selected government agencies is included. Further, the chapter outlines lessons learned in this process and reflections on how monitoring and evaluation approaches can be extensively transformed to promote Transformative Equity in society.

In Chapter 12, Fish, Mkhize and Masvaure conclude by highlighting the key points from the book.

Chapter 1

Inequality through the evaluation lens

Steven Masvaure
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Tebogo Fish
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Samukelisiwe Mkhize
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Takunda J Chirau
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Candice Morkel
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

Today's world is littered with various forms of inequalities. Communities in the Global South must confront these inequalities daily, and they have become a part of their lives. Discrimination and deprivation caused by inequalities have brought social and economic violence to the Global South. There have been

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several approaches to addressing inequalities, but they yielded minimal results. What is inconspicuous are the solutions to address these inequalities – the solutions have been far and short. In some quarters, there is resignation that inequalities are a permanent feature of life, and communities have accepted that they have limited powers to change their situation. Inequalities are driven by several factors, including gender, age, origin, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, class, culture and religion. In addition, there are inequalities between countries, as well as Global North and Global South power asymmetries. These inequalities have shaped the approach to international development and its accompanying evaluation practices.

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2023) defines equity as 'the absence of avoidable or remediable differences among groups of people, whether those groups are defined socially, economically, demographically or geographically'. Equity strives to eradicate unjust and preventable situations that strip individuals of their rights. Consequently, inequalities typically emerge when specific demographic groups are unjustly denied access to fundamental resources that are accessible to other groups. A disparity is considered 'unfair' or 'unjust' when it arises from societal conditions rather than biological factors (Singh, Chandurkar & Dutt 2017, p. 99). Equitable evaluation contends that conducting evaluation practices with an equity approach is more powerful, as evaluation is used to advance equity. It emphasises that the influence of context, culture, history and beliefs shapes the character of assessments, particularly within the multifaceted African context. Moreover, equitable evaluation has the potential to empower the marginalised, amplify the voices of the silenced and bring visibility to those who have been rendered invisible (Krenn 2021, p. i).

Evidence from the literature shows that inequality is prevalent in the African continent, hence the need to focus on evaluative solutions that address the structural and socio-economic issues that contribute to the different forms of inequality such as economic, political and social inequality. Despite a plethora of development interventions on the African continent, a large proportion of the population still lacks access to basic goods and services for survival. The effectiveness of developmental programmes in sub-Saharan Africa has been elusive, to the extent that minimal inroads have been made in addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and the effects of climate change. One is forced to ask the question: Why is it that many people in Africa are without clean water? Why is it that the majority are without food, medicine, education or a political voice? Why is it that the majority suffer from human rights abuses and poverty? The realities cut far deeper than just being poor.

This book seeks to stimulate conversations among development evaluators, commissioners of evaluations and development programme

decision-makers about the role of evaluation in addressing inequality and fostering an equitable society in Africa. The book chapters explore the following: (1) Take stock of what we know about inequality – what is inequality in the African context and how does it affect the lives of the citizens of African countries? (2) What does equitable evaluation mean? In what way can the concept of equitable evaluation be adopted in evaluation practice? (3) What lessons can be learnt from evaluations of interventions that address inequality at various (sectoral, programmatic, project) levels? (4) What epistemological transformation in evaluation practice is needed to achieve an equitable society? (5) How have issues of inequality manifested within evaluation practice through organisations, institutions and international development?

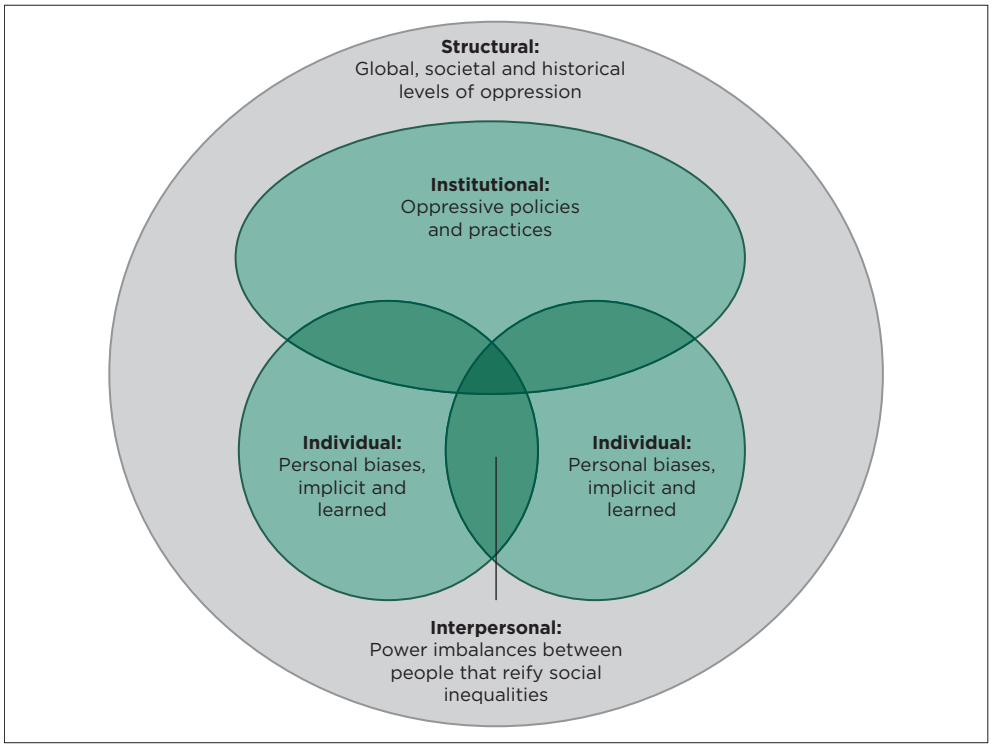
This chapter will lay the groundwork for the rest of the book, defining what inequality is and the role that evaluation can play in addressing inequality.

What is inequality/inequity?

While inequity and inequality are often used interchangeably, they are in fact distinguishable. Inequity is regarded as a form of inequality, as it involves the unequal distribution of resources. In this case, the unequal distribution of resources is based on an unjust power imbalance, often because of injustices against historically excluded or marginalised groups of people (Hasty, Lewis & Snipes 2023). Inequities generally emerge when specific population groups are unfairly deprived of basic resources that are available to other groups (Stewart 2013). Social inequalities lead to inequity when the groups in charge of distribution allocate resources in ways that further oppress marginalised groups. Social inequalities are inequalities resulting from people's backgrounds and the way in which opportunities were afforded or limited because of systems of capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression (Hasty et al. 2023).

Theorists have identified four levels of social inequalities as depicted in Figure 1.1.

Interpersonal inequalities are power imbalances that originate from personal biases, occur daily and demonstrate and naturalise inequalities that exist at institutional and systemic levels. Income inequality is an example of this. Furthermore, there are institutional inequalities that arise from the implicitly or explicitly biased policies and practices of the organisations in society which perpetuate oppression, including educational institutions, governments and companies. This kind of inequality is often imperceptible and viewed as status quo. Structural inequalities are the third type of social inequality, and they are based on the accumulated



Source: Hasty et al. (2023).
FIGURE 1.1: Levels of social inequalities.

effects of institutional decisions across societies and history, making them pervasive, global and particularly difficult to change. Structural inequalities can reinforce individual biases. Lastly, there are systemic inequalities that are the convergence of interpersonal, institutional and structural inequalities. Systemic inequalities are often depicted by 'isms', such as racism, classism and sexism (Hasty et al. 2023). Figure 1.1 shows that while social inequalities may often be viewed as different phenomena, they are in fact interconnected and exist in many different interactions between people and institutions.

There are also other dimensions of inequality, including economic inequality (income inequality, wealth and consumption), gender inequality, educational inequality and health inequality. Gender inequality is when a person is discriminated against because of their sex or gender, including females and people who identify as transgender and non-binary. Gender inequality often manifests as unequal treatment in the home, in relationships, at work, in communities and in society, including having limited or no opportunities to learn, to make money and to hold leadership positions, and at its worst, in gender-based violence (Oxfam 2019; Silva & Klasen 2021).

Gender inequity, on the other hand, refers to a lack of fairness or justice for females in all spheres of society including the economy and labour market, education, health care, etc. It is understood that creating equity across genders requires the temporary use of special measures and treatment to compensate for historical or systemic bias, discrimination and disadvantage that result from gender stereotypes, roles, norms and differences between the sexes (Shang 2022). Similarly, health inequities are the unjust differences in the health of people from different social groups, which are linked to various forms of disadvantage, such as poverty, discrimination and lack of access to services or goods. Health inequities stem from social injustices that result in some population groups being more exposed to health risks, and becoming more vulnerable to poor health than other groups (World Health Organization [WHO] 2023).

There needs to be a paradigm shift away from striving for equality, which involves giving all people the exact same resources regardless of their needs or already existing opportunities or resources and moving towards achieving equity. Equity recognises that people have different circumstances and needs, and thus, different resources and opportunities should be allocated to help these population groups thrive in order to achieve equal outcomes for all (United Way 2023). The premise of this book is that instead of promoting the allocation of equal resources to people (a one-size-fits-all approach or equality), evaluation practice can be used to determine where resources and opportunities need to be allocated most to give all citizens the same opportunity to thrive (equitable distribution or access).

Equity, diversity, inclusion and inequality?

While the concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion are often viewed as synonymous with one another, they are, in fact, different but interconnected. Diversity refers to the presence of any features or differences that set groups of people apart from one another within a particular area, including race, gender, socio-economic status, language, culture, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, (dis)ability, age, etc. (Tan 2019). Inclusion, on the other hand, is the intentional act or practise of involving, integrating and enabling the participation of people from different backgrounds, with different identities, in an activity, place, institution or sphere of society (Servaes, Choudhury & Parikh 2022). It is the value placed on the differences between people that leads to their inclusion. While equality focuses on the equal treatment of people despite their diversity, equity recognises that there are existing advantages and barriers in place in society that separate groups of people, creating imbalances in needs, resources and the availability of opportunities for the more marginalised groups. These imbalances and barriers within the social systems of society warrant

equitable solutions. Equity is the approach of providing fair access to resources, support and opportunities appropriate to the needs of certain groups of people and necessary to facilitate equal outcomes (MacEachern 2019; Servaes et al. 2022; Tan 2019).

To understand the differences and similarities between inequality and inequity, it is important to acknowledge their roots in systemic and systematic oppression and power dynamics. Systematic oppression is defined as the intentional mistreatment of certain groups of people. Inequalities experienced by people from different backgrounds, with different identities, stem from oppressive and unequal social systems such as racism, sexism, classism, patriarchy, etc. Discrimination and bias (whether covert or overt), on the other hand, stem from systemic oppression, which is the way in which social, economic and political inequalities are normalised and perpetuated in institutions, government and society through laws, policies and practice. The concepts of inequality and inequity should also be understood based on how they relate to issues of power. Power means the ability to exert control, authority or influence over others. Groups of people with more power also have more agency, meaning that they have a greater capacity to act and make decisions. The agency is also heavily affected by social groupings such as race, gender and class (Hasty et al. 2023).

Racism, for example, results from the intersection between power and racial prejudice. Racism is then perpetuated through interpersonal, institutional and systemic practices. Racism is when race is used to create and justify a social hierarchy and a system of power that privileges and leads to the advancement of certain groups of people at the expense of others. Racial inequality and inequity are pervasive globally because of racism, which is in fact a system based on race, which is a social construct or social categorisation that was used to create false scientific superiority and authority of certain race groups. Similarly, gender inequality and inequity stem from the intersection between gender prejudice and patriarchy. Patriarchy is a system of social inequality based on gender, where males are perceived to have power and characteristics associated with femininity are granted less value. Patriarchy is related to the history of males and contexts in which males hold more political, social and economic power and privilege. Similarly, income inequality stems from socially constructed class systems (Hasty et al. 2023). It is also important to understand the concept of intersectionality, in which these different forms of social categorisation overlap and exacerbate bias and discrimination. Intersectionality refers to the concept that combinations of social identity can have a further impact on oppression or privilege. ‘Gender inequality and racial discrimination are examples where discrimination experienced because of gender, such as discrimination against females, can be directly related, encouraged, and shaped by race or ethnicity’ (MacEachern 2019, p. 2).

What are the root causes of inequality in the Global South?

The root causes of inequity in the Global South can be traced back to colonialism in the early 1800s. Slavery, genocide, land dispossession and racial capitalism were all elements of this history influenced by the interests and motives of the Global North. It also had profound impacts on culture and value systems, as well as on the way development is viewed and pursued. Colonisation was driven by the extraction, exploitation and plundering of natural resources from the Global South. Europeans pillaged and plundered the colonised communities and nations for the benefit of Global North economies, with little being left for the natives of the Global South. This period in history has resulted in the affluence and development of the Global North today. The pillaging and plunder were disguised as part of civilising the Global South; however, it was also driven by racism, human rights violations and improvisation. To a larger extent, the current development challenges in the Global South are rooted in colonial history.

During colonialism, fundamental structures and systems of organisation in social, political and economic sectors, as well as the role of the state and the relationship between citizens and systems of government, were altered (Taiwo 2010). Further, colonialism disrupted indigenous ways of life, where females contributed to economic structures, whereas today, females lack status in every aspect of life. Colonial Christianity brought ideologies and belief systems that displayed females' role in society as being reduced to second-class status and removed from the existing religious, political and economic systems (Acemoglu & Robinson 2010). In the same way, females did not share power with males, while males held second-class status in relation to European colonisers. This way of life has taken root as a consequence of African people living in colonialism, putting to nought the idea that colonisation civilised the Global South. The failure to recognise and acknowledge the factual realities of colonial history and how exploitative structures continue, how inequity is the invisible and unrecognised privilege of history, is important in order to understand how global systems and societies today continue to perpetuate inequity through international development.

Colonial inequalities still exist today, however, in different forms and terminology. Global North continues to push neo-colonial policies that perpetuate the continuation of exploitative economic relations, political systems and unrecognised privileges of Global North in geopolitical relations long after the attainment of political independence in Global South countries (Andrews 2021; Frankema 2005; Nkrumah & Nkrumah 1965). Neo-colonialism manifests through the control of natural resources because of racist policy agendas and the centring of European knowledge

in development. The Global North is positioned as the 'knower' and authority on development, governing global policy agendas and priorities through the provision of aid. The perpetual nature of colonialism and neo-colonialism displaces endogenous agendas with Global North agendas sustained by colonial asymmetrical and intersubjective relations between the coloniser and colonised (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2015). The Global North maintains the power of 'who sets the agenda?'. The power to decide what is relevant and what is not, what can and cannot be discussed and what matters and what does not (Batliwala 2002). In addition, as during the colonial period, the Global South economies are largely extractive, that is, driven by primary industries that feed raw materials to the countries in the Global North.

Perpetuation of colonialism manifests itself in asymmetrical power imbalances in the global political arena, Western aid and development philosophies. Agenda-setting processes are definitively shaped by Global North donors' policies (Bradley 2008). In addition, the Global North controls the Global South agenda-setting processes, development values and priorities. Global North state agencies and donors' influence on Global South recipients' agenda-setting through the funding relationship between donors and recipients, donors and states, and its impact on agenda-setting in contemporary North–South relations. Unlike other forms of power, agenda-setting operates covertly in development processes, influencing the critical inquiry into what development is (Capella 2016). As a result of asymmetrical power imbalances between North and South, agenda-setting power continues to perpetuate inequality and inequity in development agendas, for example, how problems are identified and defined in pursuit of development and the accompanying interventions.

Why is it important to deal with inequity?

Notably, in the early 2000s, there were policy shifts by the traditional Global North funders of development in the Global South. The policy shifts were largely informed by the poor impact of development programmes in the Global South (Pallas & Urpelainen 2013). Consequently, development in the Global South took on a new focus with an increased focus on selected topics of interest that are defined in the Global North. Within these new topics, there was also an increased need to evaluate and measure immediate and short-term outcomes of the various funded development interventions. Although the need for evaluations of interventions was noble, it was defined by Global North values, paradigms, approaches and methodologies. The implication was that evaluation became a tool that validates and perpetuates the colonial ideas of the Global North.

Countries in the Global South inherited disempowered economic structures and high inequality levels from the colonial era and have remained high since independence (Stewart 2005). Recent growth and development patterns in many countries are increasingly defined by inequities across economic, human, social, political and intergenerational dimensions. Despite a plethora of development interventions on the African continent, a large proportion of the population lacks access to basic goods and services for survival. Development interventions in sub-Saharan Africa have been elusive, to the extent that minimal inroads have been made in addressing key challenges such as poverty, inequality and, currently, climate change (Masvaure & Motlanthe 2022). Inequity threatens sustainable development and human rights, perpetuates intergenerational poverty and limits communities and personal quality of life, dignity and self-worth. Thus, addressing and locating inequities in development is indisputable for development to make real contributions to improving well-being and combating inequities. Addressing inequity broadens and deepens development efforts' impacts at multiple levels. It challenges the pathways and processes of development, necessitating the unbundling of asymmetrical power relationships and dynamics developed through centuries of colonialism and neo-colonialism. Further, it encourages disadvantaged social groups, communities and states. It compels us to confront the perpetual cycle of injustice.

Inequality is a manufactured reality and a conscious decision, recognising that the decision not to tackle it in the face of increasing poverty, climate impacts, health inequities, unemployment and gender disparities has adverse impacts on inducing avoidable human suffering. The danger of the current 'silent emergence' of inequities as an acceptable societal condition and a distinct feature of modern societies negates the historical events that have led to the rising and perpetual impacts of inequity. Instead, a critical lens should be applied to development trajectories and agendas to achieve systemic change. Acknowledging the need for change requires deep inquiry into what limits us from tackling it. It also requires locating responsibility within the broader system. Fundamentally, addressing inequality and injustice is a struggle towards undoing colonial and neo-colonial exclusion and subjugation of people and communities in the Global South. This requires not only strengthening development efforts to become appropriately designed but also responsive to denied equity and justice in all sectors of modern society. Ultimately, it necessitates centring disadvantaged groups' lived histories and experiences at the centre of development agendas. This avoids the silent emergence of inequity and ahistorical narratives of neo-colonial development.

Post-colonial development and inequality

Several concerted efforts are targeted at addressing the various types of inequalities in the Global South. The efforts to address inequality in the Global South are rooted in the colonial power asymmetries where the Global North holds the decision-making power on funding and prioritisation of development. This approach mirrors how colonisation took place – the mantra was to spread civilisation to uncivilised countries such as those in the Global South. The Global North was purported to be civilised and felt that they had the responsibility to spread civilisation (Moloney 2020). However, the results of the process of spreading civilisation are shrouded in brutality, deprivation and the impoverishment of the Global South. During the colonial period, the Western powers propagated a specific interpretation of their own values (civilisation values) to justify colonisation.

Thought leadership for the current approaches to international development is held by the Global North. There is also unchallenged leadership of the Global North on development priorities in the Global South (Gosovic 2000). The north–south divide inequalities have not been challenged despite the increasing pressure for addressing such inequalities. The power asymmetries also define what gets funded. In the Global South, ideas, policies and intentions are spelled out, but if these ideas are not in tandem with the Global North agenda, they are starved of funding (Prashad 2014). In addition, international development divides countries according to 'developed' and 'underdeveloped', which closely mirrors the colonial division of 'civilised' and the 'uncivilised'.

Addressing inequality in the Global South has mainly been centred around addressing income inequality and, to some extent, wealth inequality. Income inequality has been addressed through poverty reduction strategies (Odusola 2017). The conceptual thinking around addressing poverty is driven by multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund through their Global South lending mechanisms. Some of the programmes were realised through policy instruments such as poverty reduction strategies, structural adjustment programmes, Millennium Development Goals and the current sustainable development goals (SDGs). What is important is that these policies proffered the blueprint for the Global South to progress to full economic growth, and that will result in ending poverty and inequality. Except for a few countries that charted their own way separate from the Global North's interventions, very little has been achieved when it comes to moving countries from being regarded as underdeveloped to developed. The international economic order is roughly still the same and exudes the global income patterns that were established in the early 19th century (Freistein & Mahlert 2016).

Redistributive policies have also been promoted in the Global South as a way of addressing inequality. These policies were in three parts: wealth redistribution, income redistribution and provision of public goods. Although there has been progress made in addressing specific inequalities through some of these policies, eradicating the associated socio-economic inequalities has been elusive. There are also several coordinated interventions that seek to address different types of inequalities such as health, human rights, gender and education. The lifelines of these interventions also depend on and are driven by funding and thought leadership from the Global North. Limited success has been achieved with these interventions, and evaluations have been guilty of paying too much attention to accountability instead of the impact of these programmes (Ebrahim 2005; Mayne 2017). The next section will present how evaluation can play a critical role in building a just society in the Global South.

Contribution of evaluation to addressing inequality

Inequality as a phenomenon and the scholarship around it are not new. The chasm between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' and the vast differences in the economies, well-being and livelihoods of developed and developing countries have long existed and are well-documented in the fields of economics, health and the social sciences, to name a few. This is exemplified by the quantum of academic and non-academic publications produced, for example, Stiglitz (2012), Piketty (2014) and Milanovic (2011). Conceptually, there are various definitions of inequality, for example, income inequality, wealth inequality and structural inequality. These disparities in the income, wealth, education, food security, access to health care, safety, security, housing and general well-being of individuals (to name a few) are related to structural inequalities that are produced by the othering and unequal treatment of categories of individuals, which is deepened by the institutionalisation of these patterns in the systems and structures of society. The development discourse is replete with narratives around the need to address inequality and accelerate equitable development, and global and national policies are awash with intentions to do so.

The continued existence of 'developed' and 'developing' countries (or richer and poorer nations) is indicative of the notion that development is rarely equitable and speaks volumes of the laudable intentions over the last few decades of the domination of modernisation, industrial development and economic growth that have not been able to produce equal societies anywhere in the world. It is widely acknowledged that those who own the means of production have power over those who do not – creating and, at times, deepening inequalities (Peters 2004). However, international

institutions driving the international development agenda, for example, the World Bank, have intentionally moved towards addressing inequality through shifting towards the 'shared inequality' approach (World Bank 2015). The global movement to highlight the importance of prioritising an intentional approach to tackling inequality both within and among countries is perhaps most elucidated in the SDGs (United Nations General Assembly 2014). In this regard, inequality has become a significant thematic area within policy and development debates on the global stage.

Evaluation is a well-established profession with an expanding worldwide standing and an abundance of organisations, conferences and textbooks (Hall 2020). The evaluation field is characterised by the idea that the production of evidence through the systematic collection and analysis of data, set apart from research by the value judgements that are invoked on the policies programmes and projects under scrutiny, is a public good that is conducted in service of addressing the manifestations of inequality in society. Evaluations, therefore, are generally conducted on programmes that aim to address development problems in sectors as varied as education, health, climate change, economic development, social protection and so forth. However, what is concerning is that for a long time, the field or practice of monitoring and evaluation, particularly evaluation, has had little to offer in addressing inequality through findings produced, as the greatest challenge is the utilisation of evaluation findings to either improve policies or programming. Evaluations also typically focus on single programmes or interventions, ignoring systemic issues and the complexity of development challenges. Evaluations could even do harm (Shanker & Maikuri 2022).

Evaluations, in essence, are designed to answer questions related to evaluation objectives related to a particular policy or programme that are usually of concern to the evaluator or funder rather than the evaluand or beneficiaries. The question, therefore, is perhaps not how evaluation can contribute to addressing inequality but whether – in its current form – it can do so. In the current discourse on the transformation of the evaluation sector (both in the conducting of evaluation and the kinds of policies, programmes and interventions it concerns itself with), the contribution of evaluation to addressing inequality is in question (Van den Berg, Magro & Mulder 2019). The idea that better policy- and decision-making for contributing to accelerated development results is dependent on the policies and programmes that are being evaluated, and if these are ensconced in inequality, evaluations alone will not be successful in addressing inequality. Systems transformation, therefore – which requires the transformation of the structures within which development happens – and the evaluations that are conducted within these systems of development both require attention. The debate on the transformation of evaluation is also linked to the growing discourse on the decolonisation of evaluation

and the concern in the Global South broadly, but in Africa in particular (where inequality indicators are at their worst), that colonial power matrices that continue to exist in, for example, development financing, continue to affect the evaluation sector. It is argued that the generally accepted evaluation methods, theories and approaches that were designed for application and relevance to the Global North, more so the accountability concerns of the international finance sector, continue to dominate evaluation practice in the Global South (Abrahams, Masvaure & Morkel 2022). The extent to which evaluation could reduce inequality therefore remains a pipe dream unless it is fundamentally transformed itself, and if it addresses the transformation of the systems that produce and reproduce inequalities.

However, over the past years, inequality began to surface in the discipline and practice of evaluation. For example, Rist, Martin and Fernandez wrote a book entitled *Poverty, Inequality, and Evaluation: Changing Perspectives* (2015). Additionally, there is a burgeoning 'justice for all' movement in the discipline of evaluation that has been seen in the United States of America (USA), where it strives to bring about change in the areas of social, economic and political inequalities (Hood et al. 2015). Generally, such evaluations employ culturally-responsive paradigms and methods and are known as social justice–oriented evaluation approaches (Mertens & Wilson 2012). On the contrary, the question of whether evaluation could be a catalyst for addressing inequality remains utopian.

However, what is known for a fact is that the evaluation of interventions now needs to put emphasis on producing evidence that informs how such interventions are equally distributing the gains across all in a way that reduces inequalities (Agrawal & Rao 2015). In that regard, Bamberger and Segone (2011) argue that equity-focused evaluations need to offer inquiries regarding what works and what does not contribute to decreasing inequality, along with the intended and unintended consequences for the worst-off groups, as well as the disparities that exist between the better-off, average and worst-off groups, permitting government officials (in the context of the evaluation of state-driven public good programmes) to integrate the results, recommendations and lessons into decision-making processes in the shortest possible time.

The need for intentional action in addressing deep-seated causes of inequality and consequences at individual and country levels is now more urgent than ever. Picciotto (2015) calls for the reformulation and rethinking of evaluation in the development arena. The search for a solution to inequality should therefore be found within the systemic configuration of world order and at the country level. According to Fernandez et al. (2015), the National Development Plan (NDP) is the plan of action under which the

majority of countries that are developing have organised their economic and social policies. The NDPs of countries like South Africa, Lesotho, Kenya and Namibia frequently involve poverty and inequality reduction. Additionally, in the case of South Africa, the Constitution is fundamentally anchored on principles of equality and equal opportunities for its citizens. Furthermore, it is backed by various legislative frameworks that were put in place to bring about equality and equity that were a result of colonisation, segregation and the apartheid system. However, despite these laudable policy, legislative and institutional mechanisms, the country is still far from reaching the level of equality that is articulated in the Constitution.

The concern is whether public good delivery interventions themselves are successful in prioritising addressing inequality and whether programmes to address inequality are actually being implemented. The question is, how can we evaluate what has not been implemented? If programmes are embedded in a context of systemic inequality, and if programmes continue to be focused on single problems, denying systemic conditions and approaching development from the perspective of single interventions, then how can evaluations (if focused on evaluating such programmes) address inequality? Evaluation will not help us answer the critical questions if the critical problems remain unattended to. Evaluations could be an entry point for informing the government to distribute the economic gains equally across all the people regardless of race, ethnicity, location and religion if the programmes themselves are addressing these issues systemically.

Agrawal and Rao (2015) argue that the strategic planning of the Government of India placed a sense of urgency on addressing inequality than before. Programmes of national commitments focused on bridging the gap between the haves and have-nots; programmes such as the *Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Act*, the School Feeding Scheme and Health for All (Agrawal & Rao 2015).

Considering the issue raised about NDPs, Fernandez et al. (2015) argue that given the complexity thereof covering all sectors of a respective country – and also the inclusion of all stakeholders – it is a challenge to summarise micro viewpoints into macro perspective and make the plan a utilisable document. The macro viewpoint further complicates grappling with the attribution problem during evaluations of national commitments or interests. The question, therefore, is how can we know that the NDP made an impact, notably in lowering inequality and unfairness, in the absence of a counterfactual? (Fernandez et al. 2015). This provides a key takeaway for evaluators evaluating NDPs and wanting to use findings to address the inequality.

Now more than ever, evaluation can contribute to addressing inequality and inequities in a variety of ways. For example, the SDGs and new

approaches to providing development financing call upon countries to develop country-led, focused and owned evaluation systems. Evaluating social justice and equity programmes, focusing on prioritising evaluations that address the issues of inequality. Prioritising these in National Evaluation Plans (NEPs) could be the critical levers in creating the transformation that is needed in order for evaluation to address inequality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, some of the issues that evaluators are grappling with provide some semblance of other actions that can provide leverage for transformational shifts in the evaluation towards accelerated equitable development. Firstly, conducting and ultimately ensuring the utilisation of evaluation results make decision-makers answerable for the fair distribution of opportunities and resources. Evaluation experts can verify that resources are allocated fairly and that interventions are effective in combating the fundamental root causes of inequality by monitoring the impact of policies and programmes on different groups of people. However, this is affected by a world order that is marked by political disintegration, interdependent economies and multilateral organisations contaminated by serious democratic deficiencies compounded by a lack of strong political leadership; this makes it almost impossible to say that coherent and timely public decisions will be made (Picciotto 2015). There are, therefore, possibilities for evaluations to provide solutions. Picciotto argues that '[...] there is a need for dispassionate, independent, and rigorous assessments of public policies and programmes' (Picciotto 2015, p. 255). One key question is whether evaluation as a practice and discipline is ready to provide solutions to complex and weak public sector systems? Perhaps to answer this question, countries are putting infrastructure for evaluation(s) to navigate such complexities. Countries like South Africa, Benin, Colombia, Mexico and Uganda have national evaluation systems (Goldman et al. 2019). Additionally, Benin, South African, Uganda and Uruguay have national evaluation policies and plans upon which evaluation functions are structured (Genesis Analytics 2017, p. 85).

Secondly, inequalities in having access to resources, opportunities and outcomes can be found and assessed through different evaluations. In that regard, evaluators can shed light on how certain categories of people may be disadvantaged compared to others by examining data and comparing outcomes across groups. By gaining insight into the reasons behind (and the scope of) inequality, governments and other development actors are able to prioritise resources and solutions channelled towards those who are not receiving equal resources. For example, Uganda's parliament recommended that the Youth Livelihood Programme be evaluated, and in

a report, the Auditor-General alleged that the government's Youth Livelihood Programme was failing to provide young people with the start-up funding and skills they needed (Chirau et al. 2022, p. 112). This exerted pressure on the government to channel resources where they are needed, for example, capacity-building and funding for enterprises.

Thirdly, findings from evaluations may be utilised to justify changes in policy that will confront inequalities. Evaluators are able to assist governments in making well-informed choices regarding which policies and programmes (Lederman 2012) should be promoted by proving the successful outcomes thereof that target inequality.

Chapter 2

Holding space for social justice and equity: The relational work of evaluators implementing a Made in Africa Evaluation approach

Amy Murgatroyd
Centre for Sustainability Transitions,
Faculty of Economics and Management, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa

Cecile Feront[a,b]
[a]Graduate School of Business,
Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town,
Cape Town, South Africa
[b]Centre for Sustainability Transitions,
Faculty of Economics and Management, Stellenbosch University,
Stellenbosch, South Africa

Introduction

The Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) approach has emerged and challenged Euro-American evaluation frameworks that largely dominate the assessment of development interventions in Africa (Chilisa 2019; Gugerty, Mitchell & Santamarina 2021). Euro-American evaluation frameworks have been

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evidenced to use a predominantly top-down extractive approach that serves the reporting needs and interests of donors but often fails to capture the actual impact of interventions and leaves programme participants voiceless, objectified and disempowered (Khumalo 2022; Masvaure & Motlanthe 2022). While positive changes to international donor requirements and evaluation methods are occurring, the MAE approach attempts to further contextualise evaluative practice by considering how African philosophies, cultures, belief systems and ways of knowing can be incorporated into evaluation frameworks to measure success as experienced by programme participants (Chilisa 2019; Omosa et al. 2021). This approach promotes the use of locally relevant data-collection methods, such as storytelling, to align evaluations to the expectations, needs and realities of local programme participants (Omosa et al. 2021). Importantly, the MAE approach is defined by a set of guiding principles that aim to promote social justice and equity in evaluation. These principles include addressing power inequalities among stakeholders, embracing indigenous worldviews and knowledge systems, and the inclusion of a multiplicity of voices in the evaluation process (Chilisa & Mertens 2021). The MAE approach therefore supports rigorous and ethical evaluation practices.

While the MAE approach has a set of well-defined principles, there has been limited research on how these principles are operationalised in a way that satisfies the needs and expectations of all stakeholders within the evaluation ecosystem. The evaluation ecosystem refers to all the people, processes, types of knowledge, information and skills that are involved in a programme evaluation. The main challenge is to ensure that the practice of MAE serves its purpose of social justice and equity while negotiating the needs and interests of the different stakeholders.

Critically, this positions the evaluator at the centre of operationalising an MAE approach. Yet, we know little about what is required *in practice* by evaluators to challenge the approach set by donors, negotiate whose success to measure and how to measure it and ensure the representation of a plurality of realities and experiences (Chilisa 2019; Khumalo 2022; Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019; Omosa et al. 2021; Smith 2021). This is especially relevant when evaluators are required to conduct an evaluation on existing programmes, where MAE may be at odds with the original programme design.

This study thus explores the overarching question: What does it mean, in practice, for evaluators to stay true to MAE's purpose of social justice and equity? To answer this question, this research investigates three key aspects of evaluators' work: How do evaluators negotiate tensions and power dynamics in the evaluation ecosystem? How can evaluators stay true to the lived experiences of programme participants? How can evaluators best ensure inclusivity and representation in the evaluation processes?

Our study was set around two youth development programmes operated by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Using a participatory approach and a range of qualitative research methods, we worked with key stakeholders to co-create an evaluation framework that captured the lived experiences of the programme participants. To gain insights into the process, we engaged in observations and conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews and four focus groups with key stakeholders, including programme participants, NGO employees, donors and community tribal authorities.

In brief, we found that when applying an MAE approach, the role of the evaluator extends beyond its traditional scope to include the active facilitation of collaboration between key stakeholders. If guided and supported by the evaluator, donors are often willing to adapt their current evaluation frameworks to better suit the African context. We also found that to stay true to the lived experience of programme participants, evaluators need to recognise the subjective and relational nature of success, looking beyond individuals to an impact ecosystem that includes family members, the broader community and the environment. Finally, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach, community members need to be included in the co-creation of an evaluation framework that best aligns with their values, purpose and realities. The process of co-creation requires evaluators to hold space to foster trust and build relationships – both critical elements for ensuring success in the evaluation design process.

Our study contributes to a growing body of evaluation research that is situated in Africa, for Africa, by providing insights into how an MAE approach can be implemented in practice. It further provides guidance to evaluators on how to implement Africa-rooted evaluations that promote social justice and equity while continuing to recognise the diversity of needs, expectations and realities in the evaluation ecosystem.

Background

Western influence on evaluative practice

The African development sector has historically been dominated by Western worldviews, assumptions and interests (Khumalo 2022; Said 1993; Smith 2021). Local NGOs involved in development efforts are largely reliant on donor funding, which comes from myriad sources such as international aid agencies, multilateral institutions (e.g. World Bank), foreign governments and local corporations (Hayes, Introna & Kelly 2018). The reliance on donor funding has served to reinforce unequal power dynamics, often allowing Euro-American actors to dictate development priorities and practices. These actors tend to focus their interventions on a single core problem and

use tools such as logic frames, result chains and impact pathways to work backwards from a predetermined outcome to identify a set of enabling activities (Belcher & Palenberg 2018; Chilisa 2019; Gugerty et al. 2021).

Evaluation frameworks used to assess the success of interventions have historically been rooted in the paradigms and culture of the West (Said 1993; Smith 2021). These evaluation frameworks, which structure how programme outcomes are defined and how data are collected and analysed, are guided by the epistemological view that assumes a causal relationship between an intervention and its desired effect (Belcher & Palenberg 2018). They are often based on a one-size-fits-all approach, which emphasises objective assessment to ensure accountability and replicability of interventions (Masvaure & Motlanthe 2022). While this approach might be well-suited to the context in which it was created, it often fails to capture the complex realities that exist within the African context (Chilisa 2019; Mbava & Chapman 2020; Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019; Omosa et al. 2021).

The principles that have traditionally guided evaluations tend to disempower local communities (Chilisa 2019; Mbava & Chapman 2020; Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019; Omosa et al. 2021; Smith 2021). Firstly, donors have the habit of defining the problem in a community and assigning various measures of success to the intervention without adequate participation from other project stakeholders (Hayes et al. 2018; Smith 2021). Secondly, evaluations are conducted *on* communities, not *with* them, and results are fed back to the donors for their benefit only (Chilisa 2019; Hayes et al. 2018; Omosa et al. 2021). Thirdly, this top-down extractive evaluation approach pays no consideration to what the community is getting out of the evaluation or what their actual needs and interests are (Khumalo 2022).

In line with these principles, the metrics developed by the donors are in line with a return-on-investment approach to measuring impact (Hayes et al. 2018). This means that the metrics are predominantly quantitative and make use of scientific methods to discover objective truths about an intervention and determine what success should look like. In many cases, projects are designed to achieve high-impact evaluations rather than genuinely improve the situation for the programme participants (Hayes et al. 2018). Time and resources are directed towards meeting evaluation goals and producing evidence of impact for donors rather than assessing value and success from the perspective of those being assisted (Khumalo 2022).

The evaluation practices that favour Western knowledge and value systems for data-collection and reporting have been evidenced to reinforce the asymmetry of the relationships between donors and local communities (Chilisa 2019; Smith 2021). African ways of knowing and

relational knowledge-sharing approaches are considered illegitimate (Chilisa 2019; Smith 2021). As a result, practices such as storytelling, folklore, music and dance are excluded from evaluation frameworks. This culminates in an evaluation framework that promotes a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to benefit both the donors (who are spending money ineffectively) and the communities (whose agency is being undermined).

Rise of Made in Africa Evaluation

In response to the shortcomings of evaluative practices, new evaluation approaches have emerged over time, such as developmental evaluation, indigenous evaluation, context-specific evaluation, participatory evaluation and culturally-responsive evaluation – to name a few. While each has its own set of values, practices and tools, they all seek to be more cognisant and responsive to culture and context (Chilisa 2019; Chouinard & Cram 2019; Patton 2011).

The MAE approach aligns with and draws from these approaches to a large extent, yet it is unique in that it calls for a distinctively African way of doing things (Chilisa 2019). The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) has put forward an MAE approach to acknowledge African indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs), beliefs and practices (Chilisa 2019; Omosa et al. 2021). The MAE approach seeks to report on success and failure in a way that honours the lived experiences of local African communities (Chilisa 2019; Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019; Omosa et al. 2021). The definition of MAE, as refined by Omosa et al. (2021), is:

> [*E*]valuation that is conducted based on AfrEA standards, using localised methods or approaches with the aim of aligning all evaluations to the lifestyles and needs of affected African peoples whilst also promoting African values. (p. 6)

The MAE approach challenges current evaluative practices that marginalise African data-collection tools, do not acknowledge African diversity and leave local stakeholders wondering how exactly the community has benefited from programmes (Chilisa et al. 2015).

The MAE approach is guided by relational ontology and epistemology (Chilisa 2019). A relational ontology recognises people's connection to non-material things, such as spirits or sacred places, and thus, an MAE approach will include a holistic view of well-being – one that includes the community and the environment (Chilisa 2019; Smith 2021). A relational epistemology places value on the process of knowledge creation, where meaning is stored in the unique languages, practices, rituals and folktales that are held by its people (Chilisa 2019). These modes of knowing form the basis for the methodological design of an MAE approach, making it an approach that is rooted in a relational paradigm.

Translating Made in Africa Evaluation principles into practice

While the MAE approach is associated with a set of defined principles, these have not yet been translated into a well-documented evaluative praxis (Chilisa 2019). Thus, questions remain as to how to go about, in practice, negotiating tensions and power dynamics among stakeholders, uncovering and incorporating indigenous worldviews and representing a multiplicity of voices in the evaluation process.

This brings to the foreground the role of evaluators, who are likely to shape MAE practice as they operationalise the principles (Mbava & Chapman 2020; Omosa et al. 2021). A key challenge for evaluators is to allow practices and processes to be highly contextualised, steering away from a desire to rely solely on technical know-how or to seek a set of predetermined toolkits. Research has thus highlighted the need for evaluators to have relational and transformative competencies (Rosenberg & Kotschy 2020). Relational competencies refer to the evaluator's ability to engage, collaborate, facilitate and build trust with a group of stakeholders, while transformative competencies refer to the ability of an evaluator to see the need for and to develop alternative evaluation methods and processes that suit the context (Rosenberg & Kotschy 2020).

Importantly, and as highlighted by Chilisa et al. (2015), to advance MAE practice, evaluators must grapple with key challenges relating to hierarchy, power and representation. Firstly, there is a need to challenge the top-down, extractive manner of evaluation that favours the needs and interests of donors over the participants (Khumalo 2022). This may not be easy in contexts where programmes have been initiated without a transparent and upfront agreement on the use of an MAE approach. Secondly, evaluators must challenge whose values matter and agree on whose success to measure and how to measure it (Khumalo 2022). This is critical as value considerations are likely to inform decisions on future programmes. It also represents an opportunity to shift power imbalances in knowledge generation and use; however, this may be easier said than done in a context where certain expectations have long been associated with evaluative practices. Thirdly, evaluators must work to ensure the representation of a plurality of realities and experiences through their practice. Key to this is ensuring that programme participants are involved in defining what inclusion means to them and how the representation of voices should be organised (Chilisa et al. 2015; Khumalo 2022).

As with every emerging concept, there is a need to learn from practice how to be intentional about MAE without alienating certain stakeholders. To avoid MAE becoming a one-size-fits-all approach, it is essential to explore how contextualisation happens and how to facilitate stakeholder engagement.

Gaining and sharing insights from practice can ensure that MAE reaches wider coverage, acceptability, prominence and use in the African context (Omosa et al. 2021).

Research design

Research setting

To explore how an MAE approach can be implemented in a way that satisfies the needs and expectations of all stakeholders, and to answer our research questions, we embedded ourselves into the evaluation process of an NGO involved in two youth development programmes situated in five rural communities in Northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. One of the programmes provided youth (18–27-years-old) who had completed tertiary education with an opportunity to gain work experience, while the other provided entrepreneurship and business support to those youth (18–35-years-old) who had not attended university but were participating in the informal economy. The participants were required to apply for the programme and were then selected by the NGO equally across community, age and gender. Given the location of the programme, the participants all identified as Zulu. It is important to note that this chapter does not detail the respective programme evaluations but rather focuses on the process and insights gained from designing an MAE framework.

While the NGO involved had not designed their programmes with an MAE approach in mind, they were interested in understanding how the principles of MAE could be adapted to facilitate the evaluation of their community-led programmes. The NGO was formed in 1992 with a mandate to ensure that local communities benefit from the growing eco-tourism sector. Their approach emphasised the importance of involving local community members in the conceptualisation and implementation of all phases of programme development.

The NGO was reliant on donor funding and was thus occasionally required to act in an opportunistic manner to secure this funding. The programmes were funded by a few South African corporation, through their social investment portfolios. Thus, this research investigated the attributes and practices related to evaluations performed with corporate donors and does not aim to make any inferences to donors partaking in international development activities.

The five rural communities in which this study took place are situated around a large, protected land area. The physical geography of each of the communities differs – from mountainous regions to lowland wetlands and everything in between. While these communities face many socio-economic challenges – low levels of household income, a lack of job opportunities

and difficulty accessing basic services – their natural environment is rich and wild. Given the value of these wild spaces, there are many public and private conservation and eco-tourism initiatives operating in the area that provide some opportunities to local communities.

Community members identify as Zulu, and this comes through in their traditional belief systems, values, knowledge systems and practices. At the same time, they operate in a world that is increasingly modernised, and this is something that they must balance in their everyday lives. Each of the five communities is governed by their own leadership structures and have their own developmental priorities.

Research approach

In line with the MAE approach, we adopted a relational paradigm (Chilisa 2019) and used a participatory action research approach (Preiser et al. 2018). The first author of this chapter was the evaluator for the two programmes. She embedded herself into the NGO's regional operations team to gain insights into the programmes, the stakeholder dynamics and the participant experiences. Rather than working within the constraints of an existing evaluation methodology, the evaluator made use of her technical, relational and transformative competencies to capture the lived experiences of the participants and co-create an evaluation framework that could accurately reflect the impact of the programme from the participant's perspective.

We further incorporated decolonisation practices into our research approach. Firstly, we treated research participants as experts (Smith 2021) and designed our methods of engagement to enable co-creation. Secondly, we spent time building relationships of trust with the research participants (Thambinathan & Kinsella 2021). Thirdly, we considered the regular sharing of emerging findings with participants to be an integral part of the research process (Smith 2021).

Data-collection and analysis

In line with a relational paradigm and decolonisation practices, the first author first spent time building relationships of trust before conducting any research-related activities (Chilisa 2019; Smith 2021). Thus, for the first two months, she embedded herself in the activities of the NGO, which allowed her to have many informal relationship-building engagements with the programme participants and regional NGO employees. These engagements helped her to identify appropriate and willing candidates to participate in the study. Throughout the research

process, the evaluator was supported by two local research assistants, who played an influential role in developing her understanding of the context and culture and assisted with translations between isiZulu and English when required.

After these first two months of relationship-building and informal engagement, we then iterated between data-collection and data analysis, progressively refining our focus and analysis. We initiated data-collection with semi-structured interviews and observations. A total of sixteen individual interviews were conducted. Firstly, eight programme participants (P1–8) were invited to participate in the research in order to understand their perspectives on the successes and failures of the two programmes. The demographics of these eight research participants accurately reflected those of the programme as a whole, in terms of gender, community and age. Secondly, five NGO employees (N14–19) were interviewed to gain insight into the evaluation systems currently utilised by the NGO, how the evaluations represented the lived experiences of the programme participants and how the employees dealt with the dynamics and tensions associated with reporting to donors. These employees were chosen for their involvement in both on-the-ground activities and donor reporting processes. Finally, three representatives from the donor organisations (D11–13) were interviewed to gain insight into their expectations and demands with regard to reporting and their overall attitudes towards the programmes they funded.

The interview data were analysed by coding for themes, progressively grouping these themes into categories that captured key insights (Charmaz 2011). Core to our approach, key insights were challenged through a process of member check-ins. During this process, the evaluator shared her findings and provided the research participants with the opportunity to clarify or oppose any misrepresentations or inaccurate portrayals in the research data (Chilisa 2019; Smith 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella 2021). This ensured the findings accurately reflected their views.

A key insight that emerged was the need to review the current evaluation frameworks to better reflect how participants experienced success. Building on this core insight, we held four focus groups: two sessions with programme participants (F9–10) and two sessions with community tribal authorities (F20–21). The aim of the first set of focus groups was to provide the participants with the opportunity to define what should be evaluated on the programme, as well as when, how and by whom (Mbava & Chapman 2020). They were held with two groups of programme participants (twelve and sixteen from each programme, respectively) who had not yet been interviewed and were representative

of the programme in terms of gender, community and age. The focus groups were conducted in a workshop style to give the participants the opportunity to co-design the evaluation strategy used to assess their programme. Two local evaluators, who were employed by the NGO, were involved in designing and facilitating the workshop. The purpose of their involvement was to provide a direct line of communication between participants and NGO employees, support capacity-building among local evaluators and assist in neutralising any power dynamics present in the space.

The second set of focus groups was held with the tribal authorities of two of the five communities involved in the programmes. These two tribal authorities had structures similar to the others and were chosen as they had been involved with the NGO's programmes for the longest period of time. In line with an MAE approach, we wanted to understand how the programmes were perceived by the traditional leaders of the communities (Chilisa 2019). We also wanted to give them the opportunity to define the desired content, format and regularity of the NGO's programme reports. These engagements were facilitated by the evaluator with the support of the local research assistants.

After each focus group, the evaluator and supporting team debriefed by reflecting on key takeaways, sharing notes and reviewing the evaluation frameworks produced by the focus group participants during the session. These findings were summarised in a report that included a revised evaluation framework that had been co-created with the programme participants and tribal authorities. The local evaluators played an active role in analysing the data and presenting the resulting framework to the NGO management team.

Throughout the research process, the evaluator recorded observations about what was happening in the field and engaged in critical reflexivity to constantly examine her epistemological assumptions and situatedness in the context (Hart & Whatman 1998; Smith 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella 2021). Observations were made during both formal and informal engagements with the programme participants, as well as during on-site meetings with regional NGO employees. They assisted the evaluator in making sense of the emerging findings and thinking about the next steps of the research process. In practising critical reflexivity, the evaluator made an active effort to reflect on her positionality and the identity dynamics at play and to actively manage emerging power dynamics between herself and the research participants, as well as between the NGO and their donors. Emergent themes relating to gender, structural inequality and power were dealt with in a relational manner as they arose during engagements. As a possible limitation of the study, the authors did

not conduct a structural and power analysis or an intersectional analysis, as this was beyond the scope of the research.

Findings

To explore what it means, in practice, for evaluators to stay true to MAE's purpose of social justice and equity, we structured our study around three main questions:

- How do evaluators negotiate tensions and power dynamics in the evaluation ecosystem?
- How can evaluators stay true to the lived experiences of programme participants?
- How can evaluators best ensure inclusivity and representation in the evaluation processes?

Firstly, our study revealed that when applying an MAE approach, the role of the evaluator extended beyond its traditional scope to include the active facilitation of collaboration between key stakeholders. Secondly, staying true to the lived experience of programme participants required recognising the subjective nature of success and seeing the world through an indigenous lens, looking beyond individuals to an *impact ecosystem*. Thirdly, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach, the evaluator needed to take time to build relationships and actively involve community members in the co-creation of an evaluation framework that best met their values, purpose and realities.

How do we negotiate tensions and power dynamics in the evaluation ecosystem?

Our study showed that effective contextualisation depended on the management of tensions between key stakeholders, including the donors, the NGO and the programme participants. Each of the stakeholders investigated in this evaluation ecosystem operated in a different context, was animated by different objectives and was subjected to different power dynamics. The main tensions we observed pertained to the paradigms adopted by donors in community development, the differences occurring between programme intentions and implementation, the lack of mutual contextual understanding and the conflicts between demands of objectivity and the need for immersion. Managing the various tensions between (and within) stakeholders, rather than glossing over them, was critical for the creation of an enabling environment for MAE to occur. Key to an MAE approach was the active facilitation of collaboration between key stakeholders within the evaluation ecosystem.

Moving towards 'thinking partnerships'

Because of the dynamics associated with funding, donors have historically held a lot of power in the evaluation ecosystem. To a large extent, they determine the manner in which NGOs engage in community development. In this study, we found that most donors settled somewhere along a continuum between two contrasting archetypes: the 'mercenary corporate donor' and the 'thinking partner' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022). These two archetypes were conceptualised by the authors, based on interview data.

The 'mercenary corporate donor' archetypes took on a conservative and conventional approach to development. An NGO employee (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022) described them as 'shallow, ego-led, bottom-line led and scorecard-led'. The donors in this category appeared to be motivated by gaining a strategic benefit by funding the programme: they believed that giving money would have a positive effect on their image and serve as a competitive advantage within the market sphere (D12, interviewee, 07 September 2022). These donors followed a donor-led approach, meaning they did not engage with community members around programme development. Their interventions were described as 'putting band-aids on bullet wounds' and their impact as 'palliative at best' (D12, interviewee, 07 September 2022). When it came to measuring the impact of these programmes, these donors adopted a quantitative 'return-on-investment' approach that failed to recognise the lived experiences of the participants.

In contrast, the 'thinking partner' archetypes adopted a more flexible and participatory approach. According to an NGO employee (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022), these donors believed that 'charity will not solve the ills of the world', and thus, they preferred to direct their contributions through a social investment fund. They were genuinely invested in the impact of the programme and were 'not worried about the icing' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022). A thinking partner donor was perceived as an active participant in the change process. Rather than directing the intervention from a boardroom, they prioritised spending time on the ground to immerse themselves in the context and were willing to relinquish their power in the system to ensure that communities remained the drivers of their own development. Because of their understanding of the context, thinking partners were aware of the time necessary for practising community development. They were experimental in their approach and saw failure as a learning opportunity. In terms of measuring impact, thinking partners allowed the NGO to put forward metrics that they believed to be indicative of success within the given context.

While most donors settled somewhere along a continuum between the two archetypes, all were acutely aware that the longevity of their business

rested on having a more socially equitable and ecologically sustainable society. In our study, donors were aware that large amounts of money have been invested into programmes that are failing to deliver meaningful change. Thus, donors acknowledged that to see a sustainable return on their investments, they needed to change the way in which they approached development. Despite their varying paradigms, when actively engaging in these issues, donors were generally open to adapting their current evaluation frameworks to better suit the African context.

Acknowledging tensions between methodology and practice

In our study, donors decided which socio-economic challenges were a funding priority, and the NGO mostly developed their organisational offering to align with those areas. According to an NGO employee:

> '[…] the South African corporate and public sector currently want to fund anything youth focused. If you have an enterprise development spin on it, that adds significant icing. And if you add a climate resilience piece on top of that, it has a big impact on your chances of being awarded the funding.' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022)

The NGO acknowledged being opportunistic – 'instead of hitting your head against a brick wall where there is no funding, you follow [the trends]' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022). In light of this, over the last year, the NGO received twice as much funding as in the previous year, with this 100% growth being entirely directed to the youth and enterprise development space.

Following donor funding trends in such a way sometimes caused tension between methodology and practice within the NGO. It meant the NGO had to deliver on donors' expectations while doing what they could on the ground to honour the community-led process. The tensions came through strongly in one of the NGO employees' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022) descriptions of 'selling one's soul to the donor' and the rest being 'smoke and mirrors'. Instead of focusing on the implementation of the programme, NGO employees had to spend valuable time and energy engaging in what an NGO employee (N14, interviewee, 19 September 2022) described as a 'push and pull' with donors.

These tensions required careful management from evaluators, who were often required to adapt inappropriate frameworks and evaluation metrics to the context and chop and change programme reporting to align with the donor's demands. In doing so, the focus of the intervention was shifted away from the participants towards the needs of donors, reinforcing the imbalance of power between 'donors' and 'recipients'. In this context, the challenge for the evaluator was to find ways that reflected the success of the programme in a manner that both met donor demands and honoured the lived experiences of the programme participants.

Promoting mutual contextual understanding

The lack of mutual contextual understanding often led to unrealistic expectations. For example, while the entrepreneurship programme was pitched to the informal economy, the donors initially thought they were funding individuals wearing suits and ties, sitting in an office. However, the reality was that the entrepreneurs were often sitting under a tree, selling sweets to school children. While this did not make the entrepreneurs' business venture any less valid, it did impact the kind of challenges they faced and the type of support the programme needed to provide to ensure success. As mentioned by one of the donors (D13, interviewee, 07 September 2022), 'you can't copy-paste an academic model into a rural area and expect it to work'. It was not until the NGO organised for the donors to visit the region and meet the entrepreneurs that the donors realised the reality of the programme and acknowledged the need to adapt it to the context.

This method of bringing one stakeholder into the physical space of another, to improve their understanding of the other's context, has been evidenced as a successful way to manage stakeholder tension. For instance, bringing donors into the physical space has been a successful method used by the NGO to assist the donor in understanding the contextual factors that might be impacting the programme's success. One of the donors (D13, interviewee, 07 September 2022) said that site visits were a 'must have' in the reporting cycle, as written reports 'did not do justice to reality'. Depending on the type of donor, the NGO sometimes 'sanitised [the visit] for them' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022). However, other donors were taken 'straight to the laundry room' (N17, interviewee, 20 September 2022). In some cases, it was not possible for the donor to conduct a site visit, and thus, there were times when the NGO organised for the entrepreneurs to visit the donor in another region, for example, Johannesburg. This had an additional benefit as the entrepreneurs were then able to better understand the context in which the NGO and donor operate.

The need to align expectations and contextual understanding also proved important for improving internal dynamics within organisations. For instance, if the NGO's head office team was not exposed to the regional work context (and vice versa), tensions would arise. The NGO employees thus organised site visits for the head office team (based in Johannesburg) to visit the regional team, and vice versa. An NGO employee (N15, interviewee, 20 September 2022) shared how, since her visit to the KwaZulu-Natal region, she switched from making online calls to using WhatsApp to communicate with her colleagues, as she had personally experienced how bad the network was. She also mentioned that she is now more understanding when data sheets are submitted late as she has seen how some of the rural communities are set in mountainous areas where

travelling is slow. The same employee also spoke about the benefit of the regional team visiting the head office, as they got a better idea of the pressure and demands that the head office faced.

Fostering buy-in on the value of immersion

Donors expected evaluators to remain objective and separated from the people and programmes they were evaluating. However, an MAE approach called for evaluations to be conducted *with* participants and not *on* them (Chilisa 2019). This required that evaluators build relationships with programme participants and immerse themselves in the context. In this study, the evaluator explained the difficulty she faced in reconciling these conflicting demands. She explained that 'the idea that we need to be objective, or that it is even possible to be objective, is completely outdated'. Through her experience evaluating these programmes, the evaluator further found that 'evaluations are about experiences, judgements, mistakes, new ideas, successes, and multiple voices – we should not cut these out!'

As the MAE approach required the evaluator to embed themselves in the context – embracing and reflecting on the subjective notions of impact that emerged – the donors' expectation of objectivity needed to be managed carefully. Rather than working against the donor, the evaluator made conscious efforts to engage with the donors, explaining why qualitative metrics mattered, what insights they would gain from understanding the lived experiences of the programme participants and what they could expect from the evaluation report. Donors were receptive to the changes – one donor (D11, interviewee, 31 August 2022) responded, 'if it improves the work we're doing, then why not!'.

How do we stay true to the lived experiences of participants?

Before the study, the NGO was largely making use of a quantitative approach to measuring success. This approach did not honour the lived experiences of the programme participants, and, in response, the evaluator spent time engaging with programme participants to better understand their individual perspectives of success. Through these engagements, we found that success is subjective and largely experienced in relation to others.

Recognising the limits of a 'return-on-investment' approach

Both programmes made use of a similar quantitative evaluation framework, which could be described as focused on 'return on investment'. Assumptions

had been made about programme recipients and their needs, and evaluations were conducted on them, using predominantly quantitative metrics to measure inputs and outputs. For example, in the work experience programme, the NGO measured how many participants were onboarded, how many dropped out and how many were subsequently employed. This approach to measuring success focused on the breadth of impact (X number of participants reached) rather than the depth of impact (participants experienced X change).

While this approach was aimed at objectivising the measurement of impact, it failed to consider the humans behind the data. It obscured the motivations driving people to engage in the programmes, and it did not give programme participants the opportunity to express their understanding or views of success. For example, a programme participant (P2, interviewee, 07 July 2022) expressed that her motivation for joining the entrepreneurship programme was to 'broaden her interaction with people in the community'. Another programme participant mentioned that she 'struggled with mental health and substance abuse' and she joined the work experience programme so that she could 'have a reason to get up in the morning' (F10, interviewee, 26 August 2022). Thus, while the programme might have been developed to grow an individual's business or assist them in getting a job, each individual was motivated by personally specific desires and goals.

☐ Capturing the impact ecosystem

Programme participants expressed their experience of success mostly in relational terms, which can be hard to quantify. For instance, some participants experienced success or failure depending on how well they felt heard and supported by programme leaders. Others mentioned that their experience of success was related to the fact that their family and community treated them with greater respect than before. These experiences, along with others, such as gaining independence, learning various soft skills and feeling a greater connection to nature, all represented experiences of success that do not currently feature in the donor reports.

While some participants focused on how the programme impacted them on an individual level, most people relayed their experience of success in relation to others, such as the impact that their participation in the programme had on their families, the community and the natural environment. For example, participants in the focus groups (F9 and F10) spoke about success as being able to afford school uniforms for their children, contribute to groceries and other household expenses and share new skills with their family members. On a community level, participants saw success as providing goods and services locally so that community members did not have to spend time and money travelling to larger towns.

On an environmental level, participants highlighted positive behaviour shifts (e.g. away from littering), the preservation of indigenous medicinal knowledge systems and an overall change in attitude towards protecting wildlife as the underlying successes of the programme. In sum, an impact ecosystem looks at how impact is experienced beyond the individual to include the relationships within and between the surrounding community and environment. This framing of success, in terms of an impact ecosystem, better captures the relational paradigm that guides Zulu culture.

☐ Acknowledging the subjectivity of success

Unpacking how participants experienced success in relation to others helped to contextualise impact. For instance, the varying experiences of success shared by participants revealed the influence of culturally defined gender roles in this context. In the case of the entrepreneurship programme, we found that, in general, a successful day for a female entrepreneur was one in which she could buy groceries and care for her family, while male entrepreneurs generally saw success as being able to build a house for their family or grow their assets. Thus, if the entrepreneurship programme was to measure success in terms of profit only, it would fail to recognise the gendered experiences of individual success that are present in this context.

While NGO employees appeared to understand the importance of capturing the subjective and relational dimensions of success using more qualitative measures, they were reluctant to use qualitative metrics because these were not as easy to define and measure as quantitative metrics. As such, one NGO employee (N15, interviewee, 20 September 2022) recognised that 'success is different depending on whose perspective you are looking from'. Even the donors in our study recognised the need to explore and implement more qualitative data-collection methods. As one donor (D11, interviewee, n.d.) said, 'we need to ask more intentional and direct questions about the experiences of the programme participants'. However, qualitative measures are difficult to design and take time to implement. As NGO one employee (N15) highlighted, 'the challenge of understanding what those metrics are, and how to capture them, means they get blanked out quite quickly'.

☐ Understanding how the context impacts success

Thus, part of the evaluator's work entailed understanding the contextual factors that were affecting how the participants engaged in a programme and how they experienced success. An NGO employee (N15) provided a good example of how the value of respect, which is highly regarded in Zulu

culture, can impact the manner in which a participant communicates within the programme:

> 'A lot of participants come from family structures where there is dominance or hierarchy and so they tend to see a boss as someone they can't open up to. It also goes back to the kind of education that we [*Zulus*] had growing up. We were not allowed to challenge or question older people. So rather, the participants sit with questions. And at the end of the day, they don't learn because they don't ask questions.' (N15, interviewee, 20 September 2022)

This type of information helped to explain why participants may not have experienced the programme as successful or useful to them. It provided nuance to the evaluation and was useful information for the design of future interventions in the community. Using this example, future interventions might ensure that programme participants either have someone who they perceive to be an equal to talk to or that they are made to feel comfortable speaking to someone despite their perceived seniority.

Another contextual factor that was found to affect how participants engage in the programmes was the patriarchal nature of the Zulu culture. This cultural belief continues to shape what females are or are not allowed to do. One programme participant (P2, interviewee, n.d.) shared, 'there is a culture among us Zulu people that females are not supposed to work – their responsibility is to be a housewife and take care of the kids'. Despite this, females are increasingly becoming breadwinners in their families as males migrate to cities to find stable work. However, there are still cultural, gendered restrictions on acceptable work. According to one programme participant (P7, interviewee, n.d.), a male would find it shameful to sell fruit and vegetables and a female would never be accepted as a taxi driver. According to another programme participant (P1, interviewee, n.d.), females are also restricted in what they are allowed to wear and are not meant to be outspoken. These cultural elements had very real implications for how participants, across genders, engaged within the programmes. Thus, a culturally responsive evaluation would need to navigate how gender norms and roles impact a participant's experience of success on a programme.

How do we ensure inclusivity and representation in evaluations?

Despite the NGO already having an established evaluation framework, part of this study involved facilitating focus groups (F9 and F10) with the programme participants to see how they related to these methods and metrics and what could be done differently. Our study revealed that creating a contextually relevant evaluation framework meant addressing identity dynamics and working on an ad-hoc basis, as the usefulness of the evaluation framework depended on the active participation of

programme participants. In our context, programme participants had a clear idea of why evaluations were important, what metrics should be measured and how the data should be collected. Importantly, the process of designing the evaluation framework offered all involved the time and space to build relationships, build trust and for co-creation to take place.

☐ Addressing identity dynamics

In our study, the evaluator was an 'outsider' to the context, and this carried several implications for her practice of MAE. Firstly, the evaluator recognised the limitations that her identity presented and acknowledged that she may never be able to fully honour an 'indigenised approach' (Chilisa 2019) to evaluation as her lived experiences have not equipped her with a deep enough understanding of indigenous African culture. She responded to this limitation by adopting an 'adaptive approach' (Chilisa 2019) while all the time remaining open to learning more about Zulu culture and the traditional belief systems, values and practices present in the context. As time went by, she noted that her developing knowledge of the context strengthened her practice of MAE.

Secondly, the evaluator experienced how her identity influenced the types of responses she received from programme participants. She found that many participants answered with what they thought she wanted to hear rather than with how they felt. When this dynamic was interrogated, we found it to be linked to two contextual factors. On the one hand, the participants felt it necessary to show respect to the evaluator, and it would not have been considered respectful to say anything bad about the programme. On the other hand, the participants were deeply reliant on the programmes and thus did not want to say anything to compromise future interventions. This tension was managed by involving local NGO employees in interviews and focus groups and reassuring the participants that there was no risk of the programme being halted – their responses would only help to strengthen the programme.

Thirdly, the language barrier between the evaluator and the participants posed an additional challenge, as it limited the extent to which the evaluator could present a narrative that truly reflected the lived experiences of the programme participants. When selecting programme participants to interview, the evaluator had to make a conscious effort not to exclude certain voices based on their English language proficiency. She overcame this challenge by sharing the responsibility of identifying interview candidates with her local research assistant. The presence of a local research assistant meant that all interviews could be conducted in either English or isiZulu, depending on the preference of the participant, helping to ease the communication barrier.

Co-creating evaluation frameworks through active participation

We found that to create a contextually relevant evaluation framework that speaks to the lived experiences of the community, programme participants must actively participate in the evaluation design process. They need to participate in defining how they want data to be collected, on what aspects of the programme and for what purpose. The evaluation design needed to consider the fact that different data were likely to be of different value to different stakeholders. Discussing the implication of our findings, one of the donors recognised that, in the future, 'evaluations will be defined on an ad-hoc basis, by the communities in which the funding is being dispensed' (D12, interviewee, 07 September 2022).

An NGO employee (N18, interviewee, n.d.) made the important distinction between 'involvement' and 'active participation' when it comes to including the community in design processes. He described involvement as a 'by the way' thing – community members can sit in a meeting and 'be involved' yet still have no agency in the process. Active participation, however, requires you to have 'skin in the game' (N18, interviewee, n.d.). Through active participation, ideas are shared, robust discussions take place and community members are given the platform to define their own measures of success.

Part of the aim of the focus groups was to engage with programme participants about how data could be collected in a contextually appropriate manner. We found that the preferred methods, as presented by the participants, differed across the programmes. Participants from the entrepreneurship programme mostly chose verbal methods of data-collection such as storytelling, video clips and presentations, and they chose to produce these in their home language, isiZulu. Participants from the work experience programme chose mostly written methods of data-collection, such as surveys, pictures with captions and WhatsApp, and they chose to produce their responses in English. These responses were in line with the varying education levels of the participants on each programme: participants on the entrepreneurship programme generally had not completed high school, and thus, their language and writing skills were not as well-developed, whereas many participants on the work experience programme had completed tertiary education. Thus, in this context, it was found that an appropriate evaluation framework would require an adapted data-collection strategy based on the varying educational levels of participants across programmes.

Embracing the plurality of values and ways of engagement

Whereas evaluations are traditionally designed to be conducted for the benefit of the donor, so that they can track the impact of their spending,

we found that it was as important to ensure that the collected data were relevant and useful to the programme participants themselves. When asked in the focus group 'why' we collect data, participants mentioned the usefulness for donors, but they also explained that the data were useful to them. One of the entrepreneurs in the focus group (F9, interviewee, n.d.) said that the financial data that they were required to collect were 'helping her to better manage her business'. Another participant from the focus group (F10, interviewee, n.d.) said that they wanted their data to be linked to their name (rather than anonymous) as they could then market themselves through the data-collection process. Further, we found that those who participated in co-creating the evaluation framework made greater efforts to provide the correct data in a timely manner.

During the focus groups (F9 and F10), indigenous methods of data-collection were presented and discussed with programme participants to assess how they could be integrated into the evaluation framework. As an example, the evaluator described how the indigenous practice of storytelling could be used in evaluation. Despite opening the space for creative engagement on the topic, programme participants showed little interest in exploring these methods. However, what did come through was the notion that young Zulu people 'live in two worlds – one Western, one traditional' (F9, interviewee, n.d.). This meant that they were comfortable using platforms such as WhatsApp for data-collection and participants said that methods such as this were 'fast, simple, convenient and cost-effective' (F10, interviewee, n.d.). It was thus found that a contextualised evaluation framework does not necessarily need to be focused on indigenous methods. Rather, it needs to be sensitive to the context of the target group and offer relevant options. It is important to emphasise that the focus group was made up of youth aged 18–35-years-old. Should the focus group have contained older Zulu people from the community, the level of interest towards using indigenous methods might have been different.

☐ Allowing time and space to build trust and maintain relationships

The focus group sessions (F9 and F10) that were held to design the evaluation framework showed the programme participants that their input was valued and assisted in building trust between themselves, the evaluator and the NGO employees who were involved in the process. Yet, this process took time and was better conceived as an ongoing process. As an NGO employee (N15, interviewee, 20 September 2022) observed, 'you can't push things and you can't be pressured by time – you must follow the correct processes'. Another NGO employee (N19, interviewee, 10 May 2022) further added, 'good stakeholder relationships are critical to community development processes and most people don't realise how

much work goes into maintaining these relationships'. Thus, we found that these evaluation design sessions should not be considered as a once-off process but could rather be designed as iterative efforts to reflect and improve on the evaluation design in collaboration with the programme participants.

One of the key benefits of taking time to build relationships within the evaluation ecosystem was allowing the evaluator to identify local NGO employees who would be capable of taking ownership of the evaluation design and implementation in the future. Over time, the evaluator involved these NGO employees in preparing for the focus groups and helped them develop the skills to facilitate the focus groups themselves. This helped to ensure that the focus groups were responsive to the context, assisted in neutralising insider–outsider power dynamics between the evaluator and the programme participants and removed the language barrier. As pointed out by an NGO employee (N15, interviewee, 20 September 2022), 'when participants see someone from another race, their minds go straight to funding; but when they see someone from the community, they are much more open'. It was seen that with further training, these local evaluators would become well-positioned to discover new ways to evaluate programmes that align with the desires and the needs of community members and that better reflect the lived experiences of the programme participants.

Conclusion

Contributing to the growing body of evaluation research, our study provides insights into the role of the evaluator in operationalising an MAE approach in a way that is truly rooted in the context and promotes social justice and equity. Firstly, we found that operationalising an MAE approach requires the evaluator to acknowledge and then actively manage any tensions and power dynamics present in the evaluation ecosystem. There is an opportunity for corporate donors to reposition themselves as 'thinking partners', to better align their approaches with the needs and interests of the programme participants. Part of this process involves bringing stakeholders into the physical space to promote a contextual understanding.

Secondly, while MAE scholars (Chilisa 2019; Khumalo 2022) are pushing for the decolonisation of evaluative practice and encouraging a move against Euro-American evaluation frameworks, there is a risk that the language of MAE scholars is creating an 'us and them' divide between practitioners and donors. Our study shows that corporate donors are acutely aware that their investments are not effectively translating into impact, and if carefully guided and supported, they are often willing to

adapt their frameworks to better suit the African context. To successfully integrate an MAE approach, evaluators need to work *with* donors, not against them.

Thirdly, to stay true to the lived experiences of participants and ensure that their values matter in evaluations, evaluators need to consider how success is experienced from an indigenous viewpoint. In our research, this meant looking beyond individual impact and considering the entire impact ecosystem. Metrics to measure success should be developed on an ad-hoc basis and be rooted in the context to accurately capture the participants' experiences.

Fourthly, to ensure inclusivity and representation in evaluations (Khumalo 2022), evaluators need to take the necessary time to foster relationships of trust among stakeholders. Further, community members need to be actively involved in the co-creation of an evaluation framework that suits their needs and priorities. While pursuing Chilisa's (2019) indigenous agenda, we also need to recognise that the world is changing, and in some cases, the context might call for a mix of both Western and African cultural elements in evaluative practice.

Finally, the insights from this study contribute to MAE practice by providing evaluators with guidance on how to implement Africa-based evaluations in a way that promotes social justice and equity while remaining sensitive to the needs and expectations of all stakeholders. In doing so, this study helps guide evaluators on how to hold space to negotiate tensions and power dynamics in the evaluation ecosystem, embrace indigenous worldviews, stay true to the lived experiences of programme participants and ensure inclusivity and representation in evaluation.

Chapter 3

Programme evaluation as a reflection and perpetuator of inequality in the global political economy

Ayabulela Dlakavu
Twende Mbele,
Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

The programme evaluation discipline and practice have historically been driven by Global North intellectuals and institutions, the latter inclusive of bilateral donors (member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD]) and multilateral donors (such as the United Nations [UN] and World Bank). The political, economic and ideological hegemony of the Global North in the international system has translated into a monopoly on the *conceptualisation* and *measurement* of international development, determining *which development indicators should be measured, how and why*. Hegemony historically reinforces itself through enduring ideology and institutions. It is no surprise, then, that the founding and evolution of evaluation theory and practice have been sustained by OECD donors and intellectuals, UN agencies and Bretton

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Woods Institutions (i.e. the World Bank). The Global North's monopoly of evaluation discourse and practice (including determining key evaluation criteria and framing of evaluation capacity development [ECD]) is a mechanism through which this historically hegemonic geopolitical region seeks to maintain its strong influence on Global South development discourse, measurement and governance.

As a result, an examination of evaluation theory and practice prevalent in Africa will reveal that Global North institutions, such as the World Bank and UN agencies (largely funded by OECD countries), are the primary drivers of evaluation approaches and ECD initiatives. This chapter argues that evaluation approaches and practice are dominated by Global North neoliberal conceptualisations of what constitutes *development* and how to *measure* it. Such Western monopolisation of evaluation discourse and practice is a reinforcement of the Global North's monopolisation of ideology and knowledge in the global political economy, owing to the post-1945 neoliberal institutions that are able to advocate for the adoption of neoliberal ideology and policy worldwide. The dominance of Global North *development* and *evaluation* thinking deprives these two practices of their transformative and emancipatory potential in Africa. This chapter provides a critique of current development and evaluation discourse and practice in Africa. From the critique, the chapter then moves to proffer recommendations on how to bring about development and evaluation discourses and practices that articulate African development needs and aspirations, and development measurement mechanisms that are able to capture real development experiences in Africa and offer pathways to socio-economic development. When African development and evaluation discourse is preoccupied with matters of equity and inspired by African perspectives of what constitutes development rather than Global North quantitative measures, the continent should then be in a position to pursue real socio-economic development that makes the continent developmentally competitive and comparative with other geopolitical regions with advancing economies. The added value is that such an Afrocentric development discourse and practice will elevate African development theory and policies and African development measurement approaches (i.e. evaluation approaches). This is one way of advancing African intellectual thought in development and evaluation discourse and practice within the global political economy, thereby advancing intellectual equality.

Methodological approach

This chapter adopts a qualitative design. A review of performance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) literature, as well as reflections on M&E practice (i.e. action research), literature on conceptualisation of

development, and the author's observation as a development and evaluation practitioner are the complementary methodologies adopted. *Action research* is the overarching qualitative research method discussed in this chapter. Popplewell and Hayman (2012, p. 1) define action research as research undertaken by any practitioner with the aim of identifying problems in a particular practice or discipline and consequently proffering remedial solutions to such problems. Action research seeks to improve the methods and approaches of a particular discipline or practice. In the context of this chapter, the author reflects on dominant conceptualisations and indicators of development in Africa, as well as reflecting on African evaluation approaches and practices as codified in the literature. Both these inseparable practices (development and evaluation) are interrogated to examine the extent to which they prioritise *equity* and *inequality*.

Direct observation is another complementary qualitative research method adopted by this chapter. Ciesielska, Bostrom and Ohlander (2008, p. 34) define *observation* as a researcher's reflections on the successes and challenges of a culture, a people or practice, and using this reflection to propose recommendations on improving the observed subject. In research, observation is undertaken in a deliberate and systematic manner whereby the researcher watches, evaluates and draws logical conclusions on the observed subject. In this chapter, the author's analysis of development thinking, practice and evaluation is also informed by his experiences and observations as a student, scholar and practitioner in the fields of development and programme evaluation. Recommendations on how to dismantle the Global North's monopoly of development and M&E discourse and practice are provided in the closing segment of the chapter, which recommends transformative and equity-based programme evaluation in Africa.

Mohajan (2018, p. 15) defines content analysis as a detailed and systematic examination of a body of work with the intention of identifying patterns, themes or biases. In this chapter, the author examines the literature concerning *development* and *programme evaluation* in order to understand the core meaning of these concepts and how they are applied in Africa. Thus, the sections of the conceptual framework of the chapter and the overview of adopted evaluation approaches and practices in Africa are based on content analysis.

Action research, content analysis and direct observation are therefore the complementary qualitative research methods employed by this chapter to prove or disprove its hypothesis that development and programme evaluation discourses and practices are a mirror and perpetuator of inequality in the global political economy, and one of the manifestations of this inequality is the dominance of Global North ideology and institutions

in shaping development knowledge and setting development indicators. The author concludes the chapter by making practical recommendations for the positioning of equity as a central focus of African development and evaluative practices.

Conceptual framework

The aim of this chapter is to scrutinise the hegemony of the Global North in programme evaluation discourse and practice, and it is therefore important to begin with an interrogation of the core concepts of this ensuing body of work. The key terminology that constitutes the chapter's conceptual framework includes development, equity, programme evaluation, inequality and global political economy. These are central concepts when interrogating current programme evaluation discourse and practice and formulating normative recommendations for an equity and context-relevant programme evaluation discourse and practice in Africa.

Conceptualising programme evaluation

Programme evaluation is defined as a learning tool that describes and explains the results (outcomes and impact) achieved by a development intervention (i.e. a policy or programme) *vis-à-vis* its stated objectives (Rallis & Bolland 2005, p. 5). Programme evaluation findings can be used to improve the implementation of a given programme (e.g. investment of resources and roll-out of activities) or to make decisions about the future of a development policy or programme (i.e. scaling up, continuing or discontinuing the intervention). The ultimate aim of programme evaluation is to help a development policy or programme to achieve the development outcomes it was intended to deliver (Rallis & Bolland 2005, p. 6). Programme evaluation is therefore an agent or tool of social change or transformation in development practice.

For its part, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2009, p. 15) defines evaluation as a systematic and objective assessment of the design or implementation of an ongoing development policy, programme or project, or alternatively, the results achieved by a policy, programme or project. In essence, an evaluation seeks to measure the relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of a development intervention. The ultimate purpose of an evaluation is to unearth findings or evidence to inform decision-making about the policy, programme or project. From the above definitions, the common discernible message is that evaluation serves as a performance management and learning tool for policy-makers, programme and project managers. Its core aim is to ensure optimal policy, programme or project performance and to induce better

development outcomes. Given the intertwined nature of *evaluation* and *development*, the latter concept is explained further in the text.

Conceptualising development

The widely accepted definition of *development* is coined by the Global North nations and developmental institutions. The Global North considers *development* as being characterised by the growth of a country's gross national product (earnings from all goods and services produced and sold by a country, and the country's earnings from foreign investments), a growth in per capita incomes, steady industrialisation and technological advancement (Abuiyada 2018, p. 115). These are the indicators of development from a Global North perspective. Contrary to this enduring conceptualisation, Indian economist Amartya Sen defined development as a process of eradicating poverty, tyranny, lack of economic opportunities and eradication of social deprivations (Tavernaro-Haidarian 2019, p. 21). Sen, as a Global South economist, therefore understands development from an equity perspective rather than the limited neoliberal and quantitative indicators of development found in Global North conceptualisations of development. The dominance of neoliberal perspectives on development has been sustained by the Bretton Woods Institutions (World Bank and International Monetary Fund) and other Global North developmental institutions.

Conceptualisation of development and its indicators are important because they inform public policy and foreign policy choices of governments and also inform development aid (development co-operation) strategies of Global North states vis-à-vis the Global South. Moreover, development definitions and its indicators are important because they are a primary unit of measurement in evaluation. If definitions and characterisations of development are wrong, then evaluations will measure the wrong things when determining the effectiveness or impact of public policies in the quest for *development*.

Over time, governments and non-governmental development practitioners have realised that development interventions informed by Global North conceptualisations of *development* have not been sufficient in addressing poverty and access to opportunities for empowerment and upward social mobility for the majority of Global South populations. In fact, one of the major issues with *development* in the Global South is that it has served the material interests of select groups at the expense of *others*, a condition known as *inequality*. Inequality is defined as the unequal distribution of wealth, resources and opportunities that enable individuals to live a good life free of need. Development inequality within a country is manifested by unequal distribution of income, wealth, expenditure and

opportunities between individuals and groups on the basis of gender, ethnicity, geographic location or family background (Dabla-Norris et al. 2015, p. 6). The author augments this definition of inequality by arguing that intrastate inequality is a structural condition that has its roots in historically unjust legislation that advanced the interest of one group in society at the expense of others (on the basis of race, ethnicity or gender). This structural inequality has been perpetuated by development interventions that do not address these historical structural causes of inequality.

The author makes the following observations about development inequality in the global political economy (i.e. unequal distribution of economic and political power among nations). Firstly, one observes that development inequality in the global political economy exists among nations as a result of unjust historical processes such as the post-1500 European age of 'discovery' of foreign lands (already inhabited by indigenous peoples), the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism following the granting of political independence to former colonies. From the author's observations, the historically marginalised geopolitical regions such as Africa, Asia and Latin America are compelled to achieve socio-economic progress within a global political economy designed to serve the economic interests of the Global North through instruments such as foreign direct investment (FDI), the international free trade regime implemented by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization (WTO) (which remove the capacity of Global South governments to protect domestic producers from international competition) and the development loan conditions of international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank and the IMF.

The FDI grants foreign investors a disproportionate influence over the economic trajectory of a nation's economy, especially in the context of the *financialisation* of the global economy since the 1970s, whereby many national governments have removed capital controls, allowing money to flow in and out of an economy without much government regulation. The risk for developing economies is that they have been subjected to financial shocks when unregulated capital suddenly leaves a domestic economy, leaving many businesses collapsing, unemployment skyrocketing and poverty rising. Examples of this are the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997 and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, two financial sector and FDI-induced crises that led to the collapse of national economies, felt most acutely by the Global South countries. Historically, IFIs have also adopted development loan conditions that have led to economic underdevelopment in the Global South. The author gives the example of the neoliberal Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) that were imposed on borrowing Global South countries

in the 1980s and 1990s, which compelled Global South governments to cut expenditure on state subsidisation of food, education and health care, which led to adverse socio-economic effects such as rising food prices, unemployment and poverty in Africa and Latin America.

Jones (2009, p. 3) defines *equity* as a normative conceptualisation of development that seeks to achieve equality of opportunity, fairness and social justice in society. Equity is concerned with three principles: (1) equal life chances and socio-economic opportunities for all people in society regardless of race, class and gender; (2) equal concern for people's needs and distributing goods and services without discrimination; and (3) meritocracy, where positions, opportunities and rewards are based on fairness, effort and ability (Jones 2009, pp. 6–7). In the context of this paper's focus on whose knowledge matters when conceptualising development and measuring it (evaluation), inequality is a key concept that requires framing. The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (2015, p. 1) defines inequality as a condition whereby individuals (or nations) are not equal regarding status, rights and opportunities. From this framing of equity and inequality, one can observe that equity seeks to alleviate the phenomenon of inequality. This chapter highlights the global political economy's facilitation of knowledge generation inequality with the aim of advocating for a normative future where the Global South and its institutions can also shape ideas about development and how to drive and measure it.

One of the notable failures of development and globalisation is that people's access to opportunities and resources are determined by their access to economic and political power. Individuals who do not have access to decision-makers in political and economic institutions often suffer from poverty, relative deprivation and social exclusion, and these unfortunate outcomes are quite acute in the Global South. The inequality, socio-economic and political exclusion then give rise to developing countries' domestic instability in the form of high crime rates, uprisings and revolts. In order to achieve equity, national and international development interventions (policies and programmes) should seek to provide universal public services; government expenditure should favour disadvantaged social groups, provision of social protection (i.e. basic income grants) to marginalised groups, roll-out of redistribution policies (i.e. nuanced tax policies and land reform), and addressing power imbalances (Jones 2009, p. vii). In order for programme evaluation to be a transformative discipline, discourse and practice, it needs to adopt an equity lens when measuring the relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of development interventions. This means that evaluation criteria should be equity-focused and be able to measure the extent to which development interventions advance universal access to basic services and access to decent employment for intended beneficiaries. In this way, evaluation would be able to advance a developmental agenda of ensuring that everyone

in society receives equal economic opportunities while affirming their social and political rights.

Global political economy and the hegemony of Global North knowledge and ideology therein

The global political economy refers to the global interactions and integration of nation-states and non-state actors through international trade (and the WTO governing international trade), international finance (and key IFIs providing and governing international finance, chiefly the neoliberal Bretton Woods Institutions [World Bank and IMF]) and knowledge creation and transfer (led by Global North institutions which maintain a stronghold on what is considered knowledge and what is not). A key characteristic of the global political economy is the dominance of the Global North's influence on international trade, finance and knowledge production and transmission (Thompson 2000, p. 4), because of the dominance of neoliberal ideology and policy on trade (i.e. economic liberalism and free trade ideas) and finance (i.e. the dominance of neoliberal conditions when Global South countries apply for finance from Bretton Woods Institutions and other institutions of the Global North). In the context of this chapter, the author observes that the Global North enjoys a monopoly on knowledge systems (knowledge production and sharing, particularly on *what constitutes development*, *how to facilitate development* and *how to measure* [*monitor or evaluate*] *development*, *including key evaluation criteria when measuring development*). The next section of this chapter demonstrates the Global North-centric nature of programme evaluation as a discipline (area of study), discourse and practice.

Overview of evaluation discourse, discipline and practice in Africa

This section explains the evolution of programme evaluation globally and in Africa, with the aim of interrogating the discipline's responsiveness to African development realities. Evaluation capacity development interventions on the continent are also examined to determine the extent to which they are making an effort to transform African evaluation discourse and practice into a discipline and practice that makes a meaningful contribution to the alleviation of development challenges in Africa.

Origins and evolution of programme evaluation

Worthen (1990, p. 42) traces the origins of modern-day programme evaluation to the education sector in the United States of America (USA).

From 1897 to 1898, there was a comparative evaluation study of the spelling performance of 33,000 North American students. In subsequent decades of the 20th century, other North American education programmes were also evaluated and formed the basis of curriculum reforms. A major flaw with these education system evaluations is that they made no reference to the objectives of the education programmes being evaluated (i.e. the evaluand) and there were no clear evaluation questions to which the evaluation reports were responding, which then rendered the data somewhat questionable (Worthen 1990, pp. 42–43). Furthermore, evaluations in the education sector tended to be quantitative in nature (i.e. x amount of students can spell very well while y amount of students cannot spell). In the 1960s and 1970s, programme evaluations in the education sector transformed as evaluators and researchers began to diversify towards qualitative evaluation designs, thus breaking the monopoly of quantitative research designs that did not address the *why* and *how* questions during the course of undertaking an evaluation (Worthen 1990, p. 43). With such advancements in evaluation methodological approaches, programme evaluation was then adopted and adapted by other development and public policy practitioners in other sectors in the late 20th century. From this section, it is clear that the origins and evolution of programme evaluation are traced back to 19th century USA in the Global North.

Worthen (1990, p. 47) asserts that a major challenge for evaluators in the 1980s was that they failed to understand the political nature of evaluation, resulting in irrelevant evaluation reports that lacked value in the policy cycle and failed to take note of political forces and factors within the public policy cycle. One can argue that the same issue raised by Worthen in 1990 persists in the 2020s. Within development sectors and agencies, programme evaluation is inherently a political activity because it is meant to provide advice to programme managers and policy-makers regarding the performance, worth and future of the policy or programme being evaluated. Because of being a tool and function of the public policy cycle (which is headed by political principals), programme evaluation is therefore a political activity within a political process. For example, Eckhard and Jankauskas (2020, p. 668) assert that in the public sector, programme evaluation is a tool used by political and administration decision-makers to help inform policy decisions and the allocation of public resources. Taken from this perspective, evaluation is a key input into public sector policy decision-making and budgeting, two equally critical instruments that affect the trajectory of the socio-economic development of a nation. The political nature of evaluations is not limited to state institutions, with Eckhard and Jankauskas (2020, pp. 668–669) asserting that the evaluation function in international organisations (IOs) is also a political activity because evaluation budgets are determined by the resources committed by member

states to IO evaluation departments. Furthermore, member states of IOs often use evaluation reports by IO departments to influence and determine the development priorities to be pursued by these IOs. One can also observe that evaluations within IOs are likely to be as political an activity as they are within state institutions by virtue of the fact that all IOs are created by states to pursue shared interests and objectives.

In the 21st century, programme evaluation has continued to evolve, and its qualitative value in development and policy practice has become augmented. Gelmon, Foucek and Waterbury (2005, p. 2) assert that programme evaluation has evolved and typically seeks to address the following questions vis-à-vis development policies, programmes and projects:

- Is a development intervention (policy, programme or project) achieving its goals and objectives? Why or why not?
- Is a development intervention achieving its intended impact *vis-à-vis* the intended beneficiaries? What is the nature of this impact (intended or unintended)?
- Has the development intervention been implemented efficiently?
- Is the development intervention responding to the development needs or interests of the intended beneficiaries?

Thus, the qualitative approach of programme evaluation has enabled the practice to be able to explain the *cause–effect* relationship between development interventions and their intended beneficiaries. As mentioned in earlier sections, programme evaluation as a practice and discourse has been exported into Africa by IOs. An added dimension is that the standard development indicators measured by evaluations have also been shaped by these IOs rather than the African populations that are the targets of development interventions and who should therefore define what development means in their varied development contexts. The subsequent sub-themes provide an overview and a critique of the role IOs play in driving the evolution of programme evaluation practice globally and within Africa specifically.

The impact of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development on programme evaluation practice

In 1991, the OECD–DAC adopted five evaluation criteria, which became the standard objects of measurement for evaluations internationally. The original five OECD–DAC criteria are *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability*. In 2019, the OECD–DAC added one new criterion – *coherence*

(OECD 2019, p. 3). Collectively, the six OECD–DAC criteria are internationally recognised as key objects of measurement for evaluations. When conducting an evaluation, the *relevance* criterion guides the evaluator to assess or examine the extent to which a development intervention (policy or programme) is responsive to intended beneficiaries' needs. *Coherence* examines the alignment compatibility of the development intervention with other interventions in the same context (country, sector or institution) and compatibility with regional and global development agendas. For its part, *effectiveness* as a unit of measure in an evaluation seeks to determine the extent to which a policy, programme or project has achieved its intended objectives and medium-term changes *vis-à-vis* a target beneficiary. *Efficiency* focuses on whether resources are used in an economical manner to implement intervention activities and deliver the intended results (outputs and outcomes). When an evaluation measures *impact*, it is essentially assessing the extent to which a development intervention has contributed to intended and unintended long-term changes *vis-à-vis* targeted beneficiaries and their broader community or environment. Lastly, an evaluation that measures an intervention's *sustainability* essentially examines the extent to which the benefits of an intervention have continued or are likely to continue after the intervention has stopped (OECD 2019, pp. 7–12).

While the OECD–DAC criteria are important in aiding an evaluation's judgement of the merit or worth of an intervention, this criterion does not adequately and explicitly emphasise *equity*. As mentioned in the conceptual framework, equity is important in the Global South, where colonialism structurally conditioned the pace of development across the two geopolitical regions (Global North and Global South). Because of the dominance of neoliberal conceptions of *development* globally, an evaluator and an evaluation commissioner who have no appreciation of equity are likely to ignore a development intervention's contribution to equity issues (i.e. the extent to which an intervention improves the socio-economic opportunities of vulnerable or marginalised groups [i.e. females, youth and people living with disabilities], particularly their ability to earn *living wages* and have access to the means of wealth creation such as access to finance, land and social capital).

In the African continent, the pressing development challenges are: poverty; inequality; political instability and insecurity (including civil wars); lack of access to quality education, health care and technology; energy insecurity; infrastructure challenges; food insecurity; and youth deprivation and discontent. A key question to ask is: has or is programme evaluation in Africa helping to address these aforementioned pressing development challenges through relevant inputs in public policy-making, resource allocation and government decision-making? For African evaluation

practice to be relevant and provide key advice to public policy-makers, evaluators in Africa need to have an adequate understanding of what constitutes development in different African nations and communities, particularly what constitutes equitable development. African evaluators who lack such an understanding end up measuring the wrong indicators and writing evaluation reports that do not proffer recommendations that can enable policy-makers to adopt policy actions that can genuinely eradicate poverty, inequality, youth unemployment and deprivation, terrorism and other development challenges on the continent. Thus, relevant evaluation practice requires Afrocentric and equity-based conceptualisations of development. Evaluation in Africa should therefore strive to provide African solutions to African developmental challenges.

The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) has attempted to infuse African dimensions to evaluation discourse and practice in Africa. The AfrEA (2021, p. 5) promotes five evaluation principles to be internalised by evaluators in Africa:

- Evaluation that is inclusive, participatory and that empowers Africans.
- Evaluation that is technically robust and culturally responsive.
- Evaluation practice that affirms and promotes human rights and addresses power imbalances between evaluation participants, evaluation commissioners and the evaluation team.
- Evaluation that draws from African indigenous knowledge as well as knowledge and evaluation practices from across the world.

The AfrEA and other African evaluation stakeholders (evaluation associations, evaluators and scholars) have attempted to develop and promote the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) approach. The MAE approach is meant to be a coherent body of African evaluation approaches and principles that draws from African indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs), African development indicators and African development values (Dlakavu, Mathebula & Mkhize 2022, p. 5). Even though MAE has captured the imagination and attention of the African evaluation landscape, this emerging approach has not translated into African evaluation practice. In order for MAE to be adopted as a complementary or alternative evaluation approach and for its methodologies to be adopted in evaluations, there needs to be a popularisation of decolonisation ideology and for African continental and sub-regional institutions and governments to also champion this Africa-centric evaluation paradigm and its proposed methodologies. Currently, programme evaluation in Africa continues to be another discipline and practice that mirrors Global North monopolisation of knowledge in the global political economy. Global North monopoly over evaluation discourse and practice is sustained by ECD thinking and practices, which is discussed next.

Evaluation capacity development in Africa: Perpetuation of Western evaluative thinking or a move towards transformation and equity in evaluation?

Table 3.1 outlines select formal evaluation course offerings at African higher education and training institutions.

Table 3.1 shows only two explicit evaluation courses by the University of Ghana and the University of Cape Town, which explicitly focus approaches to evaluation that hold promise for placing a spotlight on matters of development equity and socio-economic transformation for marginalised social groupings in society. More African universities need to follow these examples from the aforementioned universities. For equity to be mainstreamed, it needs to be reflected in courses and not be 'fitted' in uncodified curricula or allocated hours in courses that last a year or two. This is how decolonisation has been silently removed or overshadowed because it has been an 'implied' part of social science, not an explicit one.

A further notable issue that is raised in certain evaluation forums is the fact that evaluation appears a standalone course and divorced from associated courses such as public policy studies, public administration and development studies. This deprives evaluation students the opportunity to understand the utility of evaluation within development and public policy. Development and public policy are essentially the units of measurement for evaluations, and it is therefore interesting that over the years, evaluation studies have been divorced from development studies, public policy studies and public administration. Importantly, these other disciplines often have an explicit focus on equity; for instance, development studies' focus on *gender and development*, *children*, *youth and development*, and *grassroots development*. Similarly, public administration and public policy studies tend to emphasise the importance of affirmative action legislation or pro-poor policies and social security, especially for previously marginalised individuals. If evaluation was still linked to these equity-focused disciplines, then equity would likely be a central focus. As things stand, evaluation studies appear to be focused on technical evaluation competencies such as research and evaluation methodologies, evaluation frameworks, principles and approaches. This focus is at the expense of being conscious of pressing development issues in Africa, such as equity issues and other development issues which evaluation practice should also seek to eradicate, such as youth discontent, political instability, the marginalised population groups, energy insecurity, food insecurity and the like. Evaluation studies in Africa therefore continue to borrow 'blindly' from Western programme evaluation studies, which renders African evaluation studies as yet another

TABLE 3.1: Monitoring and Evaluation qualifications in selected African higher education and training institutions.

Higher education institution	Formal evaluation qualification offering	Standard modules	Focus on equity or African evaluation approaches
Africa Training Institute,[3] online	Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation	Introduction to M&E Project Planning and Implementation Evaluation Types and Modules Community-based Participatory Research	The community-based participatory research focus in one of the modules is an example of how to advocate for community-based M&E that is equitable and captures people's voices in development and evaluation
The Open University of Tanzania,[4] Tanzania	Master of Arts in Monitoring and Evaluation	Standard M&E methods, techniques and practices adopted by international organisations	No equity/community/ grassroots M&E methods listed
Makerere University,[5] Uganda	Master of Public Health Monitoring and Evaluation (MPHME)	M&E concepts and theories Programme Design and management Monitoring principles, methods and approaches Statistical methods Programme evaluations M&E systems Research methods	No module on equity in M&E
University of Ghana,[6] Ghana	Master of Science in Public Health Monitoring and Evaluation	Biostatistics Research methods Fundamentals of M&E M&E of Gender Integrated Programs M&E of Public Health Nutrition M&E of Social Programs	University of Ghana's M&E qualification is the most explicit of the sampled Universities here when it comes to codifying equity-focused M&E modules such as: 1. M&E of Gender Integrated Programs 2. M&E of Public Health Nutrition 3. M&E of Social Programs

Table 3.1 continues on the next page→

3. https://www.africatraininginstitute.org/diploma/diploma-in-monitoring-evaluation/.

4. https://www.out.ac.tz/ma-me/.

5. https://sph.mak.ac.ug/academics/master-public-health-monitoring-and-evaluation-mphme.

6. https://www.ug.edu.gh/sites/default/files/documents/SPH%20Msc%20M%26E%20Brochure%2010-05-2018%5B218%5D.pdf.

TABLE 3.1 (cont.): Monitoring and Evaluation qualifications in selected African higher education and training institutions.

Higher education institution	Formal evaluation qualification offering	Standard modules	Focus on equity or African evaluation approaches
University of the Witwatersrand (South Africa)	Postgraduate Diploma in Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation[7] and Master's Degree in Management of Public and Development Sector Monitoring and Evaluation	Evaluation Managing the M&E practice Monitoring systems Public finance and performance budgeting	No explicit mention of equity in evaluation nor a module on African approaches to evaluation
Stellenbosch University (South Africa)	Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation Methods[8] and Master of Philosophy in Monitoring and Evaluation	Principles and paradigms of evaluation studies Clarificatory evaluation Process evaluation and programme monitoring Statistical and qualitative analysis methods for evaluation studies Evaluation report	No explicit mention of equity in evaluation nor express module on African approaches to evaluation
University of Cape Town	Master of Philosophy in Programme Evaluation[9]	Principles in programme evaluation Statistics for evaluation Advanced quantitative evaluation design and analysis Alternate approaches for complex evaluation Qualitative methods in evaluation Alternate approaches for complex evaluation (i.e. Africa-centric evaluation) Monitoring using programme theory Research design for impact evaluation	There is a module on alternate approaches for complex evaluations, with a focus on Africa-centric and participatory evaluation that is crucial for ensuring that issues of development equity are tackled by evaluations

Source: See footnotes for each university's qualification offering.
Key: M&E, monitoring and evaluation.

7. https://www.wits.ac.za/course-finder/postgraduate/clm/pdm-monitoring-and-evaluation/.

8. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.sun.ac.za/english/pgstudies/Documents/ARTS%20Faculty/Programmes/Postgraduate%20Diplomas/Postgraduate%20Diploma%20in%20Monitoring%20and%20Evaluation.pdf.

9. http://www.organisationalpsychology.uct.ac.za/orgpsy/Masters-in-Programme-Evaluation.

arena of Western knowledge reproduction and consumption rather than being an emancipatory discipline that is grounded on African development history, contemporary development experiences and indigenous African knowledge systems that should define development and how it should be measured.

In addition to higher education institutions (universities), there are institutions that provide practice-based ECD services that are targeted at governments and non-governmental evaluation and development stakeholders. Among these ECD institutions are the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), CLEAR-Francophone Africa (CLEAR-FA), Twende Mbele, African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE) and the West Africa Capacity-building and Impact Evaluation (WACIE) programme. For the purposes of this chapter, the focus is on whether these ECD stakeholders prioritise developmental issues of equity and transformation. International organisations with developmental mandates have shaped the ECD agenda, including the thinking and discourse. For instance, the OECD–DAC, which consists of 31 countries and multilateral development agencies that are the largest distributors of development aid, adopted an ECD strategy in 2010. The OECD–DAC (2010, p. 2) resolved to provide resources for evaluation training and conferences and develop evaluation frameworks with the aid of recipient countries (governments). One commendable aspect of the OECD–DAC's ECD strategy of 2010 is that it recognised that ECD interventions should be targeted at building an enabling environment (e.g. an accountability and learning culture among political actors) and strengthening institutions implementing development interventions (OECD–DAC 2010, p. 3). Moreover, the OECD–DAC strategy emphasises the importance of country-driven ECD with support from top management in respective governments.

One missed opportunity in the ECD strategy of the OECD–DAC is a mentioning of the importance of investing in evaluation frameworks centred on the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. Such equity-based and Transformational Evaluation frameworks (i.e. evaluation terms of reference, evaluation plans, evaluation guidelines and policies) could drive evaluation stakeholders to measure the effectiveness of development interventions in improving the material conditions (living conditions) and economic opportunities of the poor, females, the youth, rural populations and people living with disabilities. Such equity-centred evaluation practice, especially by donors, would unearth key development lessons for future development aid that is likely to be genuinely emancipatory and drive *sustainable* socio-economic change in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South. Development aid in the 21st century cannot be narrowly

focused on poverty and disaster relief only, but should also seek to eliminate conditions that lead to poverty, such as:

- lack of access to productive finance
- lack of access to quality education (early childhood development, basic and higher education) that can lead to economic empowerment and prosperity
- lack of access to quality health care from birth to old age
- lack of access to quality basic services and infrastructure (electricity, water and sanitation, clean environment, roads) that attracts the concentration of economic activity in rural areas, towns and cities.

Evaluation capacity development institutes and donor agencies should collectively promote evaluation discourse and practice that is rooted in measuring the development realities of the Global South by adopting an analytical framework that is grounded on equity and the lived realities of Africans.

The World Bank is another key multilateral development and evaluation stakeholder that has contributed to evaluation discourse and practice globally. In its conceptualisation of ECD, the World Bank recognises the importance of using evaluation findings to improve the effectiveness of development outcomes and humanitarian relief. In essence, the World Bank views evaluation as an instrument of change, provided that the practice is undertaken by competent evaluators who are independent and use appropriate research methods in the evaluation process (Heider 2009, p. 2). While this principled posture on the value of evaluation is commendable, evaluation stakeholders in Africa need to contextualise evaluative thinking and approaches to the nuanced developmental history, dynamics and trajectory of this post-colonial continent.

The African continent requires evaluation practitioners who understand that the design of evaluations in Africa needs to include culturally-responsive research methods and research questions that engage with the racial, gendered and spatial nature of development across Africa. For instance, if an evaluator is evaluating the effectiveness or impact of an economic development policy or programme in any African country, such an evaluation ought to ask the following questions: (1) how has the intervention improved the livelihoods of targeted beneficiaries? And (2) how has this intervention contributed to the social mobility of the beneficiaries and their dependents or families? This is because economic development is not only about creating jobs for targeted beneficiaries but also about improving people's access to life-changing assets (land, property and finance) that can propel an individual and their families towards better living standards and a good life that is sustainable. Such a substantive understanding of what constitutes genuine

economic development should then translate into the development of substantive development indicators, evaluation criteria and evaluation questions that should result in valuable, credible and relevant evaluation reports that can be used as a basis for developing relevant economic development interventions that produce equitable development in Africa.

Evaluation capacity development institutions ought to develop individual evaluation training programmes and institutional evaluation frameworks that are grounded on this central principle of equity. Without a genuine adoption of equity in ECD and evaluation practice in Africa, ECD and evaluation perpetuate the marginalisation of the poor, the youth, rural populations and females in Africa. Promoting equity in evaluation and ECD is also relatively easier to promote among political decision-makers and senior government officials because such a practice is aligned with the developmental mandates of governments. Current evaluation and ECD discourse and practice disproportionately emphasises technical aspects of this developmental practice while overlooking the key selling points: its value in the public policy cycle, development planning and budgeting. Moreover, a more holistic evaluation and ECD discourse and practice needs to emerge in Africa if programme evaluation is to assist policy-makers and development stakeholders in alleviating development inequality locally, nationally and regionally.

Western universities have been at the forefront of updating ECD approaches and guidelines in the 21st century. Fitzpatrick, Sanders and Worthen (2011, p. 232) assert that evaluators should demonstrate cultural competence, meaning that their evaluation activities and findings should be based on a good understanding of the overarching context within which the evaluand (intervention being evaluated) and the evaluation is taking place. Such culturally-responsive evaluations are assumed to lead to appropriate and justified evaluation findings that are useful to the programme or policy decision-makers and other stakeholders. The author agrees with Fitzpatrick et al. because culturally-responsive evaluation reports may be of intrinsic value to policy or programme decision-makers because such an evaluation report would be informed by a sufficient understanding of the intervention context. Therefore, culturally-responsive evaluation practice prospectively offers relevant programme or policy recommendations that can lead to improved policy (programme) design, implementation and results.

It is also the considered conclusion of the author that the development of context-responsive evaluation practice can be one of the drivers of equity-based evaluation practice and policy-making. Moreover, context-responsive evaluation practice can be a catalyst for the building of African evaluation practice that accurately captures the development experiences

of targeted African beneficiaries, thereby incorporating their indigenous knowledge of their development experiences and aspirations into the public policy and development planning and programming processes. This would help refine development programmes, plans and policies into change agents that are informed by diverse African voices and experiences of development, thereby offering plausible pathways on how beneficiaries' lives can be improved through these development interventions.

Recommendations for transforming programme evaluation discourse and practice in Africa

To ensure that African evaluation discourse and practice transforms into an equity-focused development instrument, the chapter proffers the following recommendations:

- **African universities** as trainers of evaluation professionals, African universities should (re)integrate evaluation studies into development studies and public policy studies. Development studies offers extensive knowledge about what *development* entails theoretically, while public policy studies focuses on empirical solutions to development issues facing Africa and the world. Public policy and development studies also provide a historical and contemporary context for international and African development. From these two disciplines, evaluators in Africa can get to understand the historical and structural challenges to development, which helps with understanding how to measure *development*. The importance of equity in evaluation can be adequately emphasised if this discipline gains a philosophical, theoretical and empirical foundation from development studies and public policy studies.
- **Evaluation capacity development institutions, governments and donors** should champion programme evaluation frameworks (policies, guidelines, indicators and evaluation criteria) that emphasise the importance of measuring the extent to which development programmes and policies promote equity for the marginalised social groups in society. For example, evaluation guidelines and criteria should focus on the extent to which a development intervention has created opportunities for livelihoods, access to finance and wealth creation for females, people of colour, the youth and people living with disabilities. Such a focus on equity criteria would provide substantive insights into the genuine effectiveness and impact of development interventions in Africa and elsewhere in the Global South. A further recommendation for ECD institutions and donors would be for these stakeholders to grapple with

the question of how to work with African governments and civil society to build equity-focused evaluation systems across development sectors of African nations. That is, how can we build equity-centred evaluation systems in social development sectors (i.e. health, education and social security sectors)? How can we build energy sector evaluation systems that can contribute to energy security for all people and groups in society? How can we build agriculture sector evaluation systems that can contribute to food security in a country? How can we build financial sector evaluation systems that improve access to finance for entrepreneurial, business and education-seeking females, youth, people of colour and people living with disabilities? A further question for African governments is: how can governments adopt evaluation as a permanent tool to measure the effectiveness of macroeconomic policies (i.e. public expenditure, taxation and monetary policies) in improving development outcomes?

- **Evaluators and evaluation scholars in Africa** must champion the aforementioned principles of equity in evaluation and ECD discourse and practice. In their evaluation communities of practice and associations, African evaluation practitioners and scholars should continue advocating for decolonised evaluation discourse and practice that can highlight Africa's continuing development challenges and the global political economy that continues to reproduce or maintain the dispossession of Africa developmentally. African evaluators, or evaluators in Africa, need to persist with the quest to mainstream decolonisation of development and evaluation discourse and practices, as that is a historic mission that cannot be outsourced to evaluators and institutions beyond Africa. As a result, the chapter argues that the AfrEA and other national evaluation associations in Africa, as well as evaluators in Africa are the would-be advocates of Africa-centred evaluation methodologies that will highlight and recommend remedial actions for addressing key socio-economic, political and global challenges that limit African development potential.

Conclusion

Evaluation in the Global South must strive to be an emancipatory discipline and practice and not reproduce inequality and Global North hegemony through unconscious evaluation discourse and practice. This chapter has reflected on the current nature of evaluation discourse and practice in Africa, arguing that there is scope for the advancement of a more equitable and context-specific evaluation discourse and practice on the African continent and elsewhere in the Global South. Such an equity-focused evaluation discourse and practice is to be informed by African and Global

South development thinking, experiences and aspirations (i.e. indigenous conceptualisations of what constitutes development and the indicators of development from African peoples' perspectives). Through such African insights, equitable evaluation discourse and practice can be shaped by various evaluation stakeholders in Africa: universities, governments, donors, ECD institutions, evaluation scholars and practitioners, and evaluation communities of practice at continental and national levels. The chapter has outlined recommendations on how each of these evaluation stakeholders can help drive an equity-focused evaluation discourse, agenda and practice in Africa that can be emulated elsewhere in the Global South. The author argues that an equity-focused evaluation posture, discourse and practice can contribute to the alleviation of inequality, poverty and marginalisation in the African political economy and the global political economy at large.

Chapter 4

'*Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*?' Un(masking) inequality by international institutions

Takunda J Chirau
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Umali Saidi
Research and Innovation Division, Midlands State University, Gweru, Zimbabwe

Introduction

There is no doubt that the world is characterised by inequality and inequities. Inequality continues to manifest itself at political, business, international organisation, educational and country levels. A Marxist analysis of class offers a better understanding of how inequality emerged and has sustained itself even during contemporary times. The social relations of production contributed to the emergence and re-emergence of inequality (Onwubiko & Okooroafor 2016). This is epitomised by the relationship between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The unbalanced relationship where the bourgeoisie owns the means of production and the

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proletariat offers labour to receive a salary hardly keeps the proletariat out of poverty.

It is by understanding this asymmetrical relationship that inequality stubbornly manifests itself in every space where human agents interactively connect. The class struggle is replicated by the international institutions, albeit in new forms. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN) and its agents, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), are no exception in perpetuating inequalities, particularly in regard to the Global South. This is evident in how the Global North relates to the Global South in multilateral organisations. In that light, Onuoha (2008) argues that:

> The co-operation of various states that constitute the international system is important for the survival of the system. Unfortunately, some states are more powerful than others and these powerful states now dominate and determine the operation of these organizations. In most cases these international organizations openly function to protect the interest of the rich countries which wield more economic power. (p. 38)

In light of this, international organisations – most of which function as funders and promoters of policies on development and are openly biased – it is argued that inequity and inequalities are initially traced to the work of such organisations. The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to expose the hidden sources of inequality manifesting in the evaluation practice and space. This chapter hypothesises that the main nucleus of inequity and inequalities existing in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices are traced to the operations and attitudes of international institutions towards the Global South because these provide advice and recommend interventions based on knowledge gained from M&E practices aimed at addressing poverty (and other challenges) facing Global South countries.

As the African region pushes and seeks to develop the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) agenda, it must reflect not only on how evaluation has been under siege in Africa but also that institutions and organisations have been using systems and frameworks that force them to produce positive outcomes within contexts that do not support imported epistemes. Of concern in this chapter, however, is suggesting ways of establishing the best ways of working with Global North-induced M&E frameworks. It is hoped that this will minimise the promotion of institutional inequalities, which often implicate institutions and organisations in the process.

It is crucial to study and map variabilities in institutional or organisational (those whose business is M&E) inequalities. This will not only allow refocusing but also an appreciation of how macro- and micro-level 'political, economic, and social conditions shape the distribution of more proximate determinants' (Bakhtiari, Olafsdottir & Beckfield 2018, pp. 1–2) of inequities and inequalities. There exist broad institutional arrangements

prone to inequities and inequalities as institutions provide an interface and create relations between groups and professional agents. It is against this view that the subscription to the idea that inequality stubbornly manifests itself in every space where human agents interactively connect to solve challenges that face humanity. If, in political, business or educational spaces, to name a few, inequalities exist and continue to baffle societies, it also means evaluation spaces are not unique. The conditions there are worse than those institutions operating in Africa, wherein global evaluation matrixes come into play against the prevailing environmental and contextual factors.

When 'evaluation' is taken as an institution, apart from it being a practice, it means inequalities further manifest in a variety of ways in the administrative institution and as a concept or discipline. Thus, this chapter discusses and provides illustrative instances of institutional 'evaluation inequalities' in southern Africa, hoping to enhance MAE by minimising hurdles along the way. This chapter further reveals that many inequalities exist because of the superimposition of ontological, axiological and epistemological aspects defining the operationalisation of evaluation in Africa. It is argued that locating and placing Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs) at the centre may help close the inequality gaps observable in evaluation spaces and in the discipline itself.

Significance and research questions

Research focusing on inequality is quite substantial globally, relating also to inequalities in Africa. Several studies demonstrate, with the greatest magnitude, the degree of inequality and inequity in most societies in the world (Ahmad, Haque & Islam 2022; Costa 2010; Dutt & Mukhopadhyay 2009; Hayes, Introna & Kelly 2018; Hujo 2021; Levy et al. 2020; Silva Filho et al. 2023). Much of this research links inequalities to the attitude and relations of the Global North and Global South. It is reflected that inequality has a very long history of being propelled by institutions undertaking developmental practices and processes in Africa (Hayes et al. 2018; Hujo 2021; Levy et al. 2020; Silva Filho et al. 2023; Yekini & Yekini 2020). Gaps in research exist that fundamentally call for novel strategies to institute paradigm shifts in the nature, structure and practices of M&E in Africa.

This chapter, therefore, fills in this important lacuna in the African M&E research by drawing and calling for the need to feed from novel African epistemologies to address inequalities resulting from evaluation practices, notably driven by international organisations operating in the Global South (in this case, Africa). This chapter also makes an analytical contribution to M&E research by recognising and appreciating the significance of both

structure and agency in Global South countries, specifically with reference to MAE and IKSs. The Global South countries are not passive victims of the machinations of Global North evaluation practices but are active agents that aim to emancipate themselves from the chains of Global North evaluation imperialism and practice.

The analogy expressed by Besley and Robinson (2010, p. 655) that '*Quis Custodiet Ipsos Custodes*' regards the question of 'who guards the guards', and this is alluded to in this chapter to intimately demonstrate its connections to evaluation practices in Africa, where development institutions and their agencies identify themselves as 'guarding' the Global South against poverty, underdevelopment, pandemics, inequalities, health care and food security. This gives rise to the recurring questions about why the greater part of the Global South remains underdeveloped despite the billions of dollars in funding and the insurmountable presence of international institutions and their agencies working for years in the South to eradicate poverty, among other challenges.

In that light, and fundamentally so, this study's *main objective* is to *unearth* the sources of inequity and inequalities that manifest in the evaluation practices by a cohort of international institutions providing advice on interventions aimed at addressing poverty and other challenges facing humanity in the Global South. The preoccupation is with returning to the source in order to appreciate how inequity and inequality appear to be 'planned', based on knowledge obtained from evaluation reports from which recommendations witness mechanisms that define how M&E is practised. Sustainable interventions can be suggested only with the full knowledge of the source of inequity and inequality. In other words, the perpetuation of 'globalised' M&E practices divorced from considerations of indigenous epistemes is perpetuating underdevelopment (Rodney 1972). To achieve this, therefore, the following research questions guided this chapter: Why are evaluation practices Global North-based? To what extent have evaluation practices by international organisations helped African countries manage and develop their own evaluation systems? Who makes decisions when it comes to the management and commissioning of evaluations? What are the available options to bring about equality epistemologically?

Methods

The authors used systematic search methods to collect relevant literature. This chapter relied mainly on secondary data found in peer-reviewed journal articles and reports accessed from various online repositories. The chapter also benefited immensely from the authors' experience in working with indigenous epistemes, M&E space, strengthening M&E systems of

English-speaking countries and with central government institutions that provide oversight and coordination of public sector M&E systems. This chapter further benefits from the authors' experience in working with multilateral organisations supporting African countries in the development sector. A variety of search items were used, including inequality in multilateral organisations', inequities, MAE and IKS.

Theoretical foundation

Research shows how inequalities are linked to developmental disparities caused by some questionable relations between the Global North and Global South (Hancorck 1989; Hujo 2021; Mügge et al. 2018). Most agencies or institutions headquartered in the Global North fund developmental programmes designed to eradicate poverty in the Global South. However, by default, design or otherwise, developmental interventions have resulted in inequity and inequalities. For instance, in the 1980s and 1990s, Global South countries (particularly those in Africa) that implemented the IMF- and World Bank-prescribed structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) (Hancorck 1989) suffered serious economic recessions. Experiences of the implementation of SAP (locally known as Economic Structural Adjustment Programme – ESAP) are still alive in the memories of most southern African citizens whose countries adopted the adjustment programmes. The ESAP-linked policies resulted in the cutting out of state subsidies to low-income groups, causing widespread retrenchments, thereby escalating the cost of living and lowering real wages (Dube 2010). Tamukamoyo (2009, p. 97) argued that the 'informal economy came into its own' in the 1990s because of the negative impacts of ESAP, with backyard industries and petty trading sprouting everywhere as workers and families adopted a range of livelihood strategies. Close to 28 countries that implemented SAPs had their economies shrink (Onwubiko & Okoroafor 2016). As a result, international organisations intervened, mostly through programmes and projects (hereafter referred to as interventions) cutting across all sectors of the economies, notably, education, agriculture, politics and health.

As a condition to continue receiving support from UN agencies, the IMF and the World Bank, target countries are supposed to receive, monitor and evaluate the programmes. In analysing problematic issues around aid management in Africa, Hancorck (1989) noted the 'claim' that developmental institutions make regarding their main role. This was indicated as providing and supporting policies, attitudes, behaviours and engagements that must ultimately empower beneficiaries in the target country (Hancorck 1989). Sadly, this *modus operandi* has been subtly inducing inequality and inequity. There is an imposition of the systems of M&E on beneficiary countries, for instance.

Theoretically, therefore, the foregrounded is pinned on the Dependency Theory (DT). The DT gained traction in the 1960s as a critique to modernisation and trickle-down economic theories. It was originally applied to appreciate inequalities existing between the developed (Global North) (the core) and developing countries (Global South) (periphery) with regards to underdevelopment and industrialisation (Rodney 1972). Its application was in Latin America, with scholars such as Paul Prebisch leading the conversation.

To explain underdevelopment in other parts of the world, such as Africa, the dependency hypothesis has been employed in several different ways (Rodney 1972). The DT is analytically useful to this study because of its sensitivity to power relations between the Global North and Global South. To this end, it is therefore a useful tool to pinpoint and understand how development agencies perpetuate inequality despite other 21st-century challenges. This is despite the constraints of the DT and its problem of generalisation and ethnocentrisms (Farny 2016).

Dos Santos (1970, p. 231) defines dependency as 'a situation in which the economy of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy to which the former is subjected'. The DT separates the world into core and periphery economies. Dependency theorists, on the other hand, analyse 'systems', with a focus on how the global capitalist system contributes to the underdevelopment of the periphery (Kay 2011; Sekhari 2009). Tausch (2010) argue that:

> [...] poverty and 'backwardness' in the 'periphery' and semi-periphery are caused by the very peripheral or quasi peripheral position that these nations or regions always had in the international division of labor since the beginnings of the world system in 1492. (p. 468)

The main pre-conceptions of the theory consist of (Namkoong 1999):

1. A lack of development, as opposed to un-development, is the premeditated extraction of resources from the periphery nations in order to benefit the core nations.
2. Periphery countries are poor because of being involuntarily incorporated into the international division of labour, where they serve as producers and suppliers of raw materials or reservoirs of cheap labour.
3. Active co-operation between dominating powers and local elites who have similar interests maintains resource diversion.

Furthermore, Tausch (2010) brings another perspective and summarises the key characteristics of the periphery as the main features of the periphery and semi-periphery countries:

> [...] a high penetration by foreign capital, a heavy c from the leading countries, the overall subordination of the productive capacities of the country towards the

> interests of the evolving international division of labor, [*and*] the concentration of exports on a few commodities and recipients. (p. 469)

The economic, political, military and ideological arenas are only a few where the unequal and exploitative interactions between the Global North and the Global South can be seen (Galtung 1971). It is on these bases that dependence in the 'world system' is used to examine, understand and explain global inequalities (Farny 2016). However, with the increased globalisation, it is contemporarily challenging to hold the notion of inequality based on neo-colonialism, integrated world systems and economic dependency (Randall 2004). The rise of the so-called Asian tigers is a contradiction to the notion of an integrated world system. However, the theory has its loopholes and is subject to criticism. For instance, the DT fails to take into consideration the progress of some traditional periphery countries and also implies that it was impossible to achieve development within the context of global capitalism (Amsden 2003). Critics suggest that an integrated global economy could lead to economic improvement (Sanchez 2003). Kvangraven (2021) notes that the core tenet of the DT is not in conflict with the economic transition of the Asian tigers, rendering the theory weak in such cases. It is, therefore, essential to ask: 'Does this kind dialectical relationship exist and manifest in the evaluation practices of institutions and or organisation?' This chapter does not provide direct answers but stimulates debate while seeking a way forward to reduce the dependence of the Global South on the Global North.

Programme evaluation

Programme evaluation is defined as 'judging the worth or merit of something or the product of the process' (Scriven 1991, p. 139). Stakeholders and policy- and decision-makers desire that programmes serve the intended goals. Monitoring and evaluation is a growing profession across Africa, and this is perhaps indicative of the acknowledgement of the value that the discipline and profession hold. In Africa, universities are playing a significant role in capacitating individuals desiring to pursue careers in M&E. In turn, individuals play an important role in government and non-governmental institutions working to track the progress – or the lack thereof – of different interventions, be it programmes, projects, policies or plans, among others. These universities in Africa have a strong reputation for offering M&E programmes pitched at different levels – which is the case for some, but not all. Countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia have standalone M&E offerings at certificate, diploma, postgraduate diploma, MA and PhD levels (CLEAR-AA 2019). Other training is offered by the Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs) and government institutions, but they are not credit-bearing (CLEAR-AA 2019).

As such, critical questions are raised as to what influence the Global North has on African universities and their courses in M&E? Evaluation imperialism is the source of the current domineering of evaluation approaches, theories, frameworks and practices. The USA, Canada and Britain are usually cited as authors of evaluation imperialism (Mouton et al. 2014). Sadly, the African education systems responsible for embedding evaluation knowledge are still 'captured' by the Global North knowledge economy – that is, knowledge dealing with M&E. If the evaluation educational systems remain as-is, influencing Africanised evaluations may remain unattained. Renowned global evaluation icon theories and approaches remain the staple for any African scholars or M&E trainers and students as many of these icons drive debates around topical issues. Anecdotal evidence from people across the continent, who have obtained different qualifications (certificates, diplomas and degrees of all levels) indicated that the influence of the Global North knowledge, including theories and case studies that are taught at universities, cannot be underestimated.

There is little to no mention of the African methods taught in M&E classes, raising critical questions about whether African scholars, academics and evaluators are on the right trajectory towards Africanising the M&E courses in universities in Africa, for instance. As the tide of wanting rises to have evaluations, which are sensitive to African culture, norms, values and knowledge, there are bottlenecks acting as buffers. One of the bottlenecks relates to universities practising isomorphic mimicry, thereby perpetuating inequality in the process. What is also visible is inequality between African universities that are offering M&E. Aspiring scholars tend to favour certain universities compared to others based on the richness of the curriculum.

The evaluation 'elephant' in the room

There is a need to face and directly address 'the elephant' in the 'small' evaluation room, that is, MAE. Available research on MAE is still in its infancy with regards to addressing the 'elephant' in the room adequately and more directly and is still scraping unceasingly around the 'room'. This *implicit* rather than *explicit* attitude stems, in part, from the epistemic positioning of evaluation, generally dominated by the Global North in terms of frameworks, systems and approaches. We claim, therefore, that there is a dearth of studies exposing or reporting on notions of inequality and equity *within* developmental agencies and institutions. Part of the reason could be the existence of what scholars have termed 'epistemic inequality in a developmental perspective' (Silvia et al. 2022), which is a form of 'interaction [...] aimed at producing a belief about some relevant aspects of the world, present or absent, past or future and at assessing its degree of epistemic trustworthiness' (Silvia et al. 2022, p. 1).

In evaluation terms, institutions and development agencies assume the role of an agency, and their work, best described by Silvia et al. (2022), involves producing reports that are used to initiate a dialogue intended to influence the actions and behaviour of the objectified subjects. The relationship between evaluators and their 'clients' often overshadows reverse evaluation. This is premised on the understanding that (Silvia et al. 2022):

> Human societies progressed because of the ability to cooperate epistemically. Individuals share their beliefs, transmit reliable information, and contribute to the establishment of a collective knowledge network. This collective knowledge allows each individual to come into contact with parts and aspects of the world that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. (p. 1)

It follows, therefore, that M&E hovers into the realm of collective knowledge where one expects some degree of equity on both sides whether one is evaluating or being evaluated; whether a programme is being evaluated or the programme outcomes are forcing reverse evaluation in an endeavour to create an equitable platform for all parties (recipients and implementors). It becomes a human activity, prioritising 'epistemic' cooperations, and such cooperations often face obstacles such as social and epistemic injustices which Silvia et al. (2022) term as:

> Breaks [*in*] the cooperative chain [*that*] harms society and [*evaluators*] in equal measure. Society is harmed because the social body ceases to have access to relevant information, while the [*evaluator*] is harmed because they lose their legitimate right as a subject of knowledge. (p. 1)

Evaluation processes, therefore, are assumed to involve a balancing act while providing recommendations designed to neutralise epistemic injustices that, in the broadest sense, M&E works to stifle. It follows, therefore, that internal systems of institutions mandated to 'neutralise epistemic injustices' operate with internal equities and equalities. There are no better ways to explain this systematic creation of dependence by the Global North than the *modus operandi* shown in M&E today. In this chapter, reverse evaluation is understood as evaluation by independent parties or agents who often get evaluated in the process. It is an attempt to re-shift focus and place similar evaluation systems and frameworks and use them to identify forms of inequity and inequality within institutions deemed highly knowledgeable in aspects of underdevelopment, and not only to address the 'credibility' of the process and agent.

The social inequalities characterising contemporary societies (Idemudia 2017; Yekini & Yekini 2020) cause unequal access to social amenities or, in evaluation terms in this context, cause professionals to fail to fully undertake their professional evaluation duties and access the needed resources for their work. This, ultimately, regards ill-treatment of the professionals as agents of knowledge. It is generally taken that the forms of global economic structures are responsible for inequalities (Hancorck 1989; United Nations

Children's Fund [UNICEF] 2013). As organisations and institutions interact, the reproduction of inequalities is uncovered in one way or another (Ahmad et al. 2018).

There is no way that institutions of 'democracy' and 'accountability' will remain unaffected by the global economic inequalities within an environment where socio-political instability is threatened daily by policies, some of which are 'imported' or suggested by the Global North. Amis et al. (2018, p. 1131) observe that developmental organisations and institutions, as agents interacting with various groups, 'are heavily implicated in the rising levels of global inequality'. While Amis et al. (2018) discuss the aspects of inequality and its detrimental effects in the various regions of the world at great length, the exposé provides enough justification for interventions of one form or another by agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) hoping to level inequalities. However, internal operations and structural aspects are ignored, although they recognise that institutions and organisations are sites of creating and perpetuating inequality.

Despite this, reference to the nature of inequalities is placed elsewhere, wherein it is indicated that the global prevalence of inequalities and their trends do not imply that 'the international institutions are to blame for this increase in inequality' (Dutt & Mukhopadhyay 2009, p. 324). Despite the 'epistemic silence' demonstrated by the deafness on reference to internal structures and bases of operation by the international institutions in this case, one reads an implicit hint in institutional structures that perpetuate inequity and inequality, especially in operationalising M&E. For instance, Dutt and Mukhopadhyay (2009, p. 328) indicate that the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI)'s voting (deemed problematic) and the World Trade Organization's (WTO) decision-making systems and manner of dispute resolutions 'load the dice against poor countries in their interactions with rich countries'. Regarded as the 'world government', the UN is therefore under the spotlight where the current structure, for instance, of the Security Council, is such that five countries are 'permanent' members, notably China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America. The then president of Zimbabwe, Robert Mugabe, is on record for unceasingly calling for reform in the UN Security Council against the notion that (Campbell 2016):

> The UNSC is more involved in Africa than in any other region, and many Africans feel it is acutely unjust that none of the permanent members are from the continent. (n.p.)

It is no accident that such a call is made around aspects of global politics from other international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and other agencies that ultimately operate in accordance with the

recommendations of global political policies or calls. This is an instance of recreations of inequalities and inequity within institutions deserving serious debates on reverse evaluation, especially in matters that involve M&E in Africa. Global inequalities, therefore, have a direct influence on M&E at a micro level as the entire cycle of M&E ends up being aligned with the demands of funders who, in this case, are the development agencies controlling said institutions.

The development space has, over the years, come to be defined by the dictates, influence, work and expansion of donor organisations. This explains the conclusion presented by Hayes et al. (2018, p. 1), that 'governments and other donor organizations increasingly require NGOs to account for their impact'. In this case, impact assessment (IA), otherwise known as knowledge management, is linked to evaluation processes. Given that this is an evaluation aspect, governments and other donor organisations would naturally desire NGOs to provide such interventions, placing NGOs on unequal footing with governments or the clients they serve, rendering the IA donor-centric NGOs exposed. It is noted that there is a top-down reporting structure by NGOs or other agencies as such reporting structure 'leads to disempowerment among NGO workers' (Hayes et al. 2018, p. 2). For instance, the global village today witnesses multicultural and multilinguistic set-ups or contexts of operations by NGO workers. The use of English or some other 'colonial' language, for instance, excludes some employees in the process, thereby depriving important professionals of participation in and access to reports.

The fact that NGO workers have been 'mimicking' Western knowledge, such as reports viewed as superior to non-Western knowledge-sharing through storytelling, means that local workers mimic Western forms of accountability. This is another instance of how inequality is realised. In fact, the process of mimicking Western forms of accountability while operating in non-Western contexts or settings is in itself evidence of the existence of inequity and inequality in these organisations, and research appears to avoid confronting this. Consequently, resources, time and effort are spent in 'professionalising' and meeting 'donor' or funder requirements 'leaving them with less time to work with beneficiaries' (Hayes et al. 2018, p. 3).

Most international institutions in the development space or sector preoccupy themselves with developing interventions aimed at eradicating poverty in the world. Hujo (2021) noted that, for the past fifteen years, this preoccupation has been a characteristic of most institutions, but without the desire to address inequality. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of 2015 reconfigured the past developmental trends. This is evidence of continued declarations of undertaking the same old visions without solutions in sight.

Africa stands as the most vulnerable region and is presented as such in most of the evaluation reports. International institutions do not project themselves as being among the agents recreating inequalities. Studies show that international organisations merely 'recommend', in most cases, to governments and policy-makers the knowledge and policy directions required to eradicate poverty and inequalities, as these are believed to be responsible for underdevelopment. Failure to adopt the 'recommendations' or the failure of a programme is placed squarely on the heads of the governments, as it is understood in Eurocentric terms that African governments 'dispose of less resources for equalising post-market distribution' (Hujo 2021, p. 2). The World Bank ESAP adopted by most southern African countries in the 1990s is regarded in literature as having impoverished the populations of countries such as Ghana, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

What is missing in all this is the call for 'reverse evaluation', especially when one reads into Yekini and Yekini's (2021) submissions that NGOs have been at the forefront of urging profit-making institutions to produce sustainable reports based on their operations. Because NGOs are mostly 'non-profit-making', existing in as far as they provide their services to communities and individuals in an effort to address poverty eradication, homelessness and education for the less privileged, among others, this is thought not to injure the contextual environment. However, as NGOs operate in communities, the positive and negative environmental, cultural, economic and social activities need to be accounted for.

Non-governmental organisations and other agencies often rally behind the 'sustainability' of programmes or interventions. Sustainability entails increased quality of life, wherein the poor can now afford basic socio-economic needs following amelioration of the consequences of negative environmental activities that usually arise from rendering the public good (Yekini & Yekini 2021). Indeed, it is not always the case that governments will efficiently function to help communities and individuals living below the poverty line. Because inequalities exist in society, resulting in some groups failing to access socio-economic services to ease their situations, NGOs are vital in bringing interventions to address and promote inclusivity. The challenge, however, is the relationship or interface between NGOs and governments whose operations resultantly become 'evaluative' of the other, thereby exposing systems from both sides that leave the two institutions guilty of creating inequality and inequity.

These discussions usually involve readily available evidence from the government perspective wherein NGOs produce evaluation reports pinpointing areas where the government may be found wanting and providing counsel on policy development. Sadly, the same cannot be said

of the NGOs, as what is awash are government rhetorical evaluative and political reactions that sometimes appear to take political-reactionary stances. In Zimbabwe, NGOs have been openly accused of harbouring a regime-change agenda by the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) government. The thinking is quite simple, in that NGOs, agents and donors are mostly funded by the Global North. The power dynamics that exist between the funder and the developmental institutions make it easy for one to assume that operations and programming will somehow be directed by the expectations of the funder. In this regard, programmes that insinuate or place beneficiaries to 'question' their own government, resist or demand 'policy change' are faced with the African governments responding harshly to regime change. Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, NGOs were accused of operating and promoting actions and behaviour which contradicted the teachings of Islam (Karim 2004).

Ordinary people who have benefited from NGO programmes for a long time, for instance, may come to be baffled as to why their own government fails to undertake its duties, leaving the NGOs, for instance, to be what they 'know' and rally against, even in terms of efficiency and the manner in which food may be distributed, health care initiatives implemented, employment (as locals are employed by the NGOs or hired in one way or the other and paid handsomely), education and other aspects. NGOs, agencies and other developmental institutions, hence, unintentionally promote inequity in society as those working directly with the NGOs benefit while others, perhaps in similar situations but located elsewhere geographically, may not receive the same.

In some cases, a dependence syndrome is created, such as what has been seen in the Chivi communities of south-eastern Zimbabwe, an area characterised by prerenal droughts and floods (Madziyauswa 2018). In any case, the more the NGOs become operational and develop strong ties with local communities, especially rural communities, the more visible the message of continued failure by the government to provide social services to its people in general, let alone access the rural communities regarding developmental issues (only during election season does the government reach even the last cell of its political movement to canvas for votes).

However, it does not follow that all is rosy when NGOs are involved or dominate a certain developmental space. In Bangladesh, Islam (2021) reported that in the case of the NGOs operating in that country for the provision of health care, while they were providing health care services according to their own policies, strategies and guidelines, the government institutions offered far better in service provision compared to some NGO-led institutions, save for 'well-off families had good connections with NGO clinics, enabling them to obtain better health services than the poorer

families' (Islam 2021, p. 1).However, generally, most NGOs had better services premised on better funding being availed.

Guarding the guards of development

Applied and basic epistemology studies, mainly those that aim at modelling M&E, have encouraged the adoption and use of IKSs in all practices designed for human development in Africa. The strides that MAE has taken are beginning to be felt in a number of areas, mainly in the operations of organisations and in concerning themselves with research and development (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Mbava & Chapman 2020). Carman (2011), Chamaki, Jenkins and Hashemi (2019), Chilisa (2015), Chilisa and Mertens (2021), Curry (2019) House (2015), Kabonga (2019), Mbava and Chapman (2020), Omosa et al. (2019), White (2009) and Winthereik and Jensen (2017) all agree that scholarship has called for IKS and development discourses to be taken back to the grassroots as well as foundational aspects of research wherein funders are now making strides to fund IKS-based research. Research on the African cosmos is now being called upon to be IKS-based, wherein IKS practitioners, knowledge holders and indigenous communities get to exercise equal control over the research conducted or in cases where members of such communities partake in the study.

In South Africa, the IKS Focus Area Programme (FAP) is a notable development. When it was established in 2001, it promoted the ringfencing of funding from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) to hasten the development of the field and was managed by the National Research Foundation (NRF). O'Connor and Shumate (2014), despite using the US as the context, provide a model of operation involving business entities and NGOs collaborating in the areas of development, generally understood as corporate social responsibility in business circles. In the proposed new developmental model, NGOs and corporations collaborate in a manner in which NGOs, corporates and the government work in a symbiotic manner, triggering acceptance by the populations. Such collaborations are believed to (O'Connor & Shumate 2014):

> [...] meet the cultural expectations [recipients of the development] have about the role of business in society, while advancing social issue awareness and enhancing organizational legitimacy. (p. 106)

In other words, if one alludes to universities, for example, as institutions or corporates entering into partnerships with developmental organisations, such as is the case between the Midlands State University (Zimbabwe) and UNICEF-Zimbabwe (who signed a memorandum of understanding in 2022), it follows that the research and community services the university renders lay the foundation for evaluation and sustainable development.

By extension, reference to IKSs and their unavoidable use by developmental institutions such as NGOs reveals the resilience of IKSs (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Mbava & Chapman 2020). In the face of the shifting priorities of development or its failures, IKSs have not changed their epistemological and institutional underpinnings (Fernando 2003). Developmental institutions have come to realise that their calls for equity, especially pinned around the need to promote and accord respect to 'human rights', reflects the undeniable need to shift and revisit development as IKSs place indigenous people who have been calling for the protection of their environments from the onslaught of development (Fernando 2003). The MAE approach is therefore the alternative (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021) to guaranteeing equity, given how it has contributed significant knowledge and making indigenous knowledge 'a framework of ideas, guidelines and institutional foundation that can offer entry points into alternative ways of thinking about sustainable development' (Chilisa & Mertens 2021, p. 55).

Studies by Bjørnholt and Larsen (2014), House (2015) and Hujo (2021) have demonstrated that inequality in evaluation has resulted from developmental approaches and methods imposed at the micro level. Taking a macro level view, the result has been perennial inequities and inequalities perpetuated by global and highly connected international institutions (see Hancorck 1989). Against such realities, it follows, therefore, that IKSs have become important sources and alternatives for the Global South to overcome the limitations and failures of development programmes largely driven and directed by the Global North. It is a cultural-based strategy to 'guard' the self-imposed 'guards' of development. Evaluations are often 'political', hence providing grounding for inequalities. But MAE, as an alternative paradigm, has political power drawn from IKSs while keeping in check the ever-expanding vicious capitalism. The global political economy invites MAE to re-orient aspects of equality for the common good. In Ghana, the aforesaid is noted around the mother-queen 'MKQMA' concept or institution. Given the prevalence of HIV and AIDS cases in Ghana, Drah (2014, p. 18) reported on the successes achieved by the MKQMA, a 'traditional political system' turned into an NGO, wherein 'the queen mothers could directly raise support for orphans, thereby assuming the role of chiefs as providers of resources for childcare'. The episteme involved herein is linked to the mothering concept in African tradition wherein childcare, particularly in the areas of bringing equity among all children in Ghana and globally in the face of the HIV and AIDS pandemic; the MKQMA rose up as an intervention. International organisations such as UNICEF would only be required to render support in technical and economic means. However, as Drah (2014) noted:

> The MKQMA has been critical in improving the lives of women and children and developing a model for supporting orphans, but there is a tendency for NGOs concerned with HIV to claim more credit than they actually deserve. (p. 18)

This reveals how NGOs, because of exclusionary evaluation practices, do not recognise IKSs and are quick to erroneously conclude that any successful intervention to a developmental issue in Africa is based on the epistemologies of the Global North.

In another show of individualism, hence inequity, by NGOs working in the African region, Ferrari (2011) indicated that the fight against HIV and AIDS reportedly showed that non-Roman Catholic NGOs shy away from collaborating with Roman Catholic-based NGOs deemed advantaged given their grip on health care, infrastructure and other resources. Part of the reason is the incompatibility of the NGOs (Ferrari 2011), for example, the Roman Catholic stance on condom use. NGOs in this regard have shared challenges, but they fail to collaborate on the solutions. The result is a systematic fragmentation of the health care systems from which NGOs succeed at 'causing permanent harm to public systems of care' (Ferrari 2011, p. 87). Hence, MAE is strategically positioned as both a strategy and a tool for harmonising counterproductive work while providing a very important bridge to accord collaborations some footing that will profit the organisations.

In the Igbide, Uzere and Olomoro communities in the Delta state of Nigeria, Ebhuoma (2020) indicated that almost 90% of the households are directly or indirectly involved in agriculture, and all farmers rely heavily on IKSs for their agricultural practices, especially regarding meteorological issues. This means that evaluations ought to draw lessons from MAE, which advances frameworks that result in the integration of orthodox systems with IKS. For instance, Holma and Kontinen (2011) reported on reproductive health care efforts, foreseeing the successful HIV prevention intervention in South Africa involving the embedment of sexual education with existing practices during the tradition of girls' initiation festivities. The festivities are part of a traditional practice conducted in order to educate girls and encourage avoiding pregnancies.

This way, equity in evaluation is guaranteed, whether it is in HIV prevention and care, childcare, seasonal climate forecasts or food security. The volunteerism concept, which most NGOs have since formalised, has always been part of the livelihoods of African people (Kabonga 2020). The tradition of the *harambe* [let us get together] in Kenya and the *zunde ramambo* [chief's granary] in Zimbabwe are cases in point. Premised on the *ubuntu* epistemology, the Global South's take on volunteerism emphasises 'dedicating oneself to a certain cause without expectation of payment' (Kabonga 2020, p. 3), wherein the drive is to foresee the community benefiting. But today, in Africa, volunteerism has reportedly been re-structured to assume capitalist undertones or formalised to serve the purposes of NGO work, among them M&E officers who now rely on volunteerism to conduct data-collection, for instance.

Thus, MAE comes in to provide equity in evaluation by rectifying misrepresentations, such as the case cited by Drah (2014). Allowing international organisations to continue to dictate the pace of development and deliberately vie for credit that is not due to them (Drah 2014) has detrimental effects. Evaluation reports may reveal that, in the Ghanaian case, a successful developmental or interventional programme was exported to other African countries where the mother-queen concept is not part of the indigene, recalling that the African region itself is not homogenous. As a result, there is a manifestation of inequality fostered by the imposition of programmes purported to have been crafted in Africa and expected, as such, to be applicable anywhere in Africa with minimal modifications.

The other advantage offered by MAE, as an option, is that realistic evaluation (Holma & Kontinen 2011) is ensured. When knowledge is produced through evaluation reports by NGOs, it must be realistic and representative, as failure to meet this basic requirement makes the knowledge a perpetrator of inequality in evaluation itself. In order to promote equity in evaluation, Holma and Kontinen (2011) noted that developmental institutions have flexed up their evaluation models to have them connect to 'learning' for the simple reason that NGO work must consider the values of the targeted people. In this regard, MAE provides this symbiotic and pragmatic connection to evaluation and learning.

Thus, once MAE, as an option, is adopted fully, even the knowledge distribution (Holma & Kontinen 2011) mechanisms change. Efforts in South Africa towards operationalising MAE have witnessed the hosting of the MAE hackathon by the South African MAE in collaboration with other key players in the evaluation-scape in September 2021. There has been development of the Zenda Ofir blog site, the CLEAR-AA paper series and the *African Evaluation Journal* driving calls for papers in search and promotion of research data around MAE. These activities, among others, and institutional work are instances of operationalising IKS knowledge transfer.

As far back as 1998, the Partnership for Information and Communication Technology for Africa (PICTA) and the World Bank agreed to lead an indigenous knowledge for development initiative to help stimulate recognition, utilisation and exchange of indigenous knowledge in the development process. The partners of the Initiative are CIRAN/Nuffic, CISDA, ECA, IDRC, ITU, SANGONet, UNDP, UNESCO, WHO and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), with the World Bank being the lead partner. This is an important move to give IKSs agency as well as address evaluation dependency issues by the Global South on the Global North. It remains to be seen whether leading institutions such as the

World Bank will reform themselves out of 'power' to accord inequity and inequality a chance at a macro level in order for evaluation practices at the micro level to function sustainably.

Conclusion

There is very little information regarding the governance and operational challenges of NGOs and other developmental agencies that are internal and a site for inequity or inequality for professionals working with and for such institutions. Lack of research evidence does not entail that forms of inequalities and inequities are absent, because they exist and have operational effects on the institutions. What is noted are 'outbursts' sometimes mentioned in passing during workshops or conferences on M&E with very little documentation to help all professionals operate in various institutions. The notion to 'always place the people who are most impacted at the centre of conversations which seek to find solutions to problems affecting them' has not been well practised within development institutions. Take, for instance, formulations of the SDGs' scholarship claims, regarding which African countries were not fully consulted. Ironically, these are the recipients of the global orders that they need to incorporate into their day-to-day activities.

The scholarship reviewed in this chapter reflected on the matrix between the Global North epistemes that ignore or override the Global South epistemes, from which the take is that this is deliberately done to create inequity and inequality in development. Such a situation, as discussed in this chapter, further impacts, at the micro level, notions of M&E, as these are also knowledge-based and, as such, equally affected for any M&E practices in Africa.

The chapter noted that the field of M&E has been growing, particularly in Africa, where universities in countries such as South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Zambia, among others, are training individuals who then assume positions in government and profit-making and non-profit-making institutions in a bid to operationalise M&E. However, a lack of a sound foundations in MAE hampers such efforts.

This area remains a concern despite the dearth of literature around evaluating the international institutions in as far as how they perpetuate inequities and inequalities contemporarily. Perhaps, more important than anything else is further research on who is evaluating the international institutions, particularly 'if they practice what they preach'; hence, 'who guards the guards when the guards go on strike'. Institutional change in shifting the thinking about inequalities and inequities will not be effective unless there is a strong and deliberate focus in which these institutions

become agents of creating equality and equity among countries and institutions, not only at individual levels.

There is no doubt that international organisations play an important role in eliminating inequities and inequalities, but they must be aware of their impact in order to prevent unintentionally reinforcing inequalities and inequities. Some recommendations are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Firstly, it was noted that there is a dearth of research assessing international institutions and their contribution to inequality. Research on that is paramount to uncovering factors that contribute to inequality in the Global South. That research could trigger international development partners to self-introspect and change their *modus operandi* when it comes to providing aid to the Global South. This should help contextualise the *modus operandi* against the 'one-size-fits-all' approach.

Secondly, it was noted that it is better to foster transparency and accountability than to sideline governments that oppress their citizenry. International organisations should promote and support equitable governance frameworks in the nations with which they collaborate. Advocating for transparent and responsible political institutions that actively engage with marginalised groups such as females, minorities and indigenous populations falls under this category. Making governments accountable to their constituents can aid in the reduction of corruption and the promotion of equitable resource distribution.

Thirdly, universities should prioritise the utilisation of African ways of knowing and should advance their own epistemologies that are ontologically African-focused, as opposed to employing Global North episteme exclusively where there is a contextual and axiological difference. African universities should conduct robust research about IKSs and MAE and demonstrate growing evidence of what works, for whom, how and why by applying MAE and IKS theories, methods and paradigms. Such knowledge should be integrated into the M&E curriculum. Doing so closes the epistemological lacuna and addresses epistemological inequalities between the Global North and Global South (particularly in Africa). Such a deliberate action should be a requirement in M&E training (short courses, diplomas, etc.) or evaluation (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021). Where possible, Global North knowledge should be included as part of blending theories, methods and paradigms.

Fourthly, there is a need for a paradigm shift where evaluation ought to involve both implementers of a programme and funders, as well as those for whom the programme was initiated. This will also entail reviewing structural aspects of M&E tools used in the field, including harnessing

orthodox M&E methodologies with indigenous knowledge-based ones for sustainable M&E practices.

Fifthly, international organisations should aim to be inclusive and participatory in nature when designing programmes. The implementers or Global South countries should be consulted from the onset rather than simply being furnished with predetermined programme documents (including theories of change and logical frameworks and reporting templates). Often, they are consulted to provide feedback on documents already developed – therefore, there is no genuine consultation of beneficiaries and implementers. Where consultation is carried out, it is a matter of ticking the box and sanitising the process.

Sixthly, international institutions are required to limit and, where possible, remove conditionalities to financial aid and loans that require Global South or African countries being required to accept certain reforms and policies, as seen in the implementation of ESAP, without proper consideration of context. This has had detrimental effects on countries.

Seventhly, balancing financial resource allocation among Global South countries is critical, as these are unevenly distributed and, therefore, development even among these countries is not uniform.

Chapter 5

Unlocking climate change adaptation injustice through using intersectional analysis as an evaluation approach

Steven Masvaure
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

I begin with a real-life story of 35-year-old Lydia,[10] a married female living in the rural southern part of Zimbabwe. Her community is in an area characterised by perennial drought and low rainfall. Lydia's community was moved by white colonial settlers in the early 1900s from the wet and fertile highlands of central Zimbabwe to the southern part of Zimbabwe. Attempts by her community to go back to their ancestral land during the colonial era were thwarted by the colonial government through violence and various land dispossession legislations. During independence (post-colonial era), the new government denied or ignored the community's call to return to their ancestral land. Within the community, there is resignation to the fact that the community will never go back to its ancestral land. Her story and

10. A pseudonym.

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that of her household are similar to her fellow community members' experiences in the communities located in the southern parts of Zimbabwe. Lydia has been married to Ronald, a 43-year-old male who used to be employed as a sugar cane cutter in sugar cane plantations located in the lowveld of Zimbabwe, for eighteen years. Ronald was retrenched five years prior to the writing of this chapter and is now a full-time peasant farmer.

Lydia has five children who are attending local primary and secondary schools. Within her household, Lydia is expected to play culturally assigned roles such as taking care of the children, cooking, cleaning, farming and other roles assigned to female household members. Her farming duties are centred around producing food crops that contribute to household food, such as vegetables, groundnuts, Bambara groundnuts, beans, sweet potatoes and other crops that are culturally regarded as a preserve of female members of the household. Her husband's farming activities are also defined by cultural expectations, and he is responsible for staple crops such as maize and other small grains that are used for traditional and religious ceremonies. Although there is a cultural allocation of crops to household members (especially the husband and wife), labour is shared across all household members. However, crop ownership rests with specific household members. Overall, the household land is owned by Ronald by virtue of him being the head of the household.

Lydia's household's farming activities are conducted on a small piece of land that is communally owned. Every year, she has to negotiate with her husband for more land to plant crops that contribute to the household food basket. However, the response from her husband is that their land cannot expand; hence, she has to make do with whatever is available. Her land predicament is exacerbated by the continuous degradation of the land that is resulting in a progressive decline in yields.

In Lydia's community, several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are supporting the households within the community to cope with climate change. Some of the organisations are focusing on new climate-smart agriculture methods, while others focus on introducing cash crops to improve household incomes. In addition, other NGOs are supporting households with food aid during years of drought. These organisations have been working in these communities since time immemorial. What changes in their operations is only the intensity of their interventions; during seasons of better yields, they reduce their intensity while maintaining a presence focusing on the poorest households.

Although Lydia appreciates that the various programmes supporting households brought some positive benefits, there are several challenges that they caused within the households and the community at large. Firstly, she views programmes such as those that support cash crops as mainly

benefiting the male members of the households as cash crops culturally fall within the male domain. The male member or husband controls the income received when crops are sold and the land for cultivating cash crops is taken from land preserved for household food and vegetables. Secondly, new ways of communal farming that are being promoted by the organisations in the community reduce the size of land available for agriculture through the reduction in fertile stream bank cultivation, which in turn reduces the yield. Also, the organisations are advocating for a reduction in livestock because of the purported overgrazing – this affects the household store of wealth (rural households store wealth in the form of livestock) and food security, as the livestock produce milk and meat for household consumption. Thirdly, although food aid assists households in coping with food insecurity, it has created a dependence on these organisations and households are no longer exploring other sustainable opportunities to address food insecurity. Finally, organisations that are advocating for the preservation of the environment are also causing hardship within the community as traditional leaders are now policing access to firewood, a major energy source for the community. Although Lydia's household understands the intentions of those offering the community help, she wishes that offering help could aid in understanding the predicament and vicious cycle that the households in her community experience.

Central to this chapter is the examination of the various forms of inequalities that Lydia and her community face when they try to adapt to climate change. Although Lydia's household and community are fully aware of their precarious condition and the negative consequences of some of the programmes that seek to help them, they have adopted a 'quiet acceptance' approach because they feel that they do not have the power to deal with the course of climate change adaptation. The households have internalised the climate adaptation injustice and seem to prefer the mistreatment and perpetuation of their own oppression. The household's and the community's preference for climate change adaptation has been subverted. The circumstances in which Lydia and the community find themselves have led to adaptive preference formation – adaptive preferences refer to instances where deprivations or inequalities are not seen as such by the individuals and households who experience them. This situation is best described by Freire (2018) when he said:

> However, the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risk it requires. (p. 37)

This chapter will demonstrate how the use of the intersectional approach in evaluation contributes to a better understanding of the climate injustice

problem. Furthermore, this chapter will explore how the various forms of inequalities influence climate change adaptation decision-making.

Research methods

This chapter is based on personal experiences and experiences of the communities in the southern parts of Zimbabwe. My personal experiences of interacting and living among southern Zimbabwean communities are coupled with accumulated tacit knowledge through professional evaluation experience, discussions with fellow evaluators and my work in the evaluation capacity development space in Africa. The methodological approach adopted in this is termed autoethnography, which is defined as an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) to understand cultural experience (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011). My objective in this chapter is not only to narrate personal experiences but also to expand the understanding of the social realities of communities that are facing climate risk and are trying to adapt. In this chapter, I am going beyond mere narration of my experiences to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation – such an approach aligns with Chang's (2016) definition of autoethnography (Chang 2016). This chapter begins by presenting the real-life story of a household in the community. In subsequent sections of the chapter, a discussion follows on how the intersectional approach as a tool can be used to understand the various forms of inequalities affecting individual and household responses to climate change risk. The final section of the chapter discusses key strategies for evaluators to use when evaluating programmes that are being implemented in such communities.

Intersectional framework and Lydia's predicament

Key to Lydia and her community's story is the concept of 'quiet acceptance'. I am characterising it as quiet acceptance because there is no resistance from the individual and community, mainly because the community does not have a genuine voice. The community voice has been throttled by unequal power relations between those who are trying to help the community adapt and the community itself. Quiet acceptance can be linked to literature from the Global South that focuses on internalised oppression and adaptive preferences. 'Internalized oppression is the incorporation and acceptance by individuals within an oppressed group of the prejudices against them within the dominant society' (Pheterson 1986, cited in Williams 2012, p. 32; cf. David 2013). In Lydia's case, internalised oppression has left her feeling resigned, inferior, powerless and at the same time

grateful to the organisations that are helping her household and community to survive. Such a mixture of emotions and perceptions requires that evaluators interrogate this insidious consequence of oppression that is inadvertently perpetuating the various forms of inequality.

Of primary concern to overcome the oppression that Lydia and her community are facing is the fact that they have become accustomed to their circumstances and even come to prefer them – adaptive preferences. Adaptive preferences refer to instances where deprivations and inequalities are not seen as such by the individuals who experience them (Colburn 2011). Nussbaum argued that such 'deformed' preferences shaped by inequality do not lead to better well-being – what it does is it makes it difficult to critique unjust practices and institutions (Nussbaum 2003, 2009). This inability to critique unjust practices and institutions has encroached into the evaluation space where evaluators validate the status quo without necessarily being critical (Paz-Ybarnegaray & Douthwaite 2017). In the context of deformed preferences, there is a likelihood of evaluations revealing the level of satisfaction with the climate change adaptation interventions that are being implemented in those communities, creating what Sen called a happy slave (Sen 2001). Beyond these external inequalities, other intra-household inequalities affect females, and these are culturally regarded as settled and have adaptive preferences such as curtailed labour market access, denial of access to education, unequal childcare, unequal decision-making power and unequal access to household resources. These are common and persistent to Lydia, and she has accepted them. Caution needs to be exercised by the evaluators when interpreting these subjective aspects that determine the success of interventions that seek to address climate change risks. This chapter argues that evaluators need to employ methodologies that are fit for purpose and have the ability to reveal the internalised oppression and adaptive preferences that perpetuate inequality, especially in the realm of climate change adaptation. In this chapter, intersectional framework/analysis is a central and relevant tool for evaluators as they help reveal the underlying causes of oppression, internalised oppression and adaptive preferences. Intersectionality is defined as 'a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking' (Crenshaw 1989, p. 140). Furthermore, intersectionality 'aims to shed light on how multiple dimensions and systems of inequality interact with one another and create distinct experiences and outcomes' (Corus & Saatcioglu 2015; Scottish Government n.d., pp. 13–14). The intersectional approach has its origin in feminist critical analysis. Through using intersectionality, evaluators will be able to examine how forms of oppression and deprivation shape people's experiences.

In this chapter, there are three key observations of intersectionality to which I will pay attention. To begin with, intersectionality recognises 'that people are shaped by their simultaneous membership in multiple interconnected social categories' (Wijeyesinghe & Jones 2014). Furthermore, intersectionality dictates that 'the interaction between multiple social categories occurs within a context of connected systems and structures of power (e.g. laws, policies, and governments) (Shannon et al. 2022; Scottish Government n.d., p. 12). In addition, intersectionality highlights that structural inequalities are a result of the interaction between social aspects, power relations and contexts. Hence, an individual's experiences of inequality are chronic and create distinctive lived experiences. Finally, the chapter establishes that:

1. inequality is intersectional
2. inequality is always specific to an individual, location and social group, and awareness of these specifics is essential to the design of interventions and programmes intended to address inequality
3. despite differences in the way inequality is experienced by individual, different groups and in different places, there are striking commonalities in the experience of inequality in very different countries, communities and globally.

Poor people's climate change adaptation options are characterised by powerlessness and voicelessness, which limit their choices and define the quality of their adaptation options.

The intersectional approach does not give a higher status to a specific inequality or experience of discrimination (Evans 2019). However, the international development space and the interventions that are implemented show that there are specific inequalities that are prioritised depending on the focus of the organisation implementing them. The international development community tends to assume an unquestioned similarity of inequalities, leading to a failure to address the structural level of inequality and also fuelling the political competition between inequalities (Verloo 2006), thereby doing a disservice to the intended beneficiaries such as Lydia. This paper argues that the 'one-size-fits-all' approach to addressing multiple dimensions of inequality is based on an incorrect assumption of the similitude of the social categories connected to inequalities and of the mechanisms and processes that constitute them. By focusing on similarities, one ignores the intersectional character and dynamics of inequalities. Literature has shown that addressing one inequality does not mean that the other inequalities are also addressed. In some cases, addressing one inequality will provide relief to the other inequalities (Seedall, Holtrop & Parra-Cardona 2014), but in other situations, this will aggravate the impact of the other inequalities. Intersectionality dictates to us that Lydia's identity

is a complex amalgamation of different categories of inequality that shape her life experiences. The next section re-examines Lydia's situation intersectional framework.

Lydia's multi-dimension of inequality

Let us go back to re-examining Lydia's situation. Lydia and her community are facing several dimensions of inequality, and these dimensions of inequality shape her and the community's experiences and how they respond to climate change risk. To begin with, Lydia is affected by structural inequality – structural inequality involves uneven power relations between groups of people and is often difficult to address because it is not recognised as unjust (Pease 2021). Lydia and her community face structural inequalities that emanate from the colonial era when their communities were displaced from fertile wetlands – this is well-documented in Zimbabwe's colonial history. Colonial history has shown that the dispossession was wanton, violent, racist and spearheaded by the colonial interests of the countries from the Global North. The general perspective of Lydia's community is that the current purported climate change risk and vulnerabilities that the international development community are focusing on are not necessarily climate change induced but structurally induced. The consensus is that if the community was not dispossessed of its fertile land, they would not be forced to practice subsistence agriculture on infertile and dry land. The general feeling is that post-independence in Zimbabwe, the 'system' or government did not put in an effort to address this unjust atrocity and return them to their land. Although there was land reform 20 years after independence, it was political and elitist to the extent that vulnerable communities were left out in favour of the political elite (Zamchiya 2011).

What is also unknown to Lydia and her community is that their non-return to their ancestral land was not the decision of the post-independence government only but was also influenced by global players that included the former colonisers, multilateral institutions and the broad international development community that lobbied for the preservation of property rights, that is, preserving the land ownership rights of the former colonisers regardless of how they acquired land (Césaire 2019). Given the international balance of power (inequality of powers between the Global North and Global South), this issue was never resolved till the country went through a chaotic land reform programme that was politically driven and neglected the most vulnerable communities. Lydia and her community have resigned themselves to the fact that they cannot be returned to the land of their forefathers, and their adaptive preferences have been limited to the options that are being offered, largely by the international community. What is important to note is that Lydia and her community's adaptive preferences

no longer reflect their aspirations of being relocated to their forefather's land. However, deep down, they believe that if they are relocated, they will be able to grow their food and not depend on handouts.

On the other hand, Lydia is also facing other inequalities that are based on her being a female. This form of inequality has been termed gender inequality. Gender inequality is discrimination based on sex or gender, causing one sex or gender to be routinely privileged or prioritised over another (Johnsson-Latham, 2007). Several components are affected by gender inequality, and these include labour market participation, paid work and unpaid work, income and intra-household sharing and intra-household self-employment and decision-making. In lydia's case, it is important to highlight that climate adaptation decisions are made in the context of the household, which is defined by the cultural and social norms that influence the division of roles between Lydia and her husband. By virtue of Lydia being a female, she is expected to perform household tasks that are culturally assigned, like childcare and a range of other domestic chores or housework, while her husband is expected to participate in the labour market and be involved in activities that earn income for the household. However, he will have more decision-making power on how the income is used.

Despite Lydia and her husband, Ronald, being in one household, there is some independence in some economic activities between herself and her husband. The division of labour also shows that when it comes to climate change adaptation, there is a need for adaptation options that take cognisance of the household context and dynamics. Most programmes funded by the international community focus on climate change adaptation options that seek to address household food insecurity by focusing on adaptation strategies that increase the available household staple food. The implication is that the staple food, which is maize, is culturally assigned to the male member of the household, meaning that adaptation programmes focus more on male members of the household as compared to the female members who are involved in the cultivation of other crops such as vegetables, beans, etc. This creates inequality and perpetuates the ingrained gender inequality where more value and prioritisation of crops benefit the male members of the household. The key argument by those funding and designing climate change adaptation programmes for communities is that there are limited financial and resources for holistic programmes that address a range of inequalities that communities face. With that, I argue that although human beings are diverse and some of the diversities are left out because of the need for simplification of climate change adaptation options, there is a need to understand the risks of oversimplification of the programmes.

Another compounding insidious gender inequality factor affecting Lydia is that the programmes focusing on helping households generate income

through the growing of cash crops are doing more harm to her. As stated earlier, Lydia feels that these programmes, instead of addressing the intra-household income disparities and inequities, are worsening it in several ways. Firstly, because of limited land, the land for cash crops is taken from non-staple food land, meaning it is Lydia's land allocation that is affected, thereby reducing the land available for other crops that are vital to household nutrition, extra money for the children's clothing and other needs. Furthermore, it limits Lydia's ability to earn an income from excess crops, thereby affecting her independence and ability to address the inherent gender inequality. This supports the observation by Islam and Winkel (2017) that inequality increases the *exposure* of disadvantaged social groups to the 'adverse effects of climate change'. In addition, given Lydia and her household's exposure level, inequality increases their *susceptibility* to damages caused by climate hazards because the programmes that are seeking to address climate hazards and risks are not paying attention to the various inherent types of inequalities within households and communities. Furthermore, intra-household inequality decreases the household's relative ability to *cope* with and *recover* from the climate risk and damage they suffer. In summary, the issue of cash crops means that males are taught and encouraged to grow cash crops such as cotton, while females continue to grow crops with less market value with minimum support, thereby perpetuating income disparities.

Lydia's situation also shows the conundrum that is faced by communities in the Global South when they try to address climate change through adaptation and mitigation. Although climate-smart agricultural practices are commendable, their implementation should be guided by the local context. Lydia's household views climate-smart agriculture practices such as limiting the number of livestock they can keep, leaving land fallow for some years, banning stream bank cultivation and restrictive use of natural resources such as cutting down trees create a new challenge for her as a female member of the household. Although there are no questions about the nobility of these climate-smart interventions, they need to be viewed in the context of poor access to productive land and other household dynamics. At the individual level, the new climate-smart agriculture approaches that are being implemented and pushed by the international development community and government have limited Lydia's access to the household energy source: firewood. She must now spend more time looking for firewood, given the fact that she is no longer allowed to cut down trees. At the household level, the overgrazing initiatives that limit the number of household livestock, such as cattle, have negatively affected her household's store of wealth. Traditionally, domestic livestock has been used as a store of wealth and also contributes to the household workforce for farming and food security through the provision of milk,

meat and cash when sold. The community and households are aware of the implications of these interventions; however, they feel that they are disempowered to challenge them, as most of the organisations that are implementing these programmes work with government departments and local traditional leaders. Given the power dynamics within this community, the households and the community feel that they do not have a voice and cannot fully express how they feel about the design and implementation of these programmes that are aimed at helping them to adapt.

What should evaluators do to prevent perpetuating inequality?

In this section, I will explore the nexus between evaluation, the intersectional approach and climate justice, that is, inequalities that are associated with the current climate change dilemma. The deliberate intention is to highlight the key current evaluation practices in climate change and how they help or do not help in understanding inequalities associated with climate change. I will also discuss how adopting an intersectional approach as an evaluation approach provides a better understanding of inequality and eventually assists the intervention designers and implementers in holistically delivering climate justice and addressing other forms of inequalities within households and communities.

As I have fairly discussed the intersectional approach and climate justice, I will commence by giving a brief definition of what evaluation is. The evaluation field is littered with several definitions of evaluation. The American Evaluation Association defines evaluation as a systematic and intentional process of gathering and analysing data (quantitative and qualitative) to inform learning, decision-making and action (American Evaluation Association 2014). On the one hand, Scriven (1991) defines evaluation as referring to the process of determining the merit, worth or value of something or the product of that process (Scriven 1991). What is ingrained in these definitions is that evaluation is a tool that aids decision-making by making a judgement of the merit, worthiness and value of the intervention. What is imperative is to ask the question: Is the evaluation being used as a tool to address inherent inequalities, or is it just focused on the symptoms of inequality? Evaluation, in its truest sense, should provide evidence that informs how programmes are designed and implemented. Hence, the expectation is that it should play a critical role in bringing equity to society. I argue that, as evaluators, we should heed Freire's words that we should not wash our hands of the conflict between the powerful (those funding and implementing climate change adaptation) and the powerless (communities trying to adapt) means to side with the powerful and not be

neutral (Freire 2018). I am now going to present some suggestions that evaluators can adopt to holistically address inequalities in climate change adaptation.

Causal analysis of inequality

I posit that evaluation interlinks with multitudes of social needs and must be responsive to diverse, intersecting identities and experiences. By doing so, evaluation will reveal the underlying causes of inequality and how inequalities within communities shape the lived experiences of the individuals and communities. Although there are scholars who have argued that evaluation should take a narrow peak at the intervention that is under scrutiny, if evaluators want to be of service to the Global South communities, it is prudent for the evaluators to broaden their scope and examine the root causes of the problems they are addressing, for example, in evaluating climate change adaptation interventions it is common practice for evaluators to have a narrow focus on the interventions and how they are contributing to a specific need in the community without necessarily interrogating the historical and the root causes of the problem within these communities. The key question that evaluators should ask is how the communities arrived at this point of vulnerability as compared to what the intervention achieved. Climate change programmes address the symptoms of the underlying powers that define inequality.

My argument is that most of the development challenges in the Global South have their origin and are deeply ingrained in historical inequalities that programme funders, designers, implementers and evaluators fail to recognise and acknowledge. This approach is pervasive within the broad international development space. For example, it is common knowledge that the purported climate change challenges, such as the increasing poverty, food insecurity and climate risk within rural communities, have their roots not in current climate change but in violent and racist historical dispossession of land and other means of livelihoods during the colonial period. This dispossession was never addressed post-independence. Post-independence, there was a reset, or the slate was wiped clean without addressing the historical inequalities that disadvantaged communities. An evaluator using an intersectional approach rejects this approach to post-colonial development as it is an additive model of oppression that leaves the colonial systems that create power differentials unchanged (Hancock 2007). I am arguing that evaluators need to ask the question: What are the root causes of the climate risk in these communities? Understanding the causes of inequality requires one to understand the society's social fabric, how it is set up and who benefits from such a setup. A causal analysis of inequality points to structural and social relationships that determine who

gets what (Shaffer 2015). In evaluation, this has been missing; the focus has been on specific symptoms of inequality like poverty, food insecurity, etc. Thus, if the root causes of vulnerability are not considered, potential solutions might exacerbate rather than reduce existing injustices while leaving the challenges of climate change unaddressed (MacGregor 2010).

Measuring inequality in evaluation

The current approach to measuring inequality in evaluations is influenced by economic discipline measures such as the Gini coefficient, the Lorenz curve and other natural science quantitative methods – this approach aligned with Sen's observation that inequality is judged by comparing some particular aspect of a person (such as income, wealth, happiness liberty or opportunities or rights or need fulfilment) with the same aspect of another person; in this case, the aspect is the ability of the communities to respond to climate risk (Sen 1995). Although these approaches are globally accepted, they have limitations. One such key limitation is that these two measures fail to capture the nuances and the context of households, and also, they emphasise the importance of income inequality at the expense of other types of inequalities; hence, these two measures will not allow the evaluators to understand Lydia's context and the various forms of inequality that affect her and her household. The intersectional approach does not only focus on addressing a specific form of oppression but also on rooting out all forms of oppression. This is supported by the observation that climate change adaptation programmes reduce people to a single category at a time – they do not look at the intersectionality and are based on the assumption that social categories (i.e. race or ethnicity, gender, class, sexuality and ability) are constructed and dynamic (Cho, Crenshaw & McCall 2013; David 2013). Evaluators should take note that the effects of climate change are mediated through social, cultural and economic structures and processes, and the need for social analyses concerning the issue has become more recognised (Kaijser & Kronsell 2014).

The current prominent approach in evaluating climate change adaptation interventions is to use the household as a unit of analysis. In addition to the household unit analysis, there has also been some foray into distinguishing whether a household is female-headed or male-headed – this is being done to capture the gender differences. I posit that an analysis of female-headed households does not work because it does not focus on intra-household vulnerabilities such as those espoused by Lydia. Evaluators need to differentiate intra-household vulnerabilities and how they play out even in male-headed households. The intra-household vulnerabilities determine the adaptive preferences and the adaptation actions that a household takes.

Inequalities are embedded and the current system of international development reproduces inequalities

Evaluators need to understand that inequality is embedded in our social structure, and the search for a solution requires us to examine all aspects of our society (Atkinson 2014, p. 620). The current discourse on climate change adaptation inequality or justice focuses more on the inequalities across the Global North and Global South. Key debates and discussions focus on the causes of climate change and who is responsible for adaptation and mitigation, with very limited discussions and debates on in-country and intra-household inequalities and how they affect climate change adaptation (Islam & Winkel 2017). Social inequalities within the country, communities and households have not been at the forefront of climate adaptation decision-making. The current financing models focus more on funding climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Global South; however, the funds are not directed at social inequalities that perpetuate and increase exposure to climate risk. The non-dominance of social inequalities has meant that evaluations have not focused on understanding the embeddedness of inequality and how the current approach to climate change adaptation is aiding the reproduction of inequalities. Evaluations on climate change adaptation projects and programmes have focused on the impact of the programmes but have failed to examine social inequality in climate change adaptation.

I am arguing that evaluation interconnects with myriad social needs and must be responsive to diverse, intersecting identities and experiences. Evaluations can play a critical role if they examine the intersecting factors and conditions by which inequalities (in adapting communities) are not only produced and reproduced but also actively resisted. An intersectional approach calls for a more complex approach to address the system that creates inequality rather than just the symptoms thereof (Hancock 2007).

Evaluators should understand that the capacity to adapt is shaped by power relations

Climate change adaptation refers to those crucial actions or plans that a country, community, household or individual will employ against a current or anticipated impact of climate change (Singh et al. 2022). These actions and plans are largely influenced by the adaptive capacities ('capacity to learn, combine experience and knowledge, adjust responses in a pro-active way to changing external drivers and internal processes, and continue operating' [Berkes 2003]), absorptive capacities (includes all the various risk management strategies by which individuals and

households moderate, or cope with the impacts of shocks on their livelihoods and basic needs [Smith & Frankenberger 2018]) and the transformative capacities:

> [*T*]he capacity to create an enabling environment through investment in good governance, infrastructure, formal and informal social protection mechanisms, basic service delivery and policies/regulations that constitute the necessary conditions for systemic change. (n.p.)

When evaluators apply an intersectional lens to these different types of capacities, they will realise that the capacity to adapt and respond to change is shaped by power relations determining access to resources, information and the availability of options and choices (Tschakert & Machado 2012; Djoudi et al. 2016). This is critical to the understanding of the key causes of inequality and how individuals, households and communities respond to the intervention. Evaluators should also focus on the ability of climate change interventions to trigger the change in these social inequalities.

Evaluators need to understand that socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalised people are disproportionally affected by climate change

Literature on climate change vulnerabilities has shown that socially and economically disadvantaged and marginalised people are disproportionally affected by climate change (UNFCC 2018). IPCC (2014) also noted that socially and geographically disadvantaged people – including people facing discrimination based on gender, age, race, class, caste, indigeneity and disability – are particularly affected negatively by climate hazards. However, what is missing from the literature is how an evaluator unravels these vulnerabilities that are caused by inequality. When an intersectional approach is adopted in this instance, it dictates the need to understand the effect of the programme, and there is a need to grapple with the social and economic inequalities and show how they are contributing to inequalities. An evaluator needs to understand the many types of inequalities – inequalities based on demographic characteristics, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, age, assets and income. Care should be taken to not just focus on a few of these. In addition to these inequalities, evaluators also need to examine inequalities regarding public decision-making (political power) and access to public resources, such as publicly financed health, education, housing, financing and other services. These inequalities shape how individuals, households and communities respond to climate change.

Evaluators must ask the right questions

Finally, the Intersectional approach requires that evaluators adopt evaluative thinking, which is defined (Buckley et al. 2015):

> [...] as a cognitive process in the context of evaluation, motivated by an attitude of inquisitiveness and a belief in the value of the evidence, that involves skills such as identifying assumptions, posing thoughtful questions, pursuing deeper understanding through reflection and perspective-taking and making informed decisions in preparation for action. (p. 2)

When an evaluator adopts an evaluation thinking lens, then the following questions should be asked by the evaluator when evaluating climate change adaptation programmes: What inequities exist concerning the climate change 'problem'? Where and how can interventions be made to improve the problem? What are feasible short-, medium- and long-term solutions to the problem? How is the intervention contributing to the reduction of inequities? What is the evidence that shows if inequities have been reduced? In addition, evaluative thinking needs to be applied to be asked from the programme design stage, not just as part of the evaluation design.

Conclusion

The thrust of this chapter is that there are multiple dimensions of inequality that affect communities' adaptation to climate change. Evaluators need to employ appropriate approaches that address these multiple dimensions of inequalities. One of these approaches is the intersectional approach, which is critical to understanding how communities adapt amidst a plethora of inequalities. It is also critical to understand that, although understanding how the project has performed is important, it is also critical for evaluators to complement that understanding with evidence on how the communities become vulnerable in the first place and how the programme has affected the multiple varieties of inequalities. Furthermore, evaluations need to come up with approaches for measuring the various types of inequalities and how they affect climate change adaptation actions.

Chapter 6

‘Whose agenda is it?’ Reframing equity and justice in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture

Samukelisiwe Mkhize
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

The climate adaptation agenda in food systems discourses: Unpacking the history of the problem, politics and policy dilemmas

This chapter asks: ‘Whose agenda is it?’. It seeks to uncover how climate equity and justice can be reframed in the evaluation of agri-food systems discourses. But first, I will begin by briefly unpacking the current history and agenda. There is no better place to start than at the beginning. Often, these discourses inquire about the influence of the colonial era on agri-food systems and development, if at all. Stories of injustice and equity are understood differently depending on how the story is told. So, I begin with a brief account of the pre-colonial emergence of farming families and why

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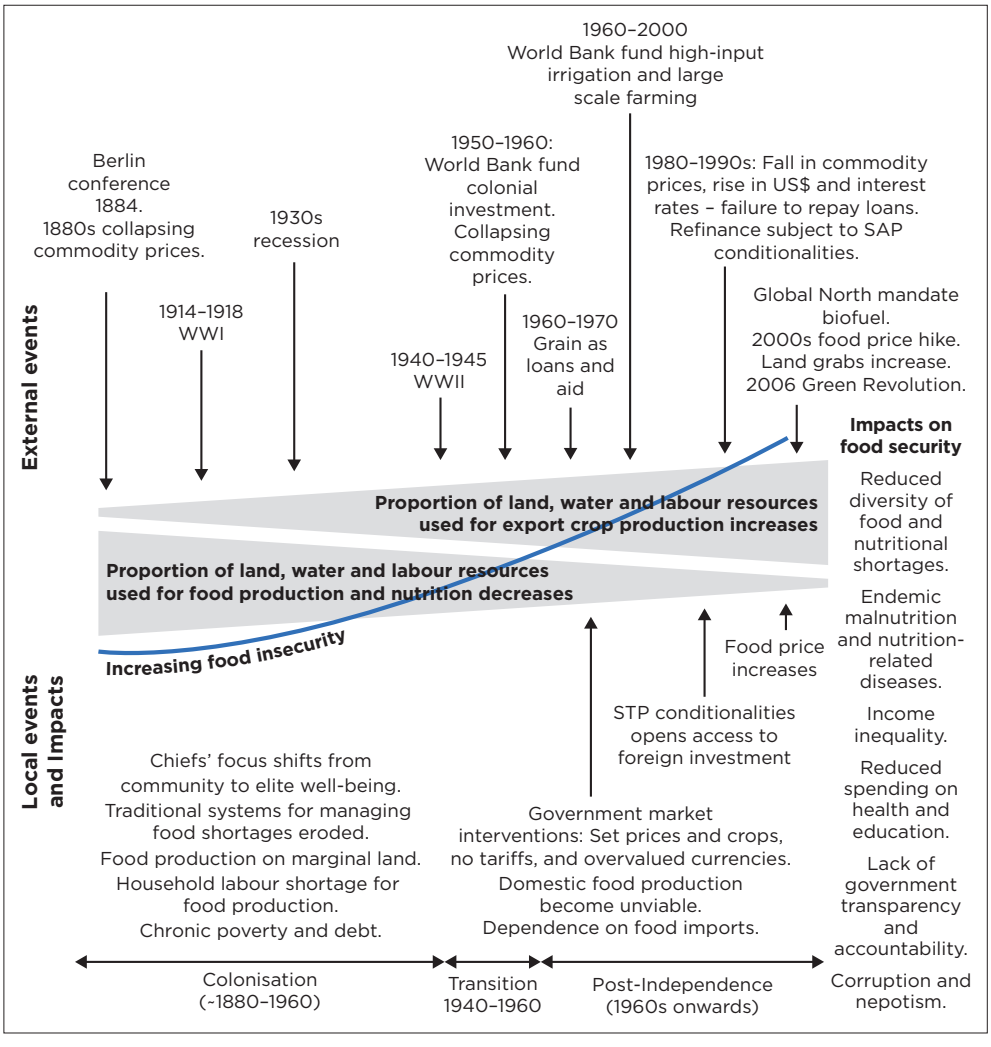
agriculture began in Africa with the history of the hunter-gatherer culture more than 10,000 years ago (Niemeijer 1996).

Hunter-gatherers transitioned from their nomadic lifestyles to being farmers – they transitioned as groups increased in number from finding food sources primarily from hunting and gathering to clearing small areas of land, cultivating indigenous crops from seeds of sorghum and millet, among other crops, and mostly raising domesticated wild animals to serve their human needs. It not only changed how Africans obtained food but also how farming communities lived. Food was produced locally with less land per person required for survival on abundant land. African farmers residing in rural villages grew a varied range of indigenous food crops, timed planting to accommodate labour demands during harvesting and managed risk in a variety of ways. These systems were non-equilibrium (not static), developed and adapted over time, but persistent systems nonetheless. Agricultural systems were internally driven and based on local needs and surplus produce was used for trade opportunities to further local development (Bjornlund, Bjornlund & Van Rooyen 2022). Subsequently, this changed how people experienced life as they could expect to stay in one place all year round, establish villages and develop knowledge of land use management as well as landscapes to meet their needs. The question answered here is not when and where agriculture began – there are many origins, in fact, and there are countless theories – but why it began.

Colonial era – paradigm shift

A paradigm shift took place from farming families to institutionalised export production as the dominant production system during the colonial era from the mid-1800s to the early-1900s. By 1914, about 90% of the continent's territory was under the control of colonisers (Bjornlund, Bjornlund & Van Rooyen 2022). But why were European colonisers interested in Africa? The shift was based on the agenda set by Global North colonisers tracing back to the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885s. Colonial governments were pressured by European businessmen and corporations to increase investment and the development of policies to advance raw material extraction and intensification of mono-crop cultivation in colonies. This was done under the pretext of civilising the 'dark continent'. There was no interest among Europeans for agricultural diversification or investment in indigenous commodities. Figure 6.1 depicts the impact of colonialisation on food security.

For the purpose of this chapter, three results are highlighted: Firstly, these events were followed by colonisers' displacing and dispossessing native inhabitants of their land. Resistance wars ensued between African indigenous tribes and colonisers, with the former fighting to protect land



Source: Bjornlund et al. (2022, p. 851).

FIGURE 6.1: Impact of colonialism on food security.

and themselves against displacement. Inevitably, colonisers stole the land and gained control over the agricultural and economic systems, with Europeans controlling the majority of the cultivable land. Secondly, many indigenous crops suffered as a result of this colonialisation process as farmers had no choice but to abandon their indigenous food crops. As a result, severe food shortages occurred, and agricultural production methods were redirected. Thirdly, during this time, the Germans, French and British set up research centres to 'teach' the most effective industrial high-input agricultural practices promoted as improved ways of crop cultivation. European industrial seed companies mass-produced,

documented practices, published, translated into African languages and distributed them to farmers for adoption. These colonial impacts are evident today across the African continent.

Post-colonial era – impact on agri-food systems

During the post-colonial era, food systems in Africa remained fragmented and reliant on export-driven production systems, leaving subsistence smallholder farmers destitute and reliant on high-input agriculture and foreign seed varieties. Consequentially, local food systems are inherently off-track and most African communities and smallholders are in need of immediate inputs and food assistance. At the same time, the change in food systems also exacerbated the current food crisis; Africans are no longer dependent on traditional food sources but rather on Western food and seed varieties.

In 2020, more than one in every five African suffered from hunger, more than doubling the proportion of hungry individuals in any other region, and over 282 million Africans are undernourished (World Bank 2022). At least 28 million of these individuals have suffered from severe food insecurity in the last two years as a result of numerous shocks, with the most vulnerable suffering the most (Muleta 2022). More than 27 million people in West Africa alone required immediate food assistance in 2021 (Obayelu et al. 2021). Food insecurity is on the rise in East Africa, where 7 million people are starving, and 33.8 million people are fighting for food (Food Security Information Network [FSIN] 2020). In southern Africa, over 27.4 million people have been estimated to be food insecure over the last two years (World Bank 2022). Despite this, African post-independence states continue to support high-input-led production systems and contemporary policy dilemmas such as foreign investor land acquisitions for mining investments, industrial developments and agricultural production (Nolte & Ledermann 2023) consistent with foreign interests based on neo-colonial agendas.

Emergence of the climate agenda in smallholder agri-food systems

The rise of global climate discourses in the 1950s 'Anthropocene era' debates, influenced by Global North scientists, was coined as the start of the devastating impact of human activities on the ecological system (Rafferty 2020; Whyte 2018; Yusoff 2018) and the birth of a new ideology (i.e. a set of ideas and framework), which spurred the need for climate adaptation and mitigation as well as the need for transformation of global

agri-food systems. The recognition and dominance of the Anthropocene era as the baseline placed on the climate crisis sparked outrage in the Global South because this frame fails to recognise the historical actions of a minority of Global North colonialists, capitalists and patriarchs on social and ecological systems (Whyte 2018; Yusoff 2018). The baseline of 1950 negates the history of people who have been exploited for centuries by imperialist institutions, structures and systems.

In fact, it was not until the late 1990s, with the rise of green politics, that interest in smallholder agriculture in Africa became a focal point of international development (Aliber & Hall 2012; Havnevik et al. 2007; Whyte 2018). In part, Green Revolution land use policies' promotion of high-yielding varieties of major cereal crops was justified by the narrow narratives of smallholder agriculture vulnerability and technology-driven agri-food transformation optimism to curb hunger through increasing agricultural intensification (Mabhaudhi et al. 2019). These have already been shown to provide only marginal benefits with deeper impacts on smallholder agriculture, increasing dependency on agro-industrial food systems (Mabhaudhi et al. 2019). Concomitantly, evaluation of international development agency programmes continues to show low levels of effectiveness on the sustainability and resilience faced by farming communities. Green politics perpetuated the history of 'white science', pushing technology-based solutions by international institutions and corporations with an implicit ideology, power and agenda to reproduce agro-capitalist interventions, raising expectations about the opportunity to develop African societies without social reforms (Kilby 2019).

Advocacy for a decolonial agenda in agri-food systems

More recently, during the commencement of the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, discontented societal and grassroots movements signed a declaration, declaring the Summit as a façade because of the dominance of corporations' and foundations' solutions, in which they unequivocally stated (Global Peoples Summit 2021):

> [*We*] reject the ongoing corporate colonization of food systems and food governance under the façade of the United Nations Food Systems Summit [...] The struggle for sustainable, just, and healthy food systems cannot be unhooked from the realities of the peoples whose rights, knowledge, and livelihoods have gone unrecognized and disrespected. (n.p.)

Activist movements point to the continued co-option of climate resilience and food system transformation discourses as central to the narratives justifying Green Revolution solutions in the Global South (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Mills-Novoa et al. 2022; Patel 2013), with intensification positioned as

crucial to ensuring adequate food production in the face of projected climatic shocks and population increases (Lal et al. 2015; Müller et al. 2011).

Activists for climate equity and justice advocate for the importance of developing nuanced and contextually appropriate alternatives for smallholder farmers. Advocates and farmer movements continue to argue for recognition of how climate disasters have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of socially and geographically disadvantaged people, including those facing discrimination based on gender, age, ethnicity, class, caste, indigeneity and disability. The goal is to build adaptive capacity through an equity and justice lens. The goal is to build adaptive capacity through an equity and justice lens. Poverty and disadvantage compound climate change impacts while also increasing local vulnerability to climate change impacts. More importantly, because of the socio-historical context, the fact that race, culture, ideology and worldview are inextricably linked to these discourses needs to be acknowledged. For the first time in more than three decades, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2022 report acknowledged colonialism as a historical and current driver of climate change. The report states (IPCC 2022):

> Present development challenges causing high vulnerability are influenced by historical and ongoing patterns of inequity such as colonialism, especially for many indigenous peoples and local communities [...] Officials and scientists from around the globe now recognize the significant role colonialism has played in heating our planet and destroying its many gifts. (p. 410)

Problem statement

However, critical movements and scholars continue to argue that current conceptualisations of climate equity and justice within food systems discourses are inconclusive on the latter fundamentals. Advocacy for discourses like food sovereignty that recognise non-dominant frames and narratives remain side-lined. The chapter's main inquiry question is influenced by the apparent differential attention given to climate equity and justice discourses in the context of transformative food systems. Hence, this chapter asks the question, 'Whose agenda is it?', as it seeks to uncover the prevailing framings of equity and justice within the evaluation of current food discourses within the climate adaptation agenda in Africa.

The chapter's inquiry focuses on human beings as the targeted custodians of food systems, particularly smallholder producers. This differentiates the elements of resilience and sustainability from the domain of ecological justice, which deals with normative issues pertaining to an entire ecological system (Inoue 2023; Wienhues 2020, pp. 16–17). Both sentient and non-sentient beings are subject to human actions and policies in the environment (Inoue 2023). The chapter assumes that the focused

concerns of interest and needs are those of human beings. Importantly, this assertion relates only to this chapter's focus on equity and justice for food systems transformation under the climate change agenda. This specific view aims to deal directly with these issues without undervaluing the ecological elements that fall outside of the scope of this chapter.

Inquiry questions

Upon this historical and contextual analysis, this chapter seeks to investigate the agenda of climate justice and equity in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture (CSA) through the interrogation of the following key questions:

- What are the dominant agri-food systems discourses in Africa?
- What is the influence of dominant narratives and framings on intervention outcomes and impact orientations?
- How can, if at all, equitable evaluation approaches contribute to reframing equity and justice within CSA interventions?
- What are the opportunities and limitations for evaluators in centring equity and justice in the evaluation of CSA?

Critical constructivism as a foundation for conducting a narrative review

Critical constructivism paradigm

This chapter's investigation is based on the critical-constructivist paradigm. Critical constructivism combines constructivism and critical theory. Using a multi-paradigm model allows for a more insightful response to the main inquiry question (Bogna, Raineri & Dell 2020). Critical theory is 'a moral construct that aims to reduce human suffering [...] especially suffering caused by conscious choices' (Steinberg & Kincheloe 2010, p. 140). By actively challenging injustices and transcending dominant social and political states of affairs that problem-solving analyses tend to take for granted, critical theorists argue that the first step is acknowledging that problems exist (Steinberg & Kincheloe 2010, p. 140). Complementarily, *constructivism* is based on the understanding that knowledge of the world is an interpretation between people, institutions or communities (Saurugger 2016). This interpretation takes place within a contextualised timeframe. Constructivists assert that it is simple-minded and misleading to simply study outcomes of constructed processes outside of the processes through which information becomes validated as knowledge as well as those that invalidate certain forms of information as validated knowledge (Kincheloe 2005, p. 63). Thus, deeper inquiry is required to understand why a problem becomes a problem as a complicated process in which politics, narratives, concepts and cognitive

frames play a crucial role. The investigation includes evaluating the frames and narratives that shape food systems discourses as well as the nature of the problems, whether the nature of the problem is major or moderate, new or recurring, short-term or long-term (Saurugger 2016).

Narrative review

A narrative review, as used here, is a process of synthesis that focuses on a range of questions – not only those related to a particular intervention's effectiveness – and explores the existing debates and contentions on the area under study (Popay et al. 2006). The chapter adopted this synthesis approach aligned with the critical-constructivists' paradigm. Narrative reviews tell the story of the findings using both empirical and theoretical studies. A search and retrieval process ensured a multi-database search strategy, including the African Evaluation Database (AfrED), Wits e-Journal Database and Google Scholar, but with a specific focus. The search utilised eight search terms – 'Climate-Smart', 'Agriculture', 'Justice', 'Smallholder', 'Food systems', 'Climate change', 'Evaluation' and 'Africa' – as core concepts, although other concepts were included such as 'Colonisation', 'Race', 'Capitalism' and 'Neo-colonialism', to further refine results in the quest to align with the review question. Each concept's associated synonyms were also included in searches in each of the search engines and databases, while truncation was used to accommodate any spelling inconsistencies.

The initial search retrieved 57 documents (including journal articles and dissertations) on the agriculture sector, broadly, of which 28 documents were specific to CSA in smallholder subsistence farming. The titles, abstracts and full texts were then reviewed to identify relevant papers to answer the review question. The search was not comprehensive or systematic, as narrative reviews do not serve this purpose (Popay et al. 2006). The study retrieved key sources that enabled us to tell a story of how the problem is defined and how the solutions are framed and operationalised.

Limitations

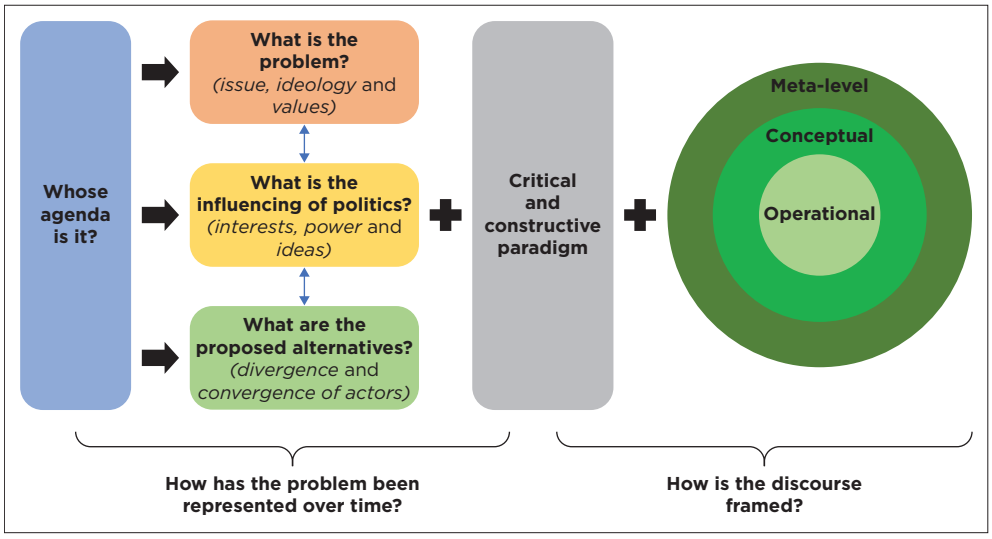
The methodology utilised has three key shortcomings. Firstly, the AfrED did not at all times efficiently and effectively produce advanced searches extending the search period. Secondly, despite being treated identically, the quality and influence of the documents varied during the data analysis process. Other studies beyond evaluation studies were included in the review to assist in conducting a constructive and critical analysis of the topic. These studies could contribute to the volume of studies contained in AfrED. Lastly, the low quality of the majority of evaluation reports retrieved limits their use in agenda and framing analyses. Nonetheless, these

constraints did not detract from the chapter's purpose, which was to tell a different story from that predominantly told in evaluation using a different lens and framework rather than being thorough. It seeks to provide a different perspective by giving a voice to side-lined perspectives. Thus, moving from exploratory to explanatory has insights and supporting arguments emerging throughout the data gathering, analysis and presentation stages.

Agenda-setting and framing analyses in evaluative inquiry – what is in a discourse?

This chapter contends that evaluators pursuing equity in their evaluative work should apply critical reflective and constructive reasoning to call attention to the way various stakeholders and interventions rely, both purposefully and subconsciously, on resources and power to influence the agenda to define the boundary of an issue in development. Evaluation is defined as 'any systematic process to judge merit, worth or significance by combining evidence and values' (Better Evaluation 2021). Thus, I contend that evaluative thinking in service of equity and justice should be understood as a process of sense-giving and sense-making. This requires examining evidence to understand the past (Holt & Thorpe, 2007) and context as part of sense-making and sense-giving through meaningful interpretation and navigation of frames. This is important because the way a problem is framed over a historic timeframe may significantly impact the design of future interventions relative to the power of those stakeholders who hold the power over the agenda. It places the responsibility on evaluators to recognise that an idea does not begin with the most obvious source. It has a history, and when one begins to trace the origin of a project or problem back through time, there is no logical point to stop the process until the cause of inequity and injustice is identified (Kingdon 2003, p. 73). Hence, this chapter settles first on the history of the problem, politics and policy dilemma as exemplified in the introduction.

Figure 6.2 draws attention to the relationship between agenda and framing analyses. Framing is defined as the process by which actors construct and represent meaning in order to comprehend stakeholder power, relationships, processes and interventions (Goffman 1974; Schon 1994). Frames are tools that allow stakeholders to 'find, perceive, identify, and classify subjective experiences or information' (Goffman, 1974, p. 11). Framing analysis is a step up towards unpacking context analysis (Scheff 2005), that allows consensual interpretations of discourse. It is a useful tool for institutions and people with varied knowledge, experiences and personal histories to analyse common issues and seek to make sense of them from their individual or organisational perspectives (Scheff 2005). The frames



Source: Author's own work.

FIGURE 6.2: Model of inquiry – combining agenda and framing analysis.

that emerge help actors identify processes and contextualise them within a set of values, concepts, discourses or agendas (Goffma 1974). Framing analyses can contribute to understanding actors' underlying logic, contestations and values (though not always in a strategic or deliberate manner). As a result, the framing process can help to give and make sense of complex socio-ecological systems like climate change.

Frames exist at multiple levels (Lugen 2020). Firstly, at the meta-level, the focus is on the existence of frames, the actors who support them, the narratives supported and their influence on how equity and justice are conceptualised, built over time and implemented within development interventions. The success of those actors in pushing their narratives and ideologies results in the design of development interventions that contain implicit and explicit conceptions of acceptable equity and justice considerations. Over time, it is apparent that the current framing of climate equity and justice in food systems in Africa acts as a form of manipulation of the state of affairs through climate investment in feasible solutions placed on the agenda. Ultimately, the acceptability of food systems interventions is controlled by the values and ideologies held by international development agencies, donors and the political elite. As Kingdon (2003) argues, policies and the focus on inequity are rarely placed on the agenda to serve the interests of communities and citizens; instead, they are a 'by-product' of the competition for 'action' among powerful actors. This requires critical analyses of how different frames and narratives are legitimised within the historical and socio-political context taking stock of the key drivers of inequity.

Secondly, framing can be seen at the conceptual level (Lugen 2020) in theories of adaptation and outcomes, as well as in scientific definitions. It is easy to see how scientific disciplines play a role in framing because they build a shared frame around the research topic and 'make meaning' through that frame. As a result, frames are revealed in shared key hypotheses, methodologies, values or assumptions. At this level, the influence of dominant frames manifests in intervention design and the emphasised dimensions and criteria, while undervaluing others. This form of control emerges as a defence against the exploitation of less powerful actors and a major source of injustice and inequities enduring existence (House 2017). In this way, issue frames and supported alternatives can perpetuate inequity through promulgating programmes and policies that purport to help the disadvantaged, even though the supported programmes and policies may adversely affect vulnerable groups (House 2017). Deep inquiry at this level has the power to contribute to uncovering the dangerous perpetuation of suspect practices and programmes. Of particular relevance to the argument and inquiry question is what House (2017) cautions against as the 'white racial frame' and bias pointing to the prejudice and danger it poses to validity, accuracy and rigour of the value statement because of its more covert and pernicious manner. Deep inquiry at this level has the power to contribute to uncovering the dangerous perpetuation of suspect practices and programmes.

Thirdly, there is the operational level of framing (Lugen 2020), where practical adaptation decisions and actions are taken. In turn, these frames influence strategies, policies, and processes for adaptation. At this level, evaluators need to understand and pay attention to the source of ideas and exclusion of actors beyond the 'usual suspects', including disadvantaged social groups, individuals, social movements and indigenous leaders, among others, as sources of novel solutions and frames frequently left in the dark. This is important because complex socio-ecological systems encompass people, geographies, institutions, identities and ideologies intersect to create complex realities that are never fully visible to any one individual or from any single point of view. Developing stances, judgements and proposed actions based on evidence and values of complex issues requires interpreting not only the information that is made available but also the information that is available to evaluators (Better Evaluation 2021), drawing from various forms of knowledge sources and disciplines.

Importantly, recognising that different actors represent different perspectives and ideas but also contribute to expanding understanding of the problem, politics and alternatives for solutions. It is a critical aspect of evaluative thinking, which is rarely problematised in programme planning and evaluation (Archibald 2020). This form of evaluative thinking is important for evaluators as it provides a critical and constructive lens to

conduct issue framing, examine interests and power dynamics, and influence interventions at multiple levels.

Characterising smallholder agriculture in Africa

For evaluators to centre equity and justice in evaluation of CSA, it is important to understand the peculiar historical and socio-cultural contexts in which African smallholder farmers who are dominantly black live in most countries. Smallholder farmers range across different age groups, sex and abilities across rural, peri-urban and rural contexts. The majority of smallholder farming still takes place in peri-urban and rural contexts on small farms (less than two hectares constitute most farm holdings), characterised by marginal and fertile lands (Beyene 2014; Mukhwana 2003), typically farming far from water, off-farm income sources and reliant on rain-fed agriculture in many African countries. These farmers also have significantly less access to other essential resources required for optimal agricultural productivity. The average black smallholder farmer, particularly in rural communities, is faced with peculiar challenges of lack of capital assets that would enable them to increase agricultural productivity, food security and income, access to energy, basic farm tools, water and labour-saving technologies. Yet, despite these challenges, smallholders contribute significantly to the rural economy and play a significant role in natural resource conservation.

It must be noted that social inequities are differentiated across different age groups, sex and abilities. Smallholders in rural, resource-poor contexts in Africa can be characterised as a vulnerable group because of the combination of vulnerabilities, risks and challenges faced in the face of climate impacts in resource-poor communities. The crucial starting point in understanding social inequities should be understanding the specific farmer, farming systems, relationships and history of the landscape in which farmers live and produce.

Evaluators must examine how these burdens and capabilities manifest differently based on individual and group identities to understand the differential resource access, systems and the physical environment, that is, climate, soil and topography, and the resources and management strategies. These characteristics are different for every farmer and farming system in different cultures. It is therefore important to understand that these socio-economic factors, farm-management and cropping systems and agro-ecological systems are embedded in cultural systems. For instance, one should not blindly believe dominant narratives of gender inequality and the existence of patriarchy in resource access and use because there are also African societies governed by matrilineal traditions and matrilineal tenure

systems in which females own land and have historically dominated labour supply for food production (Berge et al. 2014; Robinson & Gottlieb 2021 cited in Mwale 2023). Smallholder farmers have differentiated priorities, capacities and knowledge which influence their adaptive preferences. At the same time, one cannot neglect understanding the differential labour and productive capital constraints that may be present in familiar features such as age and gender in patriarchal societies, which include care dependencies, labour demands for agricultural productivity and household keeping. One should recognise that often the challenge is how females are able to leverage relationships and connectedness at intra-household and inter-household levels to build adaptive capacity and resilience.

Further, smallholder farmers possess traditional ecological knowledge that serves as the foundation of a farming community's culture, such as distinct indigenous kinds of farm-management methods and smallholder farmers' social identities (Ogunyiola, Gardezi & Vij 2022). Again, these are not the same because of cultural knowledge, colonial disruptions of these practices and forced removals from land to infertile and marginal lands, as well as varying levels of spatial climatic impacts. Therefore, the question of 'who is the smallholder' is not simply a question of socio-economic demographics but of the history of the landscape and socio-cultural identity that determine farmers' own priorities, capacities and knowledge, which in turn influence adaptation preferences and needs.

Reframing climate equity and justice in climate-smart agriculture

The analysis is structured according to the research questions and presented in themes identified in the analysis of reviewed literature. There are different agricultural approaches promoted in Africa to address climate vulnerability and impacts which provide comparable conceptions of climate equity and justice. These include agroecology, ecosystems based approach (EBA), CSA and food sovereignty. This chapter focuses its inquiry on CSA as the dominant approach proposed and evaluated among the retrieved studies.

Climate-smart agriculture

Climate-smart agriculture was introduced as a concept in 2010 and promoted by numerous development organisations, including the World Bank, FAO, USAID and Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers (CGIAR), which combines climate change with intensification (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Lipper & Zilberman 2018). All studies and literature reviewed lack a precise definition of CSA, suggesting that a broad range of agricultural practices might be considered climate-smart (Williams et al. 2015).

Through sustainable agricultural reforms, CSA seeks to link food security and climate change. The CSA performance is dependent on the local climatic, biophysical, socio-economic and development context (Williams et al. 2015). While these considerations are accurate, the socio-cultural aspect and history of the landscape are also important, as this chapter argues.

Nonetheless, there is an increasing number of studies recommending CSA as an alternative approach for agriculture or large-scale implementation in Africa (Chandra, McNamara & Dargusch 2018; Clay & Zimmerer 2020). These operations are well-supported by international development organisations and national governments. In particular, crop intensification programmes are intended to change land use strategies from subsistence and livelihood-based systems based on a variety of crops to majority cultivation of staple cash crops chosen for their export value (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Magesa et al. 2022). These interventions and experimentations are supported by international donors and overseen by a system of 'checks and balances' to ensure accountability to the central governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Williams et al. 2015). Even though CSA programmes may result in robust transformations that encompass the 'triple-win', a single focus on one of these dimensions persists, particularly intensification (Clay & Zimmerer 2020). This is because discourses play an important role in the exercise of power, both in determining who gets what and what gets done.

Dominant equity and justice frames underpinning under climate-smart agriculture

Evidence mapping of climate adaptation studies revealed that adaptation research has been limited in its ability to empirically assess and operationalise concepts of equity and justice in practice (Callaghan et.al, 2021). Although CSA is still being debated, focusing on injustice as a critical issue provides a central point of departure to developing solutions to the equity and justice call within a larger historical and socio-political context, including identifying, conceptualising and defining requirements for a solution. The predominant frames influencing how interventions are designed, implemented and evaluated were identified using framing analysis. Discourses promoting CSAs focus attention on specific issues. They define the extent of a problem, the size at which it must be handled and the spectrum of potential solutions in an attempt to control the alternatives proposed. As a result, these discourses influence the extent to which climate equity and justice goals are pushed. In addition, they influence which actors control and have access to resources, both of which lead to inequities (Keeley & Scoones 2003).

Five justice frames were intuitively identified as being dominant in CSA literature: climate equity as (1) 'distributive justice' – who will be affected by climate change?; (2) 'procedural justice' – whose voice is heard in decisions?; (3) 'interactional justice' – the quality of treatment the disadvantaged social groups (elderly, females, youth, people who are abled differently) receive when adaptation interventions are applied, and outcomes are distributed. Then, (4) 'intergenerational justice' – relates to the cost of present interventions and policy decisions on future generations. Lastly, (5) 'restorative justice' – oriented towards healing, often of multiple harms, including relational and physical harm to human beings and nature. Each frame represents different types of drivers of climate risk and adaptation solutions, values underpinning indicators and assumptions and intended outcomes.

Distributive justice

Climate-smart agriculture equity considerations tend to focus primarily on the distributive justice frame, which limits the sovereignty and autonomy of smallholder farmers' choice of adaptation options at community and household levels. Distributive justice focuse primarily on indicators and outcomes such as technology transfer and adoption, allocation of climate finance, private sector value chain support, incentives, policy frameworks and national institutional arrangements. A systematic review of farmers' choices and adoption of adaptation strategies revealed that food production is still perceived as the major cause of food and nutrition security (Lipper & Zilberman 2018; Magesa et al. 2020). Influenced by this framing, interventions still tend to focus on the production-focused approach and enhancing of market functions that seek to directly influence food security through the increasing intensification of smallholder farming systems (Chandra et al. 2019; Magesa et al. 2020).

This is largely because of the basic limitations of CSA and development efforts based on the Green Revolution philosophy. For instance, evaluations of rain-fed smallholder agricultural systems revealed that one needs to prioritise technology and farming systems management adjustments over local preferences and needs, leading to CSA efforts diminishing smallholder resilience by impairing their sovereignty over land use, reducing livelihood flexibility and restricting local resource use (Clay & Zemmerer 2020). In part, this is also related to findings from reviews of CSA interventions that practices continue to promote global perspectives and policy agendas to attract climate finance investments nationally based on simplistic narratives of the continent's high vulnerability, low climate budget and smallholder destitution to justify the need for food inputs and assistance interventions (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Williams et al. 2015). While these agro-ecological

issues are true, they are not the only issues affecting climate vulnerability, nor are they sufficient for assessing risk.

Several studies acknowledge the fact that assessing resilience in socio-ecological change entails paying attention to the undue influence of political-economic institutions and agencies, promotion of smallholder agency and who is regarded legitimate in defining resilience, as well as how climate change is a lived experience that pervades livelihoods (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Taylor 2014). Neglect of these issues promotes focus and smallholders' blind reliance on Green Revolution technology (regional crop, hybrid seeds, synthetic fertiliser, land and water engineering) (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Jayne et al. 2010). Rather, there is persistent reliance on these interventions, redefined as state-led 'social transformation' programmes, which maintain control by private sector players through incentivised market linkages to promote the adoption of high-yielding land use methods (Cioffo et al. 2016; Clay & Zimmerer 2020).

In this way, CIPs and other allegedly novel land use policies in Africa can be seen as a continuation of similar 'suspicious' initiatives to enhance agriculture through technology and policy prescriptions previously promoted in Latin America and Asia (Patel 2013) with the intention to increase influence and control of foreign private sector institutions on smallholder agriculture. More importantly, this results in a continuation of colonial thinking.

☐ Procedural justice

This form of justice seeks to address social and political struggles and unequal power relations with respect to 'whose voices are heard?' at various levels, including community and family levels, to investigate the susceptibility of smallholder farmers to current and future climate change impacts. It aims to address power dynamics. Therefore, evaluation should consider and assess local risks, specificities and farmers' priorities. But it also extends to local and national levels to consider which stakeholder voices are heard and valued on the scope of types of risks, specificities, and priorities that should be placed on the adaptation agenda. In Africa, this is limited by the allocation of CSA funding through grant-funded NGOs, national government, research centres, academia and regional bodies that hold legitimacy over decisions on the adaptation agenda.

☐ Interactional justice

This type of justice is related to whose yardsticks, benchmarks and lived experience should be utilised to determine the acceptability of an intervention and assessment criteria. Bollen (1989) points out that

inconsistencies in defining the use of acceptability concepts can limit the development of accurate indicators, assumptions and tools of measurement used in evaluating interventions. Subsistence smallholders face multiple vulnerabilities, including climate shocks, as well as other stresses such as questionable land rights, a lack of access to labour, restricting trade, and social reproduction and marginalisation processes linked to race, ethnicity and gender (Clay & Zimmerer 2020). Studies revealed that increased crop yields across heterogeneous smallholder socio-ecological contexts do not necessarily translate to improved food access, as assumed by distributive forms of justice (Chandra et al. 2018; Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Magesa et al. 2022). Thus, the focus on intensification leveraging climate change as a rationale for Green Revolution-inspired interventions with little evidence that considers the viability of realising climate resilience at intra-household levels should be questioned. More evidence is required to identify climate-resilient pathways for smallholder farmers that recognise the heterogeneous socio-cultural realities and historical contexts.

Wiliams et al.'s (2008) review reveals that African smallholder farmers, governments and policy-makers have differing objectives when it comes to prioritising CSA objectives. As a result, CSA practices will ultimately be evaluated differently depending on whose values are upheld. Arguably, this has linked implications for whether CSA priorities will appeal to investments. Further, studies indicate that the private sector primarily comprising large corporate seed companies supported by international donors and national decision-makers play a big role in investing in, influencing and regulating smallholder producers' land use decisions through the provision of agricultural inputs and information in Africa (Patel 2013; Yami & Van Asten 2017). Thus, what works and how is determined by public sector benchmarks, overemphasising value-for-money assessments; so, evaluative assessments are conducted to provide information towards this end.

☐ Intergenerational justice

At first glance, prominent movements and narratives on climate equity and justice appear to address this within CSA discourses. However, evidence shows that it mostly recognises the ecological restoration and intergenerational justice aspects aligned with Anthropocene Global North narratives, not the restoration of human systems. Questions related to spiritual linkages to ancestral lands, belonging and restoration are simply not included. In addition, the lack of identification of this aspect of intergenerational justice denies that the prevalent issues of worsening hunger and food shortages affecting smallholder farmers are an intergenerational manifestation of the historical colonialism and neo-colonial thinking through land dispossession as well as overemphasis on

technology-driven and industrial agricultural agendas in the 'New Green Revolution' at the expense of much-needed social reforms, indigenous and local food knowledge, type of land tenure, access to capital and the distribution of land.

Restorative justice

This form of justice seeks to restore relationships to rightness. It seeks to repair what is broken in order to restore relationships and power imbalances. More often, this relates to expressions of environmental rights enshrined in national statutes and Constitutions. But these are the most responsive yet restrictive in their form of restorative justice mechanisms. It is also future-oriented and unwilling to work within existing systems and structures perpetuating injustice to bring about change. Hence, it is often pronounced as idealist within global political and institutional systems as well as policy structures. Restorative justice aligns itself to solutions that restore the state of affairs to its original state before the act of injustice took place. Climate-Smart Agriculture discourses do not relate at all to this form of justice, particularly where human interests are concerned in Africa.

These discourses are not suitable in situations where water issues, tenure security and land governance are raised, for example, in the case study in Zambia where over half of the respondents (56%, n = 145) reported that households in their village could not obtain additional land for crop production in their village. This is also the case in South Africa, where it is becoming clear that the water governance laws and frameworks inherited from apartheid make it difficult to discuss the issues of CSA in a changing climate without tackling water and water availability. These issues are not addressed in CSA discourse or interventions. Instead, it promotes a 'use what you have notion' without addressing the structural and systemic root causes of inequity and justice. As a result, the future livelihood scenarios for such farmers may consist of barely surviving or 'hanging in', whether such farmers can 'step up' to adapt better to future climate constraints, or whether more of these farmers will 'step out' of agriculture (Murray et al. 2016; Ugwu 2019).

Upon this analysis, the lack of diversity and inclusion in examining drivers of climate change is evident. The role of dominant narratives and ideologies on climate change within CSA discourses relative to stated main drivers are clearly aligned to global political agendas supported by national and regional objectives. The commonly identified drivers of unstable food systems and the increasing need for immediate food assistance included poverty, economic (high food import prices, poor trade integration), environmental degradation and socio-political (conflict and displacement) (World Bank 2022) are widely accepted. This is connected to acceptable

forms of justice permissible in CSA discourses. The absence of other drivers such as race, culture, worldviews and ideology is not widely accepted.

These drivers are more often a result of colonial dispossession and exploitation of food production systems in Africa that have systematically and structurally left the poorest more exposed and vulnerable to climate variability and economic shocks. In particular, the lack of recognition of colonialism perpetuates climate inequity and injustice that broke the intimate socio-ecological linkages and interconnections that existed in Africa prior to colonialism. The neglect in recognising the historical motives of exploiting the environment and subjugating communities over generations that drove institutions of colonialism make addressing the climate issue and implementing solutions even more difficult, particularly in a just and equitable manner. Evidently, smallholder farmers' interests hold the least amount of value and legitimacy in defining desirable outcomes and impacts of such interventions. Lastly, the lack of overall attention to all these elements of justice in CSA discourses lends them to be 'suspect' and reproduce many of these uneven benefits on food security, poverty reduction and the environment.

Influence of dominant equity and justice frames on the outcome and impact orientation

The various framings of CSA suggest that it can be understood as a set of discourses, or narratives, whose outcomes and objectives are influenced by the actors' fundamental interests, ideas, power and ideologies over the political agenda, as well as the activities and objectives sanctioned by climate-smart discourses. Now, how do these frames influence and shape particular forms of resilience expressed in outcome and impact orientations? I argue that outcome and impact orientations are limited by justice frames with implications on the paradigms, methods, approaches and questions applied in evaluation. So far, the chapter has drawn attention to the agenda, influence on dominant narratives, ideologies, power dynamics and stakeholder convergence and divergence on framing of CSA discourses, how this influences the types of equity and justice frames pursued locally.

If CSA discourses continue to only pursue distributive justice, outcomes and impact will be continually viewed as the increased level of use, adoption, scale-up, dissemination and investment in CSA practices. Through this narrow focus, the orientation of related CSA programmes reinforces a particular body of expert knowledge as valid. Transcending towards procedural justice pushes the needle a little to the left, attempting to have orientations address or, in some cases, mediate and improve the power dynamics in institutional and socio-cultural contexts, including the power dynamics and relationships around how decisions are made at multiple levels.

Interactional justice pursuits necessitate outcomes and impact to centre the perspectives of those who experience injustice and inequity, using their lived experiences and history as the benchmarks, baselines and yardsticks for measuring success. This means that the evaluation of CSA interventions and practices should recognise the multiple vulnerabilities across social, human, agricultural, economic and environmental systems in relation to their lived experiences and knowledges (Mutenje et al. 2019). Current interventions focus on household-level compliance disregarding the need for both individual and community sovereignty and how resilience is determined by cross-scalar, relational and interactional considerations locally (Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Magesa et al. 2022; Mutenje et al. 2019). This requires greater attention to the power differentials among individuals, households and communities to strengthen their adaptive capacity.

Restorative and intergenerational justice are aligned with critical paradigms, such as critical realism and critical-constructivist philosophies. Orientations in these cases would be aligned more to explicit outcomes and impacts that focus on undoing colonial and setter-colonial injustices and restoring the next generation of African smallholders' sovereignty. These paradigms directly address power and politics, suggesting that it is unjust to conduct experiments and evaluative assessments on infertile lands where people were forcibly placed to test the productivity of imported scientific agricultural innovations reframed as sustainable intensification and ecological restoration under the adaptation agenda.

Evaluation approaches and methodologies contribution to reframing equity and justice within climate-smart agriculture interventions

There are growing empirical studies on CSA; majority of these focus on scientific and technical issues locally showing marginal benefits of plant science, agronomy, soil and water conservation on smallholder farming systems (Chandra et al. 2018) utilising scientific measurements and modelling tools. Evidence on locally and contextually relevant approaches and interventions is still low and reveals moderate improvements in resilience in smallholder farming systems. In part, the challenge is that these ideas originate from Global North-based agriculture, development and climate change institutions using global datasets and models of measurement (Williams et al. 2015). The CSA has made many claims as an attempt to detach from Green Revolution ideologies, claiming to be focused on the 'whole' socio-ecological system locally, including restoring connections between all individuals and how human food systems affect these relationships. There is very limited evidence of this.

There is a lack of recognition of the peculiar challenges faced by African governments and smallholder farmers in addressing multiple and interconnected issues, particularly the nexus between water, energy and food in order to achieve the stated CSA goals (Allouche, Middleton & Gyawali 2019). Understanding and situating resilience and sustainability within the operation of power relations in stakeholder and institutional dynamics creates space for value-based dialogues, allowing all actors to formulate questions about desirable outcomes and whether and how they are privileged over others. Thus, there is a need to begin with integrating concerns of epistemologies that inform the design, as well as methodologies and approaches used in evaluating CSA interventions by interrogating the epistemological issues, the hierarchy of stakeholders' framing of evaluation processes, frameworks, measurement tools used and the questions that are asked.

Socio-ecological evaluation approaches are widely used and accepted in conceptualising food systems and adaptation interventions like CSA. It is vastly useful and important in evaluating in the context of CSA. Its applicability requires a more careful application to confining current framings of development by confronting injustices of global climate change narratives and ideologies, drawing more attention to how Green Revolution thinking still sharply delimits who and what is resilient locally.

Interrogating distributive justice frames in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture

Often, evaluators use collected data that examine inequalities in income, work roles, reproductive roles, education and farming management practices to understand smallholder farmers' adaptive needs. However, in order to uncover the challenges faced by females, disabilities and other vulnerable groups evaluators should employ African feminist, intersectional and relational systems thinking approaches (Chilisa, Major & Khudu-Petersen 2017) which encompass participant-led narrative and visual analysis tools (Mapitsa 2023). These approaches and methods are useful in identifying farmers' multiple needs and constraints, as well as to enable them to shape their own meaning of how CSA can be developed to meet their adaptive needs, capacities and aspirations. In doing so, evaluation methodologies must also consider power relations and cultural values intrinsic to social change and the political dynamics mediating human–environment relations.

A continuing source of positivism's power is the dominant conceptual frameworks of natural and social science disciplines and the practices they legitimise regarding what kinds of adaptive choices should be adopted in smallholder farming systems. As climate risks and impacts vary, farmers'

local knowledge should be acknowledged as a valid and helpful instrument for adaptation (Chandra et al. 2018; Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Magesa et al. 2022). Scientific knowledge informed by climate modelling and aggregate statistics for all knowledge categories is useful in the evaluation of CSA practices (Lemos & Rood 2010). Scientific knowledge is the result of scientific effort that develops models, hypotheses, and rules based on observations and experimental evidence. This knowledge is heavily used in CSA to set baselines, desirable outcome and impacts, indicators, metrics and measurement tools which often lacks inclusion of nuanced local knowledge and lived experiences.

Interrogating issues of procedural justice in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture

Interrogating and integrating procedural justice in evaluation will enable evaluators to uncover how distributive justice in intervention designs often overlooks and limits how different females are often unable to access and use that very distributed justice to enhance their capacity to adapt to change. Methodological approaches remain frequently quantitative in nature. While important, these approaches cannot fully capture the nuances of power, inequality and justice within decision-making processes that create and constitute human and social systems and subsequent climate change impacts and outcomes.

There are different versions of reality that come from different privileges; even among females these versions must be noted. Often, females are presented in evaluation reports as a monolithic group. This will require innovation of evaluation approaches that include methods such as autobiographic retrospective narratives and participatory coded narratives, among other methods, to amplify marginalised voices of local preferences and poststructuralist notions that challenge assumptions of universal concepts and essential categories of sustainability and resilience to challenge current conceptions of equity and justice in programming and policy-making.

As climate adaptation decisions and programmes continue to increasingly shape the extent to which smallholders are able to adapt to climate change, we must think precisely about the complexity of identity and who is involved in adaptive decisions, who benefits from them and who is burdened by particular sets of adaptive decisions and the impacts of climate change. To ignore these questions creates evaluation activities where social actors and organisations remain decoupled from their role and responsibilities in the construction of and participation in these adaptive decisions. Where the embeddedness of cultural and social systems are taken for granted, the cultural blindness of funders, programme

designers and implementers remains unscrutinised and unchallenged and acts as a path-dependent barrier to the envisioning and building of an alternative climate transition in future.

Interrogating issues of restorative justice in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture

Thus, greater efforts are required to include key questions that do not lend themselves well to approaches such as quantitative modelling and methods typically employed in CSA adaptation evaluations to reinterpret the breadth of possibilities accessible to people, organisations or society to respond to change. This necessitates evaluators to anchor evaluative inquiry on appropriate evaluation paradigms that guide the evaluation questions and selection of methodologies adopted, knowledge validated and produced. Evaluations anchored by indigenous, transformative and Afrocentric evaluation paradigms enable the evaluation process to unmask versions of reality that support an oppressive status quo and seek to identify structural and socio-cultural causes of inequality and discrimination (Chilisa et al. 2017; Mertens 2007).

Further, combining the use of a multi-paradigm lens can lead evaluators to develop appropriate methodologies and approaches that can uncover the framings of CSA discourses and agendas, in addition to proposing evaluation questions seeking to unveil how limited justice frames which continue to perpetually treat symptoms of the underlying problem. This requires evaluators to understand cultures in differing contexts, as contexts are not monolithic. As aforementioned, this can be achieved by embedding evaluation methodologies in Afrocentric values that promote productive community practices, extend and build on indigenous language, spiritual and social relationships, self-sufficiency and cultural continuity.

The importance of decentring the heavy reliance on expert and scientific knowledge cannot be overstated, which ignores farmers' knowledge and promotes solutions that are unsustainable both ecologically and socially. The question is, how do we include their knowledge in evaluation processes? Evidently, as reported in various studies, smallholder farmers in African countries do not use scientific information (Chandra et al. 2018; Clay & Zimmerer 2020; Magesa et al. 2022). Evaluators must rethink and contribute to evaluation methodologies that can better account for the nuances of power, equality and justice and their underlying influence on the decision-making processes across multiple socio-political scales. One of the ways in which evaluators do so is by applying intersectionally-informed methods such as a multi-sited critical policy analysis, grounded empirical research and ethnographic methodologies that can enable evaluators to understand how resilience occurs in settings where political ecology, varied smallholder

agency and the biophysical environment converge from the perspectives of smallholder farmers and communities (Clay & Zimmerer 2020). The social science and indigenous science remain underutilised in reviewed studies.

Employing these methodologies necessitates evaluators and commissioners to be open to allowing the evaluation process and questions to emerge through the conduct of the evaluation in response to local farmer engagement parallel to adaptation processes. Essentially, it also requires funders and programme designers to embed evaluative thinking in adaptation decision-making and processes. This type of thinking will open space to ask critical questions relevant to expanding procedural justice that address the socio-ecological dynamics that influence who becomes resilient. What is considered crucial and why (Clay & Zimmerer 2020), as well as in what conditions beyond scientific and technical considerations.

The inclusion of farmers' knowledge has the potential to increase their adaptive management capacity by using situated knowledge from their own farming systems. In order to foster this kind of co-learning and adaptive processes, evaluators ought to ask additional questions such as whose decision-points are important, and who is the evaluation serving? What decision-points does evaluation seek to inform? It is important to recognise that individual smallholder farmers' adaptive decisions and information needs are different. Thus, quantitative-statistical analyses cannot be substituted for contextual and descriptive information on each farming system. Therefore, indigenous data sovereignty should be considered an important part of transforming the food system, building resilience locally, and gathering contextual information to understand whose resilience is being built, in what context, and why. Interventions recognise that the increase in climate variability necessitates farmers to have access and rights to data.

Interrogating issues of intergenerational justice in the evaluation of climate-smart agriculture

This is essential as a synthesis of empirical studies shows that farmers' local knowledge is scientifically valid but is primarily used as a tool for documentation, despite the fact that farmers' knowledge has been developed through experimentation, adaptation and co-evolution and has been culturally transmitted across generations (Ajayi & Mafongoya 2017; Juana, Kahaka & Okurut 2013; Ogunyiola et al. 2022). Therefore, an epistemological shift in socio-ecological approaches should incorporate these critical considerations. Further, where evaluators adopt the paradigms and methodologies, it is important to look for opportunities to address and

recognise power imbalances. In doing so, look for opportunities for reciprocity in identifying root causes, enable farmers to generate and own their narratives, challenge its dominant narratives, encourage greater expression of socio-cultural identity to support adaptive decisions and build local networks for social change processes beyond the evaluation.

Employing these methodologies necessitates evaluators and commissioners to be open to allowing the evaluation process and questions to emerge through the conduct of the evaluation in response to local farmer engagement in parallel with the design and implementation of adaptation processes. This will ensure that evaluation embeds evaluative thinking in adaptation processes. This thinking will open space to ask critical questions relevant to expanding procedural justice that address the socio-ecological dynamics that influence who becomes resilient? What is considered as crucial and why (Clay & Zimmerer 2020), as well as in what conditions beyond scientific and technical considerations.

Interventions to achieve resilience and sustainability will include venturing into unfamiliar areas, experimenting with new or modified strategies and responding to developing patterns in dynamic situations instead of ruling out influential and external factors given the range of unknown possibilities. This is important for equitable evaluations, as the inequities may arise during the evaluation process and may not be known prior. Thus, evaluators should build upon evaluation methodologies that fall within African feminist, intersectionality and relational systems thinking approaches which fall within critical theory. As a result, this can contribute to 'avoids the creation of grand narratives or theories' (Seigart 2005, p. 155 cited in Podems 2010) while placing greater emphasis on learning from the context and local realities, seeking social, ecological or economic resilience, adaptive viability to unknown futures in complex interventions like climate adaptation.

Other approaches, such as theory-based approaches, may reinforce inequity and injustice goals by reinforcing the pursuit of outcome and impact orientations that are not always in pursuit of justice or limited forms of justice pursued. Theory-based approaches have limitations: firstly, understanding the problem – understanding 'problems' using relational systems thinking within the African and community context without boundaries, interrogating problems through critical analysis of the sub-systems and key drivers beyond dominant narratives and individual interventions to shift how evaluators think about the vulnerabilities, risks and capabilities associated with adaptation processes, indicators and the causal mechanisms, and unpacking the implicit and explicit assumptions. Secondly, limitations in identifying and including the root causes of problems and tracing how the problem has been experienced or conceptualised in different ways over time. Thirdly, inclusion of multiple knowledges dominated in their construction and validation.

Evaluators ought to encourage developing project-level change theories that encompass 'on-the-ground' narratives of change.

Opportunities and limitations for reframing in pursuit of equity and justice through evaluative inquiry

Evaluators should understand the importance of interrogating politics, power and ideology. Evaluation in service of equity should be viewed as a political and social change process. By doing so, evaluators ought to interrogate the ideologies underpinning past and current food and agricultural 'innovations' influencing the climate change adaptation agenda. This enables evaluators to question the current framings of issues, limiting the list of alternatives on the adaptation agenda. Acknowledging the multiple agri-food models and approaches implemented within communities, outside of the evaluated interventions empowers evaluators to understand the politics, power and ideologies nested in intervention designs. Funding decisions based on colonial mindsets and outdated global perspectives are used to perpetuate dominant yet false food systems narratives, which, among other negative impacts adaptation processes locally. This will broaden the boundary of contextual analysis in evaluation. For foundations and donors committed to equity and justice, exploring how to decolonise their operations and food systems investments should be top of mind.

Recognise the importance of inclusion of multiple perspectives and a relational systems thinking approach in critical and constructive problem analysis. While evaluation practice itself is not a cause of racial bias, it manifests in evaluation processes through 'distortion, co-option and corrupting' of the perspectives influencing problem analysis. Evaluation commissioners and evaluators should advocate for those who are unsuccessful in influencing the agenda – problem analysis and definition – to be consulted in evaluative processes. The climate adaptation space is a highly contested arena of stakeholders with divergent views; thus, evaluation processes should include these divergent views to open space for more critical and constructive perspectives in understanding the problem. Provided that food is social and political, pretending that the issues presented in the chapter can be addressed in a vacuum is an attempt to avoid the harsh realities that are inextricably linked to food: exploitation and abuse of smallholder farmers and nations, as well as treatment of non-human environments, which has resulted in climate change.

Evaluators should broaden the scope of indicators and measurement tools to capture the nested socio-ecological systems. Evaluators need to

recognise the values and ideologies that are inherently embedded in the indicators set in assessing the outcomes and impact of adaptation interventions. The CSA tends to focus on measuring quantitative indicators to mostly account for interventions' environmental, agricultural and economic productivity in different smallholder farming systems. There is an increase in the use of artificial intelligence and quantitative modelling in assessing the performance of CSA practices. In a few cases, indicators of food governance are included, yet the inclusion of social, cultural and human elements in the outcome and impact is limited. The inclusion of these indicators enables programme implementers and evaluators to understand the context and multiple systems. Often, the human and cultural dimensions account for the interactional, intergenerational and restorative justice frames neglected in CSA discourses. Indicators should account for the whole socio-ecological system. It is essential to develop genuine participatory and learning-oriented approaches for defining the conceptualisation of the components of food systems, sub-systems and drivers in order to outline the parameters of the local food systems.

It is important for evaluators to also view evaluative inquiry as part of a systematic process of sense-making and sense-giving to account for histories of inequity and injustice. Policy analysis and historical stories are important learning instruments for evaluation practice, and they should be examined and generated as advocates of evidence of all kinds pursue their answers. It provides a basis for understanding whose agenda is being promoted in interventions in order not to reinforce these biases in the evaluation of interventions. However, the chapter recognises that this is a steep challenge because of the limited power over evaluations and development agendas within covert policy processes. Nonetheless, the question, 'Whose agenda is it?', is important as the African evaluation practice seeks to shift epistemological foundations for evaluative inquiry.

Conclusion

This chapter supports the pursuit of justice, particularly for solutions that make it feasible for formerly colonised people to return to their authentic selves. However, it recognises the limitation of this in dominant CSA discourses. If one were to look back at the communities before colonisation, the African population was engaged in agriculture with the capacity to provide the necessary food, materials for survival and trade. This chapter illustrates the powerful use of agenda and framing analyses in aiding evaluators who wish to centre equity and justice in evaluative inquiry. It brings attention to the usefulness of these tools to be added to the evaluators' toolbox, necessary to identify multiple influences on problem, politics and policy in contemporary African evaluation dilemmas.

This chapter calls attention to the critical need to understand and pay attention to reinforcing and reproducing problematic ideologies and values embedded in the design of interventions. Thus, this chapter also calls for action from evaluators to become activists of equity and justice, bringing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dialogues as well as analyses and 'unusual suspects' into evaluation to draw on the lived experiences of smallholder farmers. Arguably, this will increase the depth of empirical evaluative knowledge and evaluative thinking in this field towards reframing climate equity and justice considerations in CSA.

Chapter 7

Rethinking how gender inequality is framed in GBV prevention interventions: Learnings from a South African evaluation of interventions[11]

Matodzi Amisi
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Law, Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Penny Parenzee
Nelson Mandela School of Public Governance, Faculty of Commerce, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa

Introduction

Women in South Africa experience very high levels of different forms of violence, including intimate partner violence (IPV), neglect, rape and femicide. The South African Demographic and Health Survey found that

11. The following section is based on a reworking of Amisi et al. (2021b).

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21% of ever-partnered women have experienced physical violence by a partner, and 8% had experienced physical violence in the twelve months prior to the survey (National Department of Health, Statistics South Africa & South African Medical Research Council 2016, p. 355, 358). Other studies estimate that between 43% and 56% of women in South Africa have experienced IPV, and 42% of men report perpetrating it (Machisa et al. 2011). In a widely cited regional study, Gender Links found comparable rates of victimisation of women. They reported that a large proportion of males (Gauteng 78%; Limpopo 48%; Western Cape 35%; and Kwa-Zulu Natal 41%) admitted to committing some form of violence against women/females (VAW) in their lifetime (Gender Links 2011, p. 1). The 2022 police statistics recorded 52,694 cases of sexual offences and 41,739 cases of rape, an increase of 14% and 14.9%, respectively, on the figures from the 2021 fiscal year (South African Police Services 2022, p. 44). The number of sexual offences could be higher than those recorded by the police, given evidence of high levels of underreporting.

Violence experienced by women has gained attention as local, national, regional and global women's movements organised to place women's issues at the forefront of political, social and economic agendas. The growing engagement surrounding women's varied experiences of violence saw debates expand, with concerns expressed about the multiple ways in which women and men are subjected to violence. Globally, the concept of gender-based violence (GBV) was introduced to recognise that the violence that women predominantly experience is a consequence of their gender; that is, their being female makes them vulnerable to forms of violence which are an expression of men's power over women. Although the concept recognises that males are more likely to be perpetrators of violence experienced by females (Coalition of Feminists For Social Change [COFEM] 2018b), the concept also acknowledged that males can be subjected to violence. The term GBV was formally adopted in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of VAW, an international agreement in which VAW is defined as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women' (COFEM 2018b, p. 1).

The conceptualisation of violence experienced by women as GBV recognised that this form of violence has its roots in gendered power inequities that exploit distinctions between men and women. It is argued that GBV happens and is sustained by patriarchy that tips the balance of power in favour of men (COFEM 2018b). However, the adoption of the concept of GBV has been contentious, with activists critical that the hierarchical, relational power imbalances are overshadowed by an emphasis on gender being about men and women (Vetten 2013, p. 149).

Gender inequality is considered one of the key drivers of GBV. Harmful gender norms that dictate how people of a particular gender are expected to behave in a given social context are considered to be at the root of violence perpetrated by men against women. Consequently, interventions to prevent GBV are often designed to address inequitable gender norms and other markers of gender inequality as their strategic programmatic thrust (COFEM 2018a). However, the relationship between gender inequality and GBV has to be located within an understanding of historical structural inequalities which continue to inform experiences of marginalisation. For example, in South Africa, apartheid entrenched economic deprivation, with poverty remaining skewed along racial lines and concentrated within apartheid geographical pockets (Amisi et al. 2021a). This raises questions about how gender inequality could intersect with other social factors to increase GBV in South Africa. Scholars have therefore questioned the relevance of interventions focused on addressing GBV that are directed at only one set of factors that contribute towards the marginalisation and vulnerability of women (Amisi & Naicker 2021).

Despite investment by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in interventions to address gender inequality and improve the conditions of women in society, GBV remains a considerable problem. This chapter will explore the applicability and usefulness of gender inequality as a focus of interventions to prevent GBV in South Africa, with its history of colonial and racial subjugation. It asks if the current conceptualisation of gender inequality adequately explains the persistently high levels of violence in South Africa and if perhaps the framing of gender inequality should be reconsidered, with interventions incorporating other contextual factors that elucidate the relationship between the various drivers of violence within a given context.

This chapter uses 'What is the problem represented to be?' (WPR), a feminist, post-constructivist policy analysis method to interrogate the conceptualisation of gender inequality in GBV interventions and evaluation. This chapter will contribute to strengthening the conceptualisation of gender inequality and approaches to evaluating the effectiveness of interventions to prevent GBV. We apply this approach with the intention of questioning, exploring and testing a widely used concept in the GBV sector. The intention is not to solve the problem but to question and hopefully expand on and clarify our understanding of gender inequality in South Africa. The focus of this chapter is on the problematisation of gender inequality and GBV within the evaluation of interventions. The chapter does not offer a critique, nor does it analyse the evaluation methodology of GBV interventions.

Literature review

What is gender inequality?

Gender inequality refers to the relational power imbalances that occur within political, economic and social institutions in public and private spheres of life (Bennett 2009). Women inadvertently bear the most adverse impact of these power imbalances, with the experiences of marginalisation exacerbated according to intersecting factors such as race, class, geography, age, ability and identity (Reddy & Moletsane 2009).

In order to articulate women's experiences in defining gender inequality, Article 1 of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) defined discrimination against women as (United Nations Women 2003):

> [*A*]ny distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. (p. 5)

The convention gave recognition to how culture and tradition can restrict women's enjoyment of fundamental human rights. In line with this understanding, Unterhalter (2015) defines gender inequality as:

> [...] limits or constraints on the opportunities an individual or a group may have to choose and realise the actions, attributes and relationships of well-being they have reason to value. (p. 3)

These constraints can be found in culture and traditions embodied in stereotypes, customs and norms which are given legitimate social power through a country's legal, political and economic institutions. The CEDAW and other international frameworks propose, among other interventions, that countries enact legal instruments that give women power and agency in areas such as education, reproductive health, suffrage, marriage and work outside the home, among others.

Such interventions are recommended as the foundation for addressing discrimination and achieving equality. Gender equality indicates conditions where there is no discrimination or restrictions on the basis of sex or gender, where people are free to make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes and where their various contributions and needs are valued equally. In 2015, in their Progress of the World's Women report, UN Women offered a definition of substantive gender equality, which is redressing women's socio-economic disadvantage, addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence and strengthening women's agency, voice and participation.

Over time, the concept of gender inequality has broadened to reflect the inclusivity of lived experiences of marginalisation. However, with the expansion of the concept, there has been a diluted emphasis on relational power imbalances. For this reason, the concept of gender inequality, although widely used, does not have a single definition. A number of factors explain this. For example, Merry (2011, 2016) argues that gender and gender inequality are complex and context-specific phenomena (Schmid, Cook & Jones 2022). The meaning of the concept tends to shift over time and space. Also, as Unterhalter argues, defining gender inequality is not simply a matter of abstraction and theory. It is an attempt to describe the lived experiences of women in a certain context. She (Unterhalter 2015) further argues that this:

> [*R*]equires an understanding of the institutional foundations that reproduce inequalities and that can support equalities. These institutional foundations comprise both political and economic processes, socio-cultural norms, and policy and management regimes. (p. 3)

As observed by Vetten (2013, p. 124), 'power does not circulate equally across institutional sites or within networks', and within such complexity, '[…] projects to advance gender equality, must be constructed' (2013).

In the face of such complexity and conceptual difficulty, how does one measure gender inequality? If notions of gender and gender inequality are context-specific, who gets to decide if an area experiences gender inequality? What measures do they use when measuring levels of inequality? What measures do they use once they have intervened to assess if females enjoy more equality with males? Conventional measures have tended to focus on quantitative indicators for which it is easier to collect data or where there are data across countries for comparison. These indices often measure indicators such as educational attainment, participation in the workplace or representation in decision-making institutions such as government or parliament. Qualitative dimensions such as processes to create an enabling environment for optimal, quality participation have not been distilled into measures to determine 'gender inequality'.

Interestingly, with respect to these conventional quantitative measures, South Africa measures higher overall than most of sub-Saharan Africa, though measuring lower when compared to developed countries. For most indicators, South Africa also has a low base for both males and females. For example, though South Africa experiences a gender gap of 18.8% in tertiary education attainment, this is from a relatively low base. Similarly, in labour participation in 2021, 46% of women were participating in the labour market compared to 59.9% of men, which means a gender gap of about 13% (Gender Inequality Index 2021). However, labour participation in South Africa is quite low for both men and women, with an unemployment level

of 34% and even higher for young people. Another important measure of gender inequality is women's participation in decision-making institutions. That is because women's participation in key institutions in society is said to be more likely to promote policy change towards gender equality (European Partnership for Democracy 2019). In South Africa, women enjoy 46% representation in parliament (Gender Inequality Index 2021). Yet this representation has not resulted in the kinds of societal transformations that were anticipated. In fact, scholars and activists are acutely aware that these technocratic quantitative measures conceal more than they are able to reveal (Hassim 2006; Mankell 2012; Vetten & Watson 2009). These quantitative measures fail to expose the underlying structural barriers that are deeply rooted across all institutions and impact the way in which relational power hierarchies are entrenched through individual, organisational and broader societal practices.

Gender inequality and gender-based violence

Gender-based violence, or violence experienced by women, has been called a gendered phenomenon, meaning women experience violence because of their gender. This is because GBV is perpetrated mainly by men against women as a consequence of the lower status which society affords women relative to men. In recent years, the definition of GBV has expanded to include all forms of violence experienced because of an individual's gender. For example, Mpani and Nsibande (2015, p. 9) define GBV as 'any harm that is perpetrated against a person's will that has a negative impact on the physical or psychological health, development, and identity of the person because of their gender'. Though they acknowledge that women are disproportionately affected by GBV, Mpani and Nsibande (2015) argue that victims of GBV include men, women and children. This expansion in definition has been argued to take away the focus from violence experienced by women (COFEM 2018). These contentions challenge well-established ideas of how gender inequality between males and females drives VAW.

The relationship between gender inequality and GBV does not seem to be a linear one. In some cases, researchers and evaluators refer to gender inequality as a driver of violence. In their study in Nepal, Dahal, Joshi and Swahnberg (2022) found that women believed that they:

> [...] belong to a culture where women worship their husbands as a god, and this might be an important reason for men to feel powerful as a god to exploit and abuse women. The discussions put forward the idea that the existence of discriminatory beliefs, reinforcement of such beliefs, and a blind following of such practices produced differences and violence. (p. 14)

Interestingly, Dahal et al.'s (2022) arguments also demonstrate the impact of context on how gender and gender inequality play out. Religion and lack

of access to education for females create conditions particular to the Nepal case study. In this understanding, within a patriarchal society, men will have more power than women because they have control over resources and decision-making rights that are sanctioned by societal norms and practices (Javed & Chattu 2020).

At the same time, gender inequality is also considered a manifestation of GBV and that which sustains inequality between men and women. As Dahal et al. (2022) maintain, though it is often argued that gender norms influence violence, at the same time, violence also shapes gender performance with fear, sanction and corrective measures for enacting respective prescribed gender functions (Dahal et al. 2022). Thus, gender inequality and GBV have a complex interplay where they mutually shape each other. Other research shows that gender performance is not limited to women, that maleness is also gendered, and males who use violence in their relationships with females are also likely to use violence in other relationships with males (Langa 2020; Peralta, Tuttle & Steele 2010). In South Africa, high rates of GBV occur within a context of high levels of criminality, violence in social interactions and interpersonal relationships shown in high rates of contact crime and a murder rate of 46 per 100,000 citizens (South African Police Service 2022). Ratele (2018) and Langa (2020) also draw attention to the high vulnerability of young black males to homicide and other harmful behaviour.

What we observe from the literature is that it is not only power differentials between men and women that influence men's use of violence. Also, gender inequality, particularly the idea of substantive gender inequality, is embedded in the daily experiences of women and not easily fixed by changing legislation, representation in institutions or even the attainment of education for females. Even in countries considered quite equal, such as Sweden, gender inequality in different forms can persist (Ville et al. 2023). Could violence be addressed by addressing other conditions that contribute to males using violence?

Methods[12]

This chapter analyses how gender inequality is conceptualised in intervention evaluation in South Africa. As a conceptual chapter, it considers how gender inequality is framed in evaluations of GBV interventions. Thus, this paper is not an analysis of evaluation methods.

A sample of intervention and programme evaluations included in a 2019 Evidence Map carried out by CLEAR-AA, the Institute for Security Studies

12. The following section is based on a reworking Amisi et al. (2021b, pp. 1–51).

and the Africa Centre of Evidence was analysed using the WPR analytical framework.

The WPR approach suggests that problems are not self-evident and do not objectively exist. Rather, problems are framed in a specific location and in a context of existing power relations. This context and framing impacts research and policy, as every policy proposal contains within it an implicit representation of what the problem is purported to be. By extension, every research process contains an implicit representation and conceptualisation of a problem as researchers perceive it. Thus, 'what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change)' (Bacchi 2012a, p. 21). The WPR framework calls for attention to be paid to the importance of power and to the effects of power that are at the centre of how problems are defined and acted on. Thus, the WPR analysis not only focuses on how problems are spoken of (discourse analysis) but is primarily concerned with 'the outcomes and material implications that arise when phenomena are constituted in particular ways as particular kinds of "problems"' (Bletsas 2012, p. 41).

Traditionally, the WPR has been applied to policy analysis. However, there are a few cases where it has been applied to problem representation in research, as we have done in this chapter. For example, Marshall used the WPR approach to study how the World Bank shaped discourse around the 'problem' of disability and the material consequences of this in how nation-states came to understand the problem and acted on it. In this case, the unit of analysis was not a national policy but a set of policy proposals that the World Bank's researchers, policy advisors, etc., would have proposed (Marshall 2012). Similarly, Vidor et al. (2020) applied the WPR in a systematic review of literature to find out how the problem of gender parity in physics and physics education was represented and the assumptions about gender that underlie research. Amisi et al. (2021b) used the approach to analyse how research in South Africa frames the problem of VAW and children. Indeed, Archibald argued that evaluators need to pay more attention to the question of problematisation and problem representation and not only focus on how problems are ameliorated by interventions (Archibald 2019).

Papers reviewed

The analysis focused on evaluations of interventions that were tested for their effect on preventing VAW in South Africa. The initial evidence map and evidence review had 73 studies covering VAW and violence against children. We excluded all studies focused on violence against children; this included studies that targeted adolescent girls. We only included studies

where interventions aimed to prevent violence experienced by adult females because we were interested in how GBV problematisation affects interventions to prevent violence and how these are evaluated. There were several papers that reported results on the same programme, that is, Integrated Mapping and Geographic Encoding System (IMAGE), Stepping Stones, etc. We decided to randomly select one article per programme.

Sixteen papers were reviewed. Each paper was read, and data were extracted using the following WPR interrogative questions, adapted for the study (based on the work of Amisi et al. 2021b):

- How is gender inequality represented to be?
- What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of gender inequality in South Africa?
- How has this representation of gender inequality come about?
- What is left unproblematic in the representation of gender inequality? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' have been thought about or articulated differently?
- What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?
- How or where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

Data extracted were captured on a tracking sheet and analysed thematically. We also analysed the South African National Strategic Plan for GBV and Femicide (2020) to answer Bacchi's six questions. We wanted to explore where this problem representation has been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been (or could it be) questioned, disrupted and replaced?

In addition, four structured conversations were held with experts in the field of GBV prevention. The conversations added some additional insights into how gender inequality is framed, based on where one is positioned within the sector – policy-maker, service provider, researcher or community member. The individuals were purposefully selected because of the rich experience, depth of work and recognition across the sector which they receive for the work that they have been doing in GBV prevention. Respondents were established senior researchers. The first respondent has been designing and testing GBV prevention interventions in South Africa for over 20 years. The second respondent was a director of an organisation implementing both prevention and response services for GBV survivors. One respondent was a senior policy analyst on gender and gender inequality who has worked with the South African government. The fourth respondent was a senior researcher in violence prevention with a prominent South African think tank.

Findings and discussion

Bacchi's WPR framework was used to structure the presentation of the findings and discussion section.

How is gender inequality represented to be?

We observed that gender inequality is often used without an operational definition. The meaning is often implied and not spelt out. Most explanations of gender inequality describe it as power differentials between men and women, particularly when it comes to decision-making within relationships or the home, in cases where people are married and in community settings. We saw similar difficulties with definitions of gender inequality by the interviewees. They indicated that a definition of gender inequality is not easily coined and drew a distinction between formal and operational definitions. Interestingly, interviewees all emphasised how gender inequality is far more readily interpreted with respect to operational aspects. Interviewees were more likely to describe how gender inequality manifests than what the concept means ideologically.

Researchers draw on a binary representation of gender that draws on sex differences between males and females. They also draw on the social construction of femininity and masculinity and the relations between the two genders within a patriarchal society. South African society is represented as patriarchal and provides the conditions for unequal power dynamics between men and women. Similarly, interviewees were also likely to talk about the differences between men and women. They recognised that gender inequality is evolving because of shifts in how gender is understood, the shift from binary gender and issues of identity, and the dominance of this perspective in framing and shaping policy responses. There is a frustration that is, in some respects, generational, whereby the framing of gender inequality is becoming more opaque with a complexity that is difficult to translate.

Gender inequality is represented as a driver of violence experienced by women. As one paper argued, hegemonic masculinity and other harmful constructs of masculinity that emphasise male dominance and authority over women lead men to perpetrate physical and sexual VAW. The dominant masculine forms also result in men engaging in high-risk sexual behaviours and avoiding health clinics – this puts their female partners at risk (Dworkin et al. 2013). Gender inequality is also shown as men's use of power over women. The misuse of power by men over women results in IPV. Men use controlling behaviours such as sexual, economic, emotional and psychological abuse (Wright, Kiguwa & Potter 2007).

Some evaluations recognise that GBV is happening within the context of underdevelopment and poor opportunities for both men and women, though still arguing that, because of gender inequality, women are at increased risk of violence (Pronyk et al. 2006).

What presuppositions or assumptions underpin this representation of gender inequality in South Africa?

There is a sense in which patriarchy as a system of oppression is framed as the source of gender-unequal norms and beliefs. Papers argue that men benefit from the unequal norms and beliefs as they are attributed greater power or higher value. For example, one study of an intervention in a peri-urban area argues that there are promising signals that group-based training among young men can decrease IPV perpetration. For the programme's effectiveness, men who use violent behaviours should be targeted. In describing the prevailing gender norms, they indicated that male participants were likely to hold the view that women should stay at home and men should earn more and have multiple wives, while female participants expressed a desire for freedom to work outside the home and for male participation in household duties (Hatcher et al. 2020). Indeed, this evaluation highlights the limits of performative 'equalisation' or representation. The design of the intervention was such that the programme assigned female volunteers to work with male volunteers to challenge gender norms in the community. However, female volunteers were not well-received by male programme participants, which undermined their ability to critically reflect on their deeply held gender beliefs. The evaluators viewed this as a weakness in the implementation of the programme. However, perhaps it shows assumptions about the superiority of feminist thought that pushed for female representation even when the context was not ready for it, undermining the programme's very objective. Also, it showed a disregard for male voices in programming. Programmes targeting women are rarely implemented by men because of the understanding that men will not fully understand the female experience, and because where women have previous experiences of GBV, being in a programme led by men might be retraumatising. Thus, programme evaluators were more likely to interpret male responses to female programme facilitators as driven by gender-inequitable norms and not explore other factors that could have been anticipated and planned for in the programme delivery to avoid pushback.

Another presupposition is that community is the setting where gender norms are created and enforced. Thus, community outreach and advocacy is considered an effective strategy to shift harmful practices toward gender

equity and thereby reduce HIV risk and GBV (Christofides et al. 2020). This supposition is informed by research in South Africa and the Global North. For example, community mobilisation is a strategy that has been utilised in countries like the United States of America (USA) to shift gender norms and other societal norms. This focus on community and culture was sometimes criticised in conversation with those working within the sector. Through these conversations, they recognised that the sector focuses on what we think we are able to control, for example, home and community, rather than broader systems that perpetuate inequalities, such as economic and political systems.

How has this representation of gender inequality come about?

Most of the evaluations draw on feminist theory. Drawing from this theoretical framework, GBV is seen as closely linked to the social, political and historical context of women's subordination in relation to men. For example, one evaluation stated that there is a general consensus that hegemonic masculinities lead to harmful behaviour, including GBV. The way masculinity has been constructed encourages men to exert their power on women's bodies without consequences (Christofides et al. 2018).

Evaluations also draw on national police statistics to make a case for the vulnerability of women to violence and murder at the hands of their partners. For example, two studies applied a public health model and used the South African femicide statistics to show the health impact of VAW. They argue that South Africa's rates of femicide are relatively high compared to other countries, which shows how gender inequality, societal norms and hypermasculinities drive women's vulnerability to death at the hands of partners. In 2017, the femicide rate in South Africa was 4.8 times higher than the global average rate of 2.6. However, this number must be understood within the context of high levels of violence and a high contact crime and murder rate. What other factors are driving high levels of murder, including the murder of women by their partners in South Africa?

One study used Ungar's Social Ecology of Resilience to consider interactions between the individual and his or her environment in facilitating resilience. While resilience can be considered to be dependent on an individual's personal contributions and, to some extent, personality, this framework posits that social-ecological support far outweighs individual contributions. Other studies and literature are referenced that emphasise the role of religion, family and the community in helping victims of abuse to overcome adversity. Parallels are also drawn between the African philosophy of *ubuntu* and Ungar's Social Ecology; *ubuntu* stresses

communality and the idea that we are all responsible for each other. Such frameworks expand the dimensions that are explored as drivers of violence and can be helpful in unpacking complex interactions between different drivers of violence. How do we understand these factors and their interaction with gender inequality or societal norms that shape heterosexual intimate partner relationships?

An important finding from the discussions with sector experts was a recognition that debates about gender inequality are not happening in South Africa. The interviewees asserted that gender inequality has become more peripheral, with little debate and discussion about how gender inequality is understood within the current context. Instead, attention is fixated on the practical manifestations of gender inequalities. Where discussions have been prompted, particularly in the formulation of policy responses and interventions, those in the sector recognise that while there is a leaning towards being inclusive of the diverse expressions of gender, this has often been in isolation of any interrogation of how to feasibly translate the policy responses into practice. Also, where practicalities have dominated the conversations in which gender inequality is framed, such as equal work opportunities or equal pay, there is little interrogation of the extent to which the intervention facilitates actual transformation.

What is left unproblematic in the representation of gender inequality? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' have been thought about or articulated differently?

In a few studies, there is a recognition that the communities where interventions are tested are experiencing high levels of deprivation and that both men and women are experiencing marginalisation and a lack of resources. Notwithstanding this, there is a simplification of why GBV happens in these communities, and the essentialisation of gender inequality draws attention to cultures and norms and away from structural drivers of violence and crime. But as Dixon (2013) argues, the problem of violence and crime in South Africa defies simple explanations. There are high levels of violence outside of intimate partner relationships that point to other drivers that probably intersect with gender inequality that need to be explored. This is supported by Bruce (2022), who argues that:

> Chronic violence and crime show that our society is deeply 'criminogenic' – meaning that social conditions in South Africa are conducive to high levels of offending. Building a safer country depends partly on addressing the socio-economic foundations of criminality, which requires giving people access to more stable incomes, decent accommodation, education and healthcare. (n.p.)

Also, there is a focus on physical forms of violence and not so much focus on other forms of violence. This is a perspective that Galtung considered inadequate if we want to understand and prevent violence. Galtung argued that violence exists where human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisations (Galtung 1969). For Galtung, physical violence was a manifestation or a consequence of structural and cultural violence. When societal structures, such as the economic system, laws, the public service system, etc., interact in such a way that they create marginalisation of certain groups of people, this is structural violence. Structural violence is difficult to see because it looks as if it has no victims, but when society makes it difficult for individuals to realise their rights and, therefore, their potential, that society is violent. In South Africa, a country that is supposedly middle-income, children go to bed hungry, 27% of children are stunted (May & Devereux 2017), and their potential is cut even before they reach adolescence. Access to education is skewed towards those who have the means to pay and experiences of multiple forms of violence during childhood are not only common but likely. The second aspect of Galtung's conceptualisation is that of cultural violence, which exists where dominant attitudes or beliefs are used to legitimise direct or structural violence. These can be stereotypes and beliefs held by individuals or embedded within institutions. This is the case for most people in South Africa. Gqola argues that in South Africa, those who escape poverty and marginalisation are still subjected to racial and cultural marginalisation where the institutions they become part of refuse to see them as fully human, refuse to acknowledge the history of apartheid and refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of black pain. This, she argues, is seen in the backlash against affirmative action, the demonisation of black economic empowerment or the pressure to participate and be absorbed into a culture of rampant materialism and consumerism (Gqola 2007).

Sector experts also stressed the importance and complexity of situating gender inequality within a broader context. They challenged the idea of gender inequality seen from the perspective of the individual. They argued that how gender inequality manifests is determined by the role of a specific 'locus', that is, community, family, work, etc. The power distribution created by roles and responsibilities and the value derived from different spaces could be vastly different and could even be in conflict with one another. For example, in a family where love and care are deemed to be the expectation or value-add, how one thinks about gender equality may differ when one considers the workspace. So, this tension between individual, community, family, etc., may need further exploration.

Left unproblematic is the link between men's use of violence and earlier experiences of violence. Research by Gould (2015) into the life histories of

violent offenders found that most violent men had prior experiences of violence that were either unattended to or not addressed, including incidences of sexual violence. In their study, Gibbs et al. (2020) found that violent men have had extensive exposure to abuse and neglect in childhood, have been bullied at school, had a cruel father and were extremely poor. Yet, in much of the problem representation, boys' and men's experience of victimhood is either underemphasised or not mentioned as a potential contributor to the likelihood of using violence in adulthood and adult relationships. Girls' and women's experiences of victimhood in childhood and how these experiences manifest in adulthood and adult relationships are also rarely interrogated.

What effects are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?

The framing of the problem shapes the intervention that is evaluated. It could also be that the choice of the intervention to evaluate shaped the literature review and how the problem was represented in the papers reviewed.

We observe that where gender inequality was framed as a problem of unequal access to resources, the interventions involved the economic empowerment of women. This is the case for the paper evaluating the IMAGE programme. The underlying theory of change of the intervention is that economic empowerment of women would increase their power in their intimate partner relationships and that they would have some control over resources and, therefore, the power to make decisions.

Where gender inequality is seen primarily as a factor of norms and societal beliefs, the interventions targeted men to address their gender norms. Sometimes, they had a community mobilisation component, as in the One Men Can programme and the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme in rural Venda. In some cases, the interventions incorporated both individual men and community mobilisation components.

Most of the interventions do not address the cultural and structural drivers of violence as defined by Galtung. The issue of race and the history of race-based inequalities, and the continued impact these have on black communities, is rarely addressed in interventions. Except for IMAGE and Steppingstones and Creating Futures that attempt to address economic disempowerment, interventions do not address the hopelessness and disempowering effect of high levels of poverty and inequality. Even the interventions that focus on economic empowerment do not address the structural drivers of economic dislocation but focus on individual factors that lead to unemployment. Even when interventions succeed,

they merely move individuals from unemployment to underemployment, where people are still stuck with low wages that are not enough to transform their lives.

This is not a failing of programmes per se, but it highlights the stubbornness of the problem of GBV in South Africa and the need to question the theories we apply to grapple with the nature of the problem the country is facing. This highlights the importance of gender inequality conceptualisation considering the empirical and conceptual aspects of gender – there is often a tendency to focus on the empirical (debates about access to resources). However, the conceptual is also about relations of power. 'Denigration of the feminine naturalises domination and "produces even as it obscures" vast inequalities of power, authority and resource distribution' (Peterson 2003, p. 28).

Lessons

The 'What the Problem is Represented to be' framework is not a problem analysis framework aimed at finding one way to understand the problem or to find one solution. It is a problem questioning, 'an open-ended mode of critical engagement' (Bacchi 2012a, p. 22). The idea is that by critically engaging and questioning concepts that are taken for granted, new insights can emerge that can inform and possibly improve policies and programmes. Based on the analysis, we draw lessons for evaluators and those working in the GBV prevention sector.

Evaluation and evaluators

How problems are represented influences how we intervene to solve the problems. It also influences what we monitor and what we define as success or failure when we evaluate the interventions. Yet, as this chapter shows, the framing of problems is not apolitical and is about power. Who has the power to determine what is a problem and what type of problem it is, and therefore, what needs to be done about it?

Often, problem definition and problematisation is done by programme designers, in some cases with some participation of affected communities but in other cases in their absence. Community workshops and 'community consultations' can often be avenues not to truly hear community voices and how they see and interpret their lived experiences, but a way to 'influence' their thinking and convince them of the need for a certain type of intervention which programme designers and donors have already decided. As Archibald (2019) argues, evaluators need to pay attention to these issues. Sometimes, programmes are ineffective because they are not coherent and relevant to the communities they are being implemented in,

even if they are internally coherent, have been implemented effectively (meaning all activities have been implemented as intended) and resources have been used efficiently.

For evaluators, the focus on programmes as the unit of analysis in an evaluation can also lead to a narrow definition of the issue. Evaluators are often guided by what the programme identified as a problem and what they intended to do to address the problem (their theory of change or programme design) (Archibald 2019; Podems 2019). This narrows the evaluators' focus. We can fail to see how a problem that manifests in a certain community can result from factors outside of the community. For example, high rates of GBV in a certain area or community do not necessarily mean that the drivers are found in that community. The drivers could be poor employment, stress levels in workplaces, exposure to adverse childhood experiences, etc., which are produced by decisions made by corporates, government and other powerful social systems. By focusing on the community, we look for drivers in the community and think solutions can only come from within that community, whereas in some cases, we need to look outside of the community or the individuals experiencing the undesirable situation to find solutions. A public health model with its emphasis on understanding drivers at individual, relational, community and societal levels is helpful in doing this, though we observed that evaluators and researchers often find it difficult to fully apply that lens of analysis in their research. It is easier to fall back to factors on one level, probably because having a focused intervention locus is easier. The growth of systems thinking in evaluation can also help in overcoming this narrowing of focus on programmes, though our argument is that we need to question how problems are represented no matter which approach we use.

There has been a lot of talk in the evaluation sector about equity, transformation and decolonisation, at both international and regional levels, as seen in key publications on the topic from IDEAS, CLEAR-AA, the *African Journal of Evaluation* and the *American Journal of Evaluation*, among others. These various debates all come down to the realisation that evaluators' frames of reference, theories and ways of producing knowledge can serve to sustain unequal power dynamics. At its worst, the theories on which our interventions are premised can actually prevent real transformative change in communities. It can undermine the skills and abilities of those experiencing some undesirable situations to take action to address the problem. Applying the principles of the WPR approach, questioning how problems are represented, which voices are dominant and which perspectives are undermined, can go a long way in ensuring that evaluations and evaluative enquiry identify the systems that are driving social problems and therefore better inform the design of interventions that can transform such systems.

Evaluators also need to pay more attention to the methods they choose to use in evaluating programmes. Methods and approaches to evaluating programmes are not just technical tools. They reflect how we see the world or at least interpret what we observe, what we consider as credible data and how that data are made sense of. Indeed, evaluation methods and tools shape how societies understand certain types of problems and what are considered effective solutions. As Bacchi suggests, 'It means asking – what realities do my methods create and with what effects for which creatures and places?' (Bacchi 2012b, p. 7). Therefore, Evaluators must question their assumptions in designing evaluations and the analysis they carry out. This kind of self-critique and reflexivity is not just for those who are conducting qualitative evaluations but also where quantitative designs are used.

Gender-based violence prevention sector

Preventing GBV is an urgent need in South Africa. The high level of violence experienced by women continually erodes development and negatively impacts social outcomes. The analysis in this chapter points out some areas that practitioners, evaluators, programme designers and policy-makers in the GBV sector need to consider for strengthening prevention work.

There is a need for more spaces for debates and discussions about gender inequality in South Africa. Scholars and practitioners need to grapple with the meaning of gender inequality (conceptually) in the South African context, taking into consideration the history of the country and the high levels of deprivation and disenfranchisement. We found that the absence of such debates leads to a fragmented view of gender inequality and what is needed to achieve equality. The implications are that gender inequality has become ineffective as a conceptual framework to guide research, evaluation and the design of GBV prevention interventions. It has also been ineffective as a means to rally women's organisations and drive a transformation agenda in the country. Government interventions have focused on the attainment of quantifiable changes such as women's representation in the workplace, representation in political parties, etc., and there is not enough engagement with the ideological changes that need to happen to truly build a gender-equitable society. It is clear from our analysis that such a debate cannot happen outside of broader consideration of what an equitable country looks like and how South Africa recovers from apartheid and builds a society in which all citizens enjoy the human rights enshrined in the Constitution.

Addressing power imbalances between genders and the abuse of power in relationships and society is an important aspect of preventing GBV.

However, as the analysis has shown, there are many factors, such as race, employment status, geography, etc., that intersect with gender inequality to reproduce high levels of GBV in South Africa. To address GBV, the conceptual understanding of gender inequality and how it contributes to GBV needs to be layered. Importantly, this layered understanding of gender inequality needs to be translated into how interventions are designed. The sector needs to exercise caution against leaning towards operational aspects in an attempt to provide conceptual clarity, which, as the chapter shows, is unsatisfactory for practitioners who envisage and desire strategic, transformative change. The nuances of unpacking violence within private and public spheres launch one into the realm of needs and interests, with positionality a determinant of whose or which are prioritised.

Voices of researchers and programme designers are quite dominant in the framing of gender inequality, what is considered unequal power between men and women and what equality could look like. Voices of women affected by GBV are not as dominant in the framing of the problem. How do they see and understand inequality, what would equality look like for them, and what do they think should be done to address inequality and prevent violence? Creating spaces for multiple voices, experiences and knowledge forms to inform what is understood by the problem of gender inequality and its contribution to GBV can only broaden understanding of the concepts and ensure that more interventions are apt in how they are designed to transform underlying structures of power.

Conclusion

Historical tensions persist in terms of how to render visible women's experiences of oppression, with conceptual challenges evident in programme evaluations as well as among those working within the sector. To move forward, it is imperative that we open up debates about how we understand gender inequality and its relationship to the forms of violence that manifest in public and private spaces. These debates present an opportunity to forge new analytical perspectives that reflect the lived experiences of those who occupy a given context. Such conversations are not going to be easy but are essential to effect change.

Chapter 8

The role of evaluation practice in promoting the prioritisation of mental health equity on the public health agenda in Africa

Tebogo Fish
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

Mental illness is defined as any condition that applies a clinically significant disturbance on the thinking, behaviour, perception and emotions of the affected person (Addo et al. 2018). Mental illness causes significant distress in the affected person; it causes impairment in functioning, negatively affects relationships and interactions with other people and is associated with the risk of self-harm. More importantly, for a person to be diagnosed with a mental illness, they must experience serious functional and role impairment for more than two consecutive weeks, with negative consequences on their jobs and careers (World Health Organization [WHO] 2022). In addition to its debilitating effects, mental illness contributes significantly to inequality, particularly in socio-economic status and access

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to basic services (Hailemichael et al. 2019). People living with severe mental illness often fall into poverty because of reduced productivity, decreased income, loss of employment and increased medical and transport expenses, among others (Addo et al. 2018; Hailemichael et al. 2019). Severe mental illnesses include, but are not limited to: major depression; schizophrenia; anxiety disorders such as generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorder and social anxiety disorder; bipolar disorder; post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); disruptive behaviour and dissocial disorders and neurodevelopmental disorders such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD); and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) (WHO 2022).

Some of the most common severe mental illnesses affecting African people are depression disorders, including major depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. Research indicates that depression is the leading cause of disability globally and the second leading cause of the global burden of disease (GBD) (Habtamu et al. 2019). The GBD is a tool used to give a comprehensive picture of the rate of incidence, prevalence, mortality and disability from the hundreds of diseases, injuries and risk factors to improve health systems and inform policy-making to reduce disparities in access and treatment (Lancet 2020). Depression has been associated with decreased quality of life (QoL), increased use of health services, higher degree of morbidity (disease or symptoms), increased risk of mortality and overall compromised health status. In sub-Saharan Africa, studies have found a link between the severity of depression and an inability to perform daily tasks that are critical to one's survival (Habtamu et al. 2019).

Schizophrenia is another debilitating mental illness. It is regarded as the most severe of the psychiatric disorders, as it is profoundly disruptive, involving the presence of one or more forms of psychosis, including auditory hallucinations (voices) and delusions (fixed false beliefs). Mental health scholars say that it is one of the most disabling and economically taxing disorders. Schizophrenia may have a relatively low prevalence rate globally (0.28%) (Charlson et al. 2018); however, its GBD is extremely high. It was ranked one of the 12th most disabling disorders among 310 diseases and injuries globally in the 2016 GBD study conducted by the WHO (Ayano 2016). Despite the extent of these issues, African governments spend only a fraction of their health budgets on the treatment of mental illness. The latter has been linked to the lack of standalone legislation on mental health, including no mental health policies in some African countries (Gberie 2017; Sankoh, Sevalie & Weston 2018).

The treatment gap in Africa

According to the WHO (2022), one in every eight people in the world has a mental illness. However, the proportion of people suffering from mental

illness is disproportionately higher in sub-Saharan Africa: for example, over 400,000 people in Liberia suffer from mental illness, over 500,000 people in Sierra Leone, almost 3 million Ghanaians, one-third of the South African population live with a mental illness (20million people), a fourth of the population of Kenya (44 million people) and more than 30% of the Nigerian population (approximately 60million people) (Gberie 2017). Research shows that the GBD caused by mental health disorders is the highest of all health problems, accounting for 13% of the total burden of disease worldwide (Samartzis & Talias 2019). Yet the availability of mental health care facilities and professionals in low- or middle-income countries (LMICs) countries, including African countries, is limited. Sankoh, Sevalie and Weston (2018) indicate that, in Africa, there are only 1.4 mental health workers, such as psychiatric nurses, for every 100,000 people, compared to the global average of nine mental health workers per 100,000.

In addition to the scarcity of mental health care specialists, African countries also have a significantly low number of outpatient mental health care facilities and even fewer inpatient psychiatric hospitals or psychiatric wards in general hospitals with sufficient beds for patients with mental illness (Sankoh et al. 2018). In Kenya, for instance, there are approximately 80 psychiatrists and 30 clinical psychologists, with approximately 250 psychiatric nurses. According to Gberie (2017), the WHO also mentioned that the Kenyan government spends only about 0.05% of its health budget on mental health services, and more than 70% of mental health facilities in the country are in the capital, Nairobi. This means that there is disproportionate access to these services. Similarly, research by the WHO found that only 10% of mentally ill Nigerians have access to a psychiatrist or mental health care worker. There are approximately only 130 psychiatrists in Nigeria, even though depression, schizophrenia and anxiety disorders are common. While considerably better, the South African mental health sector has slightly more resources to support its mentally ill citizens, however, approximately 75% of these people have no access to treatment. It has 22 psychiatric hospitals and 36 psychiatric wards in general hospitals; however, access is disproportionately linked to socio-economic status. Ghana, Sierra Leone and Liberia are among the most poorly resourced countries, in terms of mental health care. Ghana is reported to have only three psychiatric hospitals and approximately 20 psychiatrists, and 97% of mentally ill people do not have access to these services. Sierra Leone has only one psychiatric hospital, which can only support a total of 104 patients. The hospital has only one trained psychiatrist and three psychiatric nurses. Similarly, Liberia also only has one psychiatric hospital, with only 80 beds to support the whole country (Gberie 2017).

It is against this backdrop that the international community determined that the most feasible solution to these resource challenges is the integration

of mental health care services into primary health care facilities in LMICs, including African countries. The studies found on African Evaluation Database (AfrED) evaluated interventions aimed at this integration in several sub-Saharan African countries.

Study aim

The aim of this study was to explore how mental health task-sharing programmes in Africa are evaluated in terms of the study aims, the methodologies used, the evaluand, the results and the outcomes derived. The purpose of this study was to determine whether evaluation practice is designed to facilitate equitable outcomes for patients or people living with mental illness and promote the prioritisation of mental health issues on the public health agenda in African countries through the provision of relevant information. The research question for this study is:

Are evaluations designed to facilitate equitable access and outcomes to mental health care services in Africa?

Methods

Using the AfrED, a narrative review was conducted to gain an understanding of the evaluation studies on mental health programmes in Africa. Narrative reviews are comprehensive narrative syntheses of previously published literature. This type of synthesis reports on the author's findings in a condensed format that summarises the contents of each article or report identified as relevant (Green, Johnson & Adams 2006). The AfrED is a collaborative project embarked on by the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) and Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST), which aimed to develop a knowledge base of evaluation articles, reports and dissertations conducted in Africa. The search terms that were used on the AfrED in this review include 'mental health', 'mental illness', 'depression', 'schizophrenia', 'psychosis' and 'bipolar'. The focus was on finding literature on evaluations of programmes on clinical mental illness. This meant that documents about mental illness issues arising as by-products of other diseases or health conditions, such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), substance abuse or pregnancy, were excluded from the study.

In total, the search yielded sixteen journal articles, theses and dissertations. This is a finding in itself because if you simply search 'health', then the AfrED shows that 635 evaluation documents exist in the database. This suggests that this small percentage of mental health care evaluations shows that there are a limited number of interventions focused on this

population group. This demonstrates that this aspect of public health care is not prioritised.

The topic and purpose of this study meant that further screening of the literature was done to find evaluation studies on mental health care interventions using the task-sharing approach in Africa. An initial screening of the abstracts and introductions of the documents showed that the most relevant documents pertain to the mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP), an intervention implemented by the WHO in many African and other LMICs, and studies on the Programme for Improving Mental Health Care (PRIME), which is aimed at gathering research and evaluation evidence on the implementation and scaling up of the mhGAP. Further screening led to the identification of a similar programme developed in Africa called the Friendship Bench project. The final selection of literature from the AfrED included only three relevant studies.

Task-sharing interventions in Africa

Mental health Gap Action Programme

According to the WHO, a significant proportion of people on the African continent are suffering from severe mental illness; however, mental health care services are extremely limited, and access is disproportionately distributed geographically and socio-economically, as well as being structurally hospital-based (Hailemariam et al. 2019). Thus, there is a high treatment gap, as more than 75% of people in many LMICs never access or receive adequate mental health care (WHO 2008). This is primarily attributed to the low prioritisation of mental health care by ministries of health in LMICs, who allocate a small portion of their budgets and human resources to mental health care. To address this major treatment gap in LMICs, the WHO developed the mhGAP in 2008. The mhGAP involved implementing and scaling up evidence-informed mental health interventions in over 100 countries worldwide. This programme sought to increase access to mental health care by integrating it into primary care facilities, general health care services and maternal health care facilities (Lund et al. 2015). It was determined that this kind of integration would have significant advantages, including ensuring that people are provided with more holistic health care, increased accessibility of mental health services, including for those from rural areas, opportunities for reducing the stigma of mental health problems by not being able to differentiate between patients and reduced costs (WHO 2008).

The mhGAP provides policy-makers, health planners and donors with a set of clear and coherent activities and programmes for scaling up care for mental, neurological and substance use disorders. The mhGAP programme

is based on the best available scientific and epidemiological evidence about mental, neurological and substance use disorders that have been identified as priorities. Priority disorders were identified on the basis that they represent a high burden in terms of mortality, morbidity and disability; they cause high economic costs or are associated with violations of human rights (WHO 2008). The mhGAP was also based on growing evidence of the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of specific sets of treatments for priority mental disorders in LMICs. However, research found that evidence is still lacking on how these specific interventions can be combined into integrated packages and delivered in routine primary health care, general health care facilities and maternal health care facilities. Furthermore, there is limited evidence on the process and impact of scaling up such an integrated MHCP for a country, even at a local district level (Lund et al. 2015). The latter prompted the development of the PRIME.

Programme for Improving Mental Health Care

The PRIME is a project which was established to generate evidence on the implementation and scaling up of integrated packages of mental health care interventions for priority mental illnesses in primary and maternal health care settings, implemented through the mhGAP. The PRIME project was implemented across five LMICs, including Ethiopia, India, Nepal, South Africa and Uganda. It was established in response to a call for grant proposals from the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID) in 2010 to establish a research programme consortium on the theme of improving mental health services in LMICs (Lund et al. 2015).

The PRIME is founded upon five guiding principles, two of which make this programme relevant to this study on the role of evaluation evidence in promoting the prioritisation of equity in mental health care. The principles include: (1) a focus on health systems strengthening, (2) working in partnerships and (3) focusing on priority mental disorders that impose the largest burden of disease, including depression, alcohol abuse and schizophrenia. The fourth principle is the 'use of robust frameworks for the design and evaluation of complex interventions'. The Programme for Improving Mental Health Care uses the theory of change (ToC) framework, drawing on theory-based programme evaluation approaches to develop an overarching theory of how mental health care plans can best be designed and implemented to influence the intended outcomes. One of the studies on the AfrED focuses on the latter component of the PRIME. The last principle of PRIME is the reduction of inequities. According to PRIME (Lund et al. 2015), the:

> [*B*]enefits of implementing mental health interventions should be equitably distributed, with a particular focus on outcomes in key disadvantaged groups:

> people living in poverty, women, and people with severe mental disorders. The goal should include reducing inequities both in access to services and in improved outcomes. (p. 2)

Findings and analysis

Paper one[13]

The first article from the AfrED is titled (Adewuya et al. 2019):

> The effectiveness and acceptability of mobile telephone adherence support for management of depression in the Mental Health in Primary Care (MeHPriC) project, Lagos, Nigeria: A pilot cluster randomised controlled trial. (n.p.)

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness and acceptability of adding mobile telephone adherence support to a collaborative stepped care (CSC) intervention for primary care management of depression. The CSC intervention package for primary health care workers' management of depression includes screening, psychoeducation and problem-solving therapy (PST) as the main psychological treatment that was complemented by the provision of antidepressants and referral to a mental health care specialist when necessary. The study reports on a follow-up intervention where the researchers refined the CSC intervention package to include mobile telephone support for pro-active adherence management, which involved providing information to help the patients manage their health and telephonic reminders to adhere to medication and attendance to appointments.

The study was based on the premise that one of the major contributing factors to the large treatment gap for depression and other mental illnesses in Africa is poor adherence to the prescribed intervention. This study used a pilot multi-centred, two-arm, cluster randomised controlled trial (RCT), where patients were randomly assigned into either the ordinary collaborative stepped care (OCSC) or mobile telephone-supported CSC (mCSC) groups. A total of 456 participants were randomly assigned to the oCSC group, while 439 participants were assigned to the mCSC group. The link to the WHO's mhGAP intervention is that all the health care staff of the ten comprehensive primary health care centres (CPHCs) that were randomly selected for the study were trained in delivering the CSC intervention using an adaptation of the mhGAP-IG (mhGAP intervention guide) training manual (Adewuya et al. 2019).

The study was conducted in Lagos, Nigeria, specifically Ikeja, which is the largest of the local council development areas (LCDAs). The population

13. The following section is based on a reworking of Adewuya et al. (2019).

in Lagos at the time of the evaluation was 20 million. The city has five administrative divisions and 57 LCDAs, each with an average of four primary health care centres (PHCs), with one of the four designated as 'Comprehensive PHC'. Each PHC caters for approximately 350,000 residents, with only three medical doctors, ten nurses or midwives, five community health officers (CHOs), five community health extension workers (CHEWs) and three Pharmacy technicians. The CPHCs also serve as referral centres for the other three PHCs in the LCDA. Ikeja is the largest and most populous of the five administrative divisions of Lagos (with a population of approximately 7 million people) and it has fifteen CPHPCs (eight are located in an urban setting and seven in a rural setting). Ten of the CPHCs were randomly selected, five in the rural areas and five in the urban areas.

With regards to sample size, the evaluators indicated that even though no formal sample size calculation was required because this was a pilot RCT, the sample size was calculated by assuming a minimum cluster size of 70 and intra-cluster correlation (ICC) of 0.05, modest study completion rate of 70%. They determined that a total of 385 participants in each arm would have more than 80% power to detect an average adherence rate difference of 20% (80% adherence rate in the mCSC group versus 60% adherence rate in the oCSC group) at a significance level of 0.05. There were 15,859 adult attendees who were assessed for eligibility from the ten participating CPHCs, but only 965 (6.1%) met the selection criteria, out of which 895 (92.7%) consented to participate in the pilot. Recruitment took place between October 2014 and April 2015. The mCSC arm had three clusters from rural areas and two from urban areas, while the oCSC arm had three clusters from urban and two from rural areas. The average number of participants per cluster was 89 (range 80–100). The baseline characteristics of the sample participants include a mean age of 34.89 (SD 11.96), 55.4% females, 60.9% were married, 46.0% had secondary education or higher and 10.4% had a chronic medical illness. The mean total Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9) score of the participants was 16.44 (SD 4.35), mean total WHODAS (WHO Disability Assessment Schedule) score was 14.45 (SD 9.34) and the mean overall QoL score was 2.55 (SD 1.01). Participants' characteristics in the two arms were well-balanced. There were no significant differences in the sociodemographic and baseline clinical scores between the rural and urban CPHCs.

The participants were screened for eligibility using the PHQ-9, which is based on the DSM-5 criteria for depression with a score range of 0–27. The inclusion criteria included scoring 10 and above on PHQ-9; those who intended to stay in the project for at least eighteen months; were literate enough to read either English, pidgin English or any one of the three local

languages (Yoruba, Hausa or Igbo) and completed the written informed consent form; and were enrolled in the trial. The exclusion criteria included children under eighteen-years-old, the elderly (above 60-years-old), patients with serious medical conditions or disability requiring specialist care, or people having any form of psychosis or being under psychiatric care.

The findings showed that with the mobile support intervention, there was a statistically significant improvement in adherence to the intervention at both the six- and twelve-month follow-ups. The study also found that adding mobile telephone support to the CSC intervention led to significantly lower scores on the depression questionnaire at both follow-ups. The data also showed higher recovery from depression. At the twelve-month follow-up, the mCSC group reported a much lower percentage of disability compared to the oCSC group. Also, the mCSC group had a statistically significant higher percentage of patients with good overall QoL, significantly lower rates of referral to the mental health team and loss to follow-up (Adewuya et al. 2019).

While the results of the intervention seem quite positive and promising, it is clear from the methodology used that the new mobile component of the intervention and the evaluation study did not consider the entire population of people living in Ikeja in Lagos with mental illness but instead had a very restrictive sampling frame of people who were deemed eligible for random selection into the study. This approach is known as 'sampling bias', and it 'occurs when some members of a population are systematically more likely to be selected in a sample than others' (Bhandari 2022). This approach is problematic because it gives evaluators the discretion to select groups of people with a greater chance of success in an intervention. In this study, the evaluators chose to exclude people based on their educational backgrounds, age and severity of illness. In this way, this study contributed to perpetuating inequity for some of the most marginalised people among an already marginalised group of individuals diagnosed with mental illness. It is evident that the evaluation was designed to show successful outcomes over the challenges.

According to the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) (2022), 'Evaluation can and should contribute to the transformation of current systems through the evidence it generates to guide decision-making'. The evidence generated from this RCT is not a true reflection of the true potential of the mobile intervention to bring about social change to those most afflicted by mental illness in Africa because, through its design, this evaluation has only added to the marginalisation and inequity experienced by some of the most vulnerable groups in society. The limitations of this study show the importance of evidence synthesis of a

wide range of evaluations on the same subject, as this kind of evidence would be a better fit to inform decision-making. The study excluded people diagnosed with severe mental illnesses, which are in fact priority mental disorders according to the WHO and, thus, the ones in need of urgent treatment. In addition, literature shows that depression is common among the elderly in Nigeria, and new-onset depression is higher in the elderly in Nigeria than in many other countries (Ojagbemi, Bello & Gureje 2018), is very debilitating for them, and very little is known about the disorder in this population group (Gureje, Kola & Afolabi 2007). Therefore, by excluding them, pertinent evidence about this group will not reach key decision-makers, including policy-makers. Also, access to care for children is limited globally, but even more so on the African continent (Patel et al. 2013). It is important that evaluations not perpetuate discrimination and inequities by placing exclusion criteria that make it impossible to gain new information on groups of mentally ill people who are already marginalised in many ways.

This then also draws attention to whether the use of RCTs is the most effective approach to evaluating mental health programmes implemented in government facilities because the aim of public sector interventions is to reach previously disadvantaged and unreachable areas. Public mental health is defined as 'a population-based approach to mental health, to improve coverage, outcomes and coordination of interventions provided by different sectors' (Strelitz 2022, p. 3). The inclusion and exclusion criteria used in this study (exclusionary bias of evaluation sampling) mean that the study did not contribute accurate information on the effectiveness of the intervention. According to Bhandari (2022), sampling bias limits the ability to generalise the study findings because it compromises the external validity of the findings, specifically population validity. This means that the findings from biased samples, such as this one, can only be generalised to populations that have the same characteristics as the sample. In addition, this impact evaluation was not designed in a way that it measured access and outcomes that the PRIME interventions were supposed to achieve. It was not a well-designed evaluation of what needed to be considered. Funders, commissioners and evaluators who contributed to the design of this evaluation may be among the many who continue to believe that quantitative studies, with their ability to make causal links, are the most objective form of knowledge generation, as these evaluators made little effort to incorporate qualitative methodologies to understand the experiences of the participants, their reasons for adhering to treatment or not. The latter is critical information vital for programme designers and decision-makers because it may show areas of intervention that need to be included in the scaled-up intervention. Equitable evaluation challenges the

notion that quantitative-experimental methods should have dominance in a field that should be guided by the purpose of the evaluation and the needs of the key stakeholders. It has come to be understood that evaluations using mixed methods are far more powerful tools than a study using a single methodology.

Paper two[14]

The second paper under review from the AfrED is a PhD dissertation titled 'Using ToC to design and evaluate complex mental health interventions in low- and middle-income countries: the case of PRIME'. The PhD formed part of the PRIME Research Programme Consortium. The aim of the study was to explore how having a ToC can strengthen the design and evaluation of complex health interventions, with specific focus given to PRIME. The study involved a systematic review to determine the extent to which ToC has been used to design and evaluate public health interventions. In addition, a comparison was made between the process of developing the ToC in all five PRIME countries, including Ethiopia, India, Nepal, South Africa and Uganda. Also, the study reflected on the value of ToC workshops by conducting a framework analysis of workshop documentation and interviews with facilitators. Further, the researcher explored the development of the ToCs within the programme, the implications for the development of the intervention, and the choice of evaluation methods. Furthermore, the researcher presents a ToC for the integration of mental health care in LMICs and provides ten lessons learned from PRIME in terms of the application of ToC to complex mental health interventions (Breuer 2018).

The study showed that the ToC approach has been utilised in the design and evaluation of public health interventions since the 1990s; however, it has not been used in the process of using ToCs in public health interventions and how ToCs have been used. The study determined that ToC workshops added great value to the development of ToCs for PRIME because there is a collaborative space for stakeholders. This participatory approach ensured the development of a logical and structured ToC, a contextualised Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP) and stakeholder buy-in. It also found that different stakeholders at the ToC workshops contribute different kinds of information, as this process involved multiple stakeholders, including mental health specialists, researchers, policy-makers, district-level health planners and management and service providers. This ensured that the stakeholders could provide content on all the areas required for the development of the ToC, including the level of existing mental health services; the human and

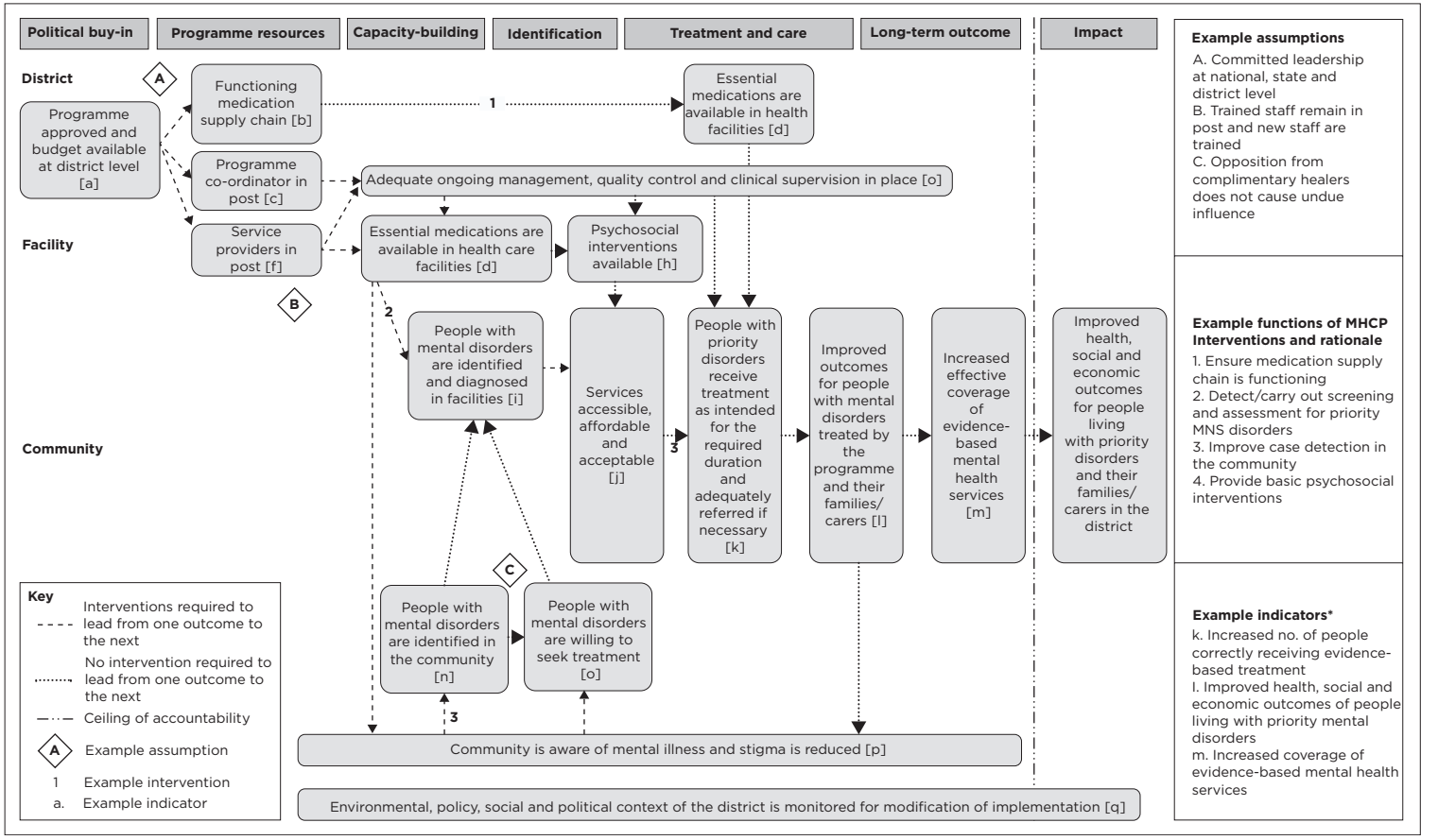
14. The following section is based on a reworking of Brueuer (2018).

financial resources available; infrastructure; clinical knowledge about identification, treatment and recovery of mental illness; the evidence base underlying effective treatments and monitoring; and evaluation of the PRIME programmes (Breuer 2018).

Other findings included the importance of taking into consideration the hierarchies that exist within the health system in the ToC workshops because power dynamics can influence the group; having a comprehensive cross-country ToC process can result in a programme theory that is relevant for a complex multi-level intervention in different contexts; a cross-country ToC can provide a framework with which to map contextually relevant interventions and also be used to complement other development intervention approaches. The study discovered that developing a cross-country ToC provides an approach that ensures that the interventions have the same functions; however, they can be developed locally and tailored to be contextually relevant. In addition, this study discovered that the ToC must be used to complement other methods used for intervention development. The Programme for Improving Mental Health Care also used additional approaches to develop the interventions, including situational analyses; qualitative interviews with district managers, service providers and people living with mental illness; costing of the interventions; and piloting. Lastly, this study showed that one of the key advantages of using a ToC approach for the development of a mental health intervention is that the causal pathway is made explicit, and indicators are developed to measure each step along the pathway (Breuer 2018).

The study mentioned that even though the PRIME ToC does not explicitly contain references to theories from social science, the ToC does implicitly refer to several theories relevant to global mental health, including the Tanahashi model of health services coverage, which it draws from significantly. The Tanahashi framework reinforces thinking on global mental health, which aims to increase the equitable coverage of services. This framework identifies five levels of coverage of health services, which are adapted to mental health care services in the PRIME ToC and are operationalised through the development of specific indicators for measurement. The five levels of coverage of mental health services include: (1) availability (people for whom services are available); (2) accessibility (people who can use the services); (3) acceptability (people who are willing to use the services); (4) contact coverage (people who use the services); and (5) effectiveness coverage (people who receive effective care) (Breuer 2018).

Figure 8.1 shows the summary PRIME cross-country ToC from Breuer (2018). Despite using a theory-based approach, the actual focus of the intervention is on the treatment of mental illness, and there is no mention



Source: Breuer (2018).

FIGURE 8.1: The Programme for Improving Mental Health Care Cross-Country Summary ToC.

of the prevention of or promotion of mental health. Research shows that while effective interventions are intended to prevent mental illness from developing, to promote mental well-being and resilience and to treat mental illness and its associated impacts: 'there is little provision of interventions to prevent mental disorder and its associated impacts, or promote mental well-being and resilience' (Strelitz 2022, p. 3). This is highly problematic because studies show the treatment of mental illness typically occurs later in life (i.e. adulthood), the first onset of mental illness usually occurs in childhood or adolescence, and early intervention has the potential to help reduce the severity and persistence of primary disorders and prevent secondary disorders (Kessler et al. 2007).

Evidence from a systematic review shows that many mental illnesses diagnosed in adulthood have their origins in childhood and argues that (Mulraney et al. 2021):

> Effective prevention and early intervention strategies for mental disorders therefore has the potential to significantly reduce the burden of disease globally as well as improve lives for individuals with mental disorders. (p. 182)

The latter literature suggests that it is in fact more equitable for public mental health care interventions to also incorporate prevention of mental illness and intervention in childhood for at-risk populations because the outcome and impact would be far-reaching. According to the WHO (2021), only a small fraction of government funding is spent on prevention. If PRIME was intended to generate evidence to facilitate the implementation and scaling up of the mhGAP integrated packages of mental health care interventions in primary and maternal health care facilities, then the limited focus of its ToC on the identification and treatment are likely to limit the effectiveness of the mhGAP.

This study and the ToC in Figure 8.1 show that the expected impact of the PRIME cross-country ToC is improved health, social and economic outcomes for people living with mental illness; however, there is no explanation of what these outcomes are. Vague outcome statements in a ToC have several negative consequences, including (1) leading to unclear and ambiguous thinking about what needs to be done to reach them, (2) sabotaging the ability of funders, implementing agents and stakeholders to develop consensus about what is important for programming and funding allocations and (3) creating difficulty for developing a measurement strategy to determine when and if, the outcomes have been achieved. People suffering from severe mental illness cannot obtain or maintain employment, and some become homeless, meaning that change in how these individuals experience discrimination in workplaces and in society will not be solved by simply

treating their mental illness because this kind of solution places the blame on the victim and their condition for their socio-economic circumstances and does not hold structural and institutional systems in society accountable for their discrimination and bias. This evaluation dissertation failed to take note of this and acknowledge it and thus reverts to the medical model of intervention.

One of the biggest issues with this ToC is its overall vagueness; the wording is not specific with regards to which 'medication' is in the functioning supply chain, which 'services are accessible, affordable and acceptable' and which 'treatment as intended' is received. Mental illness is an individual condition and requires individualised treatment and services for improvement to occur in the health, mental health, social and economic situations of people living with mental illness. The focus of the ToC was on equitable coverage of public mental health services based on the Tanahashi framework, which is commendable; however, equitable access cannot solely be focused on the quantity of coverage but also on the quality of coverage. One of the issues that creates inequity for people with mental illness is the cost or price of treatment, including medication and therapy, etc., particularly the best treatment, according to medical experts (Christensen et al. 2020). What was required here was a clear indication of the treatment packages and service combinations that are theorised to be effective for producing positive outcomes for people with mental illness. Programme for Improving Mental Health Care hosted various ToC workshops with various experts on mental health, and yet the ToC does not reflect any of this expertise, knowledge and understanding.

This evaluation dissertation claims that the design of the intervention and the evaluation are based on the theory-based approach and makes the statement that 'Although the PRIME ToC did not explicitly contain references to theories from social science, there are several theories relevant to global mental health which are implicit in the ToC' (Breuer 2018, p. 231). The latter is highly problematic because it shows that this programme and its evaluation approach are based on a ToC but are not based on any change theories. Scholars indicate that theories of change must be informed by change theories (Reinholza & Andrews 2020). Reinholza and Andrews (2020) state that:

> [*T*]heory of change is project-specific and related to evaluation. It makes the underlying rationale of a project explicit, which supports planning, implementation, and assessment of the project [...] In contrast, change theories represent theoretical and empirically grounded knowledge about how change occurs that goes beyond any one project. (p. 1)

This study shows that epistemological limitations of evaluation practice perpetuate inequities for people with mental illness.

Paper three[15]

While the third article should have been excluded from the study because of its primary focus on mental disorders in people living with HIV, the task-sharing approach of the intervention is the reason why this article is relevant to the current chapter. The third paper under review from the AfrED is a journal article titled 'Using a theory driven approach to develop and evaluate a complex mental health intervention: the Friendship Bench project in Zimbabwe'. This article is said to have been inspired by the PRIME, reported on by the PhD dissertation summarised earlier. It discusses a similar study that sought to generate evidence on how to deliver complex interventions to reduce the treatment gap for mental disorders in LMICs, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The study was focused on a complex mental health intervention called the Friendship Bench project. This programme consists of a cognitive behaviour therapy-based (CBT) intervention that also uses PST for the treatment of common mental disorders. The intervention was implemented by trained lay health workers (LHWs) employed by the city health authorities in Harare, Zimbabwe. This article described the way in which the ToC approach was used to design and evaluate a successful cluster RCT and a scale-up plan (Chibanda et al*.* 2016).

This article indicates that a theory-based approach was used to design the Friendship Bench programme, which was implemented for eight years prior to being evaluated and that this approach was also used to guide the evaluation of the programme. In addition, a cluster RCT was used to evaluate the programme. The evaluation was conducted in two workshops focused on the cluster RCT illustrated as 3a–g in Figure 8.1. The study stated that eight ToC workshops were held with various stakeholders over a period of six months. Like the PRIME studies, the focus was on four key components of the programme including: (1) the formative work, (2) piloting, (3) evaluation and (4) scale-up. The key stakeholders who participated in the ToC workshops included the City of Harare Health staff and the research team from the Friendship Bench project. A ToC map was developed as part of the process during the workshop, with defined causal pathways leading to the desired impact. The primary reasoning provided for the development of the ToC causal pathway to impact was to ensure that the intervention leads to a reduction in the common mental disorders symptoms among those receiving care through the Friendship Bench RCT (Chibanda et al*.* 2016).

15. The following section is based on a reworking of Adewuya et al. (2019).

Figure 8.2 shows the final ToC that was developed after eight workshops and ten small group meetings. Two themes were of specific interest in the ToC workshops: (1) political buy-in and (2) capacity-building, particularly among LHWs, including the development of an acceptable, user-friendly and feasible psychological intervention. The workshop discussions also led to the modification of the existing PST with an emphasis on PLWH. One key highlight from the evaluation was that obtaining political buy-in (1a) through the participation of the Minister of Health was important as the minister reinforced the notion that 'mental health care packages should be integrated into existing primary health care services' (Chibanda et al. 2016, p. 5). The latter is related to the assumption of the ToC that all 60 clinics would appreciate the need for mental health integration for it to lead to an expansion of the initiative (2b).

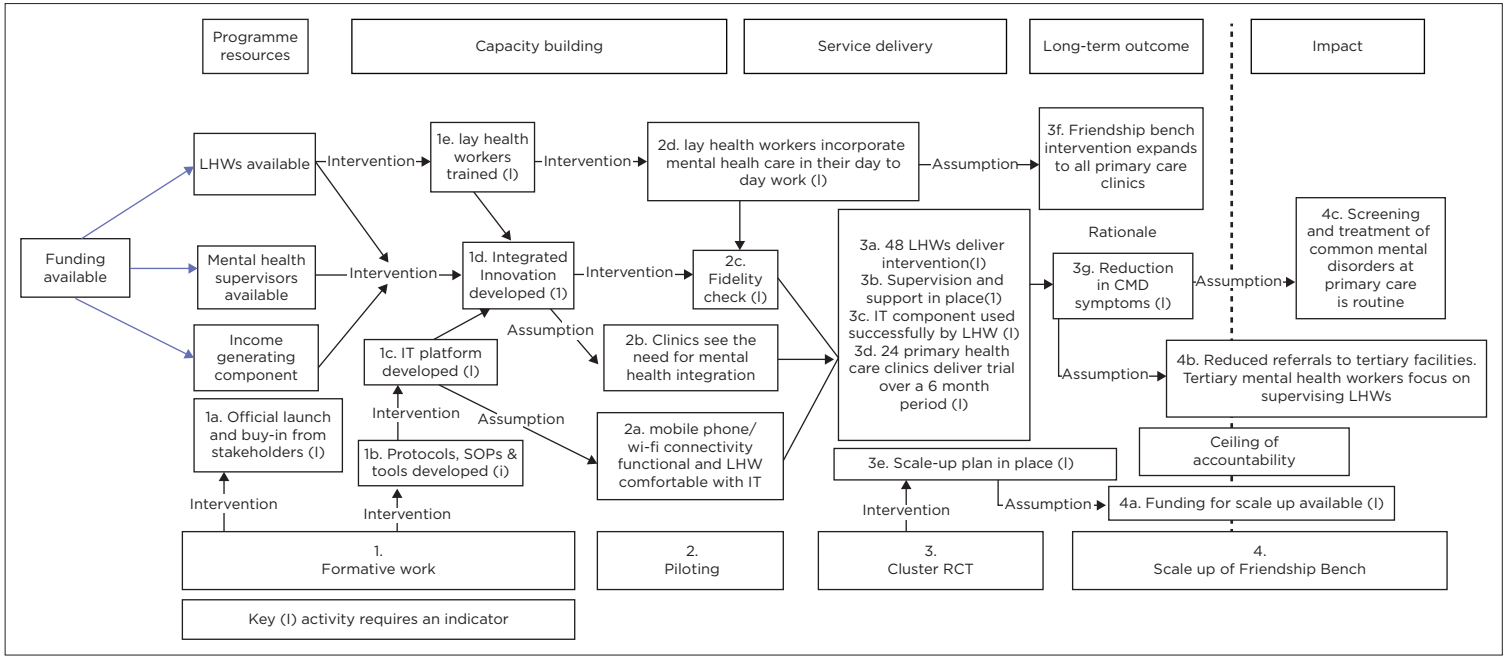
The evaluation, however, showed that in practice, the latter is difficult to implement. A quote from a participating LHW stated that (Chibanda et al. 2016):

> We see a number of mental health cases, but we don't have the capacity and the adequate time to provide structured counseling for these patients because we have to take care of everybody else at the clinic. (p. 6)

The latter finding shows the value of evaluation in providing evidence of the feasibility of the task-sharing approach. This is linked to the fact that the most important input identified in the ToC is funding. Without adequate funding to hire additional LHWs, the effectiveness of this intervention is limited. The latter finding is so important because it shows that international agencies such as the WHO, which is seen as an authority on health care globally, may have the best intentions in terms of finding solutions to problems in LMICs, including African countries, but are not very successful. The problem with this is that much of what is seen as solutions for developing countries was conceptualised in contexts far removed from the political and socio-economic circumstances that have major impacts on interventions and the beneficiaries.

Another important finding from the evaluation was that even though sufficient evidence from previous evaluation studies on the Friendship Bench project supported the feasibility and acceptability of the intervention; the views, buy-in and input of patients were a requirement to move to the next stage in the causal pathway (Chibanda et al. 2016). The latter is critical for promoting equity in developing societies and an important consideration for equity-focused evaluations (Bamberger & Segone 2011):

> If equity-focused evaluation is to be truly relevant to interventions whose objective is to improve the well-being of worst-off groups, the equity-focused evaluation processes must be used to foster wider participation of worst-off groups, facilitate dialogue between policy-makers and representatives of worst-off groups, build consensus, and create 'buy-in' to recommendations. (p. 12)



Source: Chibanda et al. (2016).
Key: LHWs, local health care workers; LHW, local health care worker; IT, information technology; RCT, randomised control trial; CMD, congenital muscular dystrophy.

FIGURE 8.2: Theory of change map for the Friendship Bench project intervention.

Discussion

This chapter shows that there are two extremes in the way in which mental health care interventions that focus on task-sharing have been evaluated in African contexts. On the one extreme are poorly designed (and thus, implemented) evaluations, and on the other extreme are contextually and culturally responsive evaluations that include all key stakeholders in all phases of the evaluation, including the design. This chapter showed an example of the one extreme, which is the problematic use of single-method studies involving RCTs or other quantitative-statistical methods for the evaluation of development interventions (Hariton & Locascio 2018), and on the other end of the spectrum is the unproblematised use of the ToC or theory-based approach, which is deemed a good model for evaluating complex interventions because of its consultative/participatory nature, and these are designed to help clearly articulate underlying assumptions from the beginning of an intervention, and because they are designed to answer evaluation questions about (INTRAC 2017; cf. Reinholz & Andrews 2020):

> [*W*]hat worked (by measuring or assessing the changes brought about by a development intervention), but also why and how it worked (by examining the processes that led to those changes). (p. 1)

The review conducted in this study showed that there are clear limitations to the use of both approaches, particularly in the context of public sector interventions aimed at supporting disadvantaged and marginalised groups of people living in African countries.

The proponents of RCTs regard it as a useful approach to evaluating the effectiveness or impact of an intervention or treatment because it is believed to produce high-quality levels of evidence through the reduction of bias stemming from the randomisation process. It is viewed as a scientifically rigorous tool for examining cause–effect relationships between an intervention and an outcome and can thus produce an internally valid impact estimate (BetterEvaluation 2021; Hariton & Locascio 2018). Some scholars even go as far as to assert that this is the easiest and most effective approach to use for conducting an impact evaluation (Glewwe & Todd 2022). While its design may have some merits, many of its limitations make it unsuitable for the assessment of government interventions aimed at distributing resources to disadvantaged people from under-resourced communities or for use in equity-focused evaluations.

Firstly, the selection of evaluation designs should be determined by the evaluation questions, not by the belief that experimental designs produce better results. Over the years, studies have shown that some questions cannot be accurately answered using an RCT design (Cook & Thigpen 2019). The RCTs are not appropriate in LMICs such as African countries,

where context is a critical factor in the outcomes produced by an intervention and important for understanding the reasons the intervention was successful or failed to produce the desired outcomes. The RCTs are quantitative in nature and thus overlook the context that provides an insight into the environment in which those with mental illnesses live. Secondly, there is the issue of 'mixed treatment effect', which means that simply because effective outcomes are found in one group and not the other group in an RCT does not necessarily mean that the intervention will have better outcomes for all individuals in that group or other groups in the future (Cook & Thigpen 2019). Evidence from a multitude of studies has shown that several individuals in both the intervention and control groups do improve, but that several individuals in both groups do not.

The most relevant and well-known limitation of RCT designs, however, is their inability to produce external validity. This refers to the fact that the results and conclusions of an RCT cannot be true for other groups of people, in other settings, at other periods of time. This is because of the unavoidable differences between the study conditions and sample and the contexts and populations to which the study aims to generalise the findings to. There is a common misconception that the findings from the RCT can be generalised to all patients, treatment/intervention environments and cultures (Cook & Thigpen 2019). This chapter showed that in its effort to control for confounding variables and increasing statistical effect or power, the study reviewed in this chapter showed that having a homogenous sample of diagnostically uniform mental health care patients is not representative of the actual demographics and complexity of the population of people living with mental illness in that area or country. According to Cook and Thigpen (2019), the less simple patients who are often excluded from participating in RCTs are called 'marginal patients', and many of the requirements needed to improve the internal validity and control for confounding bias in an RCT result in creating an artificial setting that does not closely match the real-world environment (Cook & Thigpen 2019).

It is clear from this chapter that equity is about inclusion, not only the inclusion of citizens' voices through participation in key evaluation processes but also about having inclusive evaluation approaches and designs that do not contain exclusion criteria. Evaluations should be inclusive in terms of the kinds of people who are sampled, which is why, instead of random sampling, equity-focused evaluations should use census sampling. Census sampling involves gathering data from every member of a population (Sriram 2011). One of the key advantages of this sampling strategy is that unlike other sampling strategies, which only select a subset of the total population for inclusion in the study, a census reduces the risk of sampling error. A sampling error is a statistical error that can occur when an evaluator selects a sample that does not represent the entire population

of data (Lavrakas 2008). Sampling error means that the evidence produced from evaluations using RCTs can lead to erroneous decision-making by governments, showing that while evidence use has become a key discourse and endeavour in the field of evaluation in Africa, the scrutiny of the quality of that evidence should be an even bigger discussion because using the wrong evaluation approach or design has the potential to produce findings that could contribute to furthering inequities. Hailemariam et al. (2019, p. 2) aptly stated that 'inadequate care for people with SMD [severe mental disorders] in LMICs contributes to disability, poverty, marginalisation, premature mortality and human rights abuses'.

On the other extreme is an over-reliance on the theory-based approach to evaluation, which is evident in this chapter as two of the three studies reviewed used this approach for the design of the task-sharing interventions and their evaluation. The argument is that the ToC approach is useful for evaluations because it can adequately capture the complexity of developing countries and their varying complex contexts (Breuer 2018). The latter may be true if the approach is appropriately applied. This chapter showed that both the studies reviewed did not involve the actual use of change theories; one of the studies explicitly stated that 'Although the PRIME ToC did not explicitly contain references to theories from social science, there are several theories relevant to global mental health which are implicit in the ToC' (Breuer 2018, p. 231). These studies show that what theories of change in fact do is make the underlying rationale of a programme explicit, and this is meant to support the planning, implementation and evaluation of that programme. However, scholars argue that 'Grounding projects in change theory allows change agents to draw on existing knowledge and to better contribute to our collective knowledge about how to achieve meaningful change' (Reinholz & Andrews 2020, p. 1).

The reviewed studies showed that all theories of change are a range of hypotheses about how change is expected to occur, and these hypotheses are then investigated and revised along the programme lifecycle. Some scholars, however, argue that interventions aimed at transformation should ensure that theories of change are grounded in change theories and in so doing ensure that the programme is contextualised and more likely to succeed. According to Reinholz and Andrews (2020), change theories are theories that represent generalised knowledge about how changes work, some of which are mature theories because they have a strong empirical basis. This is an important finding because it suggests that if equity-focused evaluations intend to use the ToC approach to effectively capture the complexities of the contexts in which the interventions are implemented, change theories stemming from the respective disciplines should be used. Evaluators need to understand change as occurring within a complex system because the context of a programme will affect the outcome and

impact of the intervention. Tested change theories are relevant for understanding the context and, therefore, should assist evaluators with identifying and characterising aspects of the system and culture and describe how these might influence how change in an intervention occurs (Reinholz & Andrews 2020).

The problem with using a simple linear unidirectional ToC or logic model approach is that it does not acknowledge or address any systemic issues because systems are complicated, with many components and actors which can be identified in advance and whose contribution to the ToC should be articulated (Rogers 2017). Green, Sim and Breiner (2013) state that 'Complex systems are a configuration of interacting, interdependent parts, connected through a web of relationships, that form a whole greater than the sum of its parts' (p. 255). Based on this definition, it is possible to regard mental illness as a complex system in itself because medical and psychological specialists indicate that the exact cause of a mental illness is unknown; however, it is a result of a complicated combination of genetic, psychological and environmental factors (Sachdev 2023), all of which are systems in themselves. For instance, according to Paris (2022), 'a genetic system is essentially a set of instructions that dictate our genetic makeup – what we look like and how we interact with our environment'. The child development theory by renowned American psychologist, Urie Bronfenbrenner, which is called the 'Ecological Systems Theory', views the development of a child 'as a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of the surrounding environment, from immediate settings of family and school to broad cultural values, laws, and customs' (Mcleod 2023, n.p.).

Systems thinking shows that the use of simple unilinear theories of change is inadequate for understanding the complexities within which mental illness emerges and persists, and thus, a complex range of treatments is required to support people living with mental illness. The multi-layered complexity of mental illness requires evaluation to take a systems approach. According to Green et al. (2013, p. 257), 'Evaluations that do not consider systems dynamics or conditions will likely miss aspects of the intervention and its environment that influence the intervention's operation and success' (p. 257). Evaluation practice has increasingly become aware of the importance of systems thinking, but this is primarily with regards to government systems and organisational systems; however, in psychology and psychiatry, there are important theories that refer to the diverse biological, neurological, psychological and socio-cultural environmental systems that influence people's mental well-being or lack thereof. The focus of theories of change cannot then solely be on the medical services required to treat people living with mental illness, but equity-focused

evaluation should aim to address each interacting system to truly bring about change for affected people, and this begins with incorporating empirically tested theories of change.

Conclusion

Evaluations that aim to contribute to equitable outcomes for people living with mental illness need to show an understanding of the illness from the medical perspective but also take into consideration the societal structures, institutions, cultures and norms that exacerbate the mental conditions and socio-economic circumstances of affected people. At the beginning of this chapter, literature was cited that described how people living with mental illness are highly likely to lose a job and have a decreased income. So, instead of reinforcing the value of interventions that solely focus on the illness and that assume that by addressing the illness alone, the socio-economic circumstances that these people find themselves in will automatically change, equity-focused evaluations need to consider how institutional and structural change can be facilitated. This can be done by providing evidence that supports increasing the accessibility and integration of people living with mental illness into mainstream society, including workplaces and schools, among others. Also, equity-focused evaluations need to consider how institutional and structural change can be facilitated by providing evidence that supports increasing the acceptance of people living with mental illness by bringing awareness to what it is and what it is not and the importance of support facilities or services in mainstream institutions but also changes in the way in which working and learning is conducted. For equity to occur, evaluation needs to contribute to building a society that is adapted to integrate and include people living with mental illness into every sphere and one that allows them to thrive, not simply one that integrates mental health services into mainstream public health systems.

Some of the approaches that consider issues of equity, inclusivity, power, socio-historical context are approaches that fall within the 'transformative evaluation paradigm' (Fish 2022):

> This paradigm is deeply rooted in the human rights agenda. Therefore, the ethical implications include the conscious inclusion of people generally excluded from mainstream society, making it applicable to culturally complex communities. This paradigm also pays attention to power issues in the research or evaluation process, including when designing and planning, implementing and using the research or evaluation findings. (p. 8)

Examples of these approaches and methods include participatory evaluation, emancipatory evaluation, human rights-based evaluation,

empowerment evaluation, transformative evaluation and an indigenous approach originating from Africa: the participatory rural appraisal (PRA). The PRA was recently renamed Participatory Learning for Action (PLA); it is an evaluation approach that enables smallholder farmers to analyse their own circumstances and to develop a common perspective regarding natural resource management and agriculture with others in their villages (BetterEvaluation 2021).

Chapter 9

Mechanisms and strategies perpetuating evaluative inequalities in policy practice in Zimbabwe

Zacharia Grand
Department of Public Governance,
School of Management, IT and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Durban, South Africa

Sybert Mutereko
Department of Public Governance,
School of Management, IT and Governance, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Durban, South Africa

Introduction[16]

This chapter draws on the author's PhD thesis, critically exploring how the Global Fund as a global health partnership for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has (un)intended impacts on the tracking of key M&E performance indicators for public health programmes in Zimbabwe. The

16. Sections in this chapter represent a reworking of Grand, Z 2022, 'Exploring the effects of Collaborative Global Health Partnerships in the Ministry of Health and Child Care's Monitoring and Evaluation systems in Zimbabwe', Doctor of Public Administration, School of Management, Information Technology, and Governance, College of Law and Management Studies, University of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, 2022, under supervision of Prof. Dr Sybert Mtereko.

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chapter explicitly explores how the partnership discourse emphasising mutuality and equity-based collaborative governance systems leads to missed opportunities to identify and correct evaluative inequalities in Zimbabwe. Drawing insights from the new public governance (NPG) theory (Osborne 2006, p. 381) and critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough 1989; Van Dijk 2005), the chapter provides insights into the uncomfortable and under-discussed negative effects of collaborative partnerships involving resourced global health partnerships (GHPs) from wealth countries and resource-constrained local partners in developing countries.

This chapter provides an overview of partnership literature, evaluation and inequity as the basis and benchmarks for problematising partnership practice through support from the Global Fund to fight against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria (GFATM) in Zimbabwe. This chapter draws insights from the social constructivist paradigm and CDA, arguing that partnership discourses promote the vaunted benefits of formal autonomy, freedom, knowledge-sharing and informed deliberation, which have become the greatest threats to promoting equity in evaluations as they promote a false sense of mutuality and equity between the GFATM and its associates on the one hand and the Ministry of Health and its local health partners on the other.

Documentary reviews and key informant interviews with M&E staff purposively selected for their knowledge of the subject provided the views that form the basis of the discussions in this chapter. The conclusion in this chapter is that partnership discourse hides and depoliticises the effects of power and, therefore, prolongs the possibility of equitable evaluations as it gives the false impression of a self-fulfilling discursive logic of shared decision-making, participation and informed deliberation among the partners in Zimbabwe. As a result, (un)declared contests are inherent in this partnership arrangement, thereby failing to fulfil the key tenets of mutuality, trust, and organisational identity, which form the basis of true partnerships (Ansell & Gash 2008; Brinkerhoff 2002; Emerson, Nabatchi & Balogh 2012; Vangen, Hayes & Cornforth 2015).

Background and context of the Global Fund in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe's health M&E policies have evolved significantly because of the involvement of global health partners like the GFATM. This transformation has shifted from the alma Ata-based primary health care (PHC) evaluation policies of the 1980s, aimed at rectifying colonial-era imbalances, to the more liberal selected primary health care (SPHC) approaches of the 1990s.

By the turn of the millennium, GHPs had become the preferred method of public health governance (Buse & Harmer 2007, p. 259).

The GFATM, established in 2001, plays a prominent role in this landscape, promoting transparency, accountability and inclusivity in health programmes. It mobilises technical expertise and financial support from the private sector and various governments. In Zimbabwe, GFATM began supporting M&E systems in 2001 through a round-based system, later transitioning to the new funding model in 2014. This support expanded tracking of prevention and treatment services across the country, particularly for HIV, with GFATM funding many recipients of antiretroviral therapy (ART). However, budget reallocation in 2012 resulted in a funding gap for antiretroviral (ARV) procurement in 2014 (Ministry of Health and Child Care 2013).

The GFATM's 5-year budget from 2016 allocated a significant portion toward strengthening the routine M&E reporting system in Zimbabwe (Jain & Zorzi 2017, p. s97). Initially managed by three principal recipients (PRs), Zimbabwe's GFATM programme shifted to United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) management in 2009 because of economic challenges and governance concerns highlighted by an audit of round 5. The additional safeguard policy (ASP) was implemented in May 2009, excluding the government as a direct recipient of GFATM funds.

The UNDP became the PR for all GFATM grants in Zimbabwe, extending to the new funding model from 2014. Sub-recipients, including government entities, civil society organisations and UN agencies, played critical roles in grant execution.

The GFATM's 2017–2022 data use and improvement framework aimed to build sustainable national M&E systems, emphasising country ownership, integrated health management information systems (HMIS), data analysis and use and stakeholder engagement beyond the Ministry of Health. The country's coordinating mechanism played a vital governance role in Zimbabwe, emphasising partnerships, effective representation, transparency and good governance practices. It ensured balanced representation, engaged key populations and oversaw PR performance.

Despite the support, Zimbabwe's national health M&E and information system faced challenges. Given the substantial reliance on the latter, the government's dual role as a donor and implementer raised questions about the nature and impact of its partnership with GFATM. These questions warrant scrutiny to understand the partnership's unintended effects on the health M&E system.

In summary, Zimbabwe's health M&E policies have evolved with GFATM's involvement, but challenges persist, raising important questions about the

nature and impact of the partnership between the government and a major global health partner.

Conceptual framework

The following section discusses GHPs within the NPG and CDA frameworks. The section also discusses evaluation and inequalities as it applies to the arguments raised in this chapter.

Conceptualising global health partnerships

Global Health Partnerships in this chapter are understood within a network governance framework in which state and non-state actors emphasise the desire to achieve shared goals in specific areas of global health (Buse & Walt 2000, p. 550). Similarly, Carlson (2004, p. 5) proposes an operational definition of GHPs as a collaborative relationship among multiple organisations sharing risks and benefits to achieve shared goals. Unlike Buse and Walt, Carlson's conceptualisation focuses on the goals and formal structures instead of the actors. The Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank share a similar conceptualisation with Carlson, viewing partnerships as including 'a mechanism to assess success and make adjustments' or 'an agreement to work together to fulfil an obligation or undertake a specific task by committing resources and sharing the risks as well as the benefits' (Buse & Walt 2000, p. 550). Likewise, Buse and Harmer (2007, p. 259) focus on 'institutionalised initiatives to address global health problems, in which public and for-profit private sector organisations have a voice in collective decision-making'.

The World Health Organization (WHO) describes a partnership in the health sector as a means to 'bring together a set of actors for the common goal of improving the health of populations based on mutually agreed roles and principles' (Kickbusch & Quick 1998, p. 69). The definition considers agreement on key principles as a crucial factor without destabilising the balance of power between the parties to enable each to retain its core values and identities. According to the WHO, the ultimate goal of ethical partnership principles is to achieve public health care gains and beneficence, to avoid maleficence such as ill-health and to ensure partner autonomy and equity (Buse & Walt 2000, p. 550).

The preceding conceptual discussions locate GHPs within the NPG theory (Osborne 2006, p. 381). Osborne conceptualises a new governance framework that emphasises inter-organisational collaborations based on trust or relational contracts, with institutional and implementation

structures that promote plural planning and decision-making. The chapter elaborates the theory within the framework of four governance models, namely the collaborative governance model (Ansell & Gash 2008), the integrated framework for collaborative governance (Emerson et al. 2012), collaborative governance (Vangen et al. 2015) and the government-non-profit partnership model (Brinkerhoff 2002). The NPG theory assumes consensus-oriented stakeholder collaborations emphasising trust, mutual interests and respect for partner autonomy (Ansell & Gash 2008; Brinkerhoff 2002; Emerson et al. 2012; Vangen et al. 2015). These fundamental assumptions provide the building blocks and scaffolds for a better understanding GHPs' contribution to evaluative inequalities as unintended effects. However, the key assumptions of the NPG theory tend to be its major weaknesses in collaborations that involve partners with unresolved mistrust backdated to the colonial period. As a result, the chapter further draws from the CDA as a complementary framework that analyses the framing and structure of global health care development terminologies to reveal its high politics and effects on the partnership in practice.

In a broader context, CDA represents frames, narratives and normative appeals in interactive communications and the underlying ideologies, public philosophies and values they represent (Barlow & Thow 2021, p. 2). The chapter hypothesises that partnerships for M&E use specific discourses to hide their underlying ideologies, philosophies and values, thereby perpetuating inequalities. As a result, this complementary framework brings the needed dynamism to decode the hidden language that forms the basis of prolonging this inequality. According to Van Dijk (2005, p. 352), discourse analysis aims to 'understand, expose, and ultimately resist social inequality'. It provides a critical view that identifies power relations and struggles of power and the deployment of discursive activities to construct and maintain unequal power relations (Yazdannik et al. 2017, p. 4). Furthermore, CDA's analytic amalgamation of discourse as the actual text (description), as discursive practices (interpretation) and as social context (explanation) (Fairclough 1989, pp. 24–26) shows its superiority in reaching parts that other theories and methods cannot reach (Shaw 2010, pp. 200–206) thereby providing a comprehensive understanding that exposes and informs strategies to resist social inequalities in partnerships ultimately. Hence, this chapter draws on these strengths to reveal and expose the use of language to conceal the simmering contestations that perpetuate the colonially inherited inequalities in evaluative practice in Zimbabwe.

Conceptualising evaluation and inequities

Drawing from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) evaluation, this chapter describes evaluation as a

systematic and objective assessment of ongoing or completed projects, programmes or policies (Zall Kusek & Rist 2004, p. 12). The focus is on design, implementation and results. This process aims to determine the relevance and achievement of objectives and to promote efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The process aims to provide credible, helpful information that feeds into evidence-based decisions. The process also involves documenting good and bad practices and lessons learned in the repetitive learning process to benefit local beneficiaries and funding partners. Evaluations draw lessons from beyond direct project support. The need for accountability in donor funds utilisation mainly drives the increase in demand for evaluation practices in Africa (Mapitsa, Tirivanhu & Pophiwa 2019). Whereas development partners provided the technical and financial support for evaluative capacity-building in countries like South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, Benin and Ghana, there remains a paucity of government-led and funded equity-based evaluation initiatives in Africa (Mapitsa et al. 2019, p. 62).

The term 'inequity' refers to the disparities between population groups that are avoidable and unfairly generated and maintained by what Evans and Peters (2001) have termed 'unjust social arrangements' that offend common notions of fairness (Whitehead et al. 2006, p. 3) and keeps a particular group of society in deprivation. While perspectives on what constitutes inequality may exhibit some regional variation, there exists significant shared consensus on the matter. Scholars have raised concern over inequality and inequity driven by the unprecedented encroachment of the private sector into large, previously government-reserved parts of sectors such as social services and infrastructure but are now dominated by the public–private partnership (Picciotto 2015). The level of inequity and inequality remains dire in Africa because of a combination of weak governance systems, with the world's poorest 48 countries having combined GDPs equivalent to the wealth of the three wealthiest males in the world (Coates 2004, p. 250).

Literature review

The following section briefly presents relevant literature demonstrating mechanisms and paradigms through which health evaluative inequalities are perpetuated. The focused review provides the basis for a comprehensive understanding of the arguments.

The partnership paradigms in policy and practice

This section identifies and discusses four literary perspectives in the partnership discourse in global development. These are pragmatic-

instrumental, critical-ideological, critical-governmentality and critical-constructivists.

Pragmatic-instrumental literature

Scholars in this category view the partnership as a valuable and necessary arrangement that is unproblematically implementable. The literature assumes that partnerships empower local communities to implement initiatives based on mutuality, trust and reciprocity (Brinkerhoff 2002, pp. 22–23). The scholarship suggests managerial interventions and capacity-building, adherence to policies, regulations and guidelines to address partnership imbalances. This perspective's shortcomings are the failure to anticipate and acknowledge the effects of inherited colonial imbalances and undeclared interests in the partnership.

The critical-ideological literature

Scholars in this category include Abrahamsen (2004), Van Dijk (2005, p. 352) and Fairclough (1989, pp. 24–26), who argue that partnerships form part of unspectacular strategies to advance neoliberal ideology through discourse and ideas. The strategies do not have to rely on aggressive physical or coercive programmes but on persuasive and attractive processes, including education, religion, entertainment, training and development of managerial procedures like M&E. Likewise, Baaz (2005) argued that partnership languages are rhetorical disguises or (mis) representations that rebrand the old-style paternalistic intentions of colonial projects. The partnership language carefully depoliticises and nullifies opposition to dominant economic interests through language.

The critical-governmentality literature

The scholars subscribing to the critical-governmentality view partnerships through the Foucauldian perspective of knowledge and power. Michel Foucault argued that power and knowledge work in complementary and relational ways. As a result, no one has a monopoly over power as it does not reside in specific individuals and institutions. The critical perspective identifies the unspectacular deployment of subtle, complex and productive bi-directional workings of power through discourse and ideas as evidence of influence from afar through cooperative rather than coercive measures. The strategies appear to empower yet restrain local action in poorer countries through technically depoliticising the governance of development (Barnes 2011, p. 38). The scholars draw inspiration from works by Li (2007) and Abrahamson (2004) to identify how partnerships work through soft power strategies to (re)educate and (re)configure local

decision-makers' habits, aspirations and desires in ways that benefit and promote neoliberal narratives. The aim is to achieve conditioning and (re) producing modern and self-disciplined citizens who subscribe to the neoliberal common sense by enlisting them as responsible agents of their liberal development.

The critical-constructivist partnership literature

The critical-constructivist perspective views partnerships as contextual encounters in which partners construct their understanding of obligations in the partnership. The ontological core assumptions of this perspective acknowledge the complexities of meaning creation in social and political phenomena and that because of the inherently *social nature of* (f)actors, it is impossible to understand partnerships in aid policy and practice unless we know their ideas and interests (Hay 2002, p. 254). Likewise, knowledge generation and understanding of partnerships shape the actors' meanings, beliefs, preferences and actions within their broader context. However, this perspective's limitation is its erroneous assumption that we can interpret and understand the partnerships outside its communicative processes. Yet, knowledge creation is sometimes dialogical rather than predetermined. The scholars argue that knowledge as a social phenomenon 'does not exist out there' – it is co-created.

Soft power mechanisms in global health partnership governance systems

The following section discusses policy agenda setting, norm diffusion, rhetoric and discourse control, framing, conceptual boundaries and performativity of M&E artefacts as soft power mechanisms in partnerships.

Policy agenda-setting and institutional control

The policy agenda-setting process is a contested space. Scholarly work on agenda setting has shown that the process is an art (Rothman 2011, p. 53) and science, suggesting the need for tact and craft competency. The scholar demonstrated how global health partners rely on expert, scientific, and technocratic power to influence local development agendas. They capitalise on their international reputation, legitimate and expert power and discourse control as attractive tools to influence the local M&E policy agenda. Taylor and Harper (2014, pp. 214–216) demonstrate how the GFATM successfully convinced the local partners to ensure HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and malaria are on the national agenda in Uganda, convincing the partners to move from the unsupported sector-wide approaches.

Similarly, Armstrong et al. (2019) warn that the external influence of Global Fund structures on local agenda-setting in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe risked drifting into a 'political theatre' because of a lack of genuine collaborative engagement with the local partners in budgeting and other procedural processes. Likewise, Cummings et al. (2018, p. 735) illustrate how GHPs emphasise 'pluralist-participatory' discourse at the policy and agenda-setting stage and a 'techno-scientific-economic discourse' at the policy implementation level. Khan et al. (2018, p. 219) discuss how GHPs in Cambodia and Pakistan use evidence-based rhetoric to finance predetermined HIV agenda items ahead of other pressing challenges like mental health. These examples illustrate how GHPs divert local priorities to focus on their agenda.

Normpreneurship and diffusion in global health partnerships

The concept of norm diffusion involves setting common-sensical and undisputed, generally accepted standards through circulating ideas at the global level. Through 'normalisation', 'influential knowledge producers help transform a rough concept into a widely accepted transnational norm based on expert knowledge, detailed definitions, and statistical exercises' (Nay 2014, p. 210). The GHPs, like the World Bank, are renowned for initiating and circulating influential global ideas. As a result, it acquired the status and reputation as a 'knowledge' bank and 'norm' entrepreneur (Knack et al. 2020; Nay 2014). The World Bank and the OECD played a major role in 'normalising the concept of "fragile state," referring to countries experiencing severe instability from weak governance, conflict, and severe poverty' (Nay 2014, p. 211). The concept was transformed through successive definition exercises and expert knowledge. Other scholars like Sastry and Dutta (2013, p. 23) and Smith (2018, pp. 6–7) invoke anthropological and sociological characterisation of 'doxa' to denote a society's taken-for-granted, unquestioned truths to define a higher level of normalisation influence of GHPs on potentially contested concepts like partnerships. The implication of doxa on local agenda setting is that GHP-imported ideas become unquestionable and difficult to contest even if they perpetuate evaluative inequalities at local health systems.

Rhetoric and discourse control

Rhetoric and discourse control are closely related to norm diffusion and agenda setting, as GHPs can apply the strategies simultaneously. Rothman (2011, p. 49) demonstrates how soft power, like discourse control, is a practical means and mechanism to influence international relations.

The technique involves the foregrounding of key messages and backgrounding unfavourable conversations. This process unleashes rhetoric against some actors to align with the desired discourse. Khan et al. (2018, p. 218) observe that GHPs, like the World Bank, and WHO applied inter-sectoral leverage strategies in Pakistan and Cambodia to determine how the recipient country was perceived globally, influencing the countries to align with desired health policies. Negative coverage of these countries had the undesired effect of affecting their tourism sectors.

Framing of monitoring and evaluation issues in policy and practice in LMICs

It is a powerful linguistic tool that relies on texts, symbols and meanings to influence policy and practices in LMICs. Rushton and Williams (2012, p. 148) demonstrate how framing linguistic, cognitive and symbolic power to identify, label, describe, interpret and address problems plays a determining role in policy and practice. Similarly, Fukuda-Parr (2016, pp. 49–51) discusses the MDGs and SDGs, asserting that framing determines the definition of issues, the explanation of causes and the justification of policy responses and priorities. Fukuda-Parr makes an important observation and demonstrates that the framing of most MDG targets and indicators had the unintended effect of marginalising ongoing strategic processes for people empowerment and transforming economies with adverse impacts on poverty reduction and females' political voices. Similarly, Shiffman and Shawar (2022) discuss how framing global health issues could shape differences in levels of priority of attention and resources they receive from global health organisations. Through a review of scholarship on global health policy-making processes to examine the role of framing in shaping global health priorities, Shiffman and Shawar identify the influence of three framing processes – securitisation, moralisation and technification. With 'securitisation', they refer to an issue's framing as an existential threat, 'moralisation' as an ethical imperative and 'technification' as a wise investment in science (Shiffman & Shawar 2022).

Monitoring and evaluation of conceptual boundaries

Conceptual boundaries involve a specific 'position taking' which occurs when actors overtly or covertly relate entities separated by a boundary (Kislov, Hyde & McDonald 2017, p. 1426). In this context, boundary work refers to the conceptual demarcation of knowledge creation, decoding and transmission in various contexts or communities. The boundaries could include how scientific knowledge is distinguished from lay or non-scientific

pursuits. The GHPs, as 'boundary organisations' frame, diffuse and set global M&E knowledge production agendas because of their privileged epistemic and legitimate power as international organisations. Peters (2016, p. 14) and Mueller-Hirth (2012, pp. 664–666) demonstrate how expatriates and international NGOs influenced the type of local information reported to external audiences in a global project in Angola and South Africa. In Cambodia, Aveling and Jovchelovitch (2014, p. 38) observed that 'conceptual representation of self and others' created boundaries between the GFATM and its local partners in a collaborative HIV programme leading to the privileged preoccupation with quantitative targets and indicators as the local partners chased the performance-based targets set by the Global Fund. The mechanisms of influence included expatriate staff using rhetoric and discourse control, framing in the translation of global scientific information into formats useful for local policy-making, and mediating conflicts (Gray 2016; Nay 2014; Rushton & Williams 2012).

Performativity and monitoring and evaluation artefacts

In the previous discussion, despite its limited value in capturing local experiences, the ubiquity of the logical framework provided insights into some of the GHP M&E artefacts that perform rather than capture and report the local dynamics of M&E. The list of M&E artefacts playing influential performative roles in M&E includes GHP guidelines, protocols, plans and frameworks. Using an example from Tanzania, Coultas (2020, p. 96) provides a dialogical case illustrating how international development agencies encourage local practices that perform the logic of rigid predictability aligned to international reporting rather than meeting local needs. Regardless of the difficulties in collecting locally relevant data, their donor contractual requirements provided limited options to adapt the donor M&E tools to capture local experiences.

While some scholars have identified the person-to-person 'othering' effects of power imbalances, Coultas discusses the 'self–other' relations in evidence-making involving person-to-artefact interdependencies through the M&E intervention. This insightful observation shows the power imbalances between GHPs and local partners, expressed through M&E artefacts. The evidence shows that the M&E artefacts wield power and represent the invisible presence of the GHPs from afar. In this process, Coultas successfully illustrates the conflict between the local implementer perspectives and the perspective of the artefacts. As a result, the dialogical approach reconciles the GHP logic at odds with local realities. Until this is corrected, pretentious reporting of M&E results leads to perverse self-silencing by local partners.

Theoretical discussion

This chapter employs a qualitative research design, focusing on a case study of Zimbabwe's Ministry of Health and Child Care. It relies on qualitative feedback from purposively selected M&E staff within the Ministry, supplemented by a critical analysis of four national M&E policy documents. The qualitative approach is chosen for its systematic and comprehensive data gathering, organisation, interpretation, analysis and communication, effectively addressing real-world concerns (Tracy 2013, p. 4).

In examining the impact of GFATM's partnership support for M&E in Zimbabwe's public health, the chapter draws upon context-specific and value-based insights perceived by M&E officers in the Ministry. It acknowledges the exploratory nature of the issues discussed, recognising that there is no single definitive answer to the questions posed by the problem under consideration. The research design aligns with a social constructivist ontology, subjective and value-based epistemology and the interpretivism paradigm, which asserts that perception originates from a self-reflexive subjective standpoint, with social and historical aspects preceding individual motivations and actions (Tracy 2013, p. 4). The chapter also argues that partnership for M&E is shaped by identity-forming discourses conducive to dialogic knowledge creation. It further recognises that the information generated may benefit some more than others. The chapter views partnership relationships between GFATM and the Ministry of Health as dynamic, requiring ongoing renegotiation, debate, and interpretation because of inherent power imbalances in real-life inter-organisational relations.

Furthermore, the constructivist ontological perspective holds that social and political phenomena in partnerships are context- and time-specific. This implies that the meaning of policy ideas, like partnerships, is socially and politically constructed, contested, legitimised and sometimes strategically appropriated within existing power relations (Barnes 2011, p. 58). Thus, the social constructivist or interpretivist epistemology in this chapter relies on the subjective creation of meaning from the literature reviewed, the researcher's analysis of policy documents and the responses of key informants whose data inform the discussions. It underscores that the inquiry into the nature of knowledge and the validity of issues raised hinges on the beliefs and values of research participants, echoing current debates in critical literature regarding collaborative partnerships as a preferred model of public governance.

Furthermore, language plays a fundamental role in understanding the social context in which local M&E officers experience the impact of GFATM support for M&E partnerships. Drawing from Van Dijk's insights, the chapter

argues that CDA is a potent tool for identifying and resisting power (Van Dijk 2005, p. 352). Consequently, this chapter employs CDA to uncover instances of social power abuse, inequality and dominance within social institutions and to reveal the instrumental use of power and ideology in partnerships. This chapter highlights the fact that CDA can be used to perpetuate social inequality and domination, making it a valuable framework to illuminate ideological and power struggles often overlooked in the partnership between GFATM and the Ministry of Health and Child Care in Zimbabwe. Additionally, Khan et al. (2020, p. 149) illustrate how discourse implies a dialectical relationship in partnerships to create contextually and socially relevant knowledge and meaning. Therefore, the chapter's adoption of CDA is a critical tool to uncover under-discussed and unintended issues within health partnerships in Zimbabwe.

The chapter's approach is further justified by the work of Michel Foucault, who views discourse as a comprehensive perspective that enables investigations into institutional oppressions and subjugations. Foucault's poststructuralist school of thought and his examination of the relationship between discourse, thought and social practices underpin the framework used in this chapter. This approach provides insights into how the existing partnership between GFATM and the Ministry of Health benefits the former and its associates more than it benefits the latter and its local partners.

Evaluative inequalities in policy practices: The unintended effects of GFATM's support to the Ministry's monitoring and evaluation system in Zimbabwe

The following section discusses the (un)intended effects of GFATM's support to the Ministry of Health's M&E system, which includes the digital exclusion of local under-resourced partners, disruption of existing systems, clientelism, normalising parallel M&E systems, promoting brain drain, mute and perverse practices, partner contestations and 'othering', outcomes that perpetuate evaluative inequalities in the country.

GHPs-supported monitoring and evaluation facilitating the digital exclusion

The chapter indicates that the Ministry of Health and Child Care collaborates with the Global Fund and the president's emergency plan for aids relief (PEPFAR) as a major funding partner to GFATM to facilitate coordinated and integrated collection of electronic patient-level and consolidated M&E data to enable clinical and management decisions. However, an analysis of the results reveals that this partnership had the unintended effects of

digitally excluding the Ministry's other crucial departments and consortium local partners for the HIV, TB and malaria programmes. For example, the partnership for M&E exclusively supports electronic M&E systems like the electronic health records and the electronic patient monitoring system, which does not fully integrate the administrative and human resources indicators into the core reporting system. The system prioritises programme M&E performance indicators. Yet, administrative and human resource indicators have a predictive power to inform programme planning, monitoring and evaluation of the whole programme. Similarly, some local consortium partners for M&E are without the electronic system and hence find it difficult to contribute and retrieve information from the system.

The exclusion of local partners and key Ministry of Health departments suggests unintended effects of GFATM's interventions that perpetuate evaluative inequalities in the country. As a result, one argues that the current partnership does not fully satisfy the NPG theory principles of mutuality, organisational identity, trust building and shared decision-making as proposed by Osborne (2006, p. 381). The findings perhaps also suggest that the ideals of NPG theory have limits in promoting equity in local evaluation initiatives in unstable economic environments such as Zimbabwe. Scholars (Bopp, Harmon & Voida 2017, pp. 3611–3613) observed similar consequences of nonprofits' and social enterprises' data-driven work, leading to the erosion of local partner autonomy, data drift and data fragmentation contrary to the goals of productivity and empowerment.

Thus, the GFATMs' support for electronic health M&E systems in Zimbabwe excludes other less-resourced partners, thereby unintentionally perpetuating evaluative inequalities contrary to the mutuality, trust and reciprocity values that underpin partnerships as articulated in the NPG theory. This makes the theory insufficient to comprehensively explain partnerships involving parties that have different levels of resource endowments. As a result, there is a risk that the theory institutionalises the impossibility of equitable evaluations in Zimbabwe.

Normalisation of parallel monitoring and evaluation systems

The analysis of interview responses and documentary review of M&E policies reveals the (un)intended effect of normalisation of parallel GHP-supported M&E systems in Zimbabwe. The chapter reveals that GHPs finance parallel electronic M&E systems to facilitate quick turnaround reporting to donors. As a result, the Ministry coordinates many donor-specific M&E systems that have been normalised as part of the reporting system. Key informant interviewees concurred that parallel reporting is helpful as it provides opportunities for data triangulation. However, the

chapter highlights that while data triangulation is essential in M&E, sponsoring a parallel reporting system is neither a solution nor a data quality check intervention.

As a result, the parallel data reporting systems do not consolidate and facilitate integrated information management for local decision-making and programme learning. Ultimately, the arrangement perpetuates evaluative inequalities in a fragile health system suffering from weak governance and the effects of economic sanctions since 2001.

The normalisation of parallel systems contradicts the conventional view that parallel M&E systems are pathological to local M&E systems. The conventional view considers partnerships for M&E as progressive and functional (Craveiro & Dussault 2016, p. 482; Jain & Zorzi 2017, pp. S96–S98). This chapter reinforces this conventional view and further states that the existence of parallel systems implies parallel rather than shared beliefs, capacities and evidence of a lack of principled engagement. However, the chapter also highlights the need to clarify what constitutes parallel systems. The argument by one respondent hinges on the impossibility and unnecessary expectation of the ministry and local partners like Organization for Public Health, Interventions and Development (OPHID) trust to use one reporting system if their systems contribute to the same goal. The argument is plausible within the government–NGO partnership framework (Brinkerhoff 2002, pp. 22–23), emphasising organisational identity and mutuality as key to partnerships. Thus, this chapter suggests the need for partner independence guided by national M&E goals. To this extent, parallel reporting systems are tolerated.

However, considering the weak coordination and leadership roles from the Ministry of Health perspective, this chapter maintains that partner independence, as suggested in the government–NGO partnership framework and opinion, requires contextualisation as it proves unproductive in weak health systems. This is particularly concerning considering that the Ministry of Health receives over 90% of its budget from external partners, making the partnership uneven (PEPFAR COP 2020). While partnerships are not evaluated based on financial support alone, the study reveals that GHPs also supports administrative, human resources and computer equipment support to the Ministry. To that extent, one argues that the GFATM support for evaluative programmes in the public health system constitutes parallel systems to a significant degree. As a result, they perpetuate evaluative inequalities in the public health sector.

Digital disruptions in monitoring and evaluation

This chapter further reveals that while the GFATMs' support to the Ministry of Health and Child Care intended to facilitate smooth

data-collection and reporting, the parallel electronic health systems lacked the appropriate infrastructure to support the continuous electronic data capturing and reporting. For example, the collaborative partnership for M&E has not provided the appropriate infrastructure to support the continuous electronic data-collection and reporting required to manage parallel data management processes for clinical staff, resulting in adverse health care system disruption. As a result, some key electronic processes that rely on electricity availability get disrupted during load shedding, necessitating the paper-based system's maintenance. Thus, the GFATM's intended goal of facilitating smooth data-collection and reporting has had the opposite effect, with public health clinicians spending more time consolidating and validating paper-based reports because of the system's failure.

While this observation does not directly link the unavailability of electricity to GHP support, it highlights the need for thorough feasibility of these interventions and priorities. As a result, disruption to data-collection, analysis and reporting leads to insufficient data availability for informed evaluative decisions. Yet, the GHP's support for technology-driven discourses overlooks the practical challenges accompanying its use in environments with unsuitable infrastructure like Zimbabwe. Ultimately, the well-intended support for efficient electronic M&E systems becomes disruptive because of poor infrastructure to support the plan. The results include poor evaluative outcomes perpetuating exclusion from the global evaluation systems.

However, this chapter acknowledges that digital disruptions are sometimes necessary to activate transformative evaluative change. In the current business discourse, 'digital disruption' has opportunities to improve health care systems (El Khatib et al. 2022, p. 564). Similarly, public administration scientists are experimenting with concepts such as digital governance, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), and public administration by algorithms (Bunasim 2020; Veale & Brass 2019). However, it is unclear if the digital disruptions in Zimbabwe's health care system derive as much value considering the need to attend to basic data-collection systems before investing in advanced virtual systems. The argument does not suggest antagonism to investments in technology to improve M&E systems. It draws attention to the need for thorough feasibility assessments to ensure the implementation of appropriate systems to avoid disruptions that contribute to evaluative inequalities because of a lack of quality data for decision-making. Where the infrastructure is unsuitable, digital disruptions contradict the spirit of partnerships as they fail to bring beneficiation to the system.

Contested nature of GHP-supported monitoring and evaluation

This chapter further reveals the contested nature of GHP-supported M&E partnerships in Zimbabwe. This chapter illustrates concerns regarding using technology to circumvent health data security protocols involving some GHPs. They characterised these circumstances as sovereign invasion, which suggests subtle acknowledgement of contests contrary to the partnership principles of trust. Highlighting the sensitivities and importance of safeguarding local health data, one respondent referred to data as the 'new oil'. Drawing from CDA, the statement presupposes the reference to 'new oil' as an illustration of the contested nature of extractive oil mining processes in many parts of the world. Likewise, it graphically depicts the 'extractive' and disruptive nature of data-collection procedures by GHPs like the GFATM in Zimbabwe.

The above discussion resonates with scholars' similar observations (Gimbel et al. 2018, p. 80), referring to health data as the 'new oil'. The context of the respondent's answer is complaining about GHP activities, which signify contestations in the partnership. To this extent, the GHP's support for M&E partnerships fuels mistrust contrary to its values of mutual engagements. Thus, the discourse of partnerships conceals the subtle contestations that prolong opportunities for frank and transformative conversations, thereby perpetuating evaluative inequalities in Zimbabwe. Partnerships driven by subtle confrontations concealed in partnerships delay opportunities to transform them to deliver locally relevant interventions.

Patron-clientelism

This chapter also highlights how GHPs like the GFATM unintentionally promote patron–client relations involving seconded champions in the Ministry of Health and Child Care. Key informant responses indicate a trend whereby senior staff on the chief operating level (c-suite) receive material incentives and salary support for their level of effort in GHPs-supported projects. Whereas GHP support with materials like vehicles, computers and finances facilitates the implementation of beneficial programmes in Zimbabwe, this chapter highlights how partnerships for M&E import practices are akin to patron–client relations.

This chapter further observes that partnership terminologies such as 'incentives' or 'salary support' conceal the intentions of GHPs as some of the interventions compromise the senior staff who find themselves

obligated to grant access to carefully framed demands for information from the GHPs. Thus, incentivising senior bureaucrats represents a soft power strategy that reduces resistance to information requests without recourse to expensive and openly contentious means. The discussion raises concerns as senior bureaucrats advance GHP's interests, signifying missed opportunities to direct the GHPs to align their support to national health priorities. As a result, local evaluative needs receive less attention, as reflected in higher level-focused interventions at the quinary levels with limited support for primary level data needs. This chapter suggests a destabilisation effect in the national evaluative system as donor priorities take precedence. These challenges manifest in how GHPs decide evaluative terms of references and methodologies.

The observations above resonate with findings by Mapitsa et al. (2019, p. 125), who assert that evaluations' donors or commissioners define the choice of evaluations and its methods. This chapter further suggests that the soft power effects of material incentives potentially create conditions described by Alvesson and Spicer (2012, p. 1196) as functional stupidity or functional ignorance. The concept describes the making of questionable decisions, presumably out of ignorance. The process sometimes involves making the decisions that include 'not to decide or act' or decisions not ordinarily expected from patriotic and informed leaders in the C-suite. As a result, the questionable decisions have a direct link to the material support to the staff that amounts to patron–client relations. Ultimately, policy decisions do not reflect the evaluative priorities for the country but external donors and commissioners.

However, patron–client relations are not as linear and unidirectional as suggested in the preceding discussions. The traditional view of patron–client relations assumes capture without acknowledging the possibility of agentive reflexivity by the local bureaucrats, who may instrumentally appropriate the GHP resources for the greater good as an obfuscation and extraversion strategy. Patterson (2018, p. 16) asserts that because state elites seek rents, they look to benefit from donor health resources. Similarly, Herrick (2018, p. 1) and Okeke (2018, p. 1) remind us of the precarity and temporality of partnerships involving GHPs in collaborative partnerships with perceived weaker governments. Their studies reveal that the buck stops with the government in all collaborative governance partnerships. Thus, even in the most unstable health economies, government bureaucrats wield some power over well-resourced partners from developed countries. However, whichever way one views these relations, they expose the limits of partnership discourse as they fail the test of mutuality and trust. As a result, they delay opportunities to narrow the evaluative gaps at local health systems level.

GHPs and monitoring and evaluation brain drain in the health sector

The chapter also reveals GHPs' contribution to the internal and external brain drain of key ministry M&E staff as they join local and international NGOs. Through analysing key informant responses, this chapter finds that the GHP capacity-building support for local and international M&E training programmes and local skills-building initiatives such as HIV population-based modelling, HIV estimates and big data analytics has had (un) intended effects of preparing the staff for lucrative local and international NGOs posts. Thus, the study observed that M&E staff in the Ministry appropriate these opportunities for personal skills and professional development to launch lucrative career opportunities for better rewarding jobs in the NGO sector. When this happens, the Ministry lacks adequate staff to coordinate evaluative programmes. As a result, some of the previous ministry staff were left to coordinate the programmes from across the partnership aisle as partners. Thus, this chapter highlights the disruptive effects of the partnerships for M&E, resulting in widening evaluative inequalities through dependence on donor resources. The observations do not suggest capacity-building for ministry staff as an ill-informed intervention but highlight the need for reflection by both the Ministry and the GHPs like GFATM on the unanticipated effects of these partnerships. Therefore, these observations call for reflection in the partnership discourse that presents capacity-building as a (un)disputed good intervention (Herrick & Brooks 2018, p. 528).

The GHPs supporting capacity-building initiatives aim to strengthen the systems, not create opportunities for individual career growth. To this extent, the unintended effects of GHP support perpetuate evaluative inequalities through skills flight from the Ministry. While Shukla (2013, p. 68) would classify the personal staff opportunities as unanticipated positive effects of GHP support for M&E, this chapter draws attention to its adverse effects on the evaluative system.

Drawing from the critical-governmentality literature, the discussion on brain drain invokes the current conceptualisation by Lilja and Baaz (2022, p. 190) regarding an increasingly new form of governance in which human resource subjects' desires for career professional improvement and creativity are extorted to control and profit from them. The concept that the scholars call 'arte-politics' is a form of governance technology that seeks to regulate individual behaviour in terms of self-realisation and the distribution of 'freedom' to control the labour situation of the employees. The demand for capacity-building on technical M&E skills suggests the influence of arte-politics in Zimbabwe's public health M&E system. At the

same time, distributed freedom and self-realisation represent some form of neoliberal exploitation. Despite being beneficial to individual careers, it is detrimental to the partnership goals for local health systems. Ultimately, it perpetuates evaluative inequalities through the attractive power of arte-politics manifesting as brain drain.

Promoting mute and perverse practices

This chapter also further reveals those partnerships for M&E with GHPs like GFATM manifest pathological and harmful practices (perverse) to local health systems goals. For example, this chapter highlights concern over the high targets GHPs like the GFATM set for the government and its local partners to achieve in programmes like medical male circumcision to prevent HIV. The GHP support links the achievement of targets to further funding under the results-based funding framework. This chapter asserts that some local partners connive with health facility staff to report falsified results to the donors to facilitate the next financial disbursement.

Furthermore, this chapter reveals that the attractive desire to continue receiving foreign aid for evaluative programmes silences the voice of local partners (mutes) and causes blind following on crucial policy issues. Unlike the patron–client relations focused on an individual level, mute and perverse practices are at the policy level, where the government deliberately allows certain processes (not) to happen if they can facilitate further funding. For example, the government of Zimbabwe embraced public health programmes targeting key populations like males having sex with males, departing from its previous critical stance on the issue (Zimbabwe – OHCHR UPR submissions 2022). Although the government's policy position on this issue remains unclear, the current major funded HIV and TB programmes are targeting the key populations. The plausible explanation for this situation is the government's desire to access the HIV and TB programmes that exclusively target the key populations. The observation, therefore, seeks to highlight the possibility of missed opportunities to respond comprehensively to the genuine public health demands for key populations.

The chapter raises fears that implementing programmes to attract more funds on the part of the government and fulfil donor requirements on the part of GHPs does not facilitate comprehensive service provision based on evidence. Whichever way one views the politics of this situation, the country misses an opportunity to develop comprehensive evaluative frameworks to identify and respond to the ever-increasing needs of key populations. Thus, the lack of mutuality and trust between the partners perpetuates practices that delay opportunities to design and implement comprehensive evaluation frameworks for effective interventions. The situation promotes possibilities for falsification of information. Therefore, GHPs and the government should engage in open conversations consistent with the principles of partnerships.

Scholars such as Makuwira (2018, pp. 425–430) and Storeng et al. (2019, pp. 555–564) share similar reflections in which governments enter into partnerships with GHPs to facilitate further funding in Malawi and South Sudan. The experiences in these countries involved less-than-admirable strategies, such as falsifying data to compensate for missed collaborative partnership targets. The practices show a lack of open and transparent communication based on trust and mutual interest in the functioning of GHPs.

‘Othering’ and conceptual boundaries

The final discussion point in this chapter reveals that the partnerships for M&E tend to create conceptual boundaries and the unintended effect of ‘othering’ among the ministry staff. Othering derives from the notion that an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ oppose one another. A false distinction is drawn between the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ to subjugate one group to another (Strand 2018, p. 13). This chapter reveals that GHP’s support for M&E in Zimbabwe has created demand and necessitates higher qualifications for M&E positions as a prerequisite for employment. As a result, the M&E role has attained a special status for ‘other’ staff with a background and qualifications such as statistics and computer science, biostatistics and new degrees in M&E. This chapter observes that staff without M&E qualifications are referred to as ‘other’ staff, and those with qualifications are referred to as ‘us’. As a result, the M&E positions occupy an exclusive status in the development arena in Zimbabwe.

However, the unintended binaries of ‘us’ and ‘others’ have not been problematised enough despite their potential effects in perpetuating evaluative inequalities. For example, it creates conceptual boundaries between expatriate (us) and local (other) M&E staff. Similarly, the local M&E staff (us) look down upon ‘other’ programme and support staff members. As a result, conceptual boundaries around M&E have had the unintended effects of reinforcing staff divisions contrary to the principles of partnerships.

The chapter’s arguments about the ‘othering’ effects of GHP between supported M&E staff (us) and unsupported staff (others) are consistent with findings by Peters (2016, p. 8) and Mueller-Hirth (2012, p. 663). They identify adverse effects of professional M&E boundaries involving expatriates, local M&E and programme staff in Angola and South Africa. This chapter, therefore, concludes that GHP support for M&E has created conceptual boundaries inconsistent with the key tenets of mutuality and trust among project staff. As a result, the partnerships are contested spaces rather than platforms for facilitating knowledge diffusion for innovative evaluative initiatives in the country. The ‘othering’ practices perpetuate power imbalances that resemble the paternalistic behaviour of its funders

in the collaborative networks for M&E in Zimbabwe. These practices are counterproductive and contrary to the core partnership values of trust and mutual interest.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter draws on the Zimbabwean Ministry of Health and Child Care Zimbabwe's case study to demonstrate the (un)intentional effects of GHP support in widening rather than bridging the evaluative inequalities in the country. This chapter has highlighted the practical, unintended negative effects of collaborative health partnerships, providing new perspectives that contrast Eurocentric, instrumental views about collaborative partnerships. The anticipated benefits of partnerships to promote democracy, shared decision-making (plurality), equity and improved public service delivery by diffusing political power from the sovereign state to its private and civil society partners have not been realised. Furthermore, the anticipated improvements in evaluative processes because of the comparative involvement of GHPs have remained elusive in Zimbabwe. Thus, the anticipated merits and virtues of the partnership have not translated into meaningful progress in the quest for strengthening M&E systems in Zimbabwe. As a result, the well-known benefits of collaborative partnerships are problematised in this chapter, arguing that its vaunted benefits of mutuality, trust and reciprocity do not exist in practice. This makes partnership discourse in its current form the greatest threat to efforts to facilitate evaluative equity in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 10

Why emphasis on randomised controlled trials is a flawed approach to evaluation for a more equitable society

Seán M Muller
Institute for Advanced Study,
Faculty of Humanities, University of Johannesburg,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

On the face of it, evaluation has a very practical concern: to establish the effects of a programme and how the programme played out relative to what was intended. In African countries, the programmes in question are also typically concerned with the very practical matters of addressing components of poverty, inequality and 'underdevelopment' – or their ostensible causes, such as weak state capacity, low levels of education, credit constraints, gender biases, limited technological transfer or technological know-how and so forth. Yet all important aspects of programmes and evaluations are subject to a range of seemingly more abstract considerations and concerns. For programmes, these range from

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the question of which challenges should be prioritised and chosen for programmatic interventions to who makes that choice, where and at what scale the programme is implemented, how a notional intervention takes place in practice, etc. Where there is a connection between evaluation and programme, many of these concerns will carry over – indeed, it is good practice when evaluation is going to take place for issues that arise at the evaluation stage to be considered at the programme selection and design stage.[17]

Evaluations themselves face an additional set of concerns that are more distinctly methodological and philosophical in nature. Notably, seeking to ascertain 'the effect' of a programme means potentially grappling with the challenges of inferring the causal effect of one social phenomenon on others. That requires some method for observing the relevant phenomena, disentangling them from others, and potentially measuring them quantitatively in order to infer the magnitude of effects. The large literature on these and related topics across many disciplines, from epidemiology to economics, partially reflects the difficulties in credibly addressing them.

Yet the decisions taken in these respects may be flawed in a variety of ways that can negatively impact the primary objective of building more just and equitable societies. This chapter seeks to illustrate this using the example of one particular approach to evaluation that has become particularly influential in the field of development economics – the use of randomised controlled trials (RCTs). It begins by providing some background and context to the RCT approach. I then discuss two crucial flaws in that approach, which I suggest fatally compromise the ostensible aims of evidence-based policy (EBP) in development and therefore the achievement of just and equitable societies. The first of these is that particular worldviews, biases and prejudices enter into the evaluation process using RCTs at the very outset yet go entirely unacknowledged and instead are concealed behind a veneer of 'scientific evidence'. These impose a limited and distorted understanding of inequality and its generative mechanisms at the very outset of the research process. The second is that the way in which the approach informs policy decisions reflects dubious and harmful epistemic hierarchies that inappropriately valourise certain kinds of knowledge and certain kinds of persons. That compounds the harms of the first problem and converts them into practical ones by influencing policy decisions. The pursuit of just and equitable societies can thereby be diverted for long periods of time or even turned in a direction that leads to diametrically opposite outcomes. Evaluators who adopt such approaches are made complicit. The concluding section

17. Whether and when formal evaluation is required or desirable is a separate matter.

briefly discusses how the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) may be used to examine the influence and manifestation of some of the concerns expressed in preceding sections and how evaluators may limit or mitigate their role in such harms.

Background: From causal inference to epistemic and practical harms

Beyond the more immediate methodological questions that face programme evaluators are philosophical ones about what causality is (Cartwright 1989; Mackie 1974; Woodward 2003), when and whether causal effects can be identified, whether it makes sense to think of such effects in isolation from mechanisms (Cartwright 2007a; Clarke et al. 2014), whether causal effects can be identified algorithmically using causal graphs and observational data (Spirtes, Glymour & Scheines 1993), whether they can be extrapolated (Muller 2021a) and so on.

One may also question whether ascertaining the success of a programme through identifying a causal effect is the right approach; one could instead, for example, ask the intended beneficiaries of the programme whether they are satisfied with it. Proponents of EBP notionally endorse the idea that evidence should feed into democratic processes – albeit in a very particular way mediated by researchers and technocrats like themselves. So, from that perspective, the soliciting of opinions from members of the public directly as a way of assessing the merits of a programme is defensible. In fact, strictly speaking, the intellectual commitments of mainstream economists typically prohibit them from making policy recommendations without knowing what the preferences of the relevant population are – which they typically do not.

The supposed 'credibility revolution' in evaluation

While such matters receive recognition in places within the evaluation literature, they are largely put aside when actually planning interventions or designing and conducting evaluations. Given the status quo in which evaluations are typically expected to provide some kind of confident or definitive assessment (provided there were no hindrances in the process), this is somewhat inevitable. The concern of the present chapter is with the emergence in recent decades of an approach to evaluation that purports to overcome such challenges or render them redundant, thereby justifying its claim to being the 'gold standard' and heralding a 'credibility revolution' (Angrist & Pischke 2010).

The approach in question has been summarised in many publications and 'how to' guides by proponents (Banerjee & Duflo 2009, 2017; Gertler et al. 2016; Glennerster & Takavarasha 2013). It typically starts with researchers identifying a policy question of interest and then narrowing that down to a sub-question that can be analysed using a 'field experiment' in which a social or economic intervention is assigned to a relevant group of 'subjects' randomly. The purpose of randomisation is to eliminate the influence of confounding factors and thereby be able to make a claim about the causal effect of the intervention while side-stepping the statistical or econometric assumptions and additional data needed in the absence of randomisation.[18] In some instances, researchers utilise results from a single such evaluation to make policy recommendations, either in the original context or in other contexts. In other instances, the apparent causal effect on the outcome of interest may be compared to that from evaluations of other interventions or contribute to synthesised findings from meta-analyses of evaluations. The broader practical objective is to improve or advance economic and societal 'development'.

Critical perspectives and epistemic harms

While similar to – and partly inspired by – the approach taken in medicine to pharmaceutical trials (Cartwright 2007b), the approach and its influence have been driven by a small group of mainstream economists largely based in a small number of academic departments in the United States. Moreover, it has been far removed from the typical, or stereotypical, disinterested academic enterprise, with the recipients of the Nobel Memorial Prize (Nobel Media AB 2019) all having been involved in founding institutions that have actively sought to persuade funders, governments and civil society organisations to adopt the approach well before it obtained widespread support from academic peers and with relatively little regard for concerns that were raised by other scholars (Bédécarrats, Guérin & Roubaud 2019). Moreover, while there has been an effort to frame the endeavour and its proponents as 'modest' by virtue of focusing on small rather than 'grand' interventions (Banerjee & Duflo 2011), close scrutiny does not support that conclusion (Bardhan 2013; Bédécarrats et al. 2019; Harrison 2011, 2013; Muller 2021a).

The geographical and academic location of the core of the 'randomista' (Ravallion 2009) movement reflects, I suggest, two overlapping hierarchies. The first is the global epistemic hierarchy of knowledge in which scholars and others based in the Global North are deemed to be inherently more

18. Statistically the idea is that the influence of confounding factors is either eliminated or balanced across the treatment and control groups. Even the statistical efficacy of this is not uncontroversial but those technical issues are outside the scope of the present chapter.

insightful and credible than those in the Global South, even about matters pertaining to countries and people in the South, resulting in concomitantly greater influence in various domains.[19] This phenomenon has been written about extensively, and the associated way of thinking also exists in the Global South itself, where such ways of thinking have been imposed or transferred (Hountondji 1990; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018). The second is the extreme hierarchical structure within mainstream, neoclassical economics itself in which it is taken as given that graduates and academics of top-ranked departments in the United States (and a few in Europe) and those who publish in the journals of those departments are inherently superior to other economists – including African economists on issues pertaining to African countries (Chelwa 2021; Fourcade, Ollion & Algan 2015; Heckman & Moktan 2020; Muller 2021b).[20]

This background is important to recount here because many practitioners (and even scholars) of evaluation are unaware of such details and nuances, focused as they are on practical and immediate methodological considerations. The subsequent sections will develop concerns that partly emerge from this background. Firstly, contrary to the framing of RCTs as 'scientific' and value-free ex-ante, they in fact reflect the worldview and values of those conceiving them. Secondly, the explicit and implicit epistemic hierarchies on which the randomised approach is premised are dubious and presently do not withstand critical scrutiny. Relatedly, the manner in which RCTs have been, and continue to be, deployed as a form of evaluation compounds asymmetries between the Global North and South that can be considered present-day extensions of colonial power relations in the domain of knowledge (Hountondji 1990; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2021).

Each of these issues can be considered a 'harm' in and of itself. For example, there is a large and rapidly growing literature on what has been called 'epistemic injustice' (Fricker 2007; Koskinen & Rolin 2019), but the focus here is on the more direct practical implications. The thrust is not just that randomised evaluations may fall short of achieving their objectives and claimed accomplishments – of providing evidence that facilitates social and economic development. The problems of social and economic development are among the hardest of those that exist, so merely falling

19. Recently some scholars, typically in the Global North, have taken to expressing disquiet on social media about, or disparaging, the North–South distinction. Certainly, like any other binary, it is somewhat crude. However, such criticisms or concerns have little traction when utilised by scholars in the Global South as a distinction premised on solidarity or commonality among colonised or otherwise oppressed countries and it is in that sense that the terms are used in this chapter. The problems with the ways in which certain scholars in the Global North use these terms, or indeed others relating to 'sub-Saharan Africa', 'the Third World', 'developing countries' and so forth is a matter for separate analysis.

20. Those interested in further detail can consult any one of a number of 'economics job market guides' published in North America in which such assumptions are often stated in passing or are implicit in the guidance provided.

short in addressing or 'solving' those would be little basis for criticism. By selecting hypotheses based primarily on the worldview of those based in the Global North institutions, utilising a method that favours non-structural interventions, producing findings that are not generalisable by the standards of the same paradigm it is based on, and leveraging the asymmetry of power relative to Global South governments and other local institutions, there is a strong basis for believing that these evaluations – individually and especially collectively – are and will be *harmful and counterproductive* (Muller forthcoming). And that ought to be of great concern to practitioners sincerely committed to the positive societal role that evaluations are intended to play.

The value-ladenness of randomised evaluations[21]

Educational interventions: Value for money and generalisability

There is no strictly consistent way in which RCTs are used within the evaluation process, but there are some examples from proponents of these methods that may be used as exemplars. Consider in particular the paper in *Science* by Kremer, Brannen and Glennerster (2013) on 'The Challenge of Education and Learning in the Developing World'. The core of the paper is represented by a table showing the estimated causal effects of different experimental interventions on test scores, with the latter normalised so as to be comparable across contexts (Kremer et al. 2013, p. 298). Accompanying these quantitative estimates are corresponding estimates of the costs of implementing the policies. Those two quantitative estimates are combined in a simple cost–benefit analysis. The logic being that policy-makers should select the intervention that is likely to yield the highest benefit (percentage increase in test scores) relative to cost. Moreover, normative or subjective factors, like trading off benefits for one part of a population against another, enter this final stage after the 'scientific' and 'objective' analysis has been conducted. On the face of it this indeed seems very 'scientific' and the publication of such papers by economists in what were previously general interest, highly prestigious natural science journals, including *Nature*, gives a substantial boost to economists' attempts to frame themselves as scientists.[22]

21. This section draws primarily on Muller (2022).

22. Elsewhere Muller (2021a) explains why mainstream economics might be better thought of as a 'facsimile science' but that argument would take us too far afield here.

That appearance is, however, extremely misleading. As already mentioned, there are a wide range of technical concerns that could be raised in relation to this approach. Comparability across contexts requires strong assumptions about interacting factors and causal mechanisms, yet neither issue is given any serious attention in the paper. Muller (2014) demonstrates that, within the limitations of the data and methods, in an influential, high-quality randomised evaluation of class size, the causal effects estimated were likely dependent on unobserved teacher quality.[23] As teacher quality would vary across contexts, this would mean that the effects could not be responsibly, or 'scientifically', generalised without at the least information on teacher quality that is comparable across contexts – something that rarely exists. Yet other highly influential contributions have sought to make such comparisons of class size effects.

Unacknowledged subjectivity and bias

Putting such potentially fatal (Muller 2020) technical limitations aside, another crucial implicit omission relates to the entry of normative (subjective) factors within the processes that lead to a summary table like that found in Kremer et al. (2013). To understand the problem, one first needs to recognise the basic point that researcher judgement always narrows down the set of possible questions for a variety of reasons. Firstly, in relation to *what* topic is studied: education rather than health, educational achievement rather than educational experience, and so forth. Secondly, in relation to *how* that is studied: qualitative or quantitative methods, randomised trials rather than structural econometric models, etc.

In economics, concerns had already been raised about the degree to which RCTs may constitute an instance of 'looking for keys under the streetlight'; in other words, looking for a solution to a problem only where one is able to see, regardless of the likelihood that it is there. Selecting research questions merely because they can be answered by an RCT or a cleverly selected 'natural experiment' (Angrist & Krueger 2001; Meyer 1995) arguably amounts to this. One would need some kind of much deeper argument, connecting the method of discovery with the importance of what is discovered, to believe that this approach will reveal the truths that are most important to society. So, the problem stands even if one accepts the ostensible epistemic merits of these approaches (namely, that they are the best available for identifying causal relationships and effects).

There is a further problem, however, that has been neglected or omitted in the extant literature on RCTs and other derivative literature: the normative

23. The generic, technical problem is explained in Muller (2015).

(subjective) views of researchers conducting RCTs also narrow down the set of potential research questions (Muller 2022). The education example illustrates this well. Kremer et al.'s (2013) seemingly long list of potential interventions – 30 experimental evaluations tabulated from different developing countries – includes only three that constitute a large increase in resource allocation to schools (or the schooling system if they were to be expanded). These relate to decreasing class size. For example, to decrease class size from 80 to 40, one would need to approximately double the number of teachers if keeping other factors constant, which in turn would require a large increase in resource allocation as personnel budgets are the largest component of educational expenditure in all countries. The authors note that the two experiments in India and Kenya 'did not significantly improve test scores' and take this as evidence that resource increases *in general* 'without changing pedagogy or accountability' are ineffective.

The reader might notice how remarkable it is that an evidence-based approach takes two experiments tangentially related to a question as sufficient evidence to adopt a strong stance on such a major issue (resource adequacy). As discussed by Muller (forthcoming), that dubious logic has been imitated by South African researchers in assessments of available, evidence (Van der Berg et al. 2016). The more immediate point is that there is no ex-ante, wholly objective basis for any particular composition of the types of interventions tested. So, to some degree, the composition reflects researchers' prior views about what is likely to be worth trying, combined with the available resources and opportunities for conducting different kinds of experiments. In that way, we can infer that the community of researchers conducting such experimental evaluations did not, for instance, consider that increasing teacher salaries or otherwise seeking to improve teacher working conditions had any merit. It is important to restate the problem here. The issue is not, first and foremost, whether there is a debate to be had about alternative policies such as improving teachers' working conditions. The point is more fundamental: that 'randomista' advocates of randomised experiments dismiss the notion that reliable knowledge for policy can exist unless it is premised on such evaluations, yet in their choice of what to evaluate they have assumed that certain kinds of interventions are simply not worth testing – resulting in a contradiction. In engaging in such subtly contradictory behaviour the result is to maintain a claim to objective, evidence-based, quasi-scientific approach to policy while smuggling in – wittingly or unwittingly – a host of prior beliefs, biases and the like that are unsubstantiated. The approach taken and advocated by Kremer et al. (2013), Banerjee and Duflo (2009, 2011) and others is one in which normative factors enter into the policy process by narrowing down the kinds of research questions that are asked and corresponding experiments that are conducted (Muller 2022).

While experiments related to education were the most cited in the Nobel award for the use of randomised trials in development (Nobel Media AB 2019), the same issues can be identified in other research areas. Notably, the overly hasty dismissal of resource increases and large-scale structural changes as potential solutions to problems in developing countries is not limited to the education sector – it is characteristic of most of the RCT literature. Possible explanations for that are somewhat speculative but can partly be traced to a rejection of 'grand theories of development' in favour of micro-level interventions (Banerjee 2007, 2012; Banerjee & Duflo 2011). The latter orientation was based on the observation that approaches based on such grand theories appeared not to have worked. Certainly, there is little doubt that the majority of so-called developing countries, with the much-analysed exception of the 'East Asian tigers', did not experience rapid economic growth or socio-economic development under such approaches, and many ran into serious economic difficulties that continue to the present day. But diagnosing the reasons for such failures and whether they reflect a broader failure of such structurally-oriented approaches is a completely different matter. The jump to asserting that micro-level interventions will provide an alternative, more modest ladder towards socio-economic development arguably exemplifies what one notable scholar of development called 'the pessimism of the diagnosis and the optimism of the prescription' (Mkandawire 2001).

Despite the role of subjectivity in the selection of research questions having been noted many decades ago (cf. Myrdal 1970), these problems have been entirely omitted from the RCT literature.[24] The role of values, including biases and prejudices, in designing randomised evaluations is neither recognised nor dealt with in any substantive way in the economics literature. In principle, the discipline endorses a strict separation between subjective and objective considerations in economic analysis, typically phrased as being between 'normative' and 'positive' analysis (Badiei & Grivaux 2022), but in practice, the separation is materially violated. These problems spill over into the evaluation literature, where, if anything, they are compounded by the typically narrow focus on single interventions. Evaluation and its conclusions, or prescriptions, therefore inherit the problems of the randomista approach.

Dubious epistemic hierarchies

At the heart of much of the debate about RCTs in the quantitative social science literature has been their purported status as a 'gold standard' for

24. The issue has also been omitted from the recent literature on the role of values in science. A discussion of, and explanation for, that is left for discussion elsewhere.

causal identification and evaluation of interventions (Cartwright 2007b; Deaton & Cartwright 2018) – somewhat mirroring earlier debates in the medical literature (Concato, Shah & Horwitz 2000). The use of the term itself has waned in the face of criticism, but the substantive commitment of many researchers and scholars to the idea that experimental evidence is inherently superior to other forms of evidence finds expression in statements about 'rigour' and 'robustness' of research. In essence, the debate has two strands. The first disputes whether RCTs should be at the top of the evidence hierarchy, while the second disputes whether there should be a generic evidence hierarchy at all. As noted earlier, if one believes that evaluation is only about causal identification, and if one believes that RCTs are the best (most reliable) way of obtaining such identification, then it follows that RCTs should be represented as superior to other forms of evidence. Where this has manifested most explicitly is in meta-analyses, of which economists have in fact been late adopters, where studies that are not based on randomised evaluations are often simply excluded from consideration (Abimbola 2020).

The appeal of an evidence hierarchy is quite clear. For the researcher, it provides a simple way of selecting a method of analysis: consider the feasibility of the method at the top and work one's way down. For the policy-maker, it serves a similar purpose: when considering evidence they need only start with evidence based on methods at the top of the hierarchy, and then only consider other evidence if the former is not available. In this sense, evidence hierarchies are an 'easy sell' – something proponents of RCTs have been keen to emphasise about their approach in general (Labrousse 2021) and that has been very successful in the 'evaluation market' (Manski 2011, 2013; Picciotto 2021). Unfortunately, as many have argued, the simple appeal of hierarchies does not appear to correspond to the complex realities of the phenomena being studied. In this case, evidence hierarchies create new problems rather than resolving existing ones.

As with the basic claim that RCTs can be used to identify causal effects that are useful for policy, there are many technical challenges that can be posed to the more specific claim that RCTs are superior to other forms of evidence – even just for identifying causal relationships and effects.[25] However, there are greater questions about evidence hierarchies that have RCTs at the top. Crucially, such approaches entirely devalue local knowledge and render it replaceable by, and fundamentally inferior to, externally-initiated experiments. By 'local knowledge', here, I mean the knowledge about particular phenomena or processes that is held by those directly

25. See, for instance, the literature associated with Heckman and co-authors (Heckman 2001; Heckman & Smith 1995; Heckman & Vytlacil 2005) or the literature associated with Manski's work (Manski, 1993, 2011, 2013).

involved, those in relevant (typically national) institutions that may be responsible for problems or solutions and broader groups such as policy-makers and the citizenry in general. To sharpen the point a little: making RCTs 'the gold standard' – or claiming they produce the most 'rigorous' form of evidence – means that we ought, unquestioningly, to value evidence from an education experiment conceived, funded, directed and analysed by a North American researcher over the opinions or insights of a competent and committed teacher working within the education system where improvements are being sought. For economists, including those who are not RCT proselytisers, this is a straightforward step because qualitative analysis has been explicitly disparaged and discarded in modern mainstream, neoclassical economics. But the basis for that is weak and there is little reason why those actually concerned with societal problems, rather than conforming to what is arguably a facsimile science (Muller 2021a), should do the same.

If one declines to simply accept the wholesale discarding of non-quantitative, non-experimental knowledge, then the proposed evidence hierarchy raises a series of broader epistemological questions. How is it that we as human beings can best learn about the dynamics of the societal systems we are in and construct? If we place weight on knowledge gained from participating in these systems, to whose views and insights do we give more or less weight? Moreover, how can we best determine what actions to take in order to achieve a range of desired outcomes? And one might also ask to what extent are these – understanding and successfully intervening in societal systems – even achievable. Neoclassical economists have been operating for almost a century as if these large questions have been answered and the randomista approach should be understood within that context. The question of whose knowledge is given weight is, in contrast, the subject of a number of pieces of literature in other disciplines like sociology, anthropology and philosophy.

Indigenous and local knowledge

One particular strand of that literature is concerned with 'indigenous knowledge' (Lee & Evans 2022; Smith 2012; Wiredu 1996) and 'indigenous knowledge systems' (IKSs) and emphasises the role of colonial histories in suppressing, devaluing and appropriating the knowledge of colonised peoples. And some recent scholarly contributions (Koskinen & Rolin 2019) examine how remedying this may be epistemically beneficial – in other words, improve understanding of particular societal questions. Much of the harm done by colonial approaches occurred under the rhetoric of 'science' and that has led to a tendency of some authors to contrapose science and indigenous knowledge. In my view, this is

unnecessary and counterproductive. As argued elsewhere, it can be helpful to recall that the same colonising societies also had their own 'indigenous knowledge systems' that were also discarded and disregarded, although often not in as brutal or exploitative a fashion (Muller 2021c). Recognising that helps to some degree in seeing that the problem was not in the notion of 'science' per se but rather in the manner in which it was implemented and coupled to other agendas. Thus, science may well show that some indigenous knowledge is 'incorrect' while some indigenous knowledge may reveal that certain scientific understandings are or have been incorrect. The historical record provides evidence of both types of occurrences. And if one sees these sets of knowledge as having been obtained through different ways of understanding the world, then there is no sense in which one is forced to choose between them.

All of this is very important for understanding what the adoption of a randomista evidence hierarchy in the evaluation context really implies for African countries, governments and peoples. It reproduces, in effect, the same kinds of epistemic and associated harms as the colonial and post-colonial eras (Hountondji 1990) under an analogous rhetoric of being 'more science-like' (Njoya 2020). Once again external actors (Panin 2020), with little direct or temporally extensive experience of the societies in question, design interventions on the basis that the evidence they have is superior to whatever else might exist or might have existed prior to their 'arrival' on the scene. When pressed they may resort to gesturing at their local functionaries who run the experiments for them, or they may deploy narratives about their travels among the local peoples.[26]

Ethical concerns

One may then further link this to ethical questions pertaining to research. An increasing number of scholars have examined a range of ethical concerns relating to RCTs and found the approach, in general, to be compromised or, at the very least, in need of serious improvement (Abramowicz & Szafarz 2021; Baele 2013; Hoffmann 2020; Ziliak & Teather-Posadas 2016). In addition, more serious issues have arisen in relation to individual randomised interventions – involving everything from cutting off water access to exposing poor people to the proselytisation of missionaries (Muller forthcoming). Despite the controversies, such

26. It is remarkable how durable the 'Western researcher with native peoples' photograph is over the space of centuries, despite fairly widespread awareness from the late 20th century of the offensiveness of such tropes and what they imply. Anecdotally, the only presentation this author attended at the University of Oxford by Esther Duflo, one of the three Nobel Memorial Prize winners, contained such photos of Duflo posing with or among black African and Indian children from poor communities.

research continues to appear, suggesting that there may be something akin to ethical incommensurability: there are groups of people, including scholars, who are of the view that certain experiments are inherently unethical and reflect patronising and harmful views of the experimental subjects, whereas the scholars and funders behind these experiments see them as benevolent, subtle and with positive repercussions.

A very recent example (Barsabai et al. 2022) concerns an experiment involving domestic workers from the Philippines working in Hong Kong and Saudia Arabia, who are recognised as being exploited. The researchers got these workers to give their new employers a packet of dried mangoes and photographs of their (the workers') families in order to reduce the 'perceived social distance' between workers and employers, thereby improving treatment of the former by the latter. Evidently, this must have seemed like not only a good idea to the researchers, ethical review board and funders for it to get to the stage of implementation but to be such a good idea that it merited the research resources devoted to it. Yet as soon as the working paper was published, other scholars and individuals expressed outrage on social media at what they took to be an obviously flawed and harmful experiment. A common theme was along the lines of 'how did this get conceived/approved/published?'. The extent of the difference between these two groups appears to reflect completely different worldviews, and it is notable that critics tend to be scholars from outside economics whose disciplines more explicitly address issues of epistemic asymmetries and harms, along with people from developing countries. Even those who take the view that such experiments are not unethical or harmful are nevertheless obliged to accept that this difference exists and must necessarily manifest in the research questions chosen – linking to the earlier concern about smuggling in normative biases through notionally objective and 'scientific' research. Yet they have no intellectual basis for dealing with such differences other than to simply dismiss opposing views.[27] On the other hand, those who take the view that local knowledge acquired by other means may be more accurate or insightful than experiments by outsiders typically also work within (formal or informal) intellectual frameworks in which both the existence and the wrongness of the randomista approach are explicable. The strikingly

27. This is a key difference between this example and the much-discussed case of Kuhn's ([1962] 1996) assertion that scientific paradigms were incommensurable. That statement was more a problem for realists than anti-realists since it could be accommodated by the latter's intellectual framework. However, in that debate the former focused on denying that in fact scientific paradigms are incommensurable – something that their intellectual framework provided resources for. Economists do not have the intellectual resources to construct an argument that the two sets of views on the (un)ethical nature of certain experiments are reconcilable in a way that supports their stance.

different views on ethics serve as further substantiation for critics, whereas for proponents they are inexplicable.[28]

Addressing potential objections

A common objection to certain of the criticisms and concerns raised earlier is that they are now, as of 2023, 'out of date'. In other words, that these have been acknowledged and addressed by the majority of advocates of RCTs, especially the more prominent ones. This is false: the validity of the criticisms and concerns has typically not been acknowledged, and where it has the nature of the acknowledgement has not done justice to the substantive implications for recent and future advocacy of RCTs.

For example, it is quite common to claim that substantial progress has been made recently on the problem of external validity (generalisability). Such claims typically cite recent work by the likes of Meager (2019, 2022) and Vivalt (2015, 2020), which attempts to apply the logic of meta-analysis, long-used in other disciplines, to such problems within an econometric framework. However, no consensus exists on how meta-analysis should be used to address the external validity challenge and earlier work already argued that replication, which lies at the heart of the meta-analytic approach, cannot resolve the fundamental and fatal problem posed by external validity for the randomista case (Muller 2015, 2020).

Furthermore, there has been no acknowledgement of what the claim of substantial progress would imply for all *preceding* uses of RCTs to inform policy, including those awarded the 2019 Nobel Memorial Prize. The criticisms that supposedly have been addressed imply that past policy recommendations were almost entirely inappropriate and probably wrong because they failed to deal with external validity in any serious way. Yet, there has been no such acknowledgement by practitioners or proponents.

Another objection is that policy-makers are not as much in thrall of RCTs as critics suggest: in effect defending the 'credibility revolution' by claiming there has not really been a 'revolution'. While defenders of the randomista approach tend to merely assert this claim, there are an increasing number of thorough assessments that find otherwise. Some are by critics (Bédécarrats et al. 2019), but others are by those very sympathetic to the randomista case. For example, Mehmood, Naseer and Chen (2021) find that, in Pakistan, '(econo)metrics training shifted policy-makers' beliefs towards the paradigm associated with the credibility revolution'. A notable aspect of the randomista approach through organisations like J-PAL is

28. By this, I mean substantively inexplicable: economists often explain criticism of their approaches by explicitly or implicitly suggesting their critics are simply ignorant.

their concerted effort to train researchers and policy-makers in developing countries in its arguments and methods.

Other objections fail similarly because they are, in effect, superficial. For instance, some argue that the claim of RCTs being a 'gold standard' is now out of use. This is true, but the mere discarding of the term is not the material issue. The notion that RCTs are at the top of an evidence hierarchy remains deeply entrenched in assessments of the relative 'rigour' and 'credibility' of different kinds of evaluations, which amounts to the same thing.

The concern about the questions addressed by RCTs being effectively determined by methodological preference rather than societal important or broader understanding of social problems remains unaddressed. Added to that is the further unacknowledged problem of how the choice of intervention itself smuggles in subjectivity and bias into a process that purports to be 'objective' and 'scientific' (Muller 2022).

A final common objection is that the concerns raised apply to other approaches as well, not just RCTs. For example, other formal (econometric and statistical) approaches have tended to devalue qualitative methods and local knowledge. They have also not adequately addressed the external validity problem. This is certainly true in many cases, but it in no way refutes concerns that the use of RCTs, and the randomista approach in particular, does not deliver what it claims to and is likely to do harm to the goal of creating better societies rather than enable progress towards it.

In short, all the concerns raised in earlier sections remain relevant and have not been adequately addressed or acknowledged – despite rhetorical efforts by proponents of these methods and approaches to suggest otherwise.

Conclusion

The broad set of concerns – of subjectivity, implicit marginalisation of other forms of knowledge and entrenching or expanding North–South asymmetries – are increasingly being raised as the prevalence and influence of RCTs becomes more apparent. However, there has been relatively little detailed examination or investigation of the various components of these concerns.

The AfrED database and others like it can be used to identify patterns in the kinds of interventions that are evaluated and, correspondingly, those that are omitted. This can shed light on at least two different issues. The first relates to methodological exclusions, in which certain kinds of research questions are omitted because they cannot be addressed by a favoured

method. (The 'searching under the streetlight' problem). The second is whether the kinds of interventions considered in relation to a given research question are of a particular type or set of types and, in turn, whether those correspond to prior beliefs about socio-economic relations, mechanisms and parameters. The omission and neglect of such issues to date are advantageous for ex-post analysis of this kind, as it means that there will have been little effort to conceal such leanings or attempt to give the impression of balance.[29]

Given information on funding sources the database already provides information that corroborates concerns about North–South asymmetries. As the database website notes, 'These reports are typically commissioned and funded by international (development) agencies [...] or foreign governments [...] A smaller number of reports are commissioned by African governments' (AfrED 2022). Such observations could be elaborated upon in more detail and linked to some other contributions on the asymmetries in the locations of researchers involved in such initiatives and scholarly work (Chelwa 2021; Panin 2020). What has not been examined is whether other characteristics of evaluations correlate with institutions involved. Are there differences between the kinds of programmes implemented (evaluated) by African country governments themselves relative to donors? Is there variation in the approaches taken to evaluating those programmes?

Moreover, there are important nuances that must be attended to by such analysis as there has been a concerted effort by institutions such as J-PAL, 3ie, DIME and others to secure the direct support and co-operation of developing country governments for their approach. Over time, then, we would expect that the success of such efforts would narrow the gap between the kinds of evaluations commissioned by the different types of institutions and governments or government agencies. And, indeed, it may be that this reproduces earlier dynamics in the evaluation space so that, in some respects, RCTs emerge as the most recent manifestation of these structural patterns and processes.

Using the database to examine ethical issues and disagreements would likely be less straightforward in as much as it would require additional information. For instance, one could select a subset of evaluations and ask different respondents, in formal or more accessible parlance, what they think of the ethics of those interventions (and possibly how they are evaluated). Combining those responses with a set of questions about respondent characteristics could provide further interesting information on correlates of differences. Alternatively, one

29. In the terms economists like to use: the patterns of these choices should (in a qualitative way though it may be possible to quantify some aspects) reveal the preferences of those making the decisions.

could examine characteristics of the interventions themselves as correlates for these differences. For example, whether interventions or evaluations commissioned or conceived by particular actors are more likely to be deemed unethical or otherwise problematic by 'ordinary citizens' in the relevant countries.

Despite the raft of damning critiques of the randomista approach, many critics have noted that there is no sign of its influence waning, consistent with the view that this influence was never derived primarily from the approach's substantive merits but rather rhetoric, resources, power and misplaced epistemic authority. Despite that, it bears asking what broader lessons might be drawn for the field of evaluation from the failings and harms of the randomista approach. In brief, I would suggest the following in order for evaluators to mitigate their complicity in harm and better achieve the objective of building just and equitable societies. Firstly, even where a given evaluation approach is indeed the best possible, it may nevertheless not be able to definitively answer the questions we have because of the nature of societal dynamics and structure.[30] Secondly, that historical experience repeatedly reveals claims that a given quantitative research method dramatically and comprehensively resolves the difficult questions of societal understanding and policy to be exaggerated at best and harmfully flawed at worst. Thirdly, the choice of intervention or evaluation is informed by prior beliefs about societal phenomena and how they might be influenced; the notion of value-freeness is simply a myth in such contexts (Douglas 2014), and the philosophical literature that mainstream economists sometimes gesture at is more than half-a-century out of date (and even then is incorrectly interpreted). Fourthly, evaluation takes place within a broader epistemological context that is influenced by power and resources, often reproducing dynamics analogous to those of colonial and other undemocratic or oppressive contexts. While those conducting individual evaluations may be unable to influence these broader dynamics, or even speak to them given the possible consequences for funding and subsequent work, they can nevertheless reduce their own role in causing harm by adjusting the strength and tone of conclusions and recommendations. An evaluator who makes a definitive claim about a phenomenon based on a single RCT while ignoring other kinds of evidence is complicit in epistemic harms, but it is quite possible to produce clear conclusions regarding what a single RCT has found without then making assertions of that overly broad kind. The same is true for other approaches

30. For more on this see Muller (2021b) on the 'ontological horizon' versus 'epistemological horizon' across disciplines.

to evaluation. The case for such 'epistemic humility' (Angner 2020; Manski 2011) extends to a wide range of contexts.

There is more than enough scholarly work which credibly and convincingly demonstrates that the randomista approach is flawed on its own terms (Muller 2020) and within broader epistemological frameworks. These flaws limit and distort the understanding of inequality and inequality-generating mechanisms while also generating harms and unwarranted inequalities in the process of influencing and determining policy. The appropriate response would be for that approach, and RCTs in general, to be treated as a research method with many weaknesses and some strengths and not at the top of any evidence or epistemic hierarchy. Evaluators need to be aware that the RCT-based approach as it is currently deployed is seriously flawed, but, moreover, even if implemented more responsibly, is still very limited in its capacity for enabling our understanding of inequality. Unfortunately, it appears that greater effort will be needed to achieve a change in attitude towards the approach that goes beyond the actual merits and challenges the rhetoric and deliberately constructed institutional power of RCT proponents. Proponents have back-pedalled substantially in the last decade and weakened a range of claims but have done so in a manner that seeks to obscure these changes, thereby muddying the waters for most observers (Muller 2021a). Nevertheless, it seems inevitable that eventually, the 'credibility revolution' narrative will fade into obscurity to be replaced by the next overhyped approach.[31] The critique presented earlier is consistent with broader concerns about the dominance of the 'white gaze' in the evaluation of international development initiatives (Shallwani & Dossa 2023), the decolonisation of which 'requires a critical reflexive analysis of the assumptions, motivations and values that underpin evaluation practices'. What is most important, then, is that the lessons from the flaws and failures of the randomistas be reflected in, and incorporated into, the evaluation literature. One problem is that 'intellectual dependency' means that African scholars and policy-makers tend to follow trends in the Global North with a lag of a decade or two, which means it could be many decades before this happens. Given that many of these problems impact African countries and peoples more than many others, there is no reason why African scholars, researchers and evaluators should wait for the literature in the Global North to finally shift: it is well past time for more epistemological critique to be generated and disseminated from the Global South on matters that affect its peoples so profoundly.

31. An example within economics, that may or may not make the jump to the evaluation literature, is machine learning (Athey & Imbens 2019; Muller 2021a).

Chapter 11

Transformative Equity: Promoting systemic change through a new evaluation criterion

Jennifer Norins[a,b]
[a]South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA),
Pretoria, South Africa
[b]MIET Africa,
Durban, South Africa

Desiree Jason
National Department of Social Development: Monitoring and Evaluation Unit,
Pretoria, South Africa

Ian Goldman[a,b]
[a]Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
[b]Nelson Mandela School of Public Management,
Faculty of Management, University of Cape Town,
Cape Town, South Africa

Kgaugelo Moshia-Molebatsi
National Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation: Evaluation, Evidence and Knowledge Systems, Republic of South Africa Government,
Pretoria, South Africa

Sinenhlanhla Tsekiso
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa

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Thandolwethu Lukuko
Climate Action Network South Africa (SACAN),
Pretoria, South Africa

Zulaikha Brey
DNA Economics (Pty) Ltd,
Pretoria, South Africa

Introduction

> National and international organisations and initiatives must address equity and sustainability as core criteria for evaluation at every level from the local to the global, for all projects and programmes. Making equity and sustainability universal evaluation criteria means taking them seriously, tracking them over time, making comparisons, generating findings and drawing lessons to inform future initiatives. This is how evaluation contributes to a more just, sustainable world. (Patton 2021, p. 32)

The South African Constitution provides for a unified and equitable society in which human dignity and rights are upheld for all its citizens.[32] The National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) further clarifies a vision of South Africa that is 'just, fair, prosperous and equitable' by 2030 (NDA 2012, p. 61). However, nearly 30 years after the transition from the apartheid system to a democratic government, South Africa continues to align this vision with its lived reality.

The history of colonialism and apartheid has left deep-rooted injustices and disparities in access to and ownership of services, resources and assets (World Bank 2022, p. 3; Makgetla 2020, p. 4), while the post-apartheid economy continues to reproduce extreme levels of inequality in income and wealth (Francis & Webster 2019, p. 789). The coronovirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic exposed the depth and breadth of the country's structural inequities and strengthened the mandate to redress the causes of inequity for a more just and equal society (Francis, Valodia & Webster 2020). While the government has responded at scale, with over 18 million people on social grants and 7.5 million on the temporary COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant, issues of inequity and related urgent issues like climate change and ecosystems breakdown are becoming increasingly pronounced across South Africa, as evidenced in the unrest in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) and Gauteng Provinces in July 2021, the taxi strike in Western Cape and the extensive damage caused by the flooding in April and May 2022 in the KZN and the Eastern Cape provinces and June 2023 in Western Cape. Neglecting to transform the existing systems and structures that replicate inequities threatens the full development and stability of the country (Hickel 2022; Vhumbunu 2021). Truly resolving these systemic issues requires 'whole of

32. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996: Preamble, s. 3 (2a), s. 7 (1), s. 9, s. 10*

society' action, including the mainstreaming of issues of equity and climate and ecosystems health (CEH) into all aspects of policies and programmes, including their evaluation.

Evaluations have transformative potential because, as American evaluation theorist Ernest House argues, evaluation can be used to either shift or maintain existing repressive structures, as findings are 'used to determine "who gets what" and that [...] evaluation's primary purpose is [...] to promote social justice' (Christie & Alkin 2013, p. 38). Further, evaluation plays a critical role in transformation by assessing how and to what extent interventions address systemic inequity and promote equitable development (Bitar 2021, pp. 1–2; Chaplowe & Hejnowicz 2021, p. 2).

Evaluators (and the evaluation process itself) can facilitate systemic change for greater equity and ecosystems regeneration through the way the evaluation is designed, the evaluation questions raised, the approaches used for data-collection and validation, stakeholder engagement processes, the recommendations emanating from the evaluation results and how results are disseminated and advocated for evidence use. Evaluations that focus on single-loop learning (e.g. was the intervention implemented as planned, i.e. done right?) are unlikely to be transformative because they lack depth in analysis. Evaluations that seek double-loop learning (e.g. were the right things done?) that question values, or triple-loop learning (was the underlying paradigm right?), which questions the why or the who (Aston 2020; Tamarack Institute n.d.), have much more transformative potential.

In South Africa, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)'s National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) 2019–2024 presents the government's commitment to evaluation as a mechanism for promoting equity and achieving the NDP 2030. The NEPF outlines the need for government interventions to be equity-responsive (DPME 2019, p. 13) and stipulates principles that underpin the selection of evaluations, including the principle of inclusivity. Yet, a recent review of the National Evaluation System (NES) highlights that many evaluations struggled to adequately incorporate an equity focus and did not sufficiently address issues affecting females, youth, persons with disabilities and other marginalised groups (Goldman et al. 2019). To address this gap, DPME developed the Gender-Responsive Planning, Budgeting, Monitoring, Evaluation and Auditing Framework (DPME 2019). However, it focuses primarily on gender and disability and does not account for how wider systemic factors create and perpetuate inequity, nor does it examine how inequities exacerbate the negative consequences of climate and ecosystems breakdown (Hickel 2021; Raworth 2017; Schmelzer, Vetter & Vansintjan 2022). The confluence of these two issues is recognised now in the

South African state's commitment to a Just Transition, as represented in the recently approved Just Transition Framework.[33]

During a recent virtual evaluation hackathon hosted by the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), two hackathon teams developed two new evaluation criteria and accompanying guidelines, which will be issued by DPME for broad application across South Africa, to address the systemic crises of climate and ecosystems breakdown and systemic inequity. The groups' hypothesis was that if evaluation criteria could be developed to focus on these key issues, with guidelines ratified by DPME, and if the criteria are applied in all evaluations, then issues of equity and CEH would be mainstreamed into the evaluation system, thereby contributing to the transformation of policies and programmes to address these systemic crises.

This chapter focuses on the development of the Transformative Equity evaluation criterion and guideline, providing a discussion of the criterion and how it was formulated. As this criterion was developed alongside the criterion on CEH, some references to this other criterion will be made. The chapter also discusses the pilot process underway, through which we are following government agencies' attempts to integrate the criteria into their evaluation terms of reference (TORs) and evaluation implementation process, so testing our hypothesis. Finally, there is a reflection on initial lessons learned from the pilot and how the criteria and guidelines are influencing departments' mindset regarding how to more extensively transform our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches to promote a more just and sustainable society.

Understanding inequity in South Africa

South Africa is the most unequal country in the world[34] (World Bank 2022) and the levels of inequality have not significantly changed since the end of apartheid (Francis & Webster & 2019, p. 788). In the South African context, economic inequality is extreme, with 10% of the population controlling over 85% of the wealth (Chatterje et al. 2020: in Leibbrandt & Pabon 2021, p. 179). The history of apartheid contributed to high levels of inequity aligned with racial groupings. Statistical data from 2011–2015 demonstrates that the average real earnings for black Africans was less

33. https://www.climatecommission.org.za/just-transition-framework

34. Based on World Bank assessments of the Gini coefficient, which is a measure of income distribution across segments of society and is used to demonstrate levels of inequality, South Africa has the highest level of inequality, at 0.69 out of a scale of 0–1 out of 149 countries for which there is data.

than ZAR7,000 per month, while other racial groups earned between ZAR2,000 to ZAR17,000 per month (Maluleke 2019, pp. 61–62).[35]

Inequity in South Africa also manifests along other social factors, including gender, age and ability. The pre-1994 administrations presided over a state that supported a separate development (apartheid) system that prioritised economic zones and traditionally white European economic centres at the expense of indigenous populations (Prinsloo 2021). This decision provided the legal basis for widespread injustices in South Africa and exacerbated the spatial, racial and economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment, particularly in the so-called bantustans or 'homelands' (Prinsloo 2021). Between 1994 and the mid-2000s, in the early years of democracy, South Africa was able to achieve its best years of economic growth because of various macroeconomic policies, like the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP), which were designed to achieve a transformation in South Africa by reducing the 'triple challenges' of poverty, inequality and unemployment (DPME 2014, p. 83).

The legacy of apartheid continues to contribute to the inequality in South Africa, which is manifested in the highly disparate quality of infrastructure and services between different geographic areas, particularly the former homelands and townships. The policies and systems that were established during apartheid continue to affect the availability and accessibility of quality education, infrastructure, basic services, employment and markets across different segments of society, further perpetuating social and income disparities (Makgetla 2020; Shifa, David & Leibbrandt 2021). The spatial and economic inequalities also intersect with environmental vulnerabilities, such that households living in labour-sending areas (Makgetla 2020, p. 28), former homelands and informal settlements are much more likely to be affected by environmental and climatic events or the risks of pollution and other environmental degradation than households in more affluent areas (Venter et al. 2020; Williams et al. 2019, p. 158). Moreover, various redistributive policies, like the broad range of social grants and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), have yet to reduce inequities in the country.

The NDP 2030 acknowledges key development challenges that require focused attention in order to achieve the state's transformational development objectives, including inadequate infrastructure, spatial divides and persistent poverty. These development challenges reflect paradigms for understanding how inequality and inequities manifest and

35. Although race is major factor in the high levels of economic inequality in South Africa, it has been noted that inequality in South Africa is also becoming more based on class (Webster, Valodia & Francis 2017). Makgetla (2020) points to data showing that in the richest 5% of households, 45% were white, 42% black African, and 13% coloured or Asian.

are reproduced (see Makgetla 2020) for more on how inequalities are reproduced). Supporting the NDP, the NEPF 2019–2024 centres the importance of evaluation in policy-making and management and links evaluation to planning and budgeting processes, with specific emphasis on improving performance on government objectives for greater equity, inclusion and social development.

Development of the evaluation criterion on Transformative Equity

With the inability to hold a physical conference in 2021 because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, SAMEA facilitated a two-week virtual hackathon[36] to co-create solutions for key issues facing M&E and its contributions to society. The main themes were identified and included the following: (1) addressing systemic crises, including inequity and climate and environmental degradation; (2) how to implement M&E during a crisis (including designing rapid evaluations and conducting evaluations virtually); (3) MAE and producing an evaluation evidence map for South Africa. Two teams engaged on the theme of systemic crises, one focusing on issues of equity and one focusing on the need for environmental regeneration. Given the importance of evaluation criteria to evaluations, each team was tasked with developing a criterion and supplementary guidelines for commissioners and evaluation practitioners on how the criterion could be integrated into evaluation.

The team tackling the criterion and guideline on equity comprised eighteen people from SAMEA, the DPME, the National Department of Social Development (DSD), the National Development Agency, independent evaluators, researchers and civil society representatives. The team met virtually for two hours a day over the two-week period. They reviewed existing literature on the theoretical underpinnings for evaluation as a mechanism to support transformation and equity, interacted with key experts on the context of high levels of inequities in South Africa, and debated and defined the criterion, structure and content of the guideline before developing the core content for the guideline document. Key readings included recent work by Chaplowe and Hejnowicz (2021), Michael Quinn Patton (2020), Khalil Bitar (2021), the collection of contributions in *Transformational Evaluation* (Van der Berg, Magro & Adrien 2021), economic and social analysis by Trade and Industrial Policy Strategies (TIPS; Makgetla

36. Key champions to this undertaking included South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and JET Education Services, with funding support from UNICEF South Africa and the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE).

2020) and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) criteria.

Michael Quinn Patton argues that 'criteria constitute the nuclear core of evaluation's energy function: rendering judgement. Without criteria, there can be no judgement. Without judgement, there can be no evaluation [...]' (Patton 2020, p. 4). Criteria enable evaluators to prioritise what is important, identify the key questions to ask, the types of data to collect and how to interpret results (ibid). The most widely used evaluation criteria are those set by the OECD–DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet): relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability (OECD 2019). However, numerous evaluation experts have questioned the DAC rationale that issues of equity and inclusion can be covered in other domains, such as relevance, effectiveness and impact, rather than developing a unique criterion on equity during its most recent revision phase (Bitar 2021; Chaplowe & Hejnowicz 2021; Ofir 2021; Patton 2020). As Ofir (2021) reflects, 'the criteria are fine for "business as usual summative and accountability evaluations," but remain inadequate for addressing systems change and transformation from local to global level'. Given the importance of criteria in guiding the evaluation process, the hackathon team decided that an explicit criterion was indeed needed to promote greater equity in and through evaluations.

A key decision in determining the name of the criterion was to use the concept of equity over equality and that achieving equity requires transformation. The hackathon team spent several sessions exploring personal assumptions and understandings of equity and equality in the context of South Africa. The team recognised that equality and equity are often conflated yet distinct concepts. Equality can be understood as a state of affairs in which all individuals, groups or areas receive the same set of benefits or have the same exposure to opportunity regardless of their current position of privilege or need (Espinoza 2007, p. 345; Minow 2021, p. 174). Equity refers more to fairness and justice within social and economic systems (Bamberger & Segone 2011, p. 3), and the extent to which persons or regions receive appropriate levels of support according to their level of need (Minow 2021, p. 173). Equity also recognises that systems have been purposefully designed to benefit some individuals, groups or areas over others and that these other entities require differentiated interventions so that they can equally benefit or participate (Espinoza 2007; Minow 2021, p. 174). Achieving equity often requires a transformation of systems to break apart the structures that perpetuate the imbalances (Mertens 2021, p. 3; Minow 2021) and bring them to a state of fairness. Given the high levels of inequality in South Africa, the team recognised that the emphasis of the criterion needed to be on promoting equity and justice in order for the country to reach real equality.

Following the discussion on equity versus equality, the hackathon team determined to name the criterion 'Transformative Equity'. While the criterion and dimensions will be described in more depth in the next section, it is important to note that the team decided to define the criterion using five dimensions (e.g. who, how, where, what and when) to reflect the specific context of South Africa and to help evaluation commissioners, managers and practitioners consider how issues of equity play out broadly within intervention settings and in evaluation processes.

In addition to defining the evaluation criterion, the hackathon team started developing a guideline to support the application of the criterion in evaluations. In discussing how the equity criterion would be defined and how the guideline should be written to assist application, the team agreed that for the criterion to promote transformation, the guideline must motivate evaluation commissioners, managers, practitioners and users to adopt an ethical stance that prioritises inclusivity, respect for human rights and dignity, advocate for social, economic and environmental justice and be willing to challenge the existing power structures (see Mertens 2009, 2021). As the intention was for the DPME to issue the guideline as the owner of the NES, the team decided to use the DPME's guideline on developing TORs (DPME, 2016) as the structure for the guideline, providing examples of how the equity criterion could be integrated into the design, commissioning and implementation of an evaluation. The guideline demonstrates how evaluation purpose statements and evaluation questions could be rephrased to include a focus on equity, how the methodology could be expanded to include the marginalised and disempowered, and restated the importance of developing and using evaluation findings that promote transformative change.

Following the hackathon, a smaller team, including the authors of this chapter, worked on finalising the guidelines. The first draft was shared with fifteen external peer reviewers in April 2022, including representatives from DPME, DSD, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and independent evaluators. Feedback was incorporated into the final version of the guideline, published on SAMEA's website in July 2022.[37] A pilot process was then initiated to test the practical application of the guideline. This entailed the identification of upcoming evaluations where the TORs of these could be adapted to include the new criterion, with the staff responsible for these evaluations participating in a two-day training session in July 2022. Following the training, it was expected that the TORs would be adapted and evaluations commissioned. The pilot process is further discussed later in this chapter. We now describe the criterion.

37. Currently available at https://www.samea.org.za/evaluation-hackathon-reports.

Transformative Equity criterion

The Transformative Equity criterion is defined as 'the extent to which an intervention's objectives, design, implementation and impact contribute to, or do not contribute to, addressing systemic inequities and promotion of a more inclusive society'. By deliberately including the word 'transformative', the criterion underscores the assumption that reaching equity requires a transformation of systems and structures, both in the intervention and in the evaluation. Furthermore, the emphasis on systemic inequities draws attention to the way systems have been designed, established and maintained to perpetuate inequities.

To help users better understand the criterion and how it could be applied, the team identified five dimensions through which equity and inequities manifest: *Population/populace, Cause and effect, Space, Content and intention*, and *Timing*. These five dimensions were proposed based on the need to understand the intervention's context in relation to the history of South Africa, the readings on factors reproducing inequity and the need to promote transformation. These are described later on. Later sections will describe how these dimensions can be applied in evaluation.

Dimension 1: Population/populace: Who?

The 'Who' dimension reflects on which segments of the population are prioritised or excluded by an intervention to examine who benefits and who loses (whether intentional or not) and how the consequences of an intervention – expected or unexpected – affect groups differently. Critical in the context of Transformative Equity is the intentional inclusion of individuals or groups who may be disempowered or disenfranchised, the historically marginalised and otherwise voiceless. In addition to the groups commonly identified in discourse about inequality (e.g. females or racial groups), 'who' encourages the consideration of persons with disabilities, migrants or refugees, and those of diverse sexual orientations while also requiring an intentional awareness of how power and inclusion unfold in the intervention (and the evaluation) and on how power results systemically in negative consequences for different groups in society.[38] Attention to the intersections between different categories is critical, for example, rural African females or young African trans-persons, when considering who is included or excluded and who benefits or loses.

38. Ability and skill to mainstream the equity criterion in the evaluation process is also critical to ensure an equity lens is applied to evaluation. The skills and qualities needed of evaluation technical working groups and evaluation teams is described later in the chapter.

☐ Dimension 2: Cause and effect: How?

The 'how' dimension requires a critical consideration of three aspects. Firstly, the context within which an intervention operates, particularly the systemic issues that perpetuate inequities. Secondly, the extent to which the design or implementation of the intervention is responding to inequity. Thirdly, the dimension requires a consideration of the long-term effects of the intervention on equity. In this way, the 'how' dimension reflects an element of relevance or appropriateness to the broader context within which the intervention is positioned.

'How' requires consideration of structural drivers that perpetuate social and economic inequities and the extent to which the intervention adequately and appropriately addresses these factors. Examples of such structural drivers include inequalities in the ownership, access to and control of assets, large disparities in wages and disparities in the quality of education between schools in former homelands and all-white schools. These structural drivers are remnants of the apartheid system that continues to influence access to and the distribution of wealth, jobs and services.

In understanding how interventions are responsive to issues of inequity, this dimension suggests that evaluations should focus on examining the extent to which the intervention was delivered in a manner that was aligned with the needs and expectations of the different priority groups, the flexibility of the intervention to provide differentiated components depending on location or group need and the extent to which it seeks to change the structural issues which disempower.

☐ Dimension 3: Space: Where?

The 'where' dimension focuses on spatial and geographic contexts of the intervention (e.g. space, quality of the environment and rights of access or use by different groups), the way in which the intervention is experienced in different geographic areas and the extent to which the intervention is able to address the causes of inequality that result from these spatial or geographic contexts. Given the history of apartheid, this dimension recognises the persisting spatial inequities and their intersection with other manifestations of inequity. The differential effects of interventions play out in different communities such as rural, informal settlements, formalised peri-urban townships and traditional formal urban centres. Of particular concern are the former homelands, which are some of the poorest areas in South Africa.

'Where' recognises that different locations or areas provide greater or lesser opportunities for people in terms of education, economic opportunity, mobility, health and environment and neighbourhood quality because of

multiple reasons, including historic factors, geographic location and available environmental resources. It also assesses how the intervention seeks to address the geographic and environmental issues that disadvantage particular places and social groups, for example, designing appropriate services for rural areas, thus speaking to issues of environmental justice. Equity can also be an important consideration in the sustainability of results, for example, the degree to which the benefits of a programme or intervention are sustained may also depend on the socio-economic or spatial or geographic traits of the focus community.

☐ Dimension 4: Content and intention: What?

While some interventions have explicit objectives to promote equity or inclusion – for example, a youth employment programme – the Transformative Equity criterion urges that every evaluation includes an assessment of an 'intervention' objectives and results to determine if and how they contribute to equity and social development. Therefore, the 'what' dimension urges evaluators and other key stakeholders to consider the choice of intervention and whether the design and implementation approach adequately aligns with transformative objectives.

Specifically, 'what' urges evaluators and other key stakeholders to consider the extent to which the intervention is meeting or contributing to (or expected to contribute to) specific transformational objectives that seek to redress social and economic inequities; to differentiate between interventions that make a deliberate and concerted effort to address issues of equity versus those that lightly glance over it and whether interventions seek only to address symptoms but not the root cause of the problem. The 'what' dimension requires reviewing or developing the intervention's theory of change in order to determine the driving objective of the intervention and how equity considerations are integrated into the theory of change and theory of action of the intervention. In considering issues of effectiveness of interventions in achieving equity objectives, it is important for evaluators to distinguish between theory failure and implementation failure, recognising that the evaluation should consider both how well the intervention was designed and delivered in terms of addressing equity issues.

☐ Dimension 5: Time: When?

The 'when' dimension urges evaluators and commissioners to consider various time elements with regard to the intervention and the evaluation process. Firstly, the 'when' dimension urges evaluators and commissioners to understand the period when the intervention is taking place, paying attention to the incentives in the period within which the intervention and

the evaluation are situated. For example, there may be more openness for certain social changes after an election than would be present just before an election. Similarly, given the attention placed on high levels of youth unemployment, how would an evaluation of the Youth Unemployment Service (YES) programme be influenced by timing? In this way, the 'when' dimension relates to relevance and coherence.

In addition, 'when' encourages evaluators and commissioners to consider how the equity issue under consideration has changed over time. This consideration involves a retrospective scan to deepen the understanding of the duration of the issue or periods when the issue has been more intense than others. Evaluators can be asking, 'Has there been any improvement in the issue over time? If not, why not?' For example, an evaluation of a land reform initiative would include a review of previous policies, programmes and evaluations in the contextual analysis.

Finally, evaluators and commissioners are encouraged to think about the durability of equity results over time. If interventions are to be truly transformative, the changes in equity need to last into the foreseeable future.

Equity principles

In considering how the criterion would be applied in practice, the hackathon team recognised that a set of principles may be needed to assist commissioners, evaluation managers and evaluators as they conduct their work. These principles were derived from the existing literature on human rights and equity, power and participation, systems thinking and the relational African philosophy of *ubuntu*. They also require that the evaluator is not neutral but is actively seeking to address problems of systemic inequality through the evaluation process. In the drafting process, the hackathon team identified five key principles and then described how these principles could be applied as a commissioner or manager of evaluation and as the evaluator:

1. **Equality, justice and respect for human dignity:** The South African Constitution upholds the equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms for every person in South Africa and that no person should be disadvantaged or discriminated against. This understanding of equality is based on the belief that all persons have the right to have their human dignity recognised, protected and respected. In the realm of evaluations, evaluators, commissioners and funders need to pay attention to the ways in which the intervention and the evaluation process itself promotes the principles of equality and respect for human dignity. They are urged to uphold impartiality, seek and promote justice, treat all stakeholders

with the same level of respect and ensure that less powerful stakeholder groups have equal opportunities to make their voices heard or to review and respond to evaluation findings and recommendations.

2. **Awareness of power and voice:** Power dynamics are hugely influential both in the implementation of interventions and in the evaluation of such interventions (Rodrigues-Bilella, Salinas Mulder & Zaveri 2021; Sibanda & Ofir 2021). Power differences exist between implementers and participants, between evaluator and participants, between commissioners and evaluators and between funder and recipient. To integrate equity into an evaluation, intentional awareness of, and deliberate enforcement of, and ability to mitigate against, dynamics that undermine fairness and equality is required. Evaluators, commissioners and funders must be prepared to take on the challenge of explicitly unpacking and acknowledging how power manifests and need to be willing to change their perspective from 'power-over' to 'power-with' (Abidi-Habib et al. 2021, p. 109; Pansardi & Bindi 2021, p. 51). The continuous and intentional awareness of power and voice is expected to facilitate a inclusive and equal share of the evaluation process by evaluators and commissioners to ensure ownership of the evaluation process such that study participants and others invested in the intervention have the opportunity to contribute to the evaluation planning, design, methodology, interpretation of findings and identification of recommendations as well as the use of the evaluation.
3. ***Ubuntu*:** *Ubuntu* emphasises the relational way of being that acknowledges interdependencies between persons, and between all things, living and non-living, material and spiritual (Chilisa et al. 2015, pp. 317–318; Sibanda & Ofir 2021, p. 50). Adopting *ubuntu* allows all to recognise a shared environment and shared sense of wellness and requires a change in our embedded attitudes towards the vulnerable and most marginalised, as well as nature. In applying *ubuntu* to evaluation planning, implementation and use, evaluators and commissioners are urged to give space to the perspectives of all stakeholders and consider the multiple interconnected ways of knowing and being that influence how an intervention is experienced and how values are determined to ensure that benefits accrue equitably (Billman 2019; Chilisa et al. 2015, pp. 318–319; Chilisa et al. 2015, pp. 318–319).
4. **Inclusivity:** Drawing from the literature on participatory approaches to evaluation (e.g. Abbot & Guijt 1998; Mertens 1999; Post et al. 2016), inclusivity refers to the intentional inclusion of all identities and geographies that are affected (directly or indirectly), ensuring that these are represented in the different phases of the evaluation including preparation, implementation and follow-up (Robinson, Fisher & Strike 2014, p. 5). Processes need to be established to ensure that those who

may have been previously marginalised from evaluation processes or have had less voice are given the opportunity to contribute to the process meaningfully. For example, community stakeholders must be supported to have a strong voice, not merely as sources of data or token representatives on 'advisory councils'. Inclusivity also means the priorities, interests, voices, insights and concerns of stakeholders are solicited and reflected upon from the conception stage through to delivering the evaluation findings.

5. **Systems thinking:** Development interventions are often complex, with multiple influences and stakeholders and complex theories of change (Chaplowe & Hejnowicz 2021, p. 3). It is important to understand how interventions are part of bigger systems, with often unintended outcomes in linked systems (e.g. nature) (Uitto 2021, p. 92; see Footprint Evaluations on Better Evaluations website[39]). A systems thinking approach aims to map and understand the entire spectrum of relationships, interests and influences that have a bearing on an intervention and its effectiveness (Hummelbrunner 2011, p. 399). In this way, evaluation practice needs to incorporate analyses of interactions and inclusivity within systems. This can be achieved by mapping and understanding the components of sub-systems of interest and understanding their needed contributions within the overall system.

The guideline was drafted with the understanding that commissioners of evaluations and evaluators have different roles and perspectives in the evaluation process. Therefore, the application of these principles will vary slightly based on one's place (of power) and role in the evaluation. Table 11.1 presents how the equity principles could be applied by those commissioning and those conducting an evaluation.

39. www.betterevaluation.org/our-work/footprint-evaluation-project

TABLE 11.1: Applying equity principles as a commissioner or an evaluator.

Evaluation commissioners	Evaluators
Evaluation commissioners has a responsibility to promote equity in the process of commissioning and managing evaluations by:	Evaluators have a responsibility to promote and uphold equity throughout the evaluation process by:
Adopting a mindset of social justice and equality and a willingness to examine structures that perpetuate inequities, even where these affect dominant interests	Self-reflecting on one's own biases and position of privilege, and transparency as to how these may influence the evaluation
Being attentive to the power dynamics at play in how interventions are funded, designed and implemented; how evaluations are carried out and evaluators are perceived; and how evaluation results are presented and used	Adopting a mindset of social justice and a commitment to using evaluation to promote Transformative Equity
Ensuring both the intervention and evaluation process do not reinforce inequity or produce unintended consequences that perpetuate inequality and inequity	Considering the application of evaluation theories or methodologies that are inclusive and participatory, for example, participatory evaluation,[40] feminist evaluation[41] or empowerment evaluation[42]
Ensuring the evaluation asks broader questions about relevance and coherence in the broader system, and how effectively the intervention supports systemic change	Building teams that include previously disadvantaged individuals, thereby allowing them to play a more meaningful role in the evaluation process
Establishing multiple mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, ensuring that such engagements are inclusive, respect the dignity of all, and give stakeholders meaningful opportunities for contribution by all throughout the evaluation process	Appreciating the African context, particularly the importance of relationships, material and non-material interactions, the interconnectedness with nature, and acknowledgement of multiple ways of knowing and being
Welcoming divergent views to enrich the debate while also facilitating a process of coming to agreement[43]	Creating an inclusive environment where recipients of the intervention can meaningfully input into the evaluation
Establishing trust and buy-in with communities, particularly with those that have previously been consulted without seeing any changes in their lives	Upholding ethical evaluation practice through ensuring that evaluation participants have full understanding of their rights as an evaluation participant, and respecting participants' human rights and dignity
Ensuring that the evaluation team is diverse in background and experience, and able to understand and empathise with the most affected groups in a particular evaluation	

Source: Adapted from DPME (2022).

40. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/participatory_evaluation

41. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/feminist_evaluation

42. https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/plan/approach/empowerment_evaluation

43. An example of this is in this video of the Diagnostic Review of Violence Against Women and Children https://youtu.be/JFZdnEOWARA and this policy brief https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/id/e627b871-2636-4369-a5c8-79074f22bd56/Government%20Commissioned%20Evaluation_Building%20a%20culture%20of%20evidence%20informed%20policy.pdf.

Integrating the equity dimensions and principles into the evaluation process

For evaluations to assess the extent to which an intervention can contribute to the transformation of society, the evaluation questions and evaluation design must take stock of the specific dynamics in which inequities play out in the given context and the differential experiences and needs of the various stakeholders and participants involved. Using the structure of the DPME guideline on developing TORs, the hackathon team worked to ensure that equity would be considered at every stage, from determining the objective and scope of the evaluation, identifying and engaging stakeholders and drafting evaluation questions, to using the evaluation findings and the development of improvement plans. This section provides practical guidance on how the equity dimensions and principles can be brought into these elements of evaluations.

Determining the purpose and scope of the evaluation

The evaluation purpose provides the overall intention of the evaluation, thereby providing the basis for the evaluation scope, questions and methodology. The Transformative Equity guideline urges commissioners and evaluators to consider the equity implications of the intervention being evaluated (the evaluand) and consider whether the evaluation purpose should specifically cover equity, even if the intervention does not explicitly have an equity objective. To do so, commissioners and evaluators can consider who is included and excluded, how different groups (may) experience an intervention based on their context, and what spatial or structural factors affect the efficacy of the intervention.

Evaluation questions

Each evaluation purpose requires a specific evaluation type and particular evaluation questions relevant to the phase in the intervention's life cycle. In ensuring the application of an 'equity lens', the guideline provides an example of possible questions by evaluation type, with the relevant dimension identified in parentheses. For each evaluation type, examples of detailed evaluation questions are also provided. Examples of evaluation questions incorporating equity by evaluation type are shown in Table 11.2.

TABLE 11.2: Suggested primary and detailed evaluation questions by type, accounting for equity.

Type	Primary evaluation questions in the purpose	Equity-focused evaluation questions (and in brackets where these relate to equity dimensions and the six DAC criteria, where relevant)
Diagnostic	What is the current situation and root cause of the problem? What structural or systemic inequities contribute to that problem, and what are possible interventions to address it?	What are the equity needs or problems that the intervention aims to address (*how*)? Has sufficient attention been paid to the way in which the experienced needs or problems may differ between population groups (*who*) or geographic locations (*where*), and how the problem manifests (*how*)? Has the problem been understood at a macro level before being looked at from the more micro level (*what*)? (Relevance)
Design	Is the logic of the intervention design relevant, robust and likely to work and how will it contribute to Transformative Equity?	Is the design of the intervention inclusive, addressing societal inequities and the need for Transformative Equity (*what*)? Does it consider how the intervention supports or detracts from other efforts? Was equity considered in the intervention design (represented in the ToC, indicators, log frame, etc.)? What, if any, are the assumptions made in the design of the programme (*how*)? (Appropriateness and coherence)
Implementation/ Process	Is the intervention being implemented as specified; are the outcomes likely to be achieved and why; and is the intervention likely to result in changes in the equity dimensions?	What factors influence the way the programmes are implemented (*how*)? What power dynamics are at play (*how*)? (Effectiveness) How is the context or situation changing for participants and stakeholders over the period of the implementation? What influence does a shift in socio-political context or discourse have on the intervention's likely success (*when*)?
Outcome	Have short-term outcomes been achieved as a result of the intervention, and what have been Transformative Equity outcomes, intended or unintended?	Do the emerging outcomes match the theory of change in terms of how the intervention was intended to promote equity (*what*)? How do these outcomes differ between population groups (*who*), geographic locations (*where*) and contexts (*how*)? What are the reasons and explanations for these differences? Are these outcomes likely to lead to systemic and sustainable change? (Effectiveness)
Impact	What have been the direct and indirect results of the intervention? Have there been impacts on systemic inequity? What have been the intended and unintended impacts of the intervention, and how do these relate to Transformative Equity?	To what extent do the outcomes address the symptoms and causes of inequality and inequity (*what*)? Are they systemic and sustainable in that will they make a lasting change for the beneficiaries of intervention? (*when*) (Appropriate for evaluation of individual interventions) (Impact and sustainability)
Economic	What are the costs in relation to social benefits? What are the social costs of inaction? Is the programme providing value for money?	What is the net social benefit resulting from a programme (*what* and *how*)? How should this be viewed from an equality and equity perspective? (Impact)

Source: Adapted from DPME (2022).

In addition to the evaluation purpose and evaluation questions, an evaluation TOR should also provide guidance regarding the expected evaluation design or approach and methodology to be applied. The Transformative Equity guideline urges that evaluation commissioners, technical working group (TWG) and evaluators ensure that the evaluation design is inclusive, considers system effects, and gives attention to the power dynamics between groups and possible conflicts that may emerge in the evaluation. The guideline offers some reflective questions to support this thinking:

- How will systemic issues of empowerment and disempowerment be analysed?
- How will different populations be included in the data-collection process? Does the evaluation include people of different ages, classes, races, cultures, ethnicities, families, incomes, languages, locations, abilities, health and sexualities?
- Are the data-collection strategies appropriate for diverse groups and diverse contexts, including providing for preferred modes of communication? This question requires consideration of issues such as language, accessibility and technical literacy. Do they encourage participatory methods which are culturally appropriate, perhaps using existing community structures or groupings?[44]
- How will the power differentials between evaluators and participants be managed so that bias is minimised? How will respondents be affected by being interviewed by male or female, younger or older, black or white interviewers? This potential bias underscores why it is critical for evaluation teams to be diverse and for evaluation teams to engage in ongoing self-reflection of their own biases and assumptions.

Stakeholder identification and engagement process

Given that equity is a normative, value-based concept, it is important for evaluations to identify which groups are of concern, which groups are particularly marginalised or vulnerable in the applicable context, which stakeholder characteristics are of interest and what is meant by a fair distribution. Intentional and meaningful engagement of diverse stakeholders remains critical to the success of evaluations and the usefulness of the evidence produced. This emphasis on meaningful engagement of stakeholders is particularly relevant in the South African NES, which has adopted a utilisation-focused approach in which

44. See for example https://www.participatorymethods.org/glossary/participatory-learning-and-action-pla.

evaluations are undertaken for and with the primary users in mind (Patton 2008). This means that programme participants are key stakeholders in the entire evaluation process.

The Transformative Equity guideline provides several suggestions for enhancing inclusive and equitable stakeholder engagement. A stakeholder analysis should be conducted to ensure that stakeholders and participants with diverse characteristics[45] affected by the intervention are included in the evaluation process. This intentional inclusion ensures that the voices of those affected by the intervention meaningfully participate in the evaluation planning, design, implementation and discussion of findings and recommendations. The guideline also states that representatives from the most affected and marginalised groups should be included on the Evaluation Steering Committee (ESC) or other similar oversight bodies and involved in such a way that they can make a meaningful contribution.[46] The ESC also holds responsibility for ensuring equitable participatory practices during the evaluation process. Finally, guidance is provided to commissioners and evaluators regarding processes that can be used in different stakeholder meetings to ensure inclusion and equity, including ensuring that language and presentation are inclusive and accessible, rules are established to equalise speaking time, and multiple meetings times are provided to enable broader participation.

The validation of evaluation findings presents another valuable opportunity to engage stakeholders in the review and interpretation of results and how these results can be used for improved interventions. The guideline states that participants of this workshop should be carefully selected to include groups differently affected by the intervention as well as stakeholders with diverse views. The process should encourage participation by all groups and create meaningful interaction with the findings and the potential to make recommendations.

Bringing equity into the post-evaluation processes

The South African NES was established purposively to maximise the likelihood of use (NEPF of 2011, p2 and 4). The objective of having a Transformative Equity criterion is that evaluations promote system-level

45. Such as abilities, ages, classes, cultures, ethnicities, families, incomes, languages, locations, races and sexualities.

46. For example, if an evaluation related to HIV and AIDS this may mean representatives from a group such as an association of home-based carers, or if around support to small business, representatives of informal traders. The process by which they are involved also matters to ensure they have an equal voice.

change that contributes to greater equity within society. Evaluations are only of value if they are used, and so the follow-up process is critical. Specifically, this includes communication of the evaluation results to stakeholders and participants and the development of the improvement plan. Goldman and Pabari (2020) unpack the lessons of what drives evidence use, drawing from five African countries. They provide a table indicating the types of interventions that can be taken to support evaluation use, found in these countries' NES, and other interventions promoting use. Many of these elements are present in the South African NES.

In keeping with the principles of inclusivity and participation, it is very important that results from evaluations are shared timeously with the public, particularly participants and those affected, and in accessible ways to different stakeholders (considering formats, language, media, etc.). In view of the power dynamics within communities, commissioners and evaluators must also consider the key gatekeepers who will enable or block communication. Community members may be able to take the findings from the data analysis and develop their own follow-up interventions, and this feedback is very useful in refining an evaluation report or preparing an improvement plan. Critically, it is important that those affected by the intervention have an opportunity to contribute to developing the improvement plan. However, historically, efforts to communicate evaluation results are underplayed in South Africa, with the main focus being on formal reporting upwards and little budget allocated.[47] This needs to change.

The pilot process: Mainstreaming the criterion into practice

The intended outcome of the hackathon process was that the two criteria[48] and guidelines be applied to all future evaluations, thus transforming the evaluation system to be more intentional regarding issues of equity and CEH. In order to test this, the decision was taken to pilot the practical application of the guideline in real evaluations. Targeted recruitment was used, seeking up to six evaluations that had TORs drafted and implementation scheduled for late 2022 into early 2023, asking government and non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners. In the end, only three evaluations were found at this stage: (1) the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) DPME impact evaluation on the COVID-19 TERS grant; (2) the DSD

47. The evaluation of the national evaluation system found that less than 1% of budgets are spent on communication (Goldman et al. 2019).

48. Including the climate and ecosystems health criterion.

design and implementation evaluation of the Household Food and Nutrition Security Programme; and (3) the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) implementation evaluation of the Water Research, Development and Innovation Roadmap. Teams from all three commissioning departments comprised a mix of M&E and programme staff, participated in a training conducted in July 2022. During the training, participating groups engaged with each criterion and considered how evaluation questions and scope could be adjusted to include the criteria. The three evaluations proved to be at different stages in their process, making the training and piloting more complex and generating interesting lessons.

For the Household Food and Nutrition Security Programme, it was discovered during the training that the TORs had already been approved, precluding fundamental shifts and changes to the TORs. The team recognised the relevance of the two criteria to the evaluation of the programme and agreed to incorporate the criteria during the inception phase when evaluation questions and methodology can be adjusted. In early December 2022, SAMEA board members engaged with the contracted evaluators to sensitise them on integrating the criteria into the evaluation questions and process. Although the evaluation process has experienced some procedural delays, the DSD continues to engage with SAMEA on the criteria and has indicated keen interest in institutionalising just transition into their M&E processes using the two guidelines.

In the DSI case, the TORs were adapted following the training to include questions to address both equity and CEH before being presented to the Bid Specification Committee (BSC) for approval. The evaluation manager noted that the guidelines assisted in developing appropriate questions, such as 'Has the intervention been responsive to vulnerable groups and institutions, namely: females, disabled, youth, historically disadvantaged institutions and disadvantaged communities? If not, how can this be achieved?'. However, they also noted that queries were raised by the BSC, as they recognised that current project had not collected data relevant to answer some of the additional questions. This gap speaks to the need to sensitise programme staff as well as M&E staff on these issues for integration in the design phase. In addition to adaptations to the TORs, DSI has made considerable progress in introducing and integrating the criteria and guidelines into their departmental processes and aim to include them in the departmental M&E framework.

Finally, during the training, the participants for the COVID-19 TERs impact evaluation were challenged to think of how to apply some of the dimensions of the criteria to their evaluation design. Specifically, the team struggled to see how the criterion on CEH was relevant to unemployment schemes. For reasons unrelated to this pilot process, this evaluation has

not progressed beyond the draft TORs stage, and therefore, reflections on the learning from this example are limited.

The piloting process is generating lessons for SAMEA, DPME, DSD and others engaged in this development and testing process. Initial lessons learned include:

- The relevance of an organisational champion for the issue – in this case DSD, who have a relevant mandate to leave no one behind – and evaluation capacity, but also a need to ensure this is not seen as a sectoral issue.
- The importance of a champion in the commissioning organisation or department of the evaluation, ideally from both M&E and programme staff, who will internalise the topic and drive the inclusion of equity at all stages.
- The importance of building proper reflective processes into the TOR development and evaluation implementation stages. People quickly make judgements on the relevance of these topics without thinking on them systematically. Shallow reflection will not address the transformative changes needed to address the magnitude of the equity (and climate and ecosystems) crises. With South Africa's history, it proved easier for departments to take on equity issues, which are keenly felt by most government staff, rather than climate and ecosystems issues.
- The importance of balancing the number of evaluation questions to adequately address the overall purpose of the planned evaluation while also accounting for the need to make the equity intention explicit.
- The need for tools, checklists and rubrics to support the application of the criteria and guidelines.
- Incorporating gender-responsive and equity standards within the evaluation quality assurance processes is one way of ensuring that government evaluators contribute towards addressing social justice through evaluations. Yet, commissioners, programme staff, bid committees and others need more sensitisation on how these criteria and guidelines are supporting tools in this process.

In addition to these lessons, the authors anticipate the need for much more advocacy and capacity-building on the criteria and guidelines to actuate the theory of change. Through the process of developing the criteria and guidelines, a community of practice has emerged to facilitate greater learning and application within the M&E sector, and SAMEA has decided to continue with this theme over the coming years. In the coming years, the authors anticipate this area of work to further develop as issues of Transformative Equity and CEH become more embedded in the NES.

Conclusion

The criterion and guideline described in this chapter have been developed from the perspective that evaluation can and should play a critical role in societal transformation, particularly in addressing the systemic inequities that persist in South Africa. The current DAC criteria that are commonly used in evaluations across the world do not adequately cover issues of equity. Without an explicit criterion on equity, evaluators and commissioners of evaluation may overlook key questions and steps necessary to ensure that issues of equity are adequately and purposefully included during the evaluation process.

The co-development of the two evaluation criteria and guidelines addressing Transformative Equity and CEH and the commitment of DPME to issue the guidelines has resulted in a major step to influence evaluation to better support the desired development outcomes and impact on society as envisioned in the NDP. It is still early to determine whether the hypothesis has worked and whether the application of the guidelines will be mainstreamed and have the transformative effect intended. The process to date has clearly raised the profile of Transformative Equity and fostered the commitment of DPME, DSI and DSD to institutionalise the work.

Early learnings are showing the need for greater advocacy on the value of a dedicated criterion on equity and more capacity-building for commissioners and practitioners for how to use the criterion in practice. More intensive support is needed over the next year to test the criteria and guidelines, to support the pilots effectively, document the lessons and establish how to build capacity to apply these widely in South Africa. The SAMEA will be pursuing this work over the next three years, engaging the emerging community of practice focused on evaluation for just transition to develop more knowledge, skills and practical tools within the evaluation sector and government departments to learn together how M&E can best contribute towards a just transition to a more equal and sustainable world.

Chapter 12

Evaluation in service of equity? A synthesis of the conceptualisation of inequality and evaluation approaches to address inequality

Tebogo Fish
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Samukelisiwe Mkhize
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Steven Masvaure
Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

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Introduction

Evaluation is regarded as a powerful tool that can be used to address several socio-economic issues and improve the effectiveness of development programmes. However, several scholars have highlighted the limits of evaluation as a tool. Challenges include evaluations being accountability-focused, the disjuncture between evaluation theory and practice and the project mentality that is widely adopted in evaluations. These factors have limited the role of evaluation in transforming society and improving the development outcomes of interventions. Several evaluation studies have shown that by being accountability-focused, the commissioners of evaluations and evaluators miss the key component of learning and applying evaluative thinking to the different interventions that are being implemented. Furthermore, evaluations have failed to capture the several components that shape the life experiences of the programme beneficiaries. For evaluation to be an effective tool, it needs to be critical, ask difficult questions and trigger internal and external reviews of approaches and design of interventions. This book has shown that evaluators need to be conscious of the prevailing social reality and understand how various issues interlink to produce that social reality. There is an inherent demand for programme designers, implementers and evaluators to focus on the root causes of the several challenges that are experienced in the Global South. What is emerging is that an equitable and just society cannot be achieved through simplistic approaches to evaluation but through complex and in-depth approaches that unravel the underlying mechanisms that drive unequal societies.

This book highlights the various approaches that evaluators can use to evaluate interventions that seek to address inequality in the Global South. Evaluators are urged to adopt multipronged approaches to understand the underlying causes of inequalities and pass a judgement on the effect of the interventions seeking to address that inequality. This book made a clarion call to evaluators to go beyond answering the questions: 'Are we doing the right thing?' and 'What makes this the right thing to do?' The call is for evaluators to go beyond the narrow focus on projects and other interventions and to have a broad look at the systemic drivers of inequality and address them. This approach will place the intervention in its context and foster a broad understanding of its contribution to addressing the systemic injustices in the communities.

Evaluators' conceptualisation of inequality

This book alludes to the fact that although equality and equity are generally conflated and treated as synonyms, they are, in fact, different concepts.

While equality involves the provision of the exact same resources, benefits and opportunities to all people, groups and areas in a country, regardless of identity, abilities, position, privilege or need, equity refers to the provision of the appropriate levels of support to individuals, groups or areas, according to their level of need in pursuit of fairness and justice within social and economic systems that resulted from the historical structural inequalities mentioned earlier. The experiences of people in Africa of inequality are better articulated by the concept of 'intersectionality'. Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different forms or systems of inequality based on race, class, gender and physical and mental abilities, among other issues, often overlap and thus compound the negative effects experienced by people with these various identities and backgrounds.

In this book, there is a common thread that shows that the root of the inequalities that are experienced in the Global South are rooted in colonialism and its related system of oppression, slavery, racism, patriarchy (rooted in sexism), etc. (Obeng-Odoom 2015). These historical structural inequalities, which were intentional forms of discrimination and prejudice, bred systemic inequalities that are perpetuated and normalised through the institutions, regulations and practices currently in place in society and which continue to inform experiences of marginalisation for certain worst-off groups of people. The book emphasised that the Global South has not yet recovered from the impact of colonisation. Inequities affect most of the population in the Global South to the extent that interventions focus on those who are regarded as worse off. The worst-off groups are consistently identified as females, those living with physically and mentally disabilities, youth, children and the elderly (Bamberger & Segone 2011, p. 12), as well as those on the extreme end of deprivation or poverty. Most of the current development interventions are focused on these worst-off groups, leaving others to fend for themselves.

The conceptualisation of inequality in evaluation is influenced and rooted in the ideological and epistemic hegemony of the Global North. The conceptualisation is driven by the power of development aid that is controlled by the Global North. The concept of development aid has its roots in the establishment of the Bretton Woods system in the 1940s, and the introduction of development aid in Africa coincides with the end of colonial rule and the beginning of independent governance of many African countries in the early 1960s by former colonial governments and international multilateral institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), and other bilateral and multilateral donor organisations (Harriss 2013). This book illustrates the continued economic and political hegemony of these Global North powers, which have led to the current conceptualisation of what development should look like in Africa and how it is predominantly measured. Of concern is the

limited attention paid to the views of the communities in the Global South when it comes to the conceptualisation and design of interventions that seek to address their challenges. Evaluations are largely pitched at addressing the information needs of the funders from the Global North and ignore the local needs.

For development to be equitable, it needs to assume an equity lens, not the narrow neoliberal perspective of development that is aligned with economic growth centred on market-oriented reform policies such as 'eliminating price controls, deregulating capital markets, lowering trade barriers', especially through privatisation and austerity, state influence in the economy and reducing spending on priority sectors and issues. The notion that economic growth is a panacea to addressing inequality has been proven to be less effective in reducing inequality. This book also calls for a need to realise that the contextual nuances of the Global South communities are different from those of the West; hence, pitching development interventions that are based on Western notions of development and values might result in more harm in the Global South.

The book also posits that the perpetuation of inequality is linked to Africa's dependence on foreign aid, which entrenches neoliberal development ideals. The role of colonial history and how it impoverished Global South communities is not considered, and the implication is that the conceptualisation of 'development' neglects the very reason why development is needed. Thus, inequality in this book is understood as any imbalance of power, including development decision-making power and prioritisation of development interventions. The power asymmetries are witnessed through the influence of global powers and donor institutions on sectoral agendas and priorities in Africa. The most concerning is that there appears to be a lack of a contextual, systems thinking approach and a holistic approach to addressing various inequality issues in the Global South. Instead, the interventions focus on addressing the symptoms of inequality rather than its root causes, thereby entrenching the systemic structural inequalities and the privilege of the Global North.

Further, social inequalities are viewed through unequal power dynamics between males and females, generally perceived as a key driver of gender-based violence (GBV); however, a more nuanced conceptualisation of gender inequality also includes issues of discrimination as critical to understanding the experiences of females. Discrimination denotes the intersection between power and prejudice, such as racial and disability discrimination. Inequalities in mental health illustrate the social and structural disparities between population groups that are avoidable, unfairly generated and maintained by unjust social arrangements that offend common notions of fairness and keep a particular group of society

deprived of access to mental health services. These examples show that inequality cannot be addressed through efforts to achieve equality but rather would most effectively be resolved through efforts to achieve equity. This book has shown that these contextual and social intricacies are not fully considered in the design, conceptualisation and evaluation phases of interventions.

There is a plethora of evidence that shows that the Western notion of development and the associated actions to address development inequalities have not resulted in progress or change in African countries, including in terms of economic growth (Harris 2017; Njoroge 2018). It is argued, therefore, that to be successful, development interventions and their evaluations should assume an equity lens. The pursuit of equity is important because it demonstrates the understanding that inequality is context-specific and varies across different individuals, spaces and time. Equity thus encompasses a wide variety of concepts and principles believed to be key to achieving social justice and fairness in Africa, including respect for human rights and dignity, intersectionality, inclusivity and diversity, recognition of power and giving voice to marginalised groups, *ubuntu* and systems thinking. These notions and principles should apply to both the beneficiaries of development programmes and also to African evaluators, to truly decolonise evaluation practice on the continent and make it contextually relevant and supportive of equitable development outcomes.

Proposed approaches to address inequality

This book has shown that programme evaluation can be used as an effective tool to address social change and transformation in the development space. However, this can only be achieved through concerted efforts to adopt approaches that are relevant and lead to a better understanding of the problem and its context. The argument posited in this book is that development should be viewed as an equity project, and associated evaluations should adopt an equity lens. However, to achieve this, there is a need for the decolonisation of African evaluation practice, and the curriculum should be linked to this effort, as this approach would be more context-responsive. This book also argues that the inclusion of African indigenous knowledge, worldviews, experiences, values and aspirations into public policy and development planning, programme implementation and evaluation can go a long way in creating a just and equitable society. The Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) framework provides an array of approaches that can allow evaluators to grapple with key challenges relating to hierarchy, power asymmetries and representation in international development. In addition, giving voice to

African beneficiaries and their experiences is seen as a more plausible approach to improving development interventions.

Furthermore, this book highlights the importance of adopting the 'Intersectional Framework' as a tool for unpacking inequality as it would provide a more comprehensive explanation of the inequalities faced by African people (race, gender, identities and mental and physical abilities, etc.) and enable evaluators to focus on the broader root causes of the problem. The 'Intersectional Framework' in evaluation contributes to a better understanding of chronic development challenges such as climate injustice, poverty and income inequality. It enables programme designers to come up with holistic interventions that effectively address a wide array of injustices that limit communities' and individuals' resilience, prosperity and well-being. The adoption of the intersectional lens necessitates evaluators not to limit themselves to the subject at hand but to focus on the broader root causes of the problem. This will enable programme designers to come up with holistic interventions that focus on a wide array of injustices. By avoiding examining the root causes of development challenges, evaluation will continue to scratch the surface and view problems using a narrow focus. Communities have ingrained injustices that cannot be solved by glossing over contextual factors that perpetuate them.

In addition, this book also advocates for the incorporation of an equity criterion into evaluation practice. The decision to create this criterion is based on the lack of satisfaction with the argument of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) explanatory notes that though equity is not explicitly addressed by these widely utilised evaluation guidelines, they are implicitly addressed by a few of the criteria. Before evaluators and commissioners of evaluation can think about designs and methods, they first need to decide on the right evaluation questions to ask, and these can be informed by this criterion and its guidelines. Guided by an equity-focused criterion and equity principles to evaluation, evaluators are then encouraged to reject the approach of selecting evaluation designs and methods based on Western epistemic hierarchies, where randomised control trials (RCTs) are regarded as the 'gold standard' and are at the top of the methodological hierarchy. The RCTs are riddled with flaws and weaknesses that are often not acknowledged, and several chapters across this book call this into question and propose other approaches that are more suitable and contextually relevant.

Another good example of an approach to equity-focused evaluation that can adequately capture issues of inequality is 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (CDA). The CDA looks at the social aspect of utterances (by the

beneficiaries, funders and the implementers during evaluation) in terms of the socio-economic and political situation on the ground. The argument put forward in this book is that this complementary framework brings the much-needed dynamism to decode the hidden language that forms the basis of prolonging inequality. This is achieved by providing a critical view that identifies power relations, struggles of power and the systems that maintain power relations.

This book also highlights that certain inequalities, such as those related to gender, may be more appropriately studied using analytical frameworks such as the 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' (WPR) framework. This is a feminist, post-constructivist policy analysis method that may be used to interrogate the conceptualisation of gender inequality in GBV interventions and evaluations. The WPR framework suggests that problems are not self-evident and do not objectively exist. Rather, problems are framed in a specific location and in the context of existing power relations. The WPR framework calls for attention to be paid to the importance of power and the effects of power that are at the centre of how problems are defined and acted on. The WPR analytic framework not only focuses on how problems are spoken of (discourse analysis) but is primarily concerned with 'the outcomes and material implications that arise when phenomena are constituted in particular ways as particular kinds of problems'.

Finally, this book also proposes the use of agenda setting (refers to how a particular issue gains the attention of policy-makers among other issues competing for priority) as an approach to get the issues of inequality on the development agenda. The agenda setting enhances our understanding of how problems are identified and defined. When agenda setting is coupled with social theory framing, it helps to deconstruct the process by which actors construct and represent meaning, thereby enhancing our understanding of social reality.

■ Reflection on evaluation approaches

One of the long-standing and significant challenges affecting evaluation contribution to addressing inequality in Africa is the long-standing reliance on Western/Eurocentric evaluation curriculum. Inevitably, this over-reliance has produced evaluators who mimic Western ideals in evaluation and programme design. Thus, there is a concerted need to address these challenges at this level by developing and advancing an African evaluation curriculum that responds to the need to confront issues of inequality in evaluation practice. Pertinent to this is the lack of adequate tools, methodologies and criteria for measuring and assessing the extent to

which development interventions achieve equity and social justice in Africa. One of the critical methodological challenges in addressing inequality and inequity in evaluation is the lack of explicit inclusion of equity in the most well-known and widely used OECD–DAC criteria. As evaluation criteria guide the development of evaluation questions, they are considered important guideposts when conducting evaluations. Thus, if evaluators and commissioners of evaluation do not explicitly consider equity, they are most likely to overlook these issues, resulting in inadequate and purposeless evaluations.

Similarly, evaluators need to pay more attention to the methods used to evaluate achievement of development outcomes in an equitable and fair manner, taking into consideration the nuanced and culturally appropriate designs to capture the development context. Ultimately, approaches, designs and methodologies should contribute to shifting current thinking about the interventions and options used to address inequities. A key methodological challenge prevalent in African evaluative evidence points to the over-reliance on quantitative and experimental methodologies to evaluate and measure inequality. In particular, the use of RCTs adopted as the 'Gold standard' in multiple sectors to evaluate the impact of development interventions. They are regarded as objective and value-free. Randomised Control Trials are framed as value-laden; however, the measurement tools utilised in the assessment of outcomes and impact are influenced by subjective factors, including which elements are investigated and evaluation questions are asked. More worrying is the fact that these evaluation designs tend to examine single issues in complicated contexts and often lack the capacity to have a holistic understanding of the problem and how to solve it. There are valid concerns about the continued use of RCTs, which 'look for keys under the streetlight', meaning they involve looking for a solution to a problem only where one is able to see, regardless of the likelihood that it is there.

We posit that methods and approaches utilised to evaluate interventions are not just technical tools but rather reflect how we see the world or at least interpret what we observe, what we perceive as credible data and how that data are made sense of. More often, the decision to use certain evaluation methods is often determined by evidence hierarchies. Randomised Control Trials are at the top of the methodological hierarchy and, therefore, are considered the go-to method for evaluators, and the evidence generated from their use is perceived as the most credible and appropriate for policy-making (Parkhurst 2017). Evaluation methodologies that utilise this methodology fail to consider the effect of compounding and extraneous variables on the outcomes of the interventions being evaluated. Evaluators must therefore question their assumptions and presumptions in designing evaluations and analysis. It is not just those who

use qualitative designs that should engage in self-criticism and reflexivity, but also those who use quantitative designs. In addition, interrogating the limitations of widely used approaches, such as theory-based approaches, that may reinforce inequity and injustice goals promoted by donors and more powerful stakeholders is important. Critical analysis of the root causes of the problem and boundary limitations on the problem itself, as well as stakeholders' involvement in construction and validation, remains a key critique of such approaches to ensuring the inclusion of equity and justice considerations.

It is imperative that the process of generating evidence is scrutinised, but it is equally important to evaluate the quality of the evidence produced. For example, acknowledging that the randomisation design used in RCTs is problematic and is not enough, particularly when evaluating public sector programmes because government efforts are directed towards addressing colonial and post-colonial injustices by improving conditions for the poorest and underserved communities. Questioning the evidence produced through randomisation that excludes the same vulnerable groups of people from which policy-makers need information to make informed decisions is also important. This should be done particularly in cases where it has been shown in the literature that the under-prioritisation of vulnerable groups in African governments is linked to a lack of data revealing the severity and burden of diseases.

Unlocking the value of evaluation in addressing inequality

Made in Africa Evaluation principles that promote equity should inform and guide evaluation theory and practice in Africa. This will ensure that a plurality of context-shared values whose values do not supersede other values are included, among other pertinent issues impeding evaluations' contribution to addressing inequality in Africa. Development, in its true sense, is based on the balancing act of the many competing forms of inequality. Applying a multiple and intersecting lens helps to see how a problem that manifests in a certain community can result from factors outside of the community. The importance of merging the evaluator and the beneficiary context cannot be understated. The current practice is that an evaluation is never shaped by the beneficiary context but by the context of the commissioner and the evaluator. Hence, the need for an intersectional lens during evaluation to promote justice. Understandably, addressing one form of equality might have an adverse impact on other forms of inequality experienced by the same group of people, community or individual. Even more critical is the need for evaluators to have the cultural competence to manage tensions within this context.

In addition, the focus on programmes as the unit of analysis in an evaluation can also lead to a narrow definition of the issue and impede the programmes' ability to address inequity. In order to truly resolve systemic issues, a 'whole of society' approach is required, including promoting the mainstreaming of intersecting issues at multiple levels, impeding the realisation of a just and equitable society into all policies and programmes. Thus, application of the principles of the WPR, CDA, Agenda and Framing frameworks extending beyond obvious and simplistic theories and narratives instead prompting for evaluation to question how problems are represented, which voices are dominant and which perspectives are undermined, can go a long way in ensuring that evaluations and evaluative enquiry identify the systems that are driving social problems and therefore better inform the design of interventions that can transform such systems. Thus, evaluations must begin integrating concerns of power, ideology and politics in the evaluation of development interventions. Formulating questions and approaches that lend themselves to inquiring about the types of outcomes that are desirable, as well as whether and how they are privileged over others, is required. The Transformative Equity criterion and accompanying guideline and the pilot projects used to test the integration of the criterion into terms of reference and evaluation implementation processes of various South African government interventions ought to include such tools and processes. If indeed, these guidelines and criteria are to contribute to MAE. Nonetheless, the guideline provides a useful framework guiding the operational use of five dimensions of the Transformative Equity criterion, which can be viewed as critical to understanding the socio-historical context of South Africa and factors that reproduce inequity and promote transformation.

Finally, there needs to be greater recognition that the concerns of subjectivity contribute to the marginalisation of other forms of knowledge and, in turn, promote the blind use of as well as expanding Global North–South power and knowledge creation asymmetries. As an example, whilst it is important to advance MAE, it is critical to address challenges associated with the overwhelming influence of quantitative evaluation designs like RCTs. The first step requires evaluators' awareness and acknowledgement of the flawed nature of RCTs in order to raise awareness of the need for equal treatment of this evaluation method and the dismantling of the epistemic hierarchy. Following this, the lessons from the weaknesses and failures of RCTs ought to be reflected in evaluation literature, which is currently limited by the 'intellectual dependency' of African scholars and policy-makers on trends set by the Global North. Indeed, it is well past time for more epistemological critique to be generated and disseminated from the Global South on matters that affect its people so profoundly.

Conclusion

This book has shown that for inequality to be addressed there is a need for a systematic approach. However, the current configuration of the stakeholders involved in international development does not allow a systematic approach to address the myriad of inequalities. There is a need for further research that can come up with approaches that enable the integration of interventions and synergies between the various players in the international development space. Secondly, more research should be conducted on tools and approaches that can improve the low quality of evaluative studies conducted in Africa, limiting studies inclusion in critical synthesis of development interventions. Thus, evaluators need to be empowered with critical analysis tools to ensure that evaluations contribute to addressing equity as part of the MAE Toolbox for a range of development interventions. Thirdly, there is a need for further contextualisation of the evaluation approaches and the popular OECD–DAC criteria to the Global South context. As highlighted earlier, the current practice is to use the criteria as it is despite the identified weaknesses.

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This scholarly book is a remarkable exploration of the profound impact of COVID-19 on learners' holistic development and the crucial support they require. This publication offers a profoundly insightful and culturally sensitive analysis incorporating diverse theories, including Afrocentric perspectives and an *ubuntu* lens.

The book stands out for its pioneering focus on the multifaceted effects of COVID-19 on learners' development and the indispensable support systems that must be in place. The inclusion of lesser-known theories, such as Nsamenang's social ontogenesis theory, elevates the discourse, making it an exceptionally compelling and intellectually stimulating read. Moreover, the meticulously structured framework and thoughtfully curated chapters provide a panoramic view of the subject matter, leaving no aspect unexplored.

Through scientifically substantiated research and meticulous methodological explanations, this book delivers invaluable insights into the impact of COVID-19 on learners' development. It serves as an indispensable academic resource for researchers and scholars, empowering them with essential knowledge to effectively navigate the challenges faced by learners during and beyond the pandemic.

The editors deserve to be commended for their judicious timing in publishing this important work and for assembling a team of interdisciplinary researchers and authors of the highest calibre. Their deliberate emphasis on an African-centred approach fills a significant void in the field and highlights the importance of adopting an interdisciplinary lens. The exceptional standard of scholarship exhibited in each chapter's research projects, coupled with the comprehensive introduction and concluding summary chapter, further solidifies the book's impact.

In conclusion, this publication makes a resounding contribution to our understanding of the profound impact of COVID-19 on learners' development and the indispensable support they require. This book is an indispensable resource for scholars in education, psychology, and related fields due to its integration of diverse theories and meticulously constructed framework. Through the editors' unwavering dedication and the book's comprehensive nature, this publication lays the foundation for further ground-breaking research and transformative interventions, fostering holistic learner development in the face of future challenges.

The publication of this book comes at a good time, given the endemic power imbalance between countries in the Global South and the Global North. The post-COVID-19 world demonstrates the perpetual unequal distribution of power and resources between developed and developing countries in the Global North and Global South. Millions of people suffer from this asymmetry, which contributes to growing inequality. Due to its inherent value judgement in the evaluation process and its potential influence on policy decisions, evaluation should speak truth to power rather than remain complicit.

This book on equity in evaluation is a step towards distilling and synthesising the current status and direction of evaluation in African contexts in the 21st century. This book will most certainly be a strong addition to the theoretical evaluation scholarship toolbox as it will further illuminate the current status of evaluation in African contexts. Global South evaluation voices in this publication contribute to a larger body of knowledge by invoking African epistemology, ontology, and axiology, which could engender transformative evaluation practices.

Dr Nombeko P Mbava, School of Public Leadership, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

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