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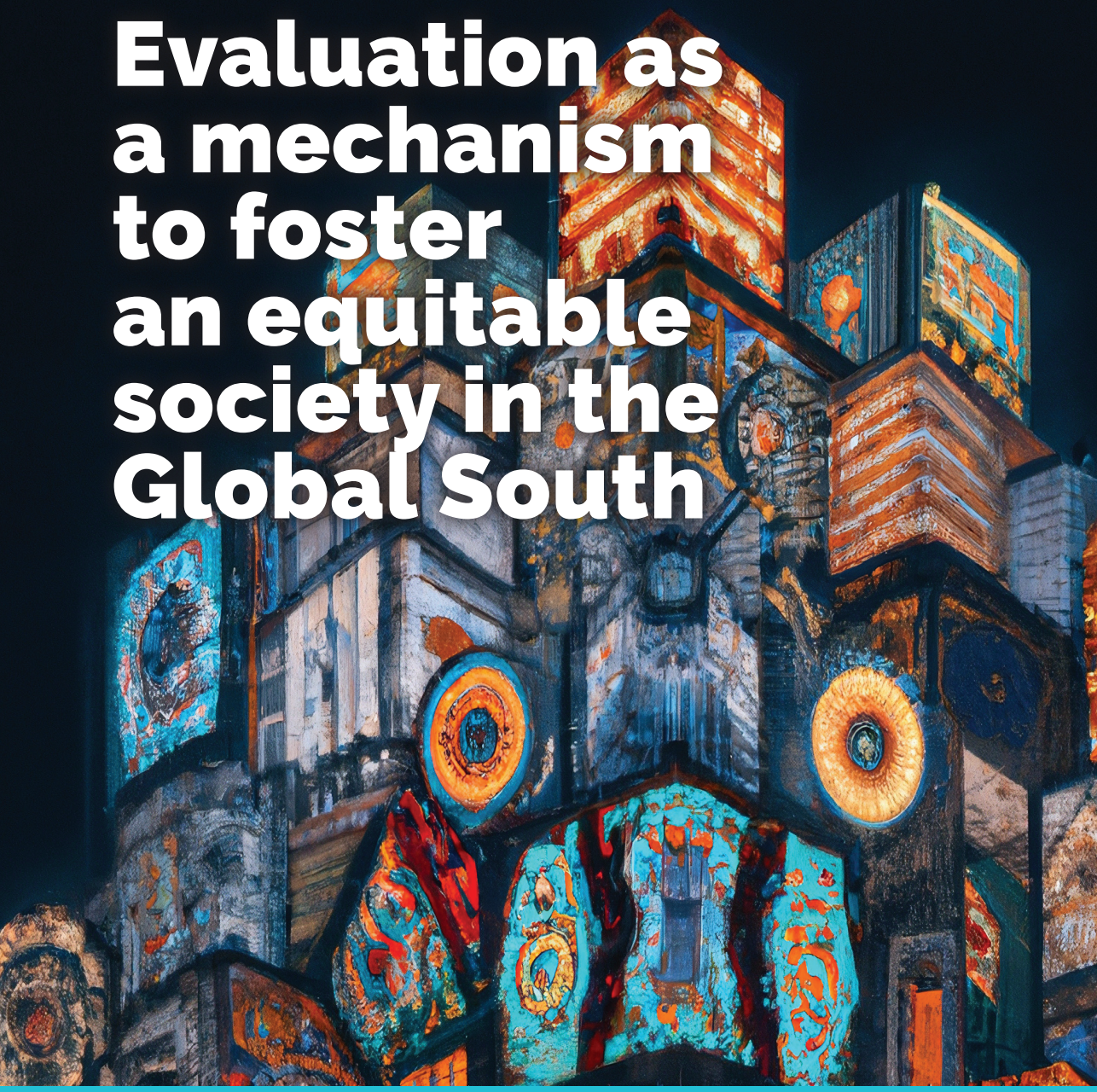
Evaluation as a mechanism to foster an equitable society in the Global South



EDITED BY
Steven Masvaure, Takunda Chirau, Tebogo Fish,
Samukelisiwe Mkhize and Candice Morkel

Evaluation: African Perspectives
Volume 2

Evaluation as a mechanism to foster an equitable society in the Global South



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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 rigorous two-step peer-review before publication by two technical expert reviewers who did not include the volume editors and authors and were independent of the volume editors, with the identities of the reviewers not revealed to the volume editors and authors. The reviewers were independent of the publisher, volume editors and authors. The publisher shared feedback on the similarity report and the reviewers' inputs with the manuscript's volume editors and authors to improve the manuscript. Where the reviewers recommended revision and improvements, the volume editors and 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 curable disparities among various individuals, regardless of how these groups are delineated, whether by social, economic, demographic or geographic factors. Equity aims to eliminate the unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive people of their rights. Therefore, inequities generally arise when certain populations are unfairly deprived of essential resources made available to other groups. A disparity is 'unfair' or 'unjust' when its cause results from 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 to advance equity. It emphasises that context, culture, history and beliefs shape the nature of assessments, 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, there is an urgent 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 still lacks access to essential 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 climate change's effects.

In this manuscript, the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), has conducted analyses on equitable evaluation in the Global South context, in order to make a contribution to this aspect of evaluation studies, to explore what is inequality in the African context, and how does it affect the lives of the citizens of African countries; what is equitable evaluation; how can the concept of equitable evaluation be adopted in evaluation practice; what lessons can be learnt from evaluations of interventions that address inequality at various levels (sectoral, programmatic and project); what epistemological transformation in evaluation practice is needed to achieve an equitable society; and how have issues of inequality manifested within evaluation practice through organisations, institutions and international development. The predominant methodology utilised is qualitative. Through improved evaluation processes, these insights will help address inequality and promote a more equitable society in Africa.

No part of this work was plagiarised or published elsewhere. Chapter 5, 'Equality of opportunity and non-discrimination as an evaluand: The case of private sector and financial system development in German development cooperation', by Candice Morkel, Jan Tobias Polak, Angela Heucher, Lena Taube and Lea Smidt, is based on a previous publication and the necessary acknowledgement is provided.

This book's target audience is academics engaged in the field of developmental programmes in sub-Saharan 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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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AEA	American Evaluation Association
AFRED	African Evaluation Database
AGDEN	Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CLEAR-AA	Centre for Learning and Evaluation and Results for Anglophone Africa
COS	Child Online Safety
CP	Child Protect
CR	Child Rights
CSOs	civil society organisations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EEF	Equitable Evaluation Framework
EEI	Equitable Evaluation Initiative
EGRS	Early Grade Reading Study
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FC	financial development cooperation
FDI	foreign direct investment
FTLP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GBVF	gender-based violence and femicide
GNI	gross national income
HIV and Aids	human immunodeficiency and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
IDEAS	International Development Evaluation Association
IEA	International Evaluation Academy
IMF	International Monetary Fund

ISPESE	Integrated Strategy on the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises
LAC	Latin American and Caribbean
LMICs	low- and middle-income countries
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAE	Made in Africa Evaluation
MSMES	Macro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises
NDP	National Development Plan
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NES	national evaluation systems
NGO	non-governmental organisations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAMEA	South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association
SDGs	sustainable development goals
SIDA	The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
TC	Technical Development Cooperation
ToC	theory of change
ToR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UNCEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
VOPEs	Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation
YEE	Young and Emerging Evaluators
ZANU–PF	Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front

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Notes on contributors

Andiswa Neku
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: andiswa.neku@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3673-5397

Andiswa Neku is a programme associate at the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA), where she plays a pivotal role in enhancing the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices across the region. With a solid academic foundation, Neku holds both a BA (Law) and International Relations and a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) from the University of the Witwatersrand. Currently, she is furthering her expertise by pursuing a postgraduate diploma in Public Management, specialising in M&E. This additional qualification underscores her drive to contribute to the field of public management with a nuanced perspective. Her educational journey reflects a commitment to understanding the complex interplay between legal frameworks and international dynamics. Neku's unique blend of analytical skills and legal acumen enables her to approach M&E with a critical eye and a comprehensive understanding of the regulatory and procedural aspects of the field. Her background in law enriches her ability to navigate the complexities of policy evaluation and implementation, ensuring that projects not only meet their objectives but also adhere to legal and ethical standards. Passionate about applying evaluation principles to real-world projects, Neku is committed to driving impactful change through rigorous and insightful evaluations. Her work at CLEAR-AA involves collaborating with various stakeholders to promote evidence-based decision-making and enhance the effectiveness of development initiatives. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, Neku is making significant contributions to the field of monitoring and evaluation, aiming to foster sustainable development and positive social impact in Anglophone Africa.

Angela Heucher
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval),
Bonn, Germany
Email: angela.heucher@deval.org
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7454-7481

Angela Heucher is a senior evaluator and team leader in the sustainable economic and social development department at the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Germany. Heucher holds a PhD in Political

Science obtained from the University of Potsdam and an MA in Political Science from Freie Universität Berlin. Heucher's research interests encompass gender equality and human rights, post-conflict contexts, multilateral development cooperation and global food security governance. Heucher has published on these topics and co-authored evaluation reports, concretely on the promotion of sustainable supply chains and human rights in German development policy with a focus on private sector and financial system development and on supporting gender equality in post-conflict contexts.

Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa
School of Governance,
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: caitlin.mapitsa@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8189-8451

Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa is a senior lecturer, holding a PhD in Migration and Displacement from the University of the Witwatersrand's African Centre for Migration and Society. She received an MA from the same institution, a BA from Wellesley College in International Relations and French, and a postgraduate diploma from the University of Stellenbosch in Monitoring and Evaluation. She is also the research director at the School. Mapitsa has worked as an evaluator in civil society, with Resilient Waters evaluating efforts to foster climate resilience in the Okavango and Limpopo river basins, as well as establishing learning systems with the Global Call to Action Against Poverty. She also worked with the CLEAR-AA, supporting efforts to strengthen M&E systems within public sector institutions across the region through peer learning. Mapitsa's research interests focus on two areas – the first is transboundary governance, of both land and people. She is interested in understanding what drives change in complex social and ecological systems, and which tools can best help us understand these changes. The second is on building contextually relevant evaluation approaches, and how evaluation can be a tool to align institutional practice with values systems and developmental objectives.

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 (PhD) is the academic head of the IPDET Programme at the Zentrum für universitäre Weiterbildung at the University of Bern,

Switzerland, and is the past director of CLEAR-AA. She has nearly more than 25 years' experience in government, academia and the non-profit sector, specialising in M&E and public policy. For eight years, Morkel focused primarily on working with governments and development partners across the African continent to help build better systems of evidence production and use towards strengthening national evaluation systems. As the IPDET Programme HoD, her focus is on ensuring the growth of the globally recognised evaluation capacity development programme, expanding its reach and sustaining its legacy. She has published peer-reviewed articles, book chapters and edited books on M&E, and supervises local and international MA and PhD students in evaluation. She is a legacy board member of the African Evaluation Association, legacy chair of the South African M&E Association and is legacy board member of the International Evaluation Academy.

Jan Tobias Polak
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval),
Bonn, Germany
Email: tobias.polak@deval.org
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3237-4554

Tobias Polak is a senior evaluator and team leader in the human rights and civil society department at the German Institute for Development Evaluation (Deval), Germany. Polak holds a PhD in Social Sciences and Economics obtained from the University of Vienna, Austria. His research interests encompass evaluation research, evaluation methodology and methods as well as human rights and aid effectiveness. He has published on these topics and co-authored evaluation reports. Polak is part of the executive board of the German Evaluation Society DEval.

Khumo Pule
Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: khumo.pule@wits.ac.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2645-7220

Khumo Pule is a M&E officer at CLEAR-AA, Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand. She is completing her MA in M&E, having finished coursework, and holds a postgraduate diploma in M&E. Pule has experience in enhancing evidence use for African Parliaments and strengthening M&E systems in both the public and private sectors. Additionally, she has extensive experience in conducting evaluations in the education and information and communications technology sectors.

Lea Smidt
German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development,
Bonn, Germany
Email: lea.smidt@deval.org
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0752-8563

Lea Smidt is a senior policy officer and data scientist at the Data Lab of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development. Smidt holds an MSc in European Studies obtained from Maastricht University, an MA in Political Sciences obtained from the University of Cologne and a BA in Political Science and African Studies from Sciences Po Paris. Smidt is a Government Analytics Fellow of the World Bank and recipient of the Daniël Heinsius Prize for the best MA thesis in Political Sciences awarded by the Dutch-Flemish Political Science Association. Her research interests lie in the fields of human rights, development policy, quantitative methods and data use in public administration.

Lena Taube
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval),
Bonn, Germany
Email: lena.taube@deval.org
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7644-1411

Lena Taube is an evaluator at the German Institute for Development Cooperation in the Department of Civil Society, Human Rights, Germany. Taube holds an MSc in Sociology, Politics and Social Research and an MA in Empowerment Studies obtained from the University of Cologne and the University of Applied Science Düsseldorf. Taube is currently working as an evaluator at DEval, where she conducts evaluations with a focus on human rights. She also works on human rights-based approaches to evaluation and how aspects such as human rights and gender could be integrated throughout the evaluation process and content.

Lungiswa Zibi
Department of Science and Innovation (DSI),
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: lulu.zibi@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0003-6337-6961

Lungiswa Zibi is an evaluator with over a decade of experience in the fields of M&E and strategic planning. Throughout her career, she has been instrumental in advancing evaluation systems and frameworks across various key governmental departments in South Africa. Her notable contributions began at the Department of Environmental Affairs, where she played a pivotal role in developing and implementing evaluation mechanisms to assess environmental programmes. Zibi further extended her impact at the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. Here, she played a pivotal role in establishing, managing and reviewing the National Evaluation System (NES). At the Department of Science and

Innovation, Zibi spearheaded the institutionalisation of the departmental evaluation system.

Currently, Zibi leads the evaluation efforts at the Department of Tourism. In this role, she focuses on enhancing strategic decision-making and policy development to foster sustainable growth within the tourism sector. Her management in this area ensures that evaluation processes are integral to shaping policies that promote economic development and environmental sustainability. Zibi's career is marked by her dedication to improving public sector performance through rigorous evaluation practices. Her ability to integrate evaluation into strategic planning has made her a key figure in shaping policies that drive sustainable development.

Madri Jansen van Rensburg
Resilience Analysis Consulting,
Johannesburg, South Africa
Email: madrijvr@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1417-3493

Madri Jansen van Rensburg is a research and consulting psychologist doing research, M&E and organisational development work. She mainly works in countries in East and Southern Africa. She works on individual, group, community and country levels and has conducted various multi-country and cross-cultural studies including studies across all African regions. Van Rensburg's research interests include children's rights, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and gender, using participatory and mixed-methods approaches. She has a special interest in the resilience of communities and individuals facing adverse conditions. She has completed various evaluation studies for public, private and civil society.

Rose Cathy Azuba
Department of Livestock and Industrial Resources,
School of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity, Makerere University,
Kampala, Uganda
Email: roseazuba@gmail.com; rose.azuba@mak.ac.ug
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8730-5231

Rose Azuba is a senior lecturer in the Department of Livestock and Industrial Resources at Makerere University Kampala, Uganda. Azuba holds an MA degree (MADEM) in Development Evaluation and Management from the University of Antwerp, Belgium; a PhD in Viral Immunology; an MA of Science in Veterinary Medicine (MSc) and a Bachelors in Veterinary Medicine (BVM). Azuba has 15 years' experience in evaluation and institutional performance assessments, participating in or leading over 40 national and international assignments in several countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Swaziland, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Cote D'Ivoire in Africa and Thailand, Myanmar, New Zealand and the Czech Republic.

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 CLEAR-AA, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. She holds an MSocSc in Policy and Development Studies from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Mkhize has extensive experience in climate adaptation and mitigation in smallholder systems, supporting the development of climate-smart agriculture decision support systems. Her current research interests are the conceptualisation of climate justice in complex socio-ecological systems and public policy responses to climate adaptation and mitigation in Africa.

Stanford Muhomba
Citofield Consulting,
Pretoria, South Africa
Email: stanford@citofield.co.za
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9956-0282

Stanford Muhomba holds an MPhil in M&E and is currently finalising his PhD in Development Studies, focusing on gender and equity-focused evaluations. With over 15 years of professional experience, he serves as the director at Citofield Consulting, where he has been involved in more than 50 evaluation and research projects. Muhomba has developed expertise in M&E methodologies throughout his career, specialising in integrating gender and equity perspectives. He is proficient in using innovative tools and techniques to enhance the accuracy and utility of evaluation findings, including mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative and quantitative data to provide a holistic view of programme outcomes. Throughout his career, Stanford has worked with a diverse range of organisations and stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organisations and private corporations. His evaluations have covered a wide array of sectors, such as health care, education, agriculture and economic development. This breadth of experience has equipped Muhomba with a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with evaluations in various contexts. A significant aspect of Muhomba's career is his focus on capacity building and knowledge sharing. He regularly conducts training workshops and seminars to equip other professionals with the skills necessary for effective M&E.

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 the University of the Witwatersrand. He holds a PhD in Development Studies. Steven possesses more than 15 years of working experience as a researcher and evaluator in the development sector across several African countries. He is an expert in strengthening country-led M&E systems in Anglophone Africa. His areas of interest include local government, climate change adaptation, food security, public employment programmes, social protection and M&E. He has also worked as an evaluator in several African countries and published research papers on food security transforming evaluation (Made in Africa Evaluation), adaptive management of climate change and national evaluation systems.

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
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. Chirau has a PhD in Sociology from Rhodes University. He has been working in the M&E discipline and has practised for more than 12 years. Chirau has conducted several National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD) activities. Some of these activities have been carried out through the respective United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) country offices and East and Southern Africa regional offices. His contributions to the M&E discipline and profession are evident in countries like Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Liberia and Zimbabwe, to mention a few. He is a former board member of the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (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 and programme manager at CLEAR-AA, hosted by the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM) at the University of the Witwatersrand. Fish holds a BA (Honours) degree in Psychology obtained from Stellenbosch University, and an MA degree in Research Psychology obtained from Wits University. Fish has been working in the M&E field for eight years. Her research interests include interventions and best practices in addressing social issues in Africa (such as poverty, unemployment, inequality, homelessness, etc.), discourses on and public sector interventions to mitigate mental illness and neurodevelopment challenges in Africa. She also has research interests in topics important to the M&E field in Africa, including culturally and contextually relevant approaches to the M&E in Africa such as Made in Africa Evaluation. Fish is also a supervisor of several students in the MA of Management in Governance (Public and Development M&E) course, and a sessional lecturer for the postgraduate diploma in Management Public and Development Sector M&E course, both at Wits University. She has authored and co-authored five published peer-reviewed journal articles on various M&E-related topics including Made in Africa Evaluation, evaluation capacity strengthening, African Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs), etc. Fish is a co-editor of Part 1 of this book (https://doi.org/10.4102/aosis.2023.BK459) and has also authored and co-authored three chapters in the book. Fish is also a co-author of a book chapter in an upcoming book by the Center for Evaluation (CEval).

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

Umali Saidi is the postgraduate studies manager (Research and Innovation Division), senior lecturer and the Editor-in-Chief of *The Dyke Journal* – a multidisciplinary journal at the Midlands State University, Zimbabwe. He is also an associate editor of the *African Evaluation Journal*. Saidi holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics and is a staunch and avid researcher with interests in knowledge management and indigenous knowledge systems, especially as linked to M&E. 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 African continent.

Vongai Chibvongodze
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: vongaichibvo@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0848-4770

Vongai Chibvongodze is currently a student studying towards an MA of Economic Science at the University of the Witwatersrand. Chibvongodze holds a BA of Economic Science with Honours and a BA of Commerce in Politics, Philosophy and Economics obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand. Chibvongodze is the recipient of the Postgraduate Merit Award and Certificates of First Class in Politics and Philosophy awarded by the University of the Witwatersrand in the years 2021 and 2018 to 2019, respectively. Chibvongodze focuses on work and research in evaluation, macroeconomics, development economics and econometrics. Her honours thesis was centred around the investigation of whether the earnings gap between black women and other social groups in South Africa has improved in the post-Apartheid era. The purpose was to track the socio-economic progress of previously disadvantaged groups in the country while identifying possible underlying and persistent causes of the remaining earning gap.

Chibvongodze is currently working on corporate and investment banking operations at the Standard Bank Group. She previously worked within the Advisory division of the M&E consultancy Data Innovators, working within Digital Data Solutions (DDS) and M&E services. She also worked as a programme associate at CLEAR-AA. Chibvongodze's has contributed to numerous influential projects, including evaluations for the Tiger Brands Foundation's In-School Breakfast Programme, Bezos Earth Fund's climate initiatives and MasterCard Foundation M&E framework development for their Young Impact Associates programme.

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Overview of the book

This book is Volume 2 of a duology that 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 questions: (1) Take stock of what we know about inequality – what inequality is in the African context, and how does it affect the lives of the citizens of African countries?, (2) What does equitable evaluation mean? 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 and project) levels?, (4) What epistemological transformation in evaluation practice is needed to achieve an equitable society?, and (5) How have issues of inequality manifested within evaluation practice through organisations, institutions and international development?

The chapter overview is as follows:

In Chapter 1, 'Elusive equitable development?', Steven Masvaure, Tebogo Fish and Samukelisiwe Mkhize introduce the concept of equitable development. They highlight that the ultimate goal of equitable evaluation is equitable development. They further chronicle the history of equitable evaluation and critique the Equitable Evaluation Framework, cultural competence and gender-sensitive evaluation. They end the chapter by providing approaches that can bring equitable evaluation.

In Chapter 2, 'Africa's inequality cannot be solved by evaluation systems alone', Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa emphasises equity-focused evaluation and evaluation to address inequality. She argues that while the evaluation sector has adopted a vocabulary and language around progressive social change, many features of evaluation systems limit its ability to serve as a tool to address inequality meaningfully. Three interrelated components drive this. Firstly, when evaluations are commissioned as activities primarily serving the interests of the donor, it inherently creates a bias in determining what to evaluate and how to approach the evaluations. Secondly, by transitioning to a learning-based, 'opt-in' system for evaluation commissioning, organisations, departments and programmes with strong management

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structures gain access to more information, which enables them to enhance their performance and bridge capacity gaps more effectively. Finally, the emphasis on users by evaluators and commissioners creates a challenge in moving beyond what is politically feasible.

In Chapter 3, 'System thinking for evaluators to enhance gender equity and transformation in Africa', Madri Jansen van Rensburg highlights that gender is one of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) that influence all 17 SDGs and affect gender transformation. She argues that a lasting transformation towards equity is only possible through system changes. Evaluations play a vital role in this transformation. She emphasises that evaluators need to develop skills and competencies to recognise, assess, influence and facilitate system change to enable transformation and equity for gender and equity in general.

In Chapter 4, '(De)paternalising evaluation: "Equity and equality" – the missing "vocabulary" in Zimbabwe', Umali Saidi highlights that calls for equity and equality in Africa, specifically in Zimbabwe, using 'evaluation' dominate developmental debates in the region and beyond. He further highlights that evaluation efforts to eliminate the unfair and avoidable circumstances that deprive African citizens of their rights to education, health care, food and freedom of expression, among others, need to be contextualised in order to respect the epistemological outlook of the targeted people. Generally, inequities arise when certain population groups are unfairly deprived of their basic resources, rights, participation in activities or opportunities available to other groups within the same space. This chapter, therefore, explores how 'paternalistic' evaluation depolarises toxic political cultures in countries such as Zimbabwe to use evaluation to address inequity and inequality in society. It is hoped that the chapter contributes knowledge on the role of evaluation as a practice to foster an equitable society in Africa.

In Chapter 5, 'Equality of opportunity and non-discrimination as an evaluand: The case of private sector and financial system development in German development cooperation', Candice Morkel, Jan Tobias Polak, Angela Heucher, Lena Taube and Lea Smidt examine how human rights principles promote equity. They use a case study that highlights that equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are human rights principles and, as such, fundamental elements of human rights-based approaches to development cooperation. This chapter deals with implementing equal opportunities and non-discrimination in developing cooperation. Based on the case of a strategic evaluation of the German human rights-based approach to development, only some of the private sector and financial system development projects anchor equal opportunities and non-discrimination and are effective for marginalised groups. One of the main

reasons for this is perceived tensions between project-specific aims and objectives of the human rights-based approach. Methodological bases for this are empirical case studies in Nigeria and India and an evaluation synthesis.

In Chapter 6, 'Equitable evaluation through the triple lens: Commissioner, evaluator and wider benefiting community, to what extent do we espouse the trio in the African evaluation practice?', Rose Cathy Azuba examines the functional definitions of equitable evaluation and to what extent the concepts are applied in evaluation processes and practice on the African continent. She further interrogates the key roles played by the evaluation commissioner, technical expert and community (herein referred to as the 'trio') in ensuring that equitable evaluation is incorporated in the evaluation design, execution and results management. Her findings contribute to the broad view of equitable development.

In Chapter 7, 'Gender and equity responsiveness in evaluation: The case of South Africa', Stanford Muhomba, Khumo Pule and Lungiswa Zibi examine the initiatives that the South African government has undertaken to mainstream the principles of equity and gender in planning, commissioning and undertaking evaluations – based on analysis of the evaluation reports in the National Evaluation System (NES) that is supported by the National Evaluation Plan(s) (NEP) which are five-year rolling. Their findings highlight the challenges faced in incorporating gender and equity dimensions in evaluations.

In Chapter 8, 'Current epistemological challenges in evaluation perpetuating inequality in Africa', Tebogo Fish and Vongai Chibvongodze discuss the fact that generating quality evaluation evidence largely depends on selecting the most appropriate approaches and methods. This chapter calls on evaluators to make paradigms a key part of the conversation when designing evaluations, particularly the data collection and analysis processes. It shows that data collection and analysis methods reflect underlying assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and the role of values. The chapter argues that evaluators often choose methods based on prevailing discourse or hierarchies of evidence, leading to a tendency to fit the problem into selected methods rather than selecting the most appropriate methods that fit the problem. This chapter shows that equitable evaluation puts values, specifically axiological assumptions, at the centre of evaluation design and selection of methodologies. They conclude the chapter by asserting that for evaluation to contribute to equitable development in Africa; the Afrocentricity paradigm should be the guiding framework for evaluative work, as it places African people and their experience at the centre of its worldview.

In Chapter 9, 'Cash-based transfers – transfers a double-edged sword: Lessons for evaluators', Andiswa Neku, Tebogo Fish and Steven Masvaure examine the well-known issue of unintended consequences and argue that evaluations are rarely targeted on unintended outcomes; evaluators need to do more if interventions are to avert exacerbating inequities in communities. They demonstrate this using popular cash-based transfers. They end the chapter by providing some guidelines to evaluators on how to tackle programmes' unintended outcomes.

In Chapter 10, 'In quest of equitable evaluation', Steven Masvaure, Tebogo Fish and Samukelisiwe Mkhize conclude the volume by calling all the different actors in the development space to action. They are specific on the roles and responsibilities of programme funders, implementers and evaluators. They emphasise the centrality of the targeted communities in every action and decision taken.

Chapter 1

Elusive equitable development?

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

'We are drowning; only what evaluations do is to describe the water.'

Introduction

Africa has experienced several challenges that had an impact on its development trajectory. Volume 1 of this series sets the foundation and builds a stronger argument in examining the current challenges traced back to significant events such as slavery, colonisation and the current post-colonial power asymmetries. The impact of these significant events is that they created inequalities and impoverished millions of people. There have been several attempts by various players to address some of these inequalities and impoverishments under the ambit of international

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development; however, the impact of such attempts is yet to be realised. Hence, most African populations are still struggling to access clean water, education, food, health, and shelter. In addition, they are often treated as humans with fewer rights. Amid these problems, African populations deal with new emerging problems, including climate change, increasing natural disasters, political instability and pandemics that chip away at some of the achievements of development. A closer examination of the aid and investments that have been made in the African development space shows that realising full development is elusive unless there is a paradigm shift.

Within this elusive development conundrum, there is a realisation that individuals, communities and African countries also have to deal with a less understood problem of inequality that is ingrained in communities and how different countries relate to each other. These inequalities are shown in the unequal distribution of resources based on an unjust power imbalance, often because of injustices against historically excluded or marginalised groups of people (Hasty, Lewis & Snipes 2022). Besides resources, there are also social inequalities which lead to inequity when the groups that have power over the distribution of resource allocation do so in ways that further oppress marginalised groups. Social inequalities are inequalities resulting from people's backgrounds and how opportunities were afforded or limited because of systems of capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression (Hasty et al. 2022).

In the international development space, evaluators have touted evaluation as a tool that can help bring equitable development among individuals, households, countries and continents. Within the development literature, equitable development puts equity at the forefront and meets the needs of deprived communities through policies and programmes that reduce inequalities (Blackwell 2000). Evaluators are being called to put equity at the forefront of the evaluation process and ensure that the evaluation meets the needs of the deprived communities, thereby achieving equitable evaluation. This is supported by a growing call to reform the traditional approaches to evaluation so that it is reflective of the context and communities where interventions are implemented. The call to reform is based on the limited function of the traditional evaluation methods in transforming and addressing the evaluation power 'dynamics and practices that have historically undervalued the voices, knowledge, expertise, capacity and experiences of all evaluation participants and stakeholders, particularly people' from Africa (Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative 2020).

The current international development approach has been centred on improving economic growth with the hope that with increasing economic growth, income inequality (and thus other forms of inequality) will decrease (characterised by the Kuznets' inverted U curve). However, recent literature from several developing countries has shown that there is no relationship

between economic growth and declining inequality (Kuhonta 2011). For the past decades, the driving development approach of neoliberal globalisation in the Global South, including Africa, has never paid attention to inequality (Hujo 2021). However, evidence is emerging that despite the increasing economic growth, wealth is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the few (Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso 2014). Countries such as South Africa have shown that inequality has not been reduced, despite making strides in economic growth. The poor progress in addressing inequality in Africa is ascribed to its colonial history, which ensured that most of the citizens have very limited access to the means of production and do not have the power to decide how their resources are used or set their own development agenda – hence they cannot benefit from the growing economic growth (Hanlon, Barrientos & Hulme 2012).

Equitable evaluation is not a new phenomenon, it has been in existence in the evaluation space in different forms for several decades. Equitable evaluation emerged in different forms; it emanated from the limited capacity of the evaluation approaches and methodologies to capture the cultural nuances that influence the outcomes of development interventions (Stern et al. 2019). Furthermore, evaluators also had a poor understanding of the culture that informs the context in which interventions are being implemented, hence the need for evaluators to be culturally competent given the ubiquitousness of various cultures across the world (SenGupta, Hopson & Thompson-Robinson 2004). In addition, there was also the inherent realisation that evaluations do not take place in a vacuum; they take place within cultural, political, economic and social contexts defined by the humans living in those communities. The context is also shaped by ethnicity, race, language and power dimensions that influence the outcomes of development interventions. Understanding these factors is regarded as critical in the sense that the key role of evaluation is to determine the worthiness, merit or value of an intervention (Scriven 1991). Passing judgement on the worthiness, merit or value of interventions largely depends on understanding the context in which the programme was implemented and issues of inequality exist within this context, thereby influencing programme results.

In sub-Saharan Africa, equitable evaluation in the form of culturally sensitive evaluation was propelled by the fact that most of the evaluators working in the Global South were not from the continent and were not familiar with the cultures and social context of the continent (Dighe 2023). Cultural competence is defined at its most basic level as reflecting an awareness and appreciation of cultural group differences and an ability to communicate effectively across cultural groups (Sue 1998). Furthermore, SenGupta et al. also highlighted that 'The evaluator also needs to be cognizant of not losing track of the value systems because too much focus is placed on the means to derive the value judgment' (SenGupta et al. 2004, p. 7). It is critical to highlight that cultural competence has been

further developed to produce new variations termed culturally responsive evaluation and the recent Equitable Evaluation Framework (EEF) (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023). These further developments show that addressing the issue of equity is paramount for evaluators. Hence there is the continuous development of approaches that help evaluators to understand the communities they are working in, thereby enabling them to make a value judgement of the worthiness or merit of the interventions under evaluation.

As evaluators, we are detached from the reality of poverty, power imbalances and oppression. It seems evaluators have limited epistemological curiosity and a certain conviviality with the object of knowledge under study. This absence of critical discussions on equity issues in our evaluation practice and the evaluation reports highlights this. Evaluators should be able to translate their acquired experiences and use them in their quest to transform the evaluation and produce an equitable society. We have hinged evaluation practice on the tree of objectivity; however, in this volume, we disagree with the objectivity approach. In addition, we disagree with the notion that evaluation is value-neutral – it is value-laden and our values, culture and personal beliefs inform the judgement we make on the performance of interventions. Evaluators should be cognisant of the prevalent oppression. As evaluators, we need to ask ourselves why is it that inequality and oppression are not topical in our practice. Have we perfected the evaluation language to make social inequality inconspicuous?

This book takes a slightly different approach. We do not view an evaluation as the only point where issues to do with equity, culture, values, context and associated components are addressed. We are arguing that evaluation, in most cases, occurs at the end of the programme (most of the evaluations conducted in Africa are mainly mid-term or end-line evaluations); hence, evaluation has limited capacity and role to deliver an equitable and just society. We are arguing that for equitable evaluation to occur, the programme or intervention must adopt an equity lens from programme funding, conceptualisation, design, implementation and monitoring. We are advocating for equitable development given the notion that evaluation is a tool that helps decision-makers make the right decisions. In this chapter, we are advocating for broadening the equity lens to include funding decision-making, programme conceptualisation, design and implementation, and evaluation. This chapter provides a critical analysis of the EEF and cultural competence in evaluation.

The Equitable Evaluation Framework

The Equitable Evaluation Initiative (EEI) put forward the EEF as a practice and a set of principles that are intended to inform evaluation work regardless of the approaches or methods used (EEF) (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023).

The EEI was initially sponsored by several philanthropic organisations, including the WK Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Kresge Foundation. These organisations recognised the need for a more equitable approach to evaluation that addresses systemic biases and inequities The EEI involved collaboration among a diverse group of stakeholders, including evaluators, foundation leaders, nonprofit professionals and community advocates. The EEF, as a result, emerged in response to a growing recognition within the philanthropic sector of the limitations of traditional evaluation approaches in addressing equity issues. The sponsors and participants of the initiative recognised the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive framework that could accurately assess the impact of programmes and initiatives on diverse communities.

The framework acknowledges that the efforts towards equitable evaluation will take time particularly because this requires an entire paradigm shift as the framework challenges evaluation's assumptions and conceptualisations of knowledge, evidence and truth. There is an effort to challenge the unquestioned orthodoxies (i.e. deeply held beliefs that impede the advancement of the principles) in evaluation to advance equitable evaluation principles. There are six areas of orthodoxy that are viewed as contentious, as they are understood and experienced differently by each stakeholder type in the philanthropic ecosystem. The first area relates to the quality criteria such as objectivity, rigour and credibility of evidence; the second area relates to conceptualisations, decision-making and perceptions; the third area relates to resources including money, time and people; the fourth area relates to relationships and trust; the fifth area relates to roles and expectations and the last area relates to productivity and accountability (EEF 2023).

According to Dean-Coffey & Cone (2023), the EEF is committed to three key principles. The first principle is that 'evaluation and evaluative work should be in service of equity', this means that the framework asserts that at the centre of the evaluation practice should be efforts to advance progress towards equity. The second principle is that 'evaluative work should be designed and implemented commensurate with the values underlying equity work', meaning that it should be multi-culturally respectful and responsive, and aim towards participant ownership. The third principle is that (EEF 2023):

> [*E*]valuative work can and should answer critical questions about the Ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the condition to be addressed; Effect of a strategy on different populations, on the underlying systemic drivers of inequity, and; Ways in which cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself. (p. 3)

Drawing on principles of diversity, equity and inclusion, as well as insights from fields such as critical race theory and decolonial studies, the EEF was

developed through a collaborative and iterative process (EEI 2023). It sought to challenge conventional evaluation practices and prioritise the voices and experiences of historically marginalised groups.

The EEF also highlights a set of mindsets (i.e. an established set of [*mental*] attitudes to be shifted [*toward*),] tensions [(*i.e.*] inherent [*strains*] to be named, navigated and normalised) and sticking points ([*i.e.*] obstacles or barriers to be moved through, over, under, or around). [*These*] mindsets, tensions and sticking points are said to provide support in [*challenging*] the orthodoxies' in the evaluation as they make it possible to have dialogue, reflexion and realignment (EEF 2023).

The framework promotes the need for evaluators, commissioners and evaluation users to think reflectively and reflexively about the norms within the practice that have guided the practice without questioning the fact that the foundations of this work stem from white American and European men. This framework argues for the need to bring into consciousness the philosophical frameworks that have guided the practice and challenge their incompatibility with the philanthropic sector's development work. While this framework is critical to the shift towards an equitable evaluation practice, it continues to reflect a single perspective, which is that of predominantly white-owned philanthropic foundations based in the Global North and is void of the voice of those practitioners, philanthropists and communities of the Global South, including those from Africa.

Critique of the Equitable Evaluation Framework

Although the framework is plausible, it has a few limitations that limit its impact on transforming the evaluation space. Firstly, the framework is too focused on the evaluators' actions and the evaluation process. Lessons from evaluation practice show that evaluators have a limited role in deciding and shaping the scope, approach and methodology of an evaluation; hence, even if they put an equity-focused lens, the evaluation commissioners might reject their contribution. Secondly, an evaluation has a limited capacity to trigger systemic change that is needed to achieve equitable development. The approach to development in the Global South, including in Africa, is encapsulated by the following key stakeholders, the programme funder, the designer, the implementer, the evaluator and the targeted community. In most cases, these stakeholders come from different organisations and have different perspectives on how to achieve equitable evaluation, hence the need for a framework that examines equity broadly from programme funding to evaluation. Thirdly, the EEF also misses the crucial point that what brings equity is not evaluation but the intervention itself. Evaluation plays a

complementary role in bringing equity. For equitable development to be achieved, interventions need to focus on empowering the worst-off groups and ensuring that interventions address behavioural change, complex social processes and attitudes among the worst-off groups. Such empowerment cannot be achieved at the evaluation level but through holistically looking at the development process. We argue that EEF principles should be applied to the thought process of the funder, intervention designer, implementer, the targeted community and the evaluator.

Fourthly, EEF is arguing for epistemological change, this is plausible; however, there is a need to go further and move evaluators from a mere superfluous understanding of context and history to a point where there is an in-depth understanding of history, culture, context and how they affect the intervention outcomes and trigger other unintended consequences. In most evaluations, the evaluation questions are too abstract and they are not framed around contextual factors. It is necessary to have a comprehension of the contextual factors which necessitate comprehending not only linguistic differences but also differences in knowledge, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. An intervention is implemented in a specific context shaped by the community's culture and context.

Fifthly, central to achieving an equitable and just society in Africa, there is a need to decolonise the development space. Hopson et al. highlighted that the political nature of knowledge, commissioning of evaluations and selection of evaluators is entrenched in white privilege – this extends to how interventions are designed and the assumptions that are made in the theories of change (Hopson, Kirkhart & Bledsoe 2012). The key argument is that if these issues are entrenched in white privilege, does this white privilege understand the cultural, socio-economic context and indigenous knowledge systems that are in Africa? Do evaluators who knowingly and unknowingly carry white privilege understand the cause of inequities in the Global South, including in Africa, and can they? We are arguing that the EEF does not place decolonisation at the centre of programme conceptualisation, evaluation epistemologies, programme design, commission of evaluation and selection of evaluators. Without decolonisation, the EEF can only make a limited dent in achieving an equitable and just society.

The final critique is that the EEF framework is more suitable for contexts where no intersections of inequalities derive from historical deprivations, cultural inequalities and power asymmetries. The Global South, particularly the African continent, is affected by these multidimensions of inequalities that are fuelled by several factors hence there is a need for the framework to venture into how the principles stated can be used to provide an insight into how the outcomes of the programme have been affected by these multitudes of inequalities.

Can cultural competence promote equitable development?

As stated earlier, cultural competence emerged from the realisation that evaluators work in different contexts with varying cultures and values hence the need for them to be competent enough to understand the cultures and values. The American Evaluation Association (AEA) describes cultural competence as an ethical imperative and essential for ensuring the validity of evaluation findings (AEA 2011a, AEA 2011b). The Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide a broader framework for embedding cultural competencies as '[...] a set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable effective work in cross-cultural situations' (CDC 2014, p. 2). The argument for cultural competence is that evaluators need to have the requisite competencies including understanding the socio-cultural experiences of people, 'national origin, race, social class, religious and spiritual beliefs, immigration status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, marital status and physical or mental disabilities' (SenGupta et al. 2004).

The major critique of cultural competence in evaluation is that it perpetuates Global North hegemony on evaluation practice and does so in two ways. Firstly, there is a raging debate on the dominance of Global North evaluators on the African continent and Global South in general, what cultural competence does is perpetuate the Global North hegemony on evaluation by capacitating the evaluators from the North through training them in Global South cultures. This limits opportunities for Global South evaluators, particularly African evaluators in the case of this book. Secondly, it also entrenches the 'superiority' of Global North evaluation skills at the expense of in-depth contextual knowledge and the evaluation skills of the Global South evaluators. Thirdly, cultural competence fails to acknowledge and position the need for decolonisation as encapsulated in approaches such as the Made in Africa Evaluation. Decolonisation is much broader and calls for a paradigm shift in how evaluations are conducted and managed in Africa. Furthermore, several evaluators and scholars in the Global South argue that cultural competence needs to encompass evaluators' contribution to deconstructing the many centuries of African dominance by Western and European epistemological paradigms (Chilisa 2015; Chirau & Ramasobana 2022; Frehiwot 2022).

How to promote equitable evaluation

This book has suggestions on how to achieve equitable development with evaluation playing a critical role. After our critiques of the EEF and cultural

competence, it is important to draw attention to specific issues that are crucial for understanding how equitable evaluation should be incorporated within the context of development practice. It is critical to understand that our suggestions are not prescriptive and require a holistic examination and integration into the development sector for them to yield the desired results of an equitable and just society. We are raising five critical factors that we believe can help the development space achieve equitable development – equitable evaluation. These factors include the history, culture and context of the targeted community, using an equitable lens in programme design, equitable programme implementation and decolonised evaluation epistemologies. These factors are described here.

Inequities are rooted in history and context

There is a need for acknowledgement by programme funders, designers, implementers and evaluators that the current development challenges in the Global South, and in Africa specifically, are rooted in the checkered history of the slave trade, racism and deprivation. There is minimal consideration of Africa's history when programmes are designed, implemented and evaluated – this tends to sanitise or ignore the impact of colonial history and the role played by the West on the deprivation of most African people. Bamberger and Segone summarised this situation by categorising it as the 'naturalization of inequity' explained as 'When inequity is perceived as a natural phenomenon (the so-called "naturalization of inequity"), societies develop theoretical, political and ideological resistances to identifying and fighting inequity as a priority' (Bamberger & Segone 2011, p. 6). This has resulted in the acceptance and treatment of inequalities in Africa as a natural state of affairs. Furthermore, the affected communities have no power or resources to change their circumstances, which has led to the resignation that the decision-making power of their development rests with the government and funders of interventions, most of whom are from the Global North.

Currently, programmes are not designed holistically, instead, they consist of single-issue interventions that fail to address development challenges comprehensively. The implication is that programme designs only focus on the prevailing conditions without critically examining the circumstances that shaped the deprivation experienced by the targeted communities, addressing symptoms instead of the root causes of the deprivation. Evaluations of such programmes adopt a programme-oriented evaluation approach, which enhances decision-making and expands existing programmes; however, this approach often limits understanding of the social and historical community context and the exogenous factors affecting programme outcomes. The evaluation usually helps the

stakeholders focus on how the initial idea can be improved and how well it is working now. While favourable, this approach has the limitation of being too simplistic and overly straightforward, as it fails to capture the complexity of the influence of historical and contextual factors on the programme. The key argument here is that history and social identity affect life experiences and development outcomes. It becomes imperative for the design of interventions and evaluations to understand the path that led the targeted communities to be where they are. Questions such as what has happened to the community? What is the impact of past deprivations? How can the design of the programme and evaluation contribute to better development outcomes?

Equity starts at programme conceptualisation

The key challenge from current approaches to equitable, equity-focused, culturally sensitive and inclusive evaluation is that their focus is on the evaluation process, not the actual programme. In this chapter, we argue that equitable evaluation should be central to the programme conceptualisation and design. The volume recognises that evaluation on its own comes late in the programme or project cycle; hence, it has limited influence on addressing the various forms of inequalities in the targeted community. We also argue that given the challenges of evaluation evidence use in Africa, the limited role of the evaluator in decision making and the inherent practice where evaluations are expected to fulfil the accountability function – it becomes difficult for evaluations to bring in an equitable change in society. We are also arguing that if issues of equity are not factored into the programme conceptualisation and design then equity-focused evaluators will try to fit square pegs in round holes. Furthermore, the terms of reference will likely not reflect the need to promote equity during evaluation.

Equitable programme design

An equitable programme design contributes to achieving equitable development by ensuring that the programme is inherently focused and aware of the existing inequities within the communities it is being implemented. The argument is that often, development programmes in the Global South, including in Africa, are funded by Global North organisations that then drive programme design, while implementation becomes the onus of the funded governments. Alternatively, through the internalisation of the Global North development agenda, funded governments design programmes of interest to funders, as a direct result of the power asymmetries between the two regions. Furthermore, there should be realisation that we do not live in a culturally and

contextually homogenous global village hence the need at the programme design level to examine context and other factors that have the potential to affect the programme. The key to the programme design is for it to do no harm or prevent the perpetuation of inequality within communities.

The argument is that if the programme assumes an equity lens then the implementation will be equity-focused, leading to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) focused on gathering information that helps programme implementers and designers understand how their programmes are addressing inequalities in the communities.

Equitable programme implementation and monitoring

Our collective experience and evidence have shown that evaluators are often expected to introduce and adopt specific approaches during the evaluation; however, the approaches or principles were never thought about at the programme design, implementation and monitoring level. For example, currently, there is a push for decolonisation and transforming evaluations; however, unless these issues have been incorporated in the planning, implementation and monitoring phases of the programme, then it becomes difficult to introduce decolonisation and transformation at the evaluation phase. We are arguing that for a realistic and meaningful equitable evaluation; there is a need to plan for it at the programme funding and design level and implement it during programme implementation. Furthermore, issues of equity should be monitored throughout programme implementation. Several studies have shown that including an equity lens during the programme implementation and monitoring phases increases the ability of the programme implementers to understand the inequities and address them appropriately. Ultimately influencing the direction of the programme evaluation.

Decolonisation and equitable evaluation

The current debate in evaluation and the development sector in the Global South is that of decolonisation. Evaluation is rooted in the significant historical power inequalities between the Global North and Global South. In Africa, decolonisation is encapsulated in the Made in Africa Evaluation approach. ‘Decolonizing evaluation means locating it within indigenous cultural specificities, preferences and practices’ (Hopson et al. 2012):

> In evaluation, colonization manifests itself in determinations of merit or worth that are defined from a non-Indigenous – often geographically and culturally distant – perspective, and applied to Indigenous persons and programmes without regard to local culture and values. (p. 62)

Under decolonisation, the key questions are centred on the following: Who determines what is valid or not in an evaluation? Whose epistemology takes precedence, that of the funder or the targeted community? How are power asymmetries dealt with at the evaluation level? Whose values and worldviews are used to pass judgement on the results of the intervention?

Conclusion

We are urging actors in the development space to focus on approaches that address inequities in the Global South at the broad development scale level, instead of a narrow focus on evaluation alone. Equitable evaluation should lead to broad equitable development and hence should be integrated into the development programme cycle. Evaluators should also look beyond cultural competencies and position evaluation as a tool that can unravel systemic inequities and bring solutions.

Chapter 2

Africa's inequality cannot be solved by evaluation systems alone

Caitlin Blaser Mapitsa
School of Governance,
Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

There are two fundamental approaches to evaluation, with contestations manifesting in the way they are implemented. The first, which I will call 'programme-oriented evaluation', is a category into which both utilisation-focused evaluation and theory-based evaluation fall. These approaches broadly begin with a premise that the starting point for an evaluation should be the programme as it is, which includes ownership by the implementing organisation, adopting the logic and view of the world that the programme has. While this does not mean an evaluator should not bring wider experience to critique the programme design or the logic of the programme, a significant expectation of an evaluator is to first see and understand the programme and its implementing organisation as it sees itself. This has many advantages, including the immediate usefulness of the programme documentation, which often forms the basis of evaluation data, as well as ease of use for the organisation to adapt to recommendations of an evaluation that are likely to be useful and useable for the organisation.

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In this broad category, utilisation-focused evaluation is one of the most widespread in practice, presumably because it is appealing to both commissioners and evaluators for its instrumental usefulness and the ease it brings to reaching a common understanding of the purpose of the programme and the evaluation.

The second category, which I will call 'principles-oriented evaluation', and which would include equity-focused evaluation, feminist evaluation and development evaluation, begins with a premise that evaluation should first and foremost serve goals of development effectiveness, good governance and justice and that an evaluator's job is to be able to locate a programme within this wider context. This does not mean the evaluator should not also seek to understand and acknowledge the views of the implementing organisation and the locale of the programme, but they are secondary to the ways in which developmental goals are being served. Among the many approaches that fit within this category, equity-focused evaluation is particularly important at the moment, given the central role inequality is currently playing in the world's developmental trajectory. Rampant inequality is seen as one of the key distinguishing features of 'late capitalism', and those who align themselves with this category of evaluations believe that this context is critical for understanding contemporary development programmes.

Equity-focused evaluation, and utilisation-focused evaluation share many foundational values around how evaluation ought to improve governance and development. However, they are premised on fundamentally different theories of change for how evaluation is supposed to work. This chapter will problematise these differences and illustrate the ways in which these two approaches can, in fact, work at cross-purposes. Furthermore, it will consider the potential and limitations both approaches may have for evaluation to reduce inequality in Africa.

To discuss these issues, it is important to consider the relationship between evaluation and inequality in three different ways. The first is the most instrumental. Development programming often has the aim to address inequality, and evaluation systems need to be equipped to do this, through equity-responsive approaches, disaggregated data, participatory methods and other components that allow evaluation systems to do this well. The second is linked to the purpose of evaluation system design. Evaluation systems are built to serve specific purposes, usually with a deliberate use-focus in mind. The use is often linked to building institutional capability and allowing governments to achieve their development goals. The ways in which equality is embedded within these developmental 'theories of change' inform the extent to which the evaluation system can be designed to respond. Finally, there is inequality that characterises the systems of international development, which are contextual features of evaluation

systems, but which sit largely outside of their control. It is to this form of inequality – the most critical from the perspective of the scope and scale of poverty – that Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) systems have been built to respond. This chapter will argue that evaluation systems that do not serve the instrumental use of their organisational context but are also equipped to historicise, contextualise and broadly consider the drivers of governance and development may be most responsive to the current challenges of inequality in Africa.

Background

There is widespread agreement that inequality is one of the greatest development challenges of our time. Levels of inequality are higher than they have been at almost any time in history, with the richest 1% of the global population owning nearly half of the world's wealth (Gradín, Leibbrandt & Tarp 2021). There are a number of other trends in inequality that make it of particular interest to evaluators. While development discourse once focused nearly exclusively on poverty, over the last half-century, many people around the world have been lifted out of poverty, yet inequality has remained unchanged or even deepened (Besley & Burgess 2003). Many economists believe shifting inequality is even more effective for reducing poverty than increasing growth (Lakner et al. 2022). Moreover, inequality brings forth entrenched relationships of power and control. Evaluators, who are trained to identify mechanisms for change, are particularly interested in this aspect (Mertens & Wilson 2018).

In addition to this, Africa is uniquely affected by global inequality. This is true for a variety of reasons including the history of colonialism and its continuing social, political and economic impacts, the history of the slave trade and continued racism, and a capitalist system that undervalues raw materials and discounts the environmental and social costs of resource extraction (Naidoo & General 2010). Africa has the highest gap between the average incomes of the top 10% of the population and the bottom 50% (Chancel et al. 2022). Furthermore, despite several noteworthy developmental gains, nearly 30% of Africans live in extreme poverty (below $2 per day), which is nearly 10 times the global average (Aikins & Du Toit Mclachlan 2022).

Furthermore, there is widespread agreement that one of the evaluation's core values lies in its use (Johnson et al. 2009). This is its key distinguishing feature from pure academic research and is the foundation of a belief that evaluation can contribute to improved programme performance, strengthened institutions and more positive development outcomes. While there may be discussion and debate about what strategies best encourage use, which users should be prioritised, or what forms of use are the most valuable, the foundational importance of use is uncontested.

Finally, there is an acknowledgement that evaluation systems are nascent, but growing across Africa, where democratic reforms have generated a demand for accountability, and evaluation is seen as one tool that can build a case around public sector performance both for electorates and the donors which still play an important role in public sector financing (Abrahams 2015). Their growth, however, is constrained on both the demand side, where the value of evaluation has not always been adequately demonstrated, and commitment to transparency is uneven, as well as on the supply side, where evaluation is often a recent introduction to higher education programmes (Cloete 2009). There has been considerable growth in both evaluation demand and supply over the last three decades, with an expansion of the number of countries with national evaluation policies and systems, as well as a growth in the number of countries with Voluntary Organisations of Professional Evaluators (VOPES) (Basheka & Byamugisha 2015). Universities are also scaling up offerings in the field of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to try and meet demand (Basheka, Lubega & Baguma 2016). However, there have also been significant hurdles to this growth, given the context of evaluation as an emergent profession, the complexity and fragility of many bureaucratic systems, and a lack of adequate resourcing at various levels (Engela & Ajam 2010).

Because evaluation has expanded from its historical roots, of a neutral measurement of effectiveness, to be a more engaged tool for understanding change in context, it has also been pulled in many directions. With a broad spectrum of purposes, from an auditing-adjacent accountability role to a supportive learning function, one of the key dilemmas of evaluation system architects in Africa has been figuring out what a fit-for-purpose evaluation system looks like, in the context of Africa (Naidoo & General 2010). A widespread critique of M&E practice in Africa is that it is overwhelmingly compliance-driven and is associated with punitive donor-driven accountability requirements. The proactive building of country-owned evaluation systems is seen as a response to this, but there have been many barriers to evaluation being a tool for learning within the public sector, some of which are discussed by Dlakavu in Part 1 of Equitable Evaluation. Another step in this direction has been the MAE approach, which has been a primarily practitioner-led way of problematising tools and approaches that do not adequately reflect an African context (Chilisa 2015, Omosa et al. 2021). This chapter discusses the variety of ways in which M&E has been institutionalised in Africa and the implications this has for the system's potential to promote equity.

There has been recent, burgeoning literature that looks at the unique and characteristic features of both evaluation practice and evaluation systems in Africa. This has enriched a debate on what contextually appropriate evaluation practice should look like. However, given how new

these debates are, despite the relevance of their contributions to wider debates, they have been slow to feed into global evaluation research. This chapter aims to survey the current literature on the African evaluation landscape, as well as the evaluation reports in the African Evaluation Database (AfrED) and consider the implications of this landscape for equity-oriented evaluation. It is based on a survey of recent literature, drawing particularly on its application to equity in Africa, and MAE debates, which largely emerged through the identification of inequality in evaluation practice as a limitation to the reliability and validity of evaluation findings in an African context (Mapitsa, Tirivanhu & Pophiwa 2019).

Features of Africa's evaluation systems

Donor-driven evaluation

It is undeniable that M&E entered Africa through neoliberal reforms and, in most countries, became closely tied to the donor community and the power dynamics associated with this. The Accra Agenda for Action committed donors to, 'better coordinate and link the various sources of information, including national statistical systems, budgeting, planning, monitoring, and country-led evaluations of policy performance'. In the same Agenda, African governments committed to strengthening their administrative systems. In Rosenstein's (2016) mapping of national evaluation policies, two African countries were categorised as having evaluation practices 'evolving', while another 12 were categorised as 'developing early stage'. None were categorised as 'well established'. This does point to a general interest in and development of evaluation, although the pace of change has been arguably slow.

Despite the progress, the AfrED demonstrates that bilateral and multilateral donors remain by far the most frequent commissioners of evaluations. Of the 20 most frequently occurring commissioning agencies, only the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) is featured, having commissioned 25 evaluations, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) commissioned 349, 234 and 170 evaluations, respectively. The Embassy of Sweden in Tanzania commissioned more evaluations over a 10-year period than the government of Tanzania, illustrating that donors have a long way to go before they have fully invested in country-led evaluation systems (Ngwabi & Wildschut 2019).

It is therefore important to consider the ways in which donors view equity, and what this means for evaluations. In a search for 'equity' in the database, first of all, only nine documents appear: Equality fares slightly better, with 37 documents appearing. However, this is from a database of

over 5,800 documents, suggesting equity is not filtering through to practice the way thought leaders in evaluation might hope or predict. A second concern, however, is of these 46 documents, 45 of them deal exclusively with gender equality. While there is no doubt that gender inequity is critical and a leading feature of inequality, it is not the only one. It may indeed be so significant that it merits a disproportionate focus in commissioned evaluation. But surely development programming is also aiming to address income inequality, rural-urban inequality or inequalities that could be based on refugee status, gender identity, physical ability, access to education or any range of intersectionalities that could be important.

Perhaps even more important than an apparent conflation of equality with gender within current evaluation practice are the inequalities that donor-driven evaluation hides. Increasing attention in the research on inequality is considering inequality within, rather than between countries, which is increasing even as gains are made between countries. However, between-country inequality still accounts for more than two-thirds of global inequality (Niño-Zarazúa, Roope & Tarp 2014). Between-country inequality presumably underpins the whole reason why bilateral aid agencies are required for development programming, and yet it is an area of work where they are doing little to intervene, and therefore, an issue that the evaluation of their programmes is silent on, by systemic design. This calls into question the role of evaluators to input on issues that are not evaluated, in addition to those which are. This is an issue on which programme-oriented evaluation, and principles-oriented evaluation, presented in the introduction, likely diverge.

A related issue is around the ways in which donor-driven evaluation systems are designed to commission evaluators from the Global North, with specific experience and expertise in the particular donor organisation in question (Ngwabi & Wildschut 2019). This has a few implications, including shaping the market of evaluation in the Global South and also restricting the worldviews that are brought into the evaluation process. In this situation, the link to equity may be indirect, but still important in two different ways. The first is by upholding the epistemic hegemony of worldviews from the Global North, which perpetuates inappropriate development interventions that are not context-responsive. The second is the real economic impact of development industry trends and policies of diverting resources back to the Global North (Sachs 2005). This well-documented and much-criticised trend has seen little progress in recent decades. A lack of available evidence about the economics of the evaluation market makes it particularly difficult to demand or track change.

Several studies have suggested that rigid procurement systems and strictly held bureaucratic norms and standards around evaluation have

prevented effective, localised commissioning (Ahsan & Kumar 2018; Kithatu-Kiwikete & Philips 2020), but regardless of the cause, the centre of evaluation practice in Africa clearly remains the donor community. This is not to discount nor overlook the other institutions that are doing important evaluative work. The African Development Bank, Regional Economic Communities, civil society and African Parliaments are all playing important roles in shaping Africa's evaluation landscape.

Most evaluation systems have a theory of change, either implicit or explicit, around their design linked to the ways in which programmes should improve and subsequent development outcomes be achieved. The donor-led evaluation approach, however, is inherently oriented towards strengthening the foreign policy objectives of the countries represented by the agencies working in Africa (Keukeleire & Delreux 2022). While there may be a complementarity with the goals of development programming, it is also possible, and even likely, that organisations receiving funds and implementing programmes have very different theories of change to which they hope these programmes will contribute. It is not reasonable to assume donor-led evaluation systems will serve to contribute towards African-owned development goals, let alone country-led evaluation systems.

One commonly held concern by bilateral and multilateral agencies is a concern for oversight and accountability mechanisms in the ways in which donor funds are spent (Dávid-Barrett et al. 2020). There are many reasons for this, beginning with a well-intentioned concern that funds go towards the programming for which it was intended. However, this is complicated when donor interests may not be shared by recipient governments, organisations or communities. There has generally been a progression from accountability for activities and spending towards accountability for results, but this shift has happened to differing degrees in different organisations, and sometimes, the onerous paperwork involved in demonstrating accountability for activities and budget spending limits organisational capacity to consider anything results-related.

In a best-case scenario, donor expectations around accountability are not so onerous, but accountability for results is still based on results as owned by the donor, rather than the implementing organisation (Pauw et al. 2020). There may be a process of negotiating common ground in the project design stage, but as we have seen from the AfrED database, for example, equity is often conflated very narrowly with gender, and there may be other equity priorities that are overlooked in development programming. Furthermore, many donor organisations have some sort of global standard indicators, which they measure across all their programming; this suggests all implementing organisations need to align to their understanding of indicators and results.

Evaluation system for learning

Many strides have been taken over the last three decades to entrench evaluation as a tool for learning, and performance improvement in African governments. Pioneers and champions of M&E in a number of governments put in place the reform processes needed to develop policies, pass legislation and build government systems with the mandate and capacity to conduct evaluations (Goldman et al. 2018). This is no small feat! However, there have been many hurdles not only in conducting evaluations but also in transforming public institutions into places of learning. A few of the challenges are outlined here.

Firstly, monitoring system data and capacity are disproportionately directed to compliance, which is essential, and cannot be undermined. The challenge this poses for evaluation systems is that often, in debates around the relationship between M&E, any issues of alignment between the two functions are framed as a technical challenge that can be fixed with relatively minor adjustments around quality (Bamberger, Rao & Woolcock 2010). However, this is often not the case. Systems designed for learning and systems designed for compliance have fundamentally different purposes and, therefore, divergent components and designs. While M&E systems across large bureaucracies have often tried to bridge these various objectives, and sometimes found success in meeting multiple objectives, this is not always possible.

Secondly, the value of evaluation in this space has not been demonstrated, and uptake is uneven. Many public servants are not familiar with evaluation at best, or at worst see M&E as something that threatens to expose non-performance on their watch. Unfortunately, M&E has historically been used and politically manipulated to call out issues of performance (Mungiu-Pippidi & Hartmann 2019). Conversely, there have absolutely been examples of champions in political positions who have seen the power of M&E in generating narratives that can equally tell positive political stories or feed evidence into debates in ways that will strengthen the credibility of arguments on any side of the political spectrum (Kanyamuna 2021).

Thirdly, there are many temporal mismatches between evaluation system building and political decision-making systems (Mueller-Hirth 2012). The time to commission and conduct an evaluation is often far longer than policy decision-making. At the same time, the time it takes to build and embed the architecture of an evaluation system is much longer than the governing mandate. Furthermore, evaluation systems are affected by external actors and practices as well, including universities which are critical to national evaluation supply (and which work on very slow timelines), and donors, who shape evaluation demand and have taken

important steps to support local evaluation systems, but still have far to go. These are all dilemmas that must be navigated to build an effective evaluation system.

An M&E system that focuses on compliance has an implicit theory of change that corruption undermines resource allocation towards development spending and prevents development programmes that would support equality from being implemented (Policardo, Carrera & Risso 2019). While there does seem to be a correlation between corruption and inequality, the direction of causality is unclear, and there is limited evidence that many systems of compliance are effective in fighting corruption. An M&E system that focuses on learning has an implicit theory of change that through improving programme performance, equality will be promoted. While there are some evidence-based programmes designed with equality-focused results in mind, and these could benefit from a rigorous evaluation, there are few examples of evaluation systems that have built the necessary components to have explicitly principle-oriented, equity-focused evaluation orientation.

There has clearly been progress in shifting the scale and scope of evaluation systems in Africa. Several governments have passed national evaluation policies, and others are in the works. There are champions for evaluation, networks of professional evaluators are growing, and the scope and scale of M&E practice are growing. However, anecdotally, this growth has been somewhat ad hoc and concentrated in areas with an existing openness to learning. As a result, institutionalising evaluation has not yet been able to play a transformative role in the overall culture of evidence use within the region's governments. This is not to say the progress should not be applauded, or that this may not be coming in time.

Made in Africa evaluation

There is growing recognition that the development and governance context in Africa is unique and requires a unique evaluation response (Abrahams 2022). The debates and discussions around an Africa-centric evaluation approach have been limited to Africa-responsive evaluation practice. This chapter suggests that it may be equally important to consider what the African-appropriate features are of a context-responsive evaluation system. How can African governments, at all levels, effectively build M&E systems in a way that meets their own needs for stronger governance, improved performance and strengthened development outcomes?

This is important for equity-focused evaluation for two reasons. One is because a blind spot of donor-oriented evaluation systems, as mentioned above, is in addressing the inequality inherent in donor relationships, and

inequality driven by between-country differences. An evaluation system that is focused on the African context should be able to better historicise the continent's challenges with poverty and inequality, and while accountability is often seen as a condition imposed by donors on recipient countries, an evaluation system developed with the African context in mind should also consider the accountability of donors for their aid commitments, drivers of inequality such as unfair trade regimes and procurement processes that privilege evaluators from the Global North.

This suggests that there could be a need to expand the cornerstone of the MAE debate from conversations grounded in evaluation practice, which speak mainly of research methods and processes within the remit of evaluation supply, to also consider the contextual drivers of evaluation demand. This has not been an organic evolution, in part because transdisciplinary evaluation practitioners often have methods as a common language and experience, whereas the practice of institutionalising evaluation demand and the academic language around decolonising the state or contextualising governance needs are quite distant. There is still work required to determine what 'African-centric' evaluation looks like in practice, but this discussion has progressed considerably further than questions of what characteristics of evaluation systems are responsive to the context of African governance and the African state.

There is not yet convergence around what the contextual features of an appropriate evaluation system in Africa would look like, but there are two issues that could come up as key. On one hand, the accountability function is critical. A common feature across the public sector in Africa is a disproportionate resource investment in compliance. This needs to be interrogated, given its inefficiency in improving governance, but is an active conversation among scholars of African public administration and governance (Yanguas & Bukenya 2016). It also needs to be multi-directional, with accountability being both towards implementing organisations as well as towards donors for the Paris Agreement and other commitments. A better understanding of the causes behind this compliance orientation and its implications for M&E is essential for comprehending how evaluation systems can be contextually relevant.

The second contextual feature that is widely accepted as relevant for understanding African governance is the central nature of transformation. Evaluation needs to be a tool for transformation, but it is unclear how African evaluation systems design principles can support this commonly agreed goal. Systems need to take up principles for transformation, but more work is needed to understand exactly what this would mean in an African context. One component of it seems to be considering a utilisation-focused approach not from the perspective of the commissioner, but from the beneficiary of a project (Pabari & Mapitsa 2024). While this is something

that has been discussed in utilisation-focused evaluation literature, there has been relatively little focus on how to operationalise this ideal in practice.

Theories of change for equity-oriented evaluation system design

The problem with a utilisation-focused approach to evaluation is that it assumes users share values around equality. Unfortunately, we are reminded often of the multiplicity of ways in which this is not the case. From the case of state capture in South Africa to donors who fly evaluators from their own countries of origin to evaluate African projects designed to meet other countries' foreign policy objectives, the international development scene cannot be assumed to be a space of shared values. Even when equality is an explicit form of programme design, it should not also be assumed that different stakeholders in an evaluation system agree on the nature, extent, focus and causes of inequality are seen the same way.

Utilisation-focused evaluation does not assume all stakeholders are monolithic, but it does hinge on a broad alignment of values between beneficiaries and commissioning organisations. Depending on where this evaluation system is embedded, the specific theory of change for how evaluation systems will contribute to democratic development and equitable ecosystem growth is unclear (Patton 2023).

Equity-focused evaluation, on the other hand, assumes that a key consideration in evaluation systems architecture is the ways in which evaluation can dismantle systems of inequality (Patton 2021). While from a relatively reductionist perspective of development objectives, this seems logical, the analysis above has demonstrated that evaluation systems are built in political and contested spaces and that evaluation systems need to serve multiple purposes. Many people in power politically are motivated to uphold the norms that keep them in power, often manipulating democratic systems to serve this objective. This could pit an equity-focused evaluation system against a democratically oriented one. It is far too simplistic to think that there is one approach to the common good if only governments and donors would endorse it. Evaluation systems architects should problematise these dilemmas and ensure rigorous documented context analyses for the basis for these systems' design.

Perhaps a more important question than how African governments should design their evaluation systems is what are the institutional mechanisms for using evaluations not only of but also for the global development industry? Current neocolonial systems are entrenching poverty in weak institutional governance systems in many African countries, and no evaluation system has the institutional architecture to shift this. In the context of an inability of most donor organisations to respond to

the genuine needs of African governments for reform which could be evidence-based and democratic, attention needs to be given to the ways in which evaluation should be entrenched for equity specifically.

Conclusion

A use-focused emphasis by both evaluators and commissioners makes it very difficult to move beyond what is politically feasible. In the current global development context, dismantling systems of inequality requires bold, imaginative leadership and an active investment in shifting centres of power. Current aid programmes often focus on social protection for the most vulnerable. While this is important and is one kind of inequality to which evaluation systems are better able to respond, it does little to address the systems which create exclusion and vulnerability. These are often driven by the institutional systems that give rise to donor organisations, and the trade, industrial and regional industrial policies of the countries to which they report.

There are limits to the role evaluation can play, but ongoing research is absolutely needed first, on the ways in which contextually responsive African evaluation systems can promote equity not only instrumentally within the contexts of African public sector programming but also more broadly, considering the context within which this programming takes place. To do this, these systems need to be oriented to engage with the ways in which transformation can be meaningfully promoted within unequal governance systems. Until the global systems which perpetuate inequality are also brought within the remit of evaluation, there will be limits to the scope of control of African governments and the evaluation systems they build.

Chapter 3

System thinking for evaluators to enhance gender equity and transformation in Africa

Madri Jansen van Rensburg
Resilience Analysis Consulting,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Introduction

This chapter focuses on changing the way we think about transformation at a systems level and using systems thinking to address gender issues. This approach should be applied to all evaluations in order to ensure a gender and equity perspective. The chapter also presents a framework that will enable evaluators to apply this new lens of equity to their work and fulfil their responsibility to drive system changes.

The chapter will highlight the interrelatedness of concepts such as gender, equity, systems thinking and transformation by describing a framework that reflects on work on gender using systems thinking on the African continent. It is essential for evaluators to understand, measure and report on gender and affect gender equity through their evaluations. The importance of evaluators including gender, equality and equity in their

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work will be illustrated using the intersection of gender in all sustainable development goals (SDGs).

It is easier to think about and understand the transformation that is sustainable after an intervention is terminated by considering the systems within the change that occurred. Systems thinking is critical for all evaluators regardless of the type of intervention being evaluated or the approach used. However, evaluators are often overwhelmed when confronted by systems dynamics and other models.

The chapter will provide a theoretical framework that will assist young, emerging and seasoned evaluators in framing their evaluations using systems thinking, focusing on transformation (both as an outcome for the project and the evaluation itself). Acknowledging gender and equity as a cross-cutting aspect in this framework will ensure that evaluators include a gender lens and influence gender equity. The theoretical framework will be explained in a manner that provides enough information about the theoretical and academic foundations without overwhelming the reader and user.

The bioecological systems model of Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Madeline 2017) is widely used to illustrate the interrelatedness of different systems. This forms the basis for the theoretical framework and is described to familiarise evaluators with systems and enable them to recognise the influences on and by the evaluand. Some of these levels are unpacked further to highlight the holistic view needed. For example, the components required to understand any individual are presented briefly. A similar approach is used to categorise environmental (macro system) factors. These categories prompt the evaluator to think about sub-systems on all levels.

The cross-cutting aspect of gender is introduced to the framework to enable the evaluator to incorporate gender in all aspects and all systems. It also includes a temporal approach highlighting the effect of time as a dimension influencing the intervention and the evaluation.

Many evaluators use standard criteria proposed or prescribed by the client or as part of the required design or methodology (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD] 2020). The chapter contains a section that illustrates how the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria are interrelated and how systems thinking can be applied to those criteria. The framework presented here, therefore, does not aim to replace other criteria but evokes the evaluator to consider how they can use systems thinking in service of transformation, especially gender and equity. System-specific criteria include a system description, structure (boundaries and coherence), dynamics (interrelatedness), system

transformation, system sustainability and leverage points. The final practical section reflects on ethics related to systems thinking and case descriptions for reflection and practice.

Ultimately, the chapter aims to provide a framework for evaluators that they can practically use to include systems thinking in working with gender as a cross-cutting issue in evaluating transformation. It does not aim to provide in-depth information on systems transformation or evaluation. Instead, it aims at changing thinking and enabling evaluators to incorporate a more integrated approach in their current practice. The logical flow of the chapter is based on the premise that a level of information is needed to understand the theoretical underpinnings of the different components. The focus is on practical application, and the final theoretical framework (consisting of the elements described throughout the chapter) integrates the information in a format that enables the evaluator to think about and use systems thinking to view transformation and wear a gender lens.

Concepts

Development work tries to effect social change. The aim of equity is not to remove all differences so that everyone and all groups are equal regarding health, education or income (Segone 2011). Equity prioritises groups unfairly deprived of those resources and works towards justice. The causes and effects of the inequalities are culture-bound and differ between countries and communities.

Gender inequality is probably the most basic and widespread inequality globally. It is not only historical but also a factor that upholds other types of inequalities and injustices. Defining gender is challenging. Working across different African countries brings the challenge of what is legally and accepted as operational definitions of gender. Gender can be dichotomous or binary (Lindqvist, Gustafsson Sendén & Renström 2021). This remains the norm in some countries. Lindqvist et al. (2021) and colleagues suggest operationalising gender according to four facets: physiological (sex), self-defined gender identity, legal gender and social gender (norm-related behaviours and gender expression). When considering gender from a system's approach, it clarifies that the definition of gender cannot be imposed. The first task of the evaluator will be to clarify the meaning in collaboration with the stakeholders with an understanding that the definition might vary between sub-systems and over time. Gender remains a social construct, and its meaning, use and definition are based on culture (Yusuff 2018).

According to Van den Berg, Magro and Mulder (2019), there are three kinds of transformational change in development work. The first is a

societal change towards gender equality and equity in society. It works for inclusion and is based on feminist perspectives. The second perspective emerged from development and environmental areas. The focus here is on interactions with ecosystems and the environment to sustain economies and societies. Management and consulting theories and operational research define transformational change as organisational-wide and over a period of time. Transformational change is, therefore, not limited to one level of a system and stretches from global and national to local systems. Systems thinking is critical to truly appreciate transformation at any level regardless of how it is contextually defined) is systemically constructed and maintained, it would require a systems view. Gender-responsive evaluations contain two elements (UN Women 2015). It assesses gender and power relations and how these influence the results of an intervention. Furthermore, it uses inclusive methods that allow the voices of marginalised groups to be heard. It provides information to ensure accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender-transformative evaluations promote social change, a more sustainable transformation of the systems underlying inequalities. When thinking more systemically, it is clear that gender transformations in one part of the system also address and influence other systems.

Hummelbrunner (2011) alerts us that developmental work is no longer a simple transfer of resources but is multi-layered, multi-faceted and complex. Many elements are interlinked, and simplified cause-effect links can no longer dictate our thinking. Systems are dynamic, interrelated components that result in more than the sum of the sub-components' results (Van den Berg et al. 2019). Systems thinking implies that the evaluator considers the intervention from other viewpoints. Therefore, systems thinking also focuses on equity (Reynolds & Holwell 2010; Segone 2011). The focus is on relationships and how different factors and people interact. Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011) worked with three confluence concepts, interrelationships, perspectives and boundaries. This chapter will integrate these with other systems concepts, such as leverage points, to enable evaluators to investigate the different perspectives on equity and gender transformation.

Gender, equity and evaluation

Gender is a cross-cutting issue in development work. All 17 SDGs can be linked to gender, with 10 goals having gender-specific indicators (Alcamo, Grundy & Scharlemann 2018; UN Women 2022; Van den Berg et al. 2019). There is an intersectionality of the SDGs. For example, gender equality (SDG 5) is directly linked to SGD 2 (end poverty), SGD 3 (good health and wellbeing), SGD 4 (quality education), SGD 10 (reduced inequalities) and

SGD 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) as they are all focused on wellbeing. Gender equity (SDG 5) is also central to the SDGs related to infrastructure, such as SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth,) which will not be possible without addressing gender equity.

Gender equality is, in many regards, also a precursor for other equity work. For example, addressing mothers' voices in education addresses the lack of girls' education and enables access to health by both girls and boys. Unfortunately, data to monitor SGD 5 is not available, let alone investigating the interaction and influences of gender between SDGs (UN Women 2022).

Evaluators are critical to ensuring programmes and policies address equity in Africa. Much work has been carried out to research and advocate for mainstreaming gender in all evaluations in addition to focused gender approaches and methodologies (GIZ 2014; Stephens, Lewis & Reddy 2018; UN Women 2015; World Bank 2012). This brought gender-sensitive, responsive and transformative evaluation within the scope of all evaluators regardless of the sector or type of interventions they work on. The work performed and published as the *Decalogue of Evaluation from a Gender Perspective* (Amariles Erazo et al. 2015) aims to guide gender mainstreaming in the policy and practice of evaluation (see Table 3.1).

Work carried out in collaborative efforts in the Global South to promote gender transformation has involved the use of specific evaluation approaches and methodologies. These efforts also highlight the importance of gender mainstreaming in all evaluations, going beyond simply disaggregating data. An example of such work is the EvalPartners/ EvalGender+ 'Peer-to-Peer (P2P) project for the development of capacities

TABLE 3.1: Decalogue of evaluation from a gender perspective.

1.	Recognises and values the political dimension of evaluation to contribute to transforming gender inequalities and promote social justice
2.	Assumes that public policies, programmes and projects and their evaluation are not gender neutral
3.	It is a quality criterion: Gender perspective should be applied to all kinds of policies, programmes and projects
4.	Implies questioning gender power relations analysing results and processes
5.	Proposes a holistic approach: One which looks at people, organisations or institutions and their environments
6.	Promotes participatory and collaborative work to build collective knowledge and empowerment
7.	Focusses on accountability, learning, improvement and advocacy with a view to transforming inequalities
8.	Generates analysis, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned to promote changes in gender relations
9.	Uses gender analysis and other tools and methodologies and adapts them to the language and cultural characteristics of local communities
10.	Analyses how gender inequality intersects with other inequalities

Source: Amariles Erazo, F, Salinas-Mulder, S, Espinosa, J, Bustelo, M, Faúndez, A & Weinstein, M 2015, *The Decalogue of evaluation from a gender perspective*, EvalGender+, New York, pp. 1–13.

in gender transformative evaluation: A Global South project', which includes Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC),[1] South Asia[2] and Africa[3] (Amariles Erazo et al. 2018). The work carried out in LAC contributed to understanding competencies in evaluation from a gender-transformative approach with cultural relevance (Amariles Erazo, Salinas-Mulder & Rodriguez-Bilella 2018). South Asia developed and tested the training of evaluators and gender advocates. The contribution from Africa to this collaborative work included the development of a culturally responsive curriculum on gender transformation evaluations (Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network [AGDEN] 2017). In this way, the partners (Africa and LAC) stimulated each other's work and contributed to a stronger voice from the Global South.

The work by AGDEN in Africa included a toolkit with gender-responsive and transformative methodologies (AGDEN 2011). After researching and developing the culturally responsive curriculum for Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) (AGDEN 2017), investigations focused on the capacity development of young and emerging evaluators (YEE) (Hoosen, Jansen van Rensburg & Loye 2018; Jansen van Rensburg & Loye 2021). Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network also developed a gender diagnostic tool for national evaluation frameworks and policies (Jansen van Rensburg 2016a; Jansen van Rensburg & Blaser-Mapitsa 2017; Tirivanhu & Jansen van Rensburg 2018). This was practically applied in South Africa (Jansen van Rensburg 2016b), Benin (Etta 2016) and Uganda (Sibanda 2016).

However, evaluations in Africa, by both those working in Africa and African evaluators themselves, still lack a strong gender perspective. Gender equity requires transforming systems and gender; other equity transformations will only result from system changes. Evaluators must be more informed and practical and apply systems thinking in evaluations with a gender perspective. We can only understand the inequities if we consider the full systemic implications of the programme or intervention.

Evaluators' responsibility

Awareness and skills to incorporate gender aspects in all evaluations are essential for evaluators on three levels. Firstly, evaluations should be carried out with a gender lens to ensure that information on power relations and other factors that influence the uptake and impact of interventions are

1. Network of Women in Organisation Management – REDWIM, Latin American Network of M&E – ReLAC.

2. Community of Evaluators South Asia – CoE SA and later Gender and Equity Network South Asia – GENSA.

3. Africa Gender and Development Evaluation Network – AGDEN.

captured and brought to the attention of those working in the development space (Brisolara 2014). Secondly, evaluators must investigate and be aware of systemic factors when evaluating and contributing knowledge regarding system changes, especially regarding equity (Reynolds & Holwell 2010). Each evaluation uncovers some systems information even when not recognised as such by the evaluator. Gathering and reporting this information is critical for sustainable change (Goldman, Pabari & Amisi 2021). Thirdly, evaluators should take responsibility for influencing systems to ensure equity in some sub-systems (Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011; Williams & Imam 2006). In other words, the evaluator is instrumental in capturing gender information and disseminating it, understanding systemic information that addresses gender and other equity issues and leverage points in the systems they are working in to optimise gender and equity transformation. Evaluators and evaluation studies, therefore, are tools to enhance gender and also broader equity.

Transformation

Firstly, we need to consider what transformation means in the evaluation context. There are ongoing discussions about the transformation in evaluation and the transformation caused by evaluation in forums created by the International Development Evaluators Association (IDEAS) and the International Evaluation Academy (IEA). The discourse needs to be more apparent because of the difficulty of defining transformation. Transformative and transformational evaluations are sometimes synonyms, and debating the differences is ongoing. Not only is the focus different when focusing on the activity to evaluate the transformation of a system (Mertens & Wilson 2018; Patton 2020) versus considering the transformative effect of the evaluation itself on the programme (and hopefully the system) (Uitto & Batra 2022; Van den Berg et al. 2019). The evaluation also needs transformation (Van den Berg, Magro & Adrien 2021). Van den Berg considered all three these aspects important. Evaluators are essential to detect and report on transformation in a system, especially a gender aspect. Furthermore, evaluators need to be aware and use their transformational power and start transforming their evaluation thinking, designs and methodologies.

Systems thinking

This section does not attempt to provide an in-depth description of system thinking and models; it does not attempt to prescribe a specific method or methodology. The systems field is very diverse, and there are many models to learn from and apply in evaluations (Ison 2010; Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011).

Significant work has been carried out in systems thinking (Waters Centre: www.waterscenterst.org). Once you have grasped that you are always in a system and influence, it is difficult not to consider it in any work.

Similarly, significant work is performed on different systems thinking models in the evaluation, specifically on applying systems thinking in evaluations (Bob Williams: www.bobwilliams.co.za). The intent is not to prescribe a specific method or model but rather to describe principles of systems thinking in evaluation. The key focus remains the importance of all stakeholder views and perceptions (Reynolds & Holwell 2010; Segone 2011; Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011).

System thinking in evaluation: Concepts and principles

Development programmes are multi-faceted and complex, influencing various parts of the systems in which they occur (Hummelbrunner 2011). Different evaluation approaches and methodologies include systems thinking and principles (e.g. democratic, empowerment, realistic and utilisation-focused evaluation). Evaluators generally acknowledge that policies, programmes and interventions (including policies, programmes, plans and strategies) influence and are influenced by the contexts and environments. Socio-cultural, historical, economic, political and organisational contextualising is an essential step in the evaluation process to understanding how and why the programme works or does not. Sub-systems are part of more comprehensive systems which enable or constrain the parts, and the parts similarly influence the larger system (Williams & Imam 2006). Systems thinking specifically for gender is also receiving more attention (Stephens et al. 2018).

Using systems concepts and approaches can significantly improve the relevance and utility of evaluation. It can be used during an evaluation's design, implementation, analysis and reporting stages. Evaluators can use systems thinking and approaches to design more relevant evaluations, increase participation in the evaluation process (especially marginalised stakeholders such as children) and enhance the usefulness of evaluation findings (Williams & Imam 2006).

There are diverse views and applications of systems thinking in evaluation (Stephens et al. 2018; Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011). For example, some focus on evaluating programmes and interventions working on a holistic system level with system transformation as the intended impact. Others emphasise the transformation that happens as a result of evaluations. This chapter advocates for evaluators to use systems thinking and incorporate

principles to look at interventions regardless of whether system changes are strategically intended. It is about working with the systems and understanding the influence you have on the system as an evaluator.

Systems thinking in evaluation is characterised by three concepts (interrelationships, perspectives and boundaries) and is valid for different evaluation approaches and not confined to one type (Hummelbrunner 2011; Williams & Imam 2006). Williams and Hummelbrunner (2011) explain that the intervention is central. The three key components of a systems framework when doing evaluations are as follows:

- *Understanding interrelationships* includes the reality the evaluator is focusing on. Everything and all systems are connected.
- The evaluator engages with perspectives on how people interpret reality. Stakeholders have different roles (and a stakeholder might have multiple roles). Stakeholder roles are those roles that are affected by or affect the intervention. This focuses on the roles, not individuals or groups, as one person could play different roles. Engaging with the perspective and the two outcomes (affecting or being affected) is important before deciding on the final criteria. If the evaluator introduces a gender lens (if it was not prominently stated in the programme strategy or the terms of reference), it will influence how the intervention is viewed and change the lenses used by those within the system.
- *Boundaries* exist for the intervention and what is feasible and desirable to do. It also exists for evaluation. If gender was not included as a criterion and the evaluator was considering the use, it would be more beneficial to consider the consequences of NOT using a gender lens.

The consequences of the evaluation and being evaluated are very important. The evaluation becomes part of the system and, therefore, influences the system (Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011). An implication of this is that if a gender lens is introduced to the intervention under investigation, it will influence how the results and the future of the intervention are seen by those involved in the evaluation (not only the commissioner or programme management).

Working systemically means something other than working with the whole system or evaluating only system-level interventions. It is about the evaluator recognising an intervention or programme's larger context and influences. Bronfenbrenner's adapted model categorises different sub-systems of levels to frame our understanding of where the focus is and what other sub-systems can be influenced. No additional measurements or investigations are necessary. It is changing the mindset and reporting on the potential and actual influences or factors to be considered to ensure transformation, especially regarding gender (and other) equity.

Bioecological systems model

A basic systems model is used as the foundation for the theoretical framework. Additional classifications (for example, on the individual and macro levels) are included. The purpose of providing these is to prompt the evaluator to consider all aspects of each sub-system (e.g. all components of the individual's body, mind and soul and all influences of the environment). Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model organises influences and interactions between individuals and their environment into five systems along a timeline of historical influence (chronosystem). From closest to the individual to furthest, they include microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Madeline 2017). These systems provide us with an understanding of the important influences and interactions of interventions on people (Jansen van Rensburg 2020). It furthermore highlights how cross-cutting issues such as gender play out in each system and how gender inequality in one system influences other systems.

The individual

The individual forms the core. These aspects are often the focus or interest when dealing with interventions on the individual level or groups of stakeholders with a specific concept, such as psychology (e.g. cognition, emotions and behaviour), education or health. According to Demartini (2010), every individual has seven areas (of purpose). This includes spiritual, mental, vocational, financial, familial, social and physical. When engaging on the individual level, it is essential to consider these areas.

Microsystem

The microsystem is the system in direct contact with the individual. It comprises those in direct contact with the individual, family, home, school and peers. This system's interactions between family members, work colleagues or classmates are critical.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem comprises the interactions between different microsystems. This includes home and school or workplace linkages, family and peer groups, and family and community.

Exosystem

The exosystem is the interaction of the groups that do not directly interact with the individual. It still plays a critical role and has a significant impact.

This includes the influence of extended family, the workplace, peers and others' direct context and neighbourhood. For instance, the work conditions of the mother influence how the child perceives gender.

☐ Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the largest but most removed system. It includes culture, values, beliefs, ideas and political and economic systems. For example, gender norms influence the upbringing of girls and boys differently, as do national policies or the gender composition of the national assembly. The PESTLE analysis formalises the factors into political, economic, social (including culture and gender), technological, legal and environmental factors (Nandonde 2019). Using these categories allows the evaluator to assess all macro-level factors.

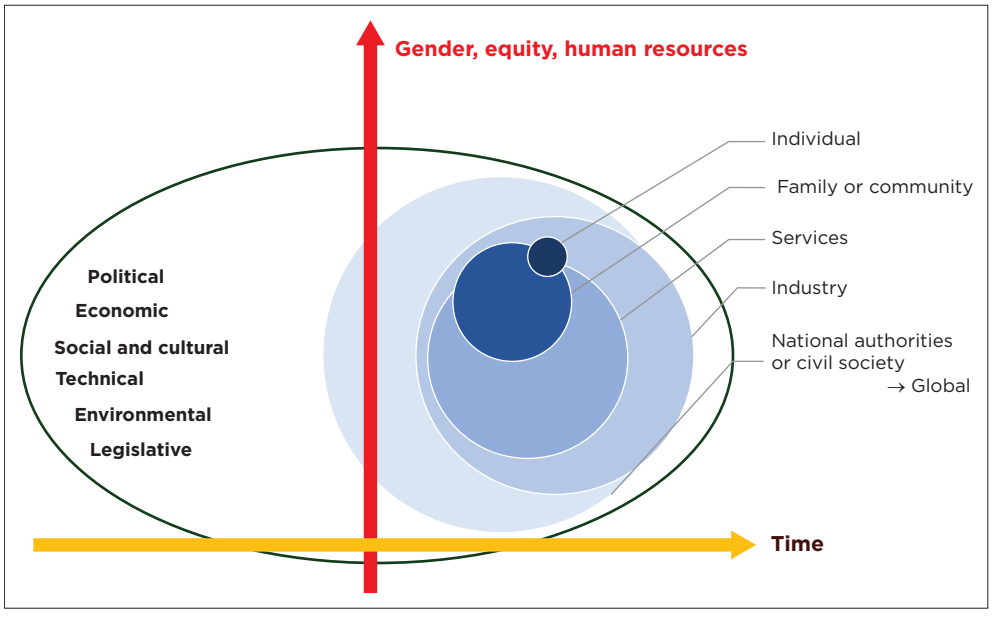
☐ Chronosystem

The chronosystem is the time dimension. It is the lifetime patterns of environmental events, changes and socio-historical circumstances. This system reflects the interaction between all the systems over time. Change at one stage can influence any of the other systems. This includes major events such as pandemics, wars, economic crises or more subtle changes in the physical environment or family structure. The impact of lockdowns because of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) will have a long-term effect on education outcomes.

A framework illustrates the cross-cutting aspects of gender and equality, using systems thinking to examine transformation. The bioecological model frames the next steps in developing the theoretical framework.

■ Theoretical framework

The following framework illustrates how to use basic systems thinking can be applied in evaluation to enhance transformation and equity. The framework does not imply that other evaluation models, approaches or methodologies should be replaced. Rather, the evaluator continues using the most relevant approaches according to the context. The framework helps frame the design, questions, analysis and specifically the integration of information generated to consider the system within which the intervention and evaluation occur. The crosscutting influences of gender, equity and the time dimension are illustrated in Figure 3.1. It shows how gender intersects with all the sub-systems, from the individual to the macro (context) levels. The whole system is also subjected to the effect of time. This is important when considering the dynamic nature of systems and sub-systems and how they change over time.



Source: Author.

FIGURE 3.1: Cross-cutting gender and time influence in the bioecological model.

Evaluating using a systems approach implies focusing on individual or beneficiary group outcomes and changes that affect the system. Changes in one part of the system or one group can affect other sub-systems. This means that a change in another sub-system might influence the implementation or outcomes of a programme. This could be missed if the evaluator solely focuses on the targeted group or intervention and its stakeholders. It does not mean including all sub-systems and larger systems, merely looking at the group within their important systems. For example, evaluating a school leadership programme does not imply engaging the national political system. It uses a lens to understand the systemic influences (such as the influence of national politicians' behaviour) and also a lens to understand the power inequalities (e.g. the limited number of female parliamentarians as role models). It requires questions to understand these system factors affecting the stakeholders, intervention and results. It considers the whole system and sub-systems necessary (Van den Berg et al. 2019, 2021).

It is important to understand the system structure and the changes over time relevant and in reaction to the programme. The bio-ecological system model views the critical beneficiary or intervention within different sub-systems. The evaluation does not focus on the individual but continuously and intentionally considers all systems interacting with the individual or group (Bronfenbrenner 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris 2006; Madeline 2017). This model's sub-system will include the

individual and microsystem – *family* and *community*, mesosystem – *service* level, and macrosystem – *national authorities* and *civil society* and other contextual and environmental factors.

The framework applies regardless of the evaluation's scale, whether a small intervention or a larger national or multi-country programme. It is about framing the evaluator's perspective as contextually sensitive to systems, transformation and equality or inequality.

Gender equality is seldom the main aim of an intervention, but it is critical for most development interventions and relevant to most SDGs, as illustrated in the introduction. It is critical to include gender measurements in all evaluations. This transformative system is the human rights-based approach (HBRA). It provides equity focus gender-sensitive (EFGS) methods that focus on data disaggregation and investigate power relations and their implications for the system's transformation (AGDEN 2011; UN Women 2022).

Awareness of systems thinking and a model that makes the application easier do not remove the issues with the commissioning partner. Most evaluations still focus on traditional criteria. Therefore, it is important to integrate systems thinking with traditional evaluation designs and criteria, especially if evaluations answer generic questions regarding effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevancy, sustainability and impact.

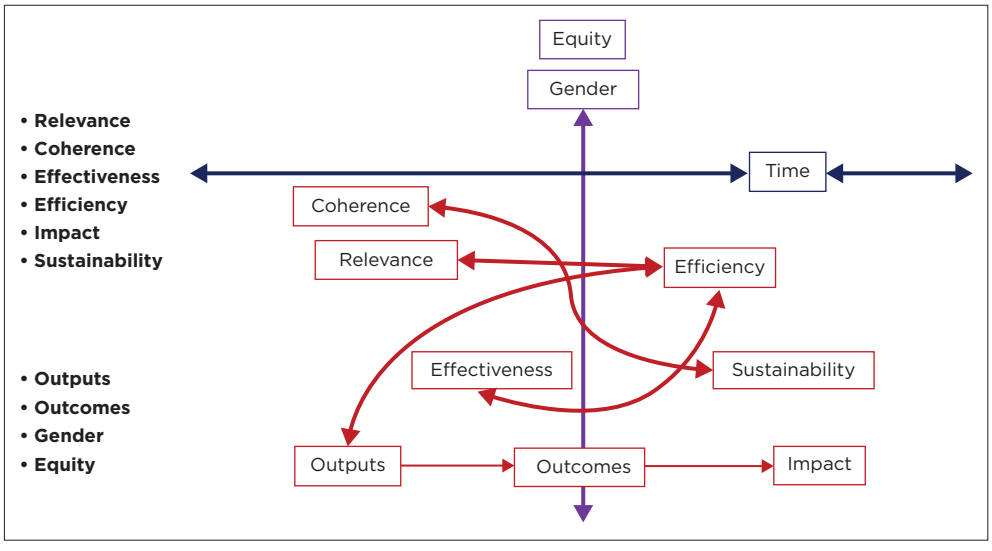
Measuring system transformation in combination with existing criteria

The conceptual framework includes reconstruction and expansion of the theory of change (ToC) by including different perspectives of sub-system stakeholders. Integrating the perspective of different groups allows a deeper understanding of the structure of the whole system and the changes that happened to the system and its parts. This includes a gender and equity lens not only for the system implications but also for existing criteria such as the OECD DAC criteria of relevance (Table 3.2), coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact (OECD 2020).

TABLE 3.2: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and its Development Assistance Committee criteria.

Relevance	Is the intervention doing the right things?
Efficiency	How well does the intervention fit?
Efficiency	How well are resources being used?
Effectiveness	Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
Impact	What difference does the intervention make?
Sustainability	Will the benefits last?

Source: OECD 2020, *Better criteria for better evaluation: Revised and updated evaluation criteria*, viewed 02 November 2021. https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/evaluation-criteria-flyer-2020.pdf



Source: Author.

FIGURE 3.2: Interlinkages of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and its Development Assistance Committee criteria.

Africa Gender and Development Evaluators Network developed a strategy and methodologies to enable a gender lens to be applied to the DAC criteria (AGDEN 2011). Therefore, the description will focus on incorporating DAC criteria with system transformation criteria. It is often reasoned that systems thinking excludes generic criteria. However, evaluations are mostly commissioned with criteria (and mostly DAC) as a stipulation. Therefore, excluding the DAC criteria favouring a more purist systems approach is possible.

Systems thinking equality applies to examining the intersection of evaluation criteria. The different criteria are interrelated, for example, the OECD DAC criteria of coherence and sustainability. Sustainability (or transformation of the system) is interrelated to coherence and the system being coherent to the environment (e.g. the political and technological environment and context). Figure 3.2 illustrates these interlinkages between different OECD DAC and evaluation criteria. The double arrows illustrate that the linkages are interrelated, and the concepts influence each other and have overlapping interpretations, meanings and measurements in the evaluation context.

Gender and equity criteria

The traditional criteria used to assess gender in an evaluation do generally not provide a sufficient investigation of the effects in sub-systems and how gender inequalities in one system influence other sub-systems

(Stephens et al. 2018). Similarly, changes in one part of the system can have a transformational effect on other parts of the system and the system overall. Asking the gender questions differently can highlight which touch points have a larger effect. Understanding this can allow the evaluation itself to be transformative as it will trigger those points. Table 3.3 provides suggestions for systemic questions. Evaluators are urged to develop their questions and expand those to include system questions as part of their normal process (e.g. when generating the evaluation matrix). Questions will also be integrated with the system's criteria, and the interrelatedness of the criteria should be considered. For example, effectiveness questions on changes for stakeholders should have specific gender-related sub-questions.

System transformation criteria

The real value of the development programme is the achievements towards structural changes in the system. The key aspect to remember when considering all these criteria is the importance of multiple perspectives. It is essential to include all stakeholders' views and views of their sub-system, the whole system and other interacting systems (Midgley 2007). Different criteria can assist in ensuring system structure, function and transformation are captured. This includes system description, system structure (coherence and boundaries, system dynamics (interrelatedness), system changes (transformation), sustainability and leverage points.

TABLE 3.3: Gender evaluation questions.

Traditional questions	Systems question
How do inequalities (differences in power and access for different groups) influence the stakeholders?	• What are the sub-systems of the intervention, and how do they reflect gender imbalances? • How does this impact the target group or system? • How do gender imbalances affect the larger system?
How did this programme address these inequalities? (Probe age, race, gender, income, disabilities, etc.)	• Which sub-systems showed improvements in power imbalances? • Which other sub-systems were influenced by those changes? • How did those changes influence the system at large?
How can this be improved? List what you think is required.	• How can the change in the sub-systems be enhanced to ensure the other sub-systems are affected? • Which sub-systems were not impacted by the change? Is this critical for system transformation (boundary), and what leverage points?
Did the programme address the needs of all targeted groups, or are or were the needs and safety of certain groups overlooked?	• Which sub-systems harmed system gender transformation? • How can this be remedied (within the scope of the programme intervention, influence, or action)?

Source: Author.

System description

The main question to describe the system would be: Which other larger system is the programme embedded in, and what are the relations between those systems?

It is important to describe the system structure to understand how it is placed within the larger system and how it relates to other systems and programmes. This can only be performed by investigating all the different stakeholder perspectives (Williams & Hummelbrunner 2011). The different sub-systems, the system's dynamics and the interrelatedness of the sub-systems are important to effect transformation. A ToC that reflects the system structure and dynamics should be developed with the intricate interrelatedness of all parts of the system. This description will aid in understanding the achieved system transformation and planning further interventions to continue the programme.

System structure – coherence and boundaries

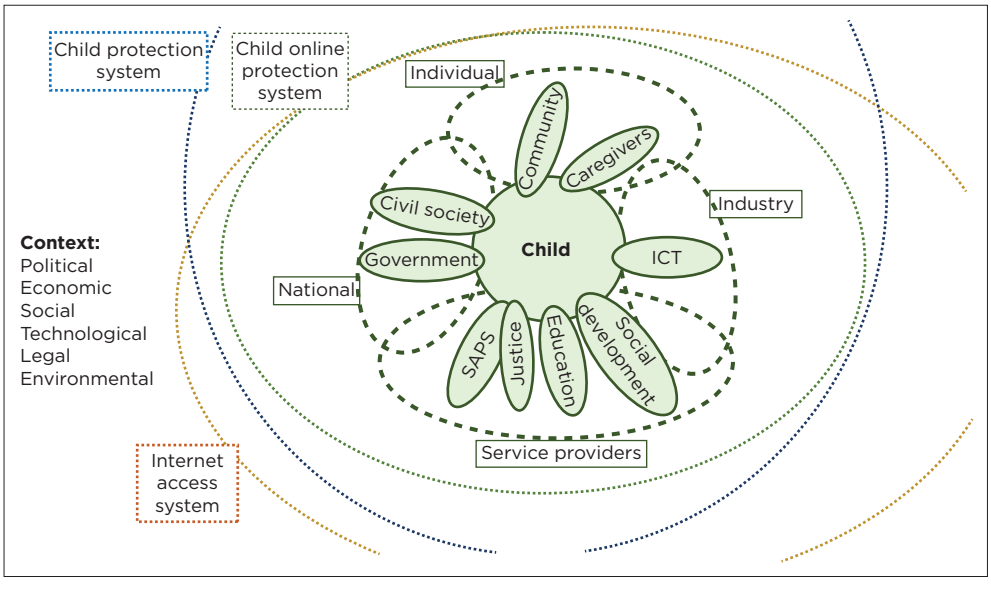
To understand the structure of the system, the evaluator could ask: To what extent did the programme contribute to other relevant systems?

The alignment of the programme and the system to other systems (outside the intervention and programme boundaries) is also essential. For example, the Child Online Safety (COS) system fits into the more extensive Child Rights (CR) systems and significantly overlaps with Child Protect (CP) (UNICEF 2022). However, it needs to be fully embedded in the CP system. The CP system aims to protect children and is fully included in the CR system. The COS system, however, has a component outside the CP system because it not only focuses on protecting children from harm but on the child's rights to access the internet and an online presence. Industry (information and communications technology) plays a role in the system and overlaps with different parts of the system.

In planning and evaluating system transformation, it is important to understand the system and where it overlaps or is embedded into other, more extensive systems. This relates to the boundaries of the system.

System dynamics – interrelatedness

The interrelatedness or dynamics within the system can be elicited by asking: How are the sub-systems related to each other, to the programme intent and to the larger systems?



Source: UNICEF 2022.

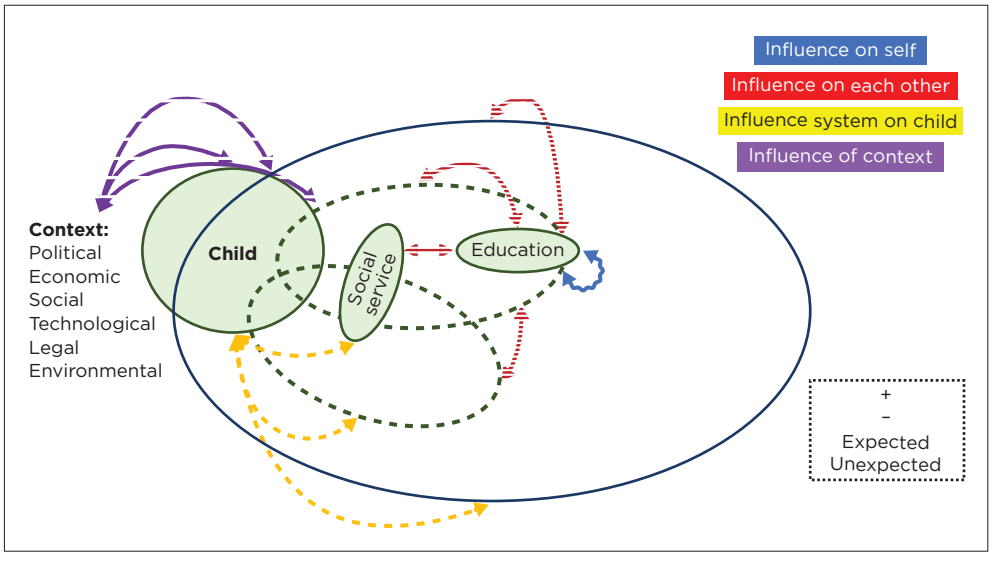
FIGURE 3.3: Structure of the system and sub-systems within the larger systems (child online safety example).

The functioning and dynamics of the system are critical to understanding and using systems thinking. The different sub-systems included in the programme design and implementation (in the example of four systems: individual, service providers, national structures and industry) are embedded into other larger systems (CP and ICT), as discussed here. Figure 3.3 shows the sub-systems of each system.

A further question about the system's dynamics includes the iterative influences between sub-systems: What are the influences between the different parts of each sub-system?

The next level of dynamics to consider is in and between sub-systems. These reciprocal interactions between sub-systems, systems and larger systems are illustrated in Figure 3.4. The parts (stakeholders and individuals) interact and influence each other within the sub-system. The different sub-systems affect each other and the larger system. There is also the bidirectional influence of the environment and the system (e.g. changes in legislation because of the system and influencing the system). The goal of the system dynamics is to influence the ultimate beneficiary of the system (i.e., the example of the child being safe online).

The interrelatedness of the different sub-systems is important to consider. Understanding the sub-systems removes silo thinking and approaches (Tett 2015). It further limits duplication of effort and enables



Source: UNICEF 2022.

FIGURE 3.4: Interactions of parts, sub-systems, systems and context.

the identification and use of leverage points. Understanding the system's dynamics allows continuous monitoring, reflection and adjustments to interventions in different parts of the system, as the effect of a slight adjustment to one area is easier to visualise.

System changes – transformation

Considering transformation from a system's point of view implies stepping into the different parts of the system and viewing the sub-system, the whole system and the interactions between the parts from each of those viewpoints. The questions about results, therefore, investigate the changes in the self, own sub-system, other parts of the system and the whole system. Table 3.4 illustrates the expansion of the traditional questions to a systems approach.

System dynamics imply that small changes can have significant effects, and what might seem like failures in part of the system highlight the next steps. Systems transformation is not a simple and linear process. Measuring progress towards impact using individual indicators (such as those in the programme log frame and captured by the DAC criteria) might miss the essential changes in the system and focus on what seems like a lack of impact. The results of efforts might seem insignificant at this stage.

TABLE 3.4: System change and transformation evaluation questions.

Traditional questions	Systems question
To what extent was the intervention produced or expected to produce significant positive or negative, intended or unintended results?	• To what extent are system changes and transformations visible? • Which sub-systems, components and elements were the most relevant, the least relevant and which were left out in addressing the whole system change? • To what extent has system transformation influenced the outcome for the targeted group? How can this be enhanced?
Were there secondary and any potential consequences of the programme's interventions?	What consequences were there that impacted other systems and the context?
To what extent were changes in behaviours or norms affected?	To what extent did the system changes influence the behaviour of individuals, components and sub-systems?

Source: Author.

Sustainability of the system

Sustainability as a criterion should consist of two levels (Van den Berg et al. 2019). Firstly, the more traditional understanding is the sustainability of the results of the programme or intervention. Secondly, the system's sustainability is to continue with the intervention or the changes introduced because of changes to the system or sub-systems. Sustainability can be high even in the initial programme phases if foundational work transforms the system. The sustainability of results might seem high without real system transformation but is highly unlikely to continue indefinitely.

If one part of the system (a critical stakeholder or champion) is lost, the system can recover as the overall system integrity remains intact. The overall change in the system is not fixed and final but will evolve and transform through time. The most important factor for sustainability is not having a fixed and stable intervention that is effective and efficient but instead having a system that is dynamic and able to adjust to changes in the environment and the design and sub-systems.

Possible questions to include as criteria to measure both results and system sustainability are presented in Table 3.5.

Leverage points

The next step is to understand that gender is not another intervention or sub-system but is part and parcel of each system and sub-system. As discussed earlier, changes in equality in one system have repercussions in all systems. These effects are closely related to leverage points (areas and aspects within the system that will lead to changes in more than one part of the system) and touch points (the actual physical points where these interactions occur and can potentially be enhanced).

TABLE 3.5: Sustainability evaluation questions.

Traditional questions	Systems question
To what extent are the net benefits of the programme's interventions likely to continue based on the institutional capacities and instruments produced through the programme?	• To what extent are system changes and transformation permanent, and to what extent will the changes in sub-systems enable continued transformation? • To what extent did national level [*insert level or sub-system according to intervention and theory of change*] interventions change to enhance continued changes in the system? Are these changes implementable? • To what extent are new knowledge and skills integrated into regular activities? • To what extent will the [*insert sub-system*] comply with new standards, and how will this complement or hinder the continued system changes?
What factors could improve the programme's sustainability if it were to be expanded or replicated to sustain net benefits over time?	• Which factors have been identified by different sub-systems that can be replicated in the sub-system or other sub-systems to enhance sustainability? • Which additional sub-systems need to be included to address systemic change? – boundary • What interrelations need special attention? – interrelatedness

Source: Author.

There are points in the system where changes need to happen first or be targeted, as the effect on the whole system will be critical (Leventon, Abson & Lang 2021; Meadows 2008). It might not influence the ultimate target beneficiaries initially. For example, working with parents or caregivers first raises their awareness of the issue or intervention and also capacitates them on ensuring their children are reached. It is not a train-the-trainer situation as if the parent or caregiver is supposed to transfer or cascade the knowledge.

Touchpoints or spaces in our example of COS could include:

- School space (defined as any space where learning takes place and not just the physical school grounds).
- Online platforms and communities.
- General public spaces where people spend time (such as at health clinics, taxi ranks and shopping centres) for broader awareness messages.

Leverage points with children could be peer structures, such as:

- Representative Council of Learners, a formal structure at schools.
- Civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are working with different activities, including sports.
- Development of online games and applications specifically targeting the market segment.

Ethical issues and evaluator responsibilities

All ordinary ethical principles and all rights are upheld the same way as any other evaluation. There is, however, a critical question to be asked regarding the inclusion of gender and equity criteria and using a gender lens looking at system transformation: 'What is the cost of NOT including a gender lens?'

Evaluators have a critical role as knowledge brokers. This includes information on system transformation and the part of inequalities. Evaluators can capture and disseminate essential information and knowledge about power relations and other factors enabling or challenging transformation.

Evaluators, furthermore, have an important role in affecting systems. This is regardless of intent. As part of the system, evaluators influence the system in one way or another. Awareness of this effect and using this opportunity to enable parts of the system to reflect on gender and other inequalities is vital.

Considering the gains in knowledge and influence, the cost of additional questions and looking at all system influences is relatively small. There are no special or additional methods or stakeholder groups to be included that are not ethically required as a minimum standard for any evaluation anyway. The main cost is the change in mindset of the evaluator to see the stakeholders and the intervention in relation to all the systems and the interrelatedness of sub-systems.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a practical and applicable framework that evaluators can implement regardless of the sector or evaluation approach used. The chapter moved from defining key terms and their interrelatedness to emphasising the importance of gender and the mainstreaming thereof in evaluations. Transformation and systems thinking were explained not to create expertise in these topics but to illustrate how gender, transformation and systems thinking are critical for all evaluators. The central part of the chapter dealt with developing a theoretical framework that integrates these concepts. Relevant information was highlighted to explain why and how the framework is put together. Different examples illustrate how this framework can integrate traditional evaluation criteria with systems criteria. Short case studies from Africa were presented with reflection questions to encourage further application.

Chapter 4

(De)paternalising evaluation: 'Equity and equality' – the missing 'vocabulary' in Zimbabwe

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

Introduction

The 21st-century Africa reflects a myriad of political and socio-economic challenges. Most independent governments in Africa perpetuate inequity and inequality resulting in serious political and socio-economic problems. This chapter uses Zimbabwe as an illustrative context, and its experiences are premised on conversations on sustainable development, which are largely pinned on the need to eliminate inequalities to deal with imbalances. The ultimate goal of this chapter is to show the role of evaluation in addressing these inequalities in the Global South.

In order to advance the aforesaid, the chapter identifies paternalism as a concept primarily marred by political and economic power and a determinant factor in conversations of sustainable development. Reference to paternalism is made in an attempt to link it to evaluation – generally

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accepted as a panacea to inequality, especially in the Global South. Guiding this chapter are the following questions:

- What should evaluators consider as they seek to make significant contributions in terms of improving analytical frameworks analysing the performance and results of specific programmes and projects?
- How can evaluation help assess and design better public management systems in terms of inequality reduction?

Against the forgoing, this chapter proceeds by briefly locating Zimbabwe, the illustrative context, within the larger realm of inequalities wherein poverty and unsustainable development needs are topical issues reflective of many of the countries in the Global South. The concept of 'evaluation' is explored by examining different methodologies while alluding to the idea of paternalism. Key concepts such as equity and equality are critically assessed in relation to evaluation processes to reflect more deeply on the problem at hand.

Zimbabwe, the illustrative context

This section gives a brief historical trajectory of the illustrative context regarding some inequality determinants. These are mainly attached to the economic, political and social realities. The idea is not to create a 'political economy debate' but to trace the various potential historical socio-economic and political realities from the illustrative context to appreciate why evaluation is required today for sustainability.

In Zimbabwe, the period from 1998 to 2008 was the worst socio-economic decade for the country and its citizens, resulting in some migration-induced challenges neighbouring countries such as South Africa had to deal with. The period was a socio-political and economic era in the post-independent history of the country. Signalled by the food riots of 1998, following decisions by the economically stressed government channelling unbudgeted country resources to support the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) civil war (International Institute for Strategic Studies 1999), the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP) policy of 2000 was to follow (Chipenda 2020; Mkodzongi 2013; Mutopo, Manjengwa & Chiweshe 2014; Ossome & Naidu 2021), coupled with the 2005 Operation Murambatsvina (Vambe 2008).

While acts of government tyranny were reported from 1998, the 2008 violence, following disputed elections, reached catastrophic proportions (Dupuy & Prakash 2022; Mwonzora & Mandikwaza 2019; Raftopoulos 2014). All these had a toll on the economy in one way or the other ultimately creating, for instance, a heavily polarised political landscape wherein unfair

and avoidable circumstances were promoted. It resulted in most people or certain population groups being deprived or exposed to different forms of inequities.

It follows, therefore, that current development challenges are a build-up of cumulative 'failures' by the African independent governments, although these differ. In the case of Zimbabwe, these are linked first to the regime of the then Robert Mugabe and as of 2017, Emmerson Mnangagwa. Of late, the two, in developmental aspects, are now being compared to Ian Smith's, the last Rhodesian colonial government Prime Minister's colonial regime. The dialogue around such a matter insinuates that Mugabe and Mnangagwa have, and are, failing to maintain or have stamped on the rights of their citizens while destroying much of the development that had projected the country as a jewel of Africa at independence. In other words, self-rule is projected as marred by severe corruption, incompetence and underdevelopment.

Most Southern African countries are among the many countries on the continent providing evidence on how developmental agencies, institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), among others, have contributed immensely towards unmasking the prevalence of inequalities in Africa. Studies have shown that disparities are responsible for the poverty experienced by citizens.

The evaluative solutions characterising the developmental factors and institutions are being enhanced as they are part of the solution to structural and institutional challenges contributing to socio-political and economic inequalities (Marshall & Suárez 2014). For a long time now, NGOs have been performing, and continue to do so, several welfare and educative functions in Africa (Moore & Moyo 2018), which are primarily the responsibility of states and governments. However, for years, ruling governments in most African countries, Zimbabwe included, have found it 'increasingly difficult to perform welfare, agricultural assistance, and other legitimacy functions' (Moore & Moyo 2018, p. 3), such as guaranteeing food security, health care, mitigate domestic, gender and sexual violence perpetrated against vulnerable populations, among other issues. The instance of Zimbabwe as explained earlier suffices. The main reason is that most African governments are 'broke' and in 2020, the situation was acerbated by the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic (Heitzig, Ordu & Senbet 2021; Mangani 2023; Muchhala 2022; UNICEF 2021). In Zimbabwe, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, Mthuli Ncube, did not shy away from informing the Zimbabwean parliament in December 2022 that the government was 'broke' noting that there was no single portfolio committee which had expressed satisfaction with its allocated budget. The Minister, further acknowledged that the budget was indeed inadequate and that everyone needed to operate with the available resources (Mangudhla & Chikandla 2022).

Studies, such as by Simpson and Hawkins (2018) and Mlambo (2014), indicate that the first decade of independence in Zimbabwe was characterised by the government pushing 'pro-people' developmental policies and spending greatly on education, health and social goods without drawing a balance to developing the country's productive capacity. The economic and other social policies that were enacted and adopted, some of which were World Bank-and-International Monetary Fund (IMF)-based, such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP), had a toll on education, health and social nature of the country caused by an economic decline (Kanyenze 2004; Mhone 1995; Mlambo 2014). The country's involvement in the DRC civil war worsened the economic decline in Zimbabwe as the war drained much of the country's budget (International Institute for Strategic Studies 1999). At the turn of the 21st century, the Land Reform Programme, health pandemics such as human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), the growing opposition and political pressure and natural disasters such as droughts reduced the country to a 'begging basket' case warranting an increased need for interventions most of which were rendered by NGOs, civil society and other groups.

Against the aforementioned, Zimbabwe experienced toxic political and economic realities in the 1990s and 2000s, thereby having an increased presence and work by development agencies in the country because of the socio-political and economic decline (Zimfact 2018). Agencies and government departments working with NGOs and civil society groups, among others, have been very visible in communities affected by various crises, most of which are a result of inequity and inequality pervading society. However, the NGO flourishing phenomenon is not unique to Zimbabwe as Marshall and Suárez (2014, p. 2) reported that the global growth and visibility of NGOs is traced back to the end of the Second World War which ushered and called for 'building civil society and encouraging civic engagement'.

Studies further demonstrate that African governments are found wanting when it comes to funding developmental programmes. Governments face budgetary constraints (Chamaki, Jenkins & Hashemi 2019) and in highly inflationary or economic recession environments, 'outside options [...] can result in more efficient outcomes' (Chamaki et al. 2019, p. 1). This explains the interventions by NGOs, CSOs and other developmental institutions. Because of, 'rich countries and development agencies who give aid to developing countries' such has grown to be motivated by the argument that 'foreign aid promotes economic development and welfare in those recipient countries' (Akobeng 2020, p. 1690). By extension, as Siradag (2015) reports, NGOs are significant world political players and the more these are present and operational in a country, the more the states attempt meaningful accountability.

However, Brass (2022) notes that NGOs can, as monitors and evaluators, democratise the Global South if their work is supported. For Brass (2022), aspects of inequity and inequality that pervade much of African societies require interventions by NGOs and CSOs based on the conception that international donors 'now emphasise the need for civil society – often operationalised to mean NGOs – as a crucial factor for the social, economic, and political development in the Global South' (p. 2). One finds this position to be heavily informed by outcomes from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) reporting, which provide data assumed to be used by donors and funders to arrive at such decisions.

Conceptualising evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation in developmental practice is prioritised as a launch pad for development against the socio-economic and political activities deemed the brooding ground for inequity and inequality (Rist & Jacobi 2016). Otundo (2021, p. 4) believes M&E is not an imposition 'control mechanism' by donors to any programme or project but 'a dialogue on development and its progress between all its stakeholders'. Stakeholders have a different take on the importance of M&E, with civil society taking M&E as a guarantor of good governance and efficient administration (Kabonga 2018), NGOs look up to M&E for direction to implement their activities, while, more generally, 'effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability' (p. 2) are considered tools 'to measure the success and performance of both private and public projects through involvement of key stakeholders with the process' (Otundo 2021, p. 1).

Studies discussing M&E-inclined aspects, therefore, lay down working definitions of M&E for purposes of placing a given study into perspective. The often and commonly cited definition of M&E is one the World Bank gave in 2007, wherein 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' are given as the defining aspects of M&E. For the World Bank (2007 in Chaplowe & Cousins 2018, p. 1), 'monitoring' entails a 'continuing function that aims primarily to provide [...] an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results'. Much of this definition's subscription is that most definitions converge on the idea that M&E is a 'paraphernalia for effective development' (Kabonga 2018, p. 2).

The other sources from which the M&E definition is usually derived are academic texts, manuals and guidelines on M&E, which refer to such activities as 'performance', 'implementation' and 'process', monitoring; 'planning, design', 'programme monitoring' and evaluation (Chaplowe & Cousins 2018). The thinking is that M&E is a programme of activity designed to determine whether a project, or policy, is being implemented as planned (Kabonga 2018). Hence, 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' are the mutually

dependent parts that make up 'M&E' wherein the evaluation is considered an objective exercise focused on merit and worth, often of discrete projects conducted externally by independent evaluators for reasons of objectivity (Kabonga 2018). For Otundo (2021, p. 3), evaluations appraise credible data to inform strategic decisions, thereby improving 'the five main interventions: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability'.

'Monitoring' regards 'a lower-level activity, an internal exercise in bean counting to satisfy funders' documentation needs' (Chaplowe & Cousins 2018, p. 1), or a continuous function that uses systematic data collection mechanisms to inform and/or manage stakeholders of an ongoing intervention (Kabonga 2018; Otundo 2021; World Bank 2020). Otundo (2021, p. 1) submitted that the 'resources channelled by the country, and other donors, have to be well managed to ensure performance' of projects or policies.

Evaluation, therefore, is understood as the systematic and 'scientific' assessment of a completed, or in some cases, ongoing programme, operation or policy in terms of its design; how it was implemented and with what results? Generally, the goal of evaluation is to establish and determine relevance, efficiency, impact, effectiveness and sustainability. Further, through its systematic and often 'scientific', and/or formal and informal systems, the evaluation process is expected to avail valuable and credible data with the potential to influence decision-making.

Evaluation has no single normative view regarding the optimal way of locating the evaluation function (Mapitsa & Tsotsotso 2022). In other words, commissioning organisations place the evaluation function in a 'more strategic governing role' (p. 30), while commissioning agencies are located as a 'managerial requirement, with a tighter focus on outputs and compliance' (p. 30). Thus, evaluation stands out and self-brands itself branded 'apolitical'. However, this is far from what obtains on the ground. Studies (Eckhard & Jankauskas 2019; Siradag 2015) have set out to prove the politically charged nature of evaluation. For instance, Eckhard and Jankauskas (2019, p. 2) noted that 'despite its ambitious intention to be a scientific and data-based inquiry, evaluation is an inherently political activity'.

The main point of contestation, wherein evaluation makes it political, is that it focuses on aspects linked to development, human rights, democracy, equity and equality of targeted groups. Here, political actors, such as governments, are generally measured as poor, disabled or unwilling to provide guarantees in the said areas. This is especially so in most African countries where African governments have damming records of human rights abuses and are unable to guarantee food security, access to health

and education, among other welfare. However, Loveless (2016) disagrees when she notes that institutions or governments may not be to blame as individuals in their pursuit of private gain, contrary to the government's or institutions' efforts to guarantee the supply of public goods and aid people in need.

There are considerable typologies to M&E as they are situational circumstances in which M&E is used. The most common typologies aligned to developmental agencies, CSOs and governments' work regarding situation and performance monitoring. Based on inequality and inequitycharacterising much of the African societies, developmental agencies, CSOs and African governments are well positioned to subscribe to the situation and performance monitoring of programmes and policies designed to promote equity and equality. In this respect, situation monitoring measures change, or lack thereof, against the set conditions, whereas 'performance' monitoring measures 'progress in achieving specific objectives about an implementation plan' (Kabonga 2018, p. 3).

Ultimately, M&E is the 'new force' providing the tools to ensure that programmes, projects or policies take off, are directed towards achieving their goals and promote accountability. In this chapter, evaluation is believed to promote equity and equality, especially in the Global South. According to the United Nations (UN) Department of Economic Affairs (2020), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can only be meaningful if inequalities are reduced in pursuing Goal 10 of the SDGs. Without M&E, therefore, Africa will become much poorer as inequality and inequity rule much of the roost on the continent given that 'Powerful economic, social and environmental forces are affecting inequality' (UN Department of Economic Affairs 2020, p. 2). By extension, it also explains why NGOs and CSOs, rather than governments, have readily embraced M&E (Kabonga 2018) and why M&E is more robust in the area of providing credible data or information required to make informed decisions, especially by governments and donors alike (Otundo 2021).

Scholarship (Azevendo et al. 2019; Chaplowe & Cousins 2018; Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Purdue, Peterson & Deng 2018) believes underlying philosophies, theories or epistemological worldviews must cement M&E. This provides the point of difference between academics, advocates and M&E practitioners. Engaging the work by Oxfam GB, Azevendo et al. (2019) reflect on how feminists called on Oxfam GB's interventions to promote women's rights and gender equity using feminist analyses and approaches to focus on 'power and inequality, with a commitment to supporting empowerment processes for women' (p. 486). Rightly so, Oxfam GB embraced the feminist guidelines to provide 'insight into how to incorporate feminist principles into different stages of designing, planning, monitoring, and evaluating feminist campaigns and advocacy

strategies' (p. 486). Azevendo et al. (2019) prove that M&E is a professional practice that must be grounded in particular worldviews for effective and sustainable strategic planning, programme implementation efficiency and accountability. On the other hand, Kabonga (2020) alludes to volunteerism, which somehow appeals to M&E. Of significance is the conception that volunteerism in African societies is 'usually guided by the Ubuntu value system' (p. 2). To this end, the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) is evidence to the call that M&E in Africa, or involving the continent of Africa, be grounded by the culture, history and belief systems, in other words, African epistemologies (or indigenous knowledge systems, IKS) (Chilisa 2015; Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Mbava & Chapman 2020; Omosa et al. 2019).

Methodology

This chapter aims to contribute insights to the ongoing conversation on the 'inequality turn' among development evaluators, commissioners of evaluations and development programme decision-makers. The conversation concerns the use of evaluation as an essential tool to foster and build sustainable, equitable societies in Africa, particularly in Zimbabwe.

To harness knowledge on equitable evaluation as an assistive tool to support the creation of equitable and equal societies in Africa, qualitatively, search and analysis of M&E reports, research-based journal articles, and critical assessment of literature dealing with inequity and inequality (Rist, Martin & Fernandez 2016), paternalism (Harrison & Ross 2018; Kalliris 2017; Obeng-Odoom 2019; Tinker 2019), and M&E were extensively consulted. Strategically, this was to lay the foundation for the conversation, which I hope will continue beyond this volume while instilling inroads into further research on the matter at hand. Further, the chapter triggers reflections on strategies for evaluators to craft mechanisms and procedures that guarantee equitable evaluations, such as employing paternalism even if, at the surface, it appears authoritarian. In this regard, a review of the literature on the conceptualisation of M&E, M&E grounding approaches or theories, and reflections on paternalism was crucial in this endeavour. The goal ultimately was to establish and contribute knowledge on ways to handle circumstances that deprive, rather than promote inequity and inequality in societies.

Paternalism

Paternalism regards forms of interference by an independent agent in a person or group of people's 'freedoms' for the latter's purported good. Kalliris (2017, p. 1) declares that paternalism is 'the restriction of a person's

autonomy for the good of that person'. Interferences are often in the form of actions pinned on restrictions and protection of the common good of those whose 'freedoms' may have been infringed upon. Tinker (2019, p. 315) adds that 'Paternalism is the limitation, influence, or judgment of choices, whether physical, psychological, interpersonal, cultural, social, professional, or political, of one person, public, or [organisation] by another'.

As insinuated earlier in this chapter, there are two camps to paternalistic issues wherein one camp submits notions of infringing on autonomy to protect. In contrast, the other camp emphasises that paternalism 'obstructs self-determination' (Kalliris 2017, p. 4). The state, in this case, is usually observed as having its *modus operandi* mechanisms of interfering with citizen freedoms against the notion that it will be protecting the citizens whose autonomy will be infringed upon. More often, 'democracy' is used to demarcate whether a government or state exercises much of its power to infringe on citizen freedoms or obstruct self-determination. Such societies, project citizens or a country are unlikely to be one's masters.

Infringements may be by coercion or manipulation. These, however, are regarded as having the potential to undermine 'autonomy' because they interfere with the decision-making process (Kalliris 2017). Regarding governments or institutions involved, paternalism is considered a government's intervention responsibility and mandate to bring about a solution to the failures in judgement or reasoning by individuals to promote the 'good'. In other words, interventions are designed to 'modify a target person's behaviour' (Harrison & Ross 2018, p. 3), considered positive paternalism, while intervention that imposes normative judgments that the 'target might not share faces a prima facie obligation to justify the specific usurpation of the target's autonomy morally' (Harrison & Ross 2018, p. 3). In this case, the actions of the government as a paternalistic agency are brought into question. In examining the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU–PF) government, it is essential to explore its relationship with its citizens and its diplomatic interactions with other nations. This analysis reveals a negative form of paternalism, where the government exerts control and authority over its population. Conversely, it also highlights the more liberal paternalistic approach adopted by evaluation agencies, which, while offering guidance and support, still influence national policies and governance under the guise of benevolence.

To put into perspective the above, Kalliris (2017) provided a simplified explanation regarding what one believes is the epistemological view to which evaluation agencies, institutions and professionals subscribe. This is conceived on the understanding that human life can only be self-authored if materials and resources one or a community or groups of people possess

are guaranteed and all populations have equal access to them. Once the resources are restricted, too few, trivial or out of reach as expected, options or opportunities will be non-existent to some populations. In order for one, therefore, to access the opportunities, mental capacities will be required, yet 'freedoms' are not only for the privileged few with necessary mental capacities. In any case, self-determination is something all people can enjoy regardless of creed or abilities. Human endeavour works to access basic needs and rights, which governments and other international institutions ought to guarantee, such as the rights to life, health and integrity (Kalliris 2017). The government's duty is, as it were, to guarantee security, nutrition and other virtues.

The above, therefore, places evaluation as an aspect that either conditions or is designed to expose or modify paternalistic behaviours and acts in order for 'self-authorship', as discussed ealier in this chapter, to be attained. Knowledge of this fact enhances intervention programmes initiated by developmental agencies and supported by seating governments to be ones that are (de)paternalistic in their nature, hence, the MAE call, for instance. In expressive terms, paternalism uses 'intervention' to express part of its tenets, while developmental agencies prominently use the same term with similar semantic value to which revision of such discursive expression is required as a ploy to modify paternalistic behaviours rhetorically visible in the paper.

It, therefore, means that evaluation agencies are never innocent in this developmental endeavour. They may harm the process unknowingly. However, if not grounded in proper contextualised approaches and mechanisms, they may be an abomination to ordinary African people (Obeng-Odoom 2019). If paternalism is not well balanced, it will be rejected for stifling 'liberties' (Tinker 2019) deemed guarantors of sustainable development. In pushing the liberal developmental agenda, paternalism is, thus, inevitable and a strategic practice subtly employed by developmental agencies, as evidenced by the current state of reporting, evaluation systems, methodologies, biases, omissions and commissions.

The consequence is that the paternalistic actions of governments, or those by the Global North developmental bodies, institutions, agencies, civil society, NGOs and so on, often result in the exposure of the perpetuation of inequity or inequalities. Usually, African governments are quick to use their political muscle to defend such exposed realities. However, in most cases, they concede to the need to review or develop laws or policies that promote equity and equality. In cases where governments appear to reject outcomes, it is a case of protecting inequalities to hide accountability issues of, say, government institutions and those they represent. It explains in part how, often, eradication is but a dream rather than a reality to be achieved. The vocabulary as such should be to 'reduce', say poverty, rather

than ‘eradicate’, poverty, to ‘ease’ rather than ‘guarantee sustainable’ food security; ‘promote’ equity and equality rather than ‘achieve’ equality.

This chapter, therefore, finds ‘paternalism’ as essential to an equitable evaluation in that undertaking the work by NGOs, CSOs, governments and their departments is ultimately pinned on the objectives of providing equitable space for protection, providing opportunities, guaranteeing and operationalise liberties or freedoms which are for the common good. What should suffice is identifying aspects that are likely to infringe on those ‘freedoms’ of the targeted beneficiaries as interventions such as undertaking evaluation without reference to IKS, for instance.

The relationship between the Global North and South is sometimes regarded as paternalistic, given the ideologically inclined relational position in terms of aid, its flow and management. Much of the Global South is subjected as the recipient while the North is the ‘agent’. International organisations such as the UN, its agencies and Bretton Woods Institutions, for instance, are the largest perpetrators of this ideology (Hancork 1989). Following Akobeng (2020, p. 1690), for the SDGs to eradicate poverty by 2030, rich countries are encouraged to:

> [/]ncrease their foreign aid allocation to developing countries by 0.7% of the rich countries’ gross national income (GNI) in fulfilment of the Pearson Commission of the United Nations recommendation made in 1969.

In other words, rich countries are ‘encouraged’ to render part of their ‘riches’, indicating that the aid-flow direction is one-sided. It is always from the Global North towards the Global South and never vice versa.

But what is not unpacked are the intricacies, and sometimes complexities, involving developmental agencies undertaking evaluations. The fact that NGOs report on the need for increased aid, for example, reveals that the aid-growth paraphernalia (Otundo 2021) affects ‘consumption’ rather than investment in targeted communities. Despite reports on positive economic growth in some Southern African countries, ‘poverty and inequality are still among the main challenges facing those countries’ (Albagoury 2021, p. 109). In this regard, both poverty and inequality have equal weight as sources of challenges in Africa, a departure from Rist and Jacobi (2016) conception of calling for ‘evaluation and inequality-turn’. This is revealed and shared in project formulations, and when developmental agencies seek the buy-in of the communities who, in most cases, are the targeted beneficiaries, as defined by project implementers. However, studies (Chinsamy & Koitsiwe 2016; Mujere 2022) have demonstrated that inclusive growth, despite the niche area of focus, be it vegetable gardening (Chinsamy & Koitsiwe 2016), livestock rearing, smart farming (Mujere 2022) among others, economic growth must eventually guarantee sustainable improvement in the welfare and proceeds equally shared among individuals

and population groups. In other words, inclusive growth, following Albagoury (2021) is read in terms of:

> [...] low and declining inequality, economic and political participation of the poor in the growth process and benefit-sharing from that process. It is the growth that creates economic opportunities and ensures equal access to these opportunities by all groups of society; Equity in the provision of public services particularly education, health and employment opportunities [wherein the strategy] involves the equity and equality of opportunities and social protection. (pp. 109–110)

To achieve and negotiate for the above as well as undertake strategic evaluation (de), paternalism must be encouraged, at least within the evaluation circles, in order to avoid the perpetuation of inequality because evaluation may have been carried out to promote programmes designed to reduce inequality. Evaluators need to adopt a form of evaluation, such as MAE, to prevent paternalism. If left unaddressed, paternalism can easily lead to a deprivation of liberties for communities to shape their own destinies. Hence, (de)paternalisation must be undertaken as a procedure of underlining or foregrounding evaluation. This is important because it also helps change the reasoning in Western thought on the Global North that sometimes regards the African continent and communities as if they are homogenous, both in space and behaviour (Chipaike & Bischoff 2019).

Evaluation and the fundamentals of 'equity' and 'equality'

Equality could generally refer to 'citizens' receiving the same or having equal access to life resources and benefiting from any developmental programme without any systematic or deliberate exclusion based on ethnicity, gender, political affiliation, education or nationality, among other variables (Rist & Jacobi 2016; Shaffer 2016). In cases where inequity or inequality exists, it is regarded in the literature as 'a disparity' (Cramer, Little & McHatton 2018; Rist & Jacobi 2016). In most cases, 'poverty' is identified as the main reason for disparities that cause inequity and inequality. Hence, development (Cold-Ravnkilde, Engberg-Pedersen & Fejerskov 2018), with its determinants governance, accountability, democracy and so on, has been regarded as the panacea to eradicating poverty. In other words, poverty, especially in the Global South, results from the substantive existence of inequalities. This regard, for instance, unequal access to education either based on gender, disability or geographical location.

However, development is fraught with issues of how to approach the development. Those deprived of, say, 'equal access' require evaluation intervention to be brought to par with 'everyone'.

In Zimbabwe, the synergy between 'evaluation' and 'politics' injures the country's equity and equality, especially among those designed to

benefit from developmental programmes of national significance. Evaluation entails, in some respect, performance measurements deliberately employed to improve public decision-making and participation in national development. But this is the rational side of M&E as evaluation processes are political instruments, wherein paternalism suffices, ultimately affecting public policy (Bjørnholt & Larsen 2014). Evaluation has consequences in Zimbabwe, and these promote discursive positions peddled mainly by the ruling ZANU–PF government to create an ideologically redefined stance of 'us' vs 'them' in the country. For evaluation to succeed, the 'us' versus 'them' stance creates a rift between developmental agencies, the government and communities, which means the objectives of evaluation will not be met.

Inequality, of one kind or another, preoccupies global politics, hence the 'collective' effort to address it. This is evidenced by the role and number of developmental agencies recommending interventional programmes designed to eradicate inequality completely (Rist 2017) to guarantee 'equity' in health, education, politics, access to information, freedoms, food security, and economic participation among citizens and vulnerable population groups. Mastracci (2017, p. 241) noted that 'achieving political and economic equality remains an unrealised goal'. Loveless (2016), however, believes inequality disrupts democracy while the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2020) reports on efforts to at least 'reduce' inequality to fulfil SDG 10.

It follows, therefore, that in terms of evaluation (Mapitsa & Tsotsotso 2022), and its activities in Zimbabwe, for instance, especially on governance, issues hoped to be determiners of equality, based on the aforesaid argument, should be aligned to tailor-made evaluation. This is because evaluation provides the tools for democratising spaces and aspects from which inequality has been noted to manifest itself. This democratisation ability offered by evaluation is what makes the Zimbabwean government uncomfortable, as evidenced by its position to ban activities by some NGOs or international development agencies. Other countries in the Global South have taken a similar stance. Musila (2024), for instance, reported that 11 countries[4] in Africa have either adopted legislation or policies to constrain the activities of NGOs. While this may be read as African governments' move to consolidate their political power by seeking to maintain deprivation of political space, it could be that the same sense of some degree of

4. 'Seven countries, Egypt, Tunisia, Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, and Tanzania, have anti-NGO measures pending or may be moving to introduce them, while six – Kenya, Malawi, Angola, Nigeria, Congo-Brazzaville, and Zimbabwe – have introduced such measures only to have them abandoned by the executive, rejected by the legislature or invalidated by the courts. These laws and policies seek to impose state control over civil society, particularly NGOs that work on human rights and governance issues (see Musila 2023).

paternalism by some NGOs as such taking punitive action to defend their own countries rather than shying away from 'accountability' (Loveless 2016).

Western democratic strands demand that there be governance by performance measurement. This places discursive notions of M&E beyond their managerial or organisational aspects, an aspect that has been very common in the M&E debates. It is crucial, especially at a time when the MAE is being debated in Africa (Chilisa & Mertens 2021; Mbava & Chapman 2020; Omosa et al. 2019). There is a need to revisit contextual variables and attitudes towards evaluation in developing countries like Zimbabwe. In these countries, efforts in M&E face several challenges that may expose underdeveloped MAE.

A closer reading of M&E involving state participation results in politicians playing an agenda-setting role, whether this is performed in line with institutions such as the UN while developmental agencies come in to operationalise the set agenda. Hence, political decisions determine the actions developmental agencies will take and how they formulate, implement, and even monitor their programmes. Such a stance breeds fertile ground for paternalism both on the side of the government in this regard, as well as on the side of the developmental agencies, all of which exert pressure on the target community.

Bjørnholt and Larsen (2014, p. 403) observed that evaluation provides the ability to measure performance for explicating 'political priorities down the hierarchy, enabling agencies to predict what is expected of them and to focus on operations'. However, this is not usually the case, as evidenced by the tensions currently existing in Zimbabwe, for instance, regarding the relationship between the state and developmental agencies operating in that country, which rhetorically reflects the government's discomfort. In Zimbabwe, developmental agencies are accused of setting the agenda, subtly and implicitly as well as clandestinely, by fronting the 'opposition', thereby dictating the government's political priorities.

When the FTLRP was launched in Zimbabwe, the objective and narrative for its support was that it was to redress the land, economic and socio-political inequalities caused by colonialism, notably the 1930 Land Apportionment Act and other subsequent repressive land laws and policies. The vocabulary used by the then Mugabe government was that the liberation struggle between 1966 and 1980 was a stepping stone to adequately address the inequities around the land question in the country, but it became pending until the 21st century. Hence, it became an anthem of the government that the land reform was part of the 'gains' of independence. Scholars such as Chipenda (2020) indicate that the FTLRP

was a social policy programme. As such, its evaluation should be based on 'several social policy outcomes or multiple instruments, namely production, social reproduction, redistribution, social protection, and social cohesion' (p. 4). The multitude of approaches to the evaluation of the FTLRP in Zimbabwe by scholars and developmental agencies alike have provided a cocktail of approaches based on human rights, livelihoods, political economy and neo-liberalism among others. These have been judged as problematic and inadequate in evaluation frameworks in the face of social policy programmes such as the FTLRP and the Transformative Social Policy (TSP) (Chipenda 2020). Instead, the preferred approach is one that focuses on guaranteeing equity and equality through 'transforming gendered, racialised and ethnicised forms of poverty and inequality which are manifestations of the intersections of social identities and categories' (Chipenda 2020, p. 5).

Using the language of the evidence from the above approaches, the ZANU–PF government insists on focusing on the impact of the FTLRP as an instrument of sustainable development. The positives that Chipenda (2020) reports on, for instance, project the country as having scored positively in the areas of social protection, food security, unemployment and gender equity, among others. These are among the most common poverty eradication indicators development agencies generally focus on and on which various programmes are initiated as interventions. It is generally thought that evaluation, regardless of the approach or instruments used in the processes, should ultimately guarantee equity and equality – or uniformity, among beneficiaries of a programme or system. In other words, evaluation is a standardising instrument wherein the measurement of performance, compelling players to undertake responsibility and account stand out as key aspects.

Evaluation professionals subscribe to standards because they believe that evaluation standardises practices, becoming a means of making the public aware of their role, utilisation and access to resources, state of development and effectiveness of their representatives, or leaders meeting predetermined performances (in governance as an example). In any case, any developmental programme ultimately demands accountability. The above, therefore, approaches what is regarded as a 'national' social policy programme, as if it was homogenous, as such positive equalising outcomes, in terms of ownership of the land, food security, economic empowerment and social securities, and even gender equity can only be regarded as sporadic. An estimated 3.8 million people, most rural individualised, were projected to be food insecure at the height of the 2022/2023 lean season (https://fscluster.org/zimbabwe), which is a 29.8% increase from 2021/2022 consumption.

Final thought

Monitoring and evaluation are premised on acceptable international human rights, environmental and other 'democratic', and internationally recognised formulations. Because China has been regarded as emphasising 'economic' development rather than undertaking inroads into improving 'governance'; which is against Beijing Consensus, democracy – equity and equality, is an effect of lack of economic development, justifies the Eastern giant's continued business even with pariah states and dictators without having to be taken to account by any institution.

The Zimbabwean government is both a global victim and a local perpetrator of paternalism that eventually results in inequity and inequalities that affect various social groups in the country. Internationally, Zimbabwe has fought to stop interference and being dictated to by the West but has employed policies that have invited another powerful global giant, generally opposed to the West, to advance their economic interests by way of extending grants and programmes most of which are not subjected to evaluation by institutions such as the parliament of Zimbabwe and independent civil society groups. Chipaike and Bischoff (2019) noted that in Zimbabwe, there has been serious flaunting of environmental and even labour laws by the Chinese business activities, and evaluation institutions are denied the 'voice' that should come out of the monitoring of the China-Zimbabwe relations, for instance, while emphasising transparency, equity and equality across the board, and in the country generally.

Because of its paternalistic stance locally, the ZANU–PF government has also deliberately shut out the participation of civil society and other public institutions in helping it improve its agency on suspicion that civil society groups are an extension of the West aiming at regime change agenda. Rejection of an open-ended or democratic evaluation of developmental programmes, especially those that directly involve the state, means that the Government of Zimbabwe is resisting 'change' in an age of 'globalization, growing multi-polarity and democratization' (Chipaike & Bischoff 2019, p. 960).

Amid the above, the Zimbabwean government has been conscious of rhetorically reflecting evaluation-linked vocabulary as a way of painting a picture of responsibility and mandate to the citizens. The government's vocabulary in this respect has been linked and 'referring to a more effective administration and service, increased efficiency, and more evidence-based policies' (Bjørnholt & Larsen 2014, p. 405).

Realities in Zimbabwe prove that evaluation is not innocent and does bow to politics contrary to the claim made by Bjørnholt and Larsen (2014) that:

> Performance measurement can even be used strategically to transform unpopular and contested policy decisions into a more technical, apolitical form. It then offers the potential for political control while minimizing the threat of a reaction to that control. (p. 405)

Evaluation, or performance measurement in this regard, has not proved the above position in Zimbabwe. Both international relations and the ZANU–PF government's relationship with its citizens have witnessed paternalistic policies ruling the roost. The China-Zimbabwe relations, as discussed earlier, reflect how China has assumed developmental agency in Zimbabwe to the detriment of Zimbabwe, which, in trying to avert Western paternalism and risking isolation, desperately took an allied policy stance, which has resulted in the public unable to measure project performances as the executive shields Chinese operations from scrutiny by the public. Hence, there is no influence on the political process (Bjørnholt & Larsen 2014) to talk about saving for inequity and inequalities in access to resources and their distribution.

The China-Zimbabwe relations outcomes, as discussed and exemplified earlier in this chapter, reflect not only a manipulative and desperate interface but demonstrate that there is a very diversity in developmental cooperation determining even the provision of aid, distribution and accountability. Government aid agencies fall short of the required funding and skills to operationalise development, and the Zimbabwean government is not an exception. Amid such a reality, bilateral donor organisations, multilateral institutions, large NGOs and philanthropic foundations work with budgets surpassing most government agencies (Cold-Ravnkilde et al. 2018). All these in cooperative relations towards development have sorted out how development should be conceived and how evaluations are used to communicate such conceptions. It is evaluations that are believed to provide standardised rules and guarantee common goals and principles of engagement.

However, for countries such as Zimbabwe, standardised stances are viewed as a threat to sovereignty, as evaluations are, as such, because they measure the performance of the government and its developmental programmes. In any case, evaluation needs to assume some degree of paternalism if it is to function in politically polarised spaces such as Zimbabwe. Much of the M&E, especially as discussed in Africa, is considered pro-western when it is required to be (de)paternalised more strategically to promote the evaluation objectives as universal rather than regional or otherwise.

The ZANU–PF government, for instance, behaves uncomfortably in the face of evaluations or mechanics of 'standardisation', which it regards as hegemonic accountability, whether formal or informal. In its vocabulary, the ZANU–PF government finds failures as systematic restrictions or imposed sanctions on its blueprints, most of which in the 21st century have had very short lifespans and are abandoned willy-nilly. Reading 'sanctions' this way symbolises inroads towards state-take-overs (Cramer et al. 2018), resulting in the government rhetorically characterising evaluators as 'regime' change actors. The evaluation reports are designed to have state institutions and government agencies perform and account to their citizens or clients in the area of service delivery, food security, education, improvement in social and health of communities and inclusion of vulnerable groups such as women and those living with disabilities in the mainstream national economy.

The behaviour of the ZANU–PF government is valid as far as it questions evaluation processes regarding their partiality. If 'standardisation', referred to as a metric or an indicator of what is valued (Cramer et al. 2018), it follows that what is obtaining like M&E, especially in Africa, much of the M&E literature rightly observes that such 'value' is determined by the global north internationally, and the ZANU–PF government, in this case, determines 'value' locally demarcating issues of who has power, either economically or politically. This alone means the language of equity or equality is a mere smokescreen and justification of pushing a 'political' agenda which, in most cases, foresees the perpetuation of inequity or inequality globally or locally. Ultimately, evaluation systems are thus found wanting, at least in pragmatic terms, because the demands or objectives of M&E contradict individualised state complex contextual variables and the needs of the communities. Because of this, paternalism often takes over as interferences are noted as buffers to ring-fence actors' interests.

Another point worth noting is that in M&E, participatory evaluation (Donnelly 2015) is called for to ensure that knowledge and local wisdom suffice as part of the evaluation data. Programmes have their internal dynamics, and participation by all stakeholders is expected. In other words, to fully participate in development, ordinary citizens must contribute to it, but their participation is based on their appreciation of the internal dynamism of various development programmes, policies or roadmaps. However, paternalism, often because of unequal distribution of power and resources, blocks this participation by using exclusory mechanisms that often lead to inequity and inequality.

This may explain how development agencies have redesigned programming to capacitate communities in education and skills development, with some hidden political agenda (Eckhard & Jankauskas 2019). Gossel (2022) noted that foreign direct investment (FDI), despite its increase

over the years in sub-Saharan countries, inequality has not been reduced for the simple reason that FDI relies on skills-based development. In the resource-based economies in sub-Saharan Africa, the disappointing effect 'may be because many sub-Saharan African countries remain commodity export-dependent, which can "crowd out" FDI in non-resource industries and increase the durability of authoritarian regimes' (p. 1). These are, to some extent, deliberate mechanisms designed to dilute paternalism while allowing space for evaluations to be undertaken in a less politically charged stance. Democratisation processes are considered the ultimate space from which any developmental aspect can thrive, thereby making evaluations of respective programmes fully scientific and meaningful to human endeavour. The talk, at least internationally, is that evaluations will guarantee democratisation (Gossel 2022), which sadly is contested even by pariah states or dictators who are ready to question the 'undemocratic' behaviours of the institutions undertaking evaluations.

The missing 'vocabulary' in the rhetoric of the Zimbabwean government's developmental activities initiated and commissioned in various communities. What is heavily noted is 'economic' growth, wherein the mantra '*nyika inovakwa nevene vayo*' (a country built by its own people) suggests exclusory aspects. The ZANU–PF government has been for years pushing the agenda of defining the indigene. For instance, members of the opposition are regarded as 'saboteurs', 'sell-outs', 'gays' and 'lesbians', labels that mark certain sections of the population as 'Zimbabweans' while others are foreigners. Foreign developmental agencies from 'hostile' parts of the globe, mainly the United States of America and the United Kingdom, are classified as 'detractors' on a mission to 'reverse our hard-won independence [...] sovereignty [*and*] land reform [...]' are common expressions, while from the East, agencies described as 'all-weather friends' (Chipaike & Bischoff 2019) and progressive.

Moore and Moyo (2018) despise the expressions state and governments such as the ZANU–PF government subscribe to, that developmental agencies operating in the country and other NGOs are inappropriately and generally referred to as 'civil society'. It is noted that when Zimbabwe rolled out the FTLRP (Chipenda 2020) beginning in 2007, the West, based on its quick check of the evaluation reports conducted using pro-Western evaluation systems, read the Zimbabwean 'crisis' in the context of a localised 'agrarian reform war'; however, with some bit of international flair given the involvement of white commercial farmers most of whom were tied to Britain as such had economic implications to the interests of the global north.

Academic evaluation by the pro-FTLRP reports indicates that part of what incensed the global north was the programme's radical and unprecedented nature. Hence, Western-induced evaluation work

undertaken at the time, and even beyond, made it easier for the government of Zimbabwe to link it to a systematic Western stance of evaluating the government's performance, mainly in governance and human rights. The anti-FTLRP, primarily advanced by the West, conceptualised the programme as 'dysfunctional, anti-development, and it represented a well-developed commercial agrarian structure' (Chipenda 2020, p. 3). On the other hand, the counter-narratives, using empirically field-based evaluated data, triggered the description and defence of the programme, which became 'an epitome of the country's liberation and decolonisation process aimed at achieving social justice and black economic empowerment' (Chipenda 2020, p. 3).

Conclusion

Evaluation benefits from a radical stance because it operates within a heavily charged political environment. Developmental agencies are expected to take an 'apolitical' stance, which is an idealised position meant to project them as neutral regarding their operations and evaluation exercises. This is a misnomer as there is no such thing as apolitical when dealing with evaluation objectives designed to promote inequality and inequity by running programmes that are meant to promote democracy, socio-economic and even political empowerment.

As the discourses and debates on M&E shift from over-concentrating on poverty, regarded as a deprivation of the minimum required resources, to addressing inequity, believed to be a deliberate deprivation of available opportunities or access to resources of specific population groups, sustainable development in the area of achieving equity and equality demands that evaluation be strategic in its outlook.

To achieve the aforesaid, this chapter has alluded to paternalism, which is noted as restrictions of a person's autonomy for the good of that person. In (de)paternalising, this chapter has argued that it involves moulding or using paternalistic notions to enhance evaluation in a manner that does not ultimately deprive the liberties of the beneficiaries. This thinking was pushed based on the realisation that M&E is not innocent. In other words, M&E's scientific-based mechanisms subject it to barraging attacks, especially by African authoritarian regimes such as the ZANU–PF government, as reports expose government weaknesses and calls to accountability. The idea of NGOs getting to know and report on what is good for the government should be enhanced given that evaluation is assumed to have been contextualised in terms of operations, thereby coming up with reports designed to provide data that help governments, for example, to come up with better and sustainable policies or be accountable in matters of equity and equality for the good of citizens.

Chapter 5

Equality of opportunity and non-discrimination as an evaluand: The case of private sector and financial system development in German development cooperation[5]

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

Jan Tobias Polak
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, Germany

Angela Heucher
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, Germany

Lena Taube
German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval), Bonn, Germany

Lea Smidt
German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, Bonn, Germany

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Introduction

Equity has been at the forefront of development thinking and practice for over three decades. In the aftermath of the greatest exogenous shock that the world has seen this century – the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic – the 2022 World Development Report speaks of achieving an 'equitable recovery', which means the comprehensive recovery from losses of jobs, incomes and assets for all adults, regardless of socio-economic status (World Bank Group 2022, p. 2). Although there are debates and contestations about the precise definition of equity – or, more precisely, what equitable development means – equity is largely considered normative (Jones 2009).

As a means to contribute to the discussion on the extent to which evaluating development cooperation can contribute to equity, this chapter presents a review of the empirical results of a strategic evaluation of the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval). The review considered the following questions:

- To what extent are evaluations of equity-focused German development cooperation programmes deemed equitable when analysed against principles of equitable evaluation?

The question was answered by reflecting on DEval's evaluation of private sector and financial system development. In this evaluation, DEval inter alia analysed the anchoring of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in development practice. The evaluation was part of DEval's evaluation of the human rights-based approach to development, which was implemented and published in two reports (Polak et al. 2022; Polak, Taube & Smidt 2021). The results presented in this chapter refer predominantly to the second part of the evaluation, which examined the anchoring and effectiveness of the human rights-based approach in the private sector and financial system development. Private sector development and financial sector development interventions are central pillars of BMZ's interventions to strengthen sustainable economic development with partner countries. As such, they constitute one of three intervention areas of the core area, 'Sustainable economic development, training and employment' (BMZ 2020, 2022). The other intervention areas are vocational education, training and economic policy.

Firstly, the fundamental rationale for equity is the moral imperative to ensure that all human beings have access to equal opportunities for wellbeing and development (Fleurbaey, Bolwig & Corbera 2014; Jones 2009). One would be hard-pressed to find development programmes that are not geared towards equity in some sense, and there is consensus that one of the major tasks of development cooperation is working with

developing (particularly the poorest) countries to achieve higher levels of income and wellbeing, and 'correcting extreme international inequalities' (Alonso & Glennie 2015, p. 1). Secondly, equity as a legal imperative has shifted global development priorities towards equitable development, for example, the requirements around existing treaty commitments and soft law agreements relating to sustainable development and climate change, which require cooperation based on stated equity principles (Fleurbaey et al. 2014, p. 287).

Three seminal publications in the development sector heralded a new age of focus on equitable development and what became known as the 'new equity agenda'. These reports were: The 2006 World Development Report (World Bank 2005), the 2005 Human Development Report (UNDP 2005) and the 2005 Report on the World Social Situation (UN 2005) (Anderson and O'Neil in (Jones 2009, p. 1). However, despite widespread agreement on its importance, equity is often misunderstood and under-emphasised in development programming (Jones 2009). It is, therefore, essential to define equity and other related terms used in this chapter (including equality, equitable development and equitable and equity-focused evaluation).

Equity is defined in terms of two fundamental principles, the first being access to equal opportunities that are not pre-determined by factors such as race, gender or social background, and the second being able to avoid various deprivations related to health, education and consumption level outcomes (World Bank & Oxford University Press 2005, p. xi). *Inequity* would be the reverse – the unequal distribution of opportunities based on factors such as race, gender and social background, which influences a multiplicity of development deprivations. Similarly, the UNCEB defines equity as the application of fair standards and processes in distributing costs, benefits and opportunities to people, both horizontally (between social groups) as well as vertically (for example, income) (UNCEB 2016, p. 4). *Equality*, on the other hand, is defined as equal opportunities and outcomes for all people groups (UNCEB 2016, p. 4). The Gini Coefficient, the most widely used measure of *inequality*, measures income distribution, that is, the extent to which there is a perfectly equal distribution of income in a given population – or more accurately, how far the value of the coefficient deviates from that perfect equal distribution (Afonso, LaFleur & Alarcón 2015, p. 1). In essence, a higher Gini coefficient means that there is more inequality (i.e. a more unequal distribution of income among the population). The concept of inequality is not without contestation, with the Chancel et al. (2022) in the World Inequality Report asserting that there are strong contradicting opinions on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable levels of inequality, as well as how it needs to be addressed (Chancel et al. 2022, p. 22). Notwithstanding the contestation, data show

that 'Global inequality rose between 1820 and 1910, and stabilised at a high level since then' (Chancel et al. 2022, p. 54).

The imperative to focus on more *equitable development* has permeated the global consciousness through the sustainable development goals (SDGs) so that the focus of international development efforts is that universal, equitable and inclusive access to social and economic development reaches all citizens of the world. No one is left behind (UNCEB 2016, p. 8). According to Blackwell (2001, pp. 1278–1279), equitable development means two things: (1) that equity must be given priority and (2) it requires both 'people' and 'place' strategies – that is, investments in human capital programmes such as social safety nets must be pursued together with infrastructure development (Blackwell 2001, pp. 1278–1279).

The focus of this chapter – equitable evaluation and equity-focused evaluation – remains highly contested. There is currently no scholarly or theoretical basis for equitable evaluation, and more work is being done in practice to define what it means for an evaluation to be equitable or equity-focused. One such example is the Equitable Evaluation Initiative,[6] which is the work of the Center for Evaluation Innovation, Institute for Foundation and Donor Learning, Dorothy A Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Luminaire Group, focusing exclusively on expanding the use of the Equitable Evaluation Framework (EEF). The EEF, grounded primarily in the experience of around 44 institutional foundations within the United States between 2019 and 2023, consists of a set of principles, orthodoxies, mindsets, tensions and sticking points to guide practitioners in equitable evaluation (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023). The principles of this Framework, as well as other generally accepted principles of equitable evaluation (see, for example, the work of Bamberger & Segone 2011; Dean-Coffey et al. 2014; Gates et al. 2022; Segone n.d.; Stern et al. 2019), have been used in this chapter to reflect on a strategic evaluation of private sector development and financial sector development interventions in German Development Cooperation. More details on these principles are discussed later in this chapter.

In addition to the moral and legal justification for equity, several important factors support a stronger focus on equity and equitable development. Firstly, there is evidence to support the economic justification that increasing equity can enhance both the level and efficiency of resource utilisation within a nation (World Bank & Oxford University Press 2005, p. xi). Secondly, there is the political and institutional imperative, based on the idea that excessive power and influence inequalities can lead to political, social and economic conditions that are not conducive to long-term growth.

6. https://www.equitableeval.org/

Equity has become critically important as countries (particularly those in the Global South) battle for post-pandemic recovery, considering that during 2020, global poverty rose in ways not seen in decades, and the largest shrinkage of the global economy happened for the first time in a generation (World Bank Group 2022). Focussing on equity is important because 'inequity has a negative effect on growth, poverty reduction, social cohesion and voice' (Jones 2009, p. vi). Our intrinsic understanding of equity's inherent benefits and value means that tackling inequity is significant to developing countries (Jones 2009, p. vii). For example, a multidimensional study on inequality in South Africa suggests that when large segments of society are excluded from economic opportunities, it limits both individual incomes and negatively affects the national economy (Statistics South Africa 2019). The international community, therefore, understand that driving an agenda for equitable development drives poverty reduction and growth and that 'equity is instrumentally central to long-term change, through its causal ties to efficiency, growth, poverty reduction and social cohesion' (Jones 2009, p. vii).

The moral and legal imperative for equitable development has meant that addressing equity has become more prominent in programmes across all development areas, such as health, education, food security, development financing, economic growth and development. In particular, the sustainable development goals have become the lodestar of development impact. Therefore, evaluation agencies responsible for evaluating development cooperation have (also) put a spotlight on equity, owing to the new agenda for equity, further bolstered by initiatives such as 2015 being declared the International Year of Evaluation, aligned to the SDGs, which catapulted equitable evaluation onto the evaluation scene. The creation of initiatives such as EvalGender+ also provided a space for key stakeholders to advocate for and promote equity- and gender-focused evaluation practice (My M&E 2015a in Robertson 2015, p. 1). As the discourse around equitable evaluation started receiving greater attention with the growing advocacy around the SDGs, some key publications around the subject provided definitive arguments for a new, intensified focus on including equity in all evaluations. These included publications such as National Evaluation Policies for Sustainable and Equitable Development: How to integrate gender equality and Social Equity in National Evaluation Policies and Systems by Segone, Bamberger & Reddy (2015), as well as more recently UNICEF's Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation (2019). Adding to the list is the OECD's contribution to applying a human rights and gender lens to the evaluation criteria (OECD 2023). Specialised publications such as these recognise the intersectionality of race, class and gender in the discourse on equity and inequality. Gender equality is also considered central to achieving sustainable and equitable development (Bamberger & Segone 2011, p. 20).

Guidelines such as those listed above continue to fulfil an important role in closing the gap in theory and practice on equitable evaluation, as implications are that there is a need for more theoretical and practical guidance for practitioners, in this area of evaluation (Robertson 2015). The study 'Landscape analysis to inform international evaluation in the service of equity', conducted from 2022 to 2023 by the Global Change Center, Praxis UK, and Praxis Institute for Participatory Practices (2023), commissioned by the Ford Foundation is another example of this kind, as is this current volume of the book series on equitable evaluation by CLEAR-AA (also commissioned by Ford Foundation).

Despite its ubiquity and the seemingly obvious rationale for promoting equitable development and equitable evaluation, some critical questions have been raised around these concepts. One of these is whether sufficient clarity exists in development policies and programming around what is meant by equity and whether there is precision and clarity around what specific actions are equity-focused (Jones 2009, p. 3). This accentuates the question around the definition of equitable evaluation: is it the evaluation of programmes that drive an equity agenda, and advocating through evaluation that development programming has an equity lens? Or is it evaluation that is conducted in an equitable manner? In this study, the focus was on the evaluation of programmes that drive an agenda for equity, and their alignment to principles of equitable evaluation. Therefore, the terms equitable evaluation and equity-focused evaluation are used interchangeably. It is suggested that the evaluation literature, 'does not clearly distinguish between generally accepted promising evaluation practices – which strengthen the quality of any evaluation – and those that are exclusive or central to equity-focused evaluation' (Robertson 2015, p. 12). Furthermore, development programming itself is murky around what it is trying to achieve in terms of equitable development, and without an in-depth examination of what makes equity-focused programming distinctive, it is often the evaluators who are left with the burden of doing so (Robertson 2015).

This chapter addresses the implementation of equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the practice of development cooperation. The primary question that we are asking is: Can an evaluation of development cooperation be construed as an equitable evaluation because of its focus on programmes driving an equity lens? The case of a strategic evaluation of the German human rights-based approach to development, which shows that only some of the private sector and financial system development projects anchor equal opportunities and non-discrimination and are effective regarding marginalised groups, helps answer the question of whether such evaluations can be framed as equity-focused evaluations and used to advocate for more equitable outcomes in programme design and implementation going forward.

The case for equity-focused evaluation

Not much has changed over the last few decades of the international development community's focus on equitable development. Despite various waves of development programming and various policy and programmatic options, the indicators show that inequality is still pervasive between and within countries. In sub-Saharan Africa in particular, countries face particular inequities related to, for example, health outcomes, both within themselves and in comparison to other countries (Otim et al. 2020). The different approaches that have been attempted to bring about equitable development have included Structural Adjustment Programming (although there is evidence that such programmes have led to increased levels of inequality and poverty in countries they had been implemented), Capacity Development (human and physical) and poverty reduction (Bouquet 2005, p. 14). As mentioned before, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant losses in many areas where progress has been gaining momentum globally, for example, poverty reduction, and less developed nations have been among the worst affected. For example, low-income countries that were already in debt distress prior to the pandemic are now faced with having to meet the demands of even more exorbitant debt levels because they had to take on significantly higher levels of new debt to finance their crisis response plans (World Bank Group 2022, p. 6). This means that the money that is being diverted for debt recovery, is now being syphoned away from further recovery initiatives, setting them even further behind more developed nations. This is particularly dispiriting as these are the nations most in need of rapid economic recovery. Nearly all people who have slipped into extreme poverty (i.e., living on less than $1.90 per day) because of the pandemic live in lower to middle- and low-income countries (World Bank Group 2022, p. 7). In order to contribute to equitable development, evaluation processes – from a selection of evaluation subjects to the design planning of evaluations (Sibanda, Sibanda & Sibanda 2023, p. 2) – ensure that a definition of equity-focused evaluation incorporates both *how* evaluations are conducted, as well as *what* kinds of development programming evaluations are concerned with (and how they act as a guiding light to more equitable development programming).

Development policies and programming that foster equitable development have focused primarily on a liberalisation agenda and economic growth as the vehicle for getting to a more equitable society, free from poverty and the multiple deprivations associated with it (Chancel et al. 2022, p. 3). However, empirical evidence suggests that although global growth is associated with liberalisation, regressions in growth have been observed in some cases, owing to country and context-specific matters (Bouquet 2005, p. 14). This brings into question whether poverty reduction and equitable development are mutually exclusive, and which specific policy and programming choices truly

ensure an equitable distribution of gains for the poor across (and within) all nations. Defraigne and Fontagné (in Bouquet 2005, p. 14) offer that 'the relationship between growth and poverty reduction is also hard to define with certainty', and it is suggested that studies have been inconclusive about the relationship between growth and poverty reduction (Bouquet 2005). As will be seen later in this chapter, the human-rights-based approach to development is often difficult to reconcile with certain elements of microfinance projects (in German development cooperation) or requires increased resources. Microfinance projects often aim to support marginalised groups and thus address issues of equity and access. For the competitiveness and sustainability of development banks, including marginalised groups is often less profitable and generally more risky, as marginalised groups are often structurally disadvantaged in economic terms, have fewer resources and run a higher risk of becoming over-indebted. Therefore, the irony of providing such loans to individuals questions whether it does more harm than good. Equity, therefore, cannot be achieved through the conventional interplay of market forces because 'equity and the market are not part of the same register' (Bouquet 2005, p. 17). The argument is that traditional market-related solutions to promote growth are in cross purposes to achieve equity, and it is even suggested that inequities are often driven by 'market failures' (Jones 2009, p. 12). Therefore, evaluation that drives an equity agenda should be cognisant of the complexities of the debates around equitable development, especially because what 'success' looks like, and 'what works', are embedded in protracted contestations around what the best enablers of equitable development are, and (building on the work of Guba and Lincoln in Mertens n.d., p. 26) these are rooted in ideological, axiological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. Evaluation can therefore play a powerful role in (re)shaping the understanding of what equitable development looks like and how best to design equitable development programmes. Therefore, using evaluation methods deemed as 'equitable' is only one form of understanding or conceptualising equitable or equity-focused evaluation.

Conceptualising equity-focused or equitable evaluation

There is a widespread belief that the concept of equity-focused evaluation is significantly informed by the seminal publication by Bamberger and Segone (2011) on equity-focused evaluation (Sibanda et al. 2023, p. 4). The definition of equity-focused evaluation provided by Bamberger and Segone (2011) remains relevant, and states that:

> An equity-focused evaluation is a judgment made of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and, in humanitarian settings, coverage, connectedness and coherence – of policies, programmes and projects concerned with achieving equitable development results. (p. 9)

One of the unique characteristics of equity-focused evaluation is that it seeks to assess what works and does not work in reducing inequity, both intended and intended outcomes, highlighting, in the end, the gap between the best-off and worst-off groups in society (Bamberger & Segone 2011, p. 9; Segone n.d., p. 7). Furthermore, equitable evaluation is concerned with the dynamics and historical practices that have continued to undermine and undervalue the voices, knowledge, expertise, capabilities and perspectives of stakeholders in the evaluation eco-system, particularly people of colour as well as those who had been historically marginalised (Stern et al. 2019, p. 1). Several practitioners, therefore, agree that equity-focused evaluation is not simply about methods and other technical aspects of evaluation, but includes a 'lens or standpoint that influences the choices made' (Hay n.d., p. 47) (in methods and other aspects of an evaluation). Equity, therefore, 'is the lens in which questions are asked and evidence is challenged' (Hay n.d., p. 47).

Principles of equitable evaluation: The Equitable Evaluation Framework

There are numerous perspectives on what makes an evaluation equitable or equity-focused (see, e.g., Bamberger & Segone 2011; Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023; Dean-Coffey et al. 2014; Gates et al. 2022; Segone n.d.; Stern et al. 2019). Another example is the voluminous work (containing 12 chapters on equitable evaluation) entitled 'Evaluation for an Equitable Society', published in 2016 and edited by Donaldson and Piccioto (2016). There is, therefore, a multiplicity of views on what constitutes equitable evaluation, with some scholars and practitioners, for example, contending that evaluations should be:

- Viewed as pro-equity interventions that empower worst-off groups and that ensure that evaluation questions are relevant to the situation of these groups (Segone n.d., p. 9).
- An overarching commitment to 'address inequities and advance various forms of equity through evaluation processes and products' (Gates et al. 2022, p. 1).
- Culturally sensitive and attuned to matters pertaining to ethics, wherein evaluators are sensitive to local beliefs and customs and act with integrity and honesty, particularly with marginalised or worst-off groups (Segone n.d., p. 9).
- Permeate the entire evaluation process, including evaluation design, implementation and use (Sibanda et al. 2023, p. 2).
- 'In line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions, [...] and should operate in accordance with international values' (Segone n.d., p. 9).
- 'Use participatory and/or empowerment evaluation processes to ensure worst-off groups are involved and/or co-leading the equity-focused evaluation process starting at the design phase' (Segone n.d., p. 10).

- 'Pay particular attention to existing imbalances in power relationships between worst-off groups and other groups in society. This is to avoid worst-off groups participating in the equity-focused evaluation being merely "providers" of information or even of being manipulated or excluded' (Segone n.d., p. 10).
- 'Look[*s*] explicitly at the equity dimensions of interventions, going beyond conventional quantitative data to the analysis of behavioural change, complex social processes, and attitudes and collecting information on difficult-to-reach, socially marginalised groups' (Stern et al. 2019, p. 3).
- 'Goes beyond culturally responsive evaluation in requiring that researchers understand the context within which an intervention is implemented, including key systems, structures, and power dynamics. Perhaps most importantly, it demands that evaluators assess how an intervention may contribute to or resist replicating existing inequities within this context, including the possibility that it may have different effects for different populations' (Stern et al. 2019, p. 3).

Among this rich practice-based information that is available on equitable evaluation, the EEF stands out as a definitive framework for guidance and reflection. Because it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a comprehensive synthesis of principles for equitable evaluation from the corpus of available literature, the EEF provides a useful, readily usable framework that can be used for reflection. Although the EEF was initially developed to serve the field of philanthropy, the general applicability of these principles is clear when compared to the characteristics of equitable evaluation listed above.

Therefore, in this chapter, the principles of the EEF were used to guide the reflection on the evaluation by DEval. The framework espouses the following characteristics or principles (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023, p. 3):

- Principle 1 – evaluation and evaluative work should be in service of equity:
  - Production, consumption and management of evaluation and evaluative work should hold a responsibility to advance progress towards equity at its core.
- Principle 2 – evaluative work should be designed and implemented commensurate with the values underlying equity work:
  - Multi-culturally valid
  - Oriented towards participant ownership.
- Principle 3 – evaluative work can and should answer critical questions about the:
  - Ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the condition to be addressed

- Effect of a strategy on different populations, on the underlying systemic drivers of inequity
- Ways in which cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself.

Reflecting on the evaluation of human rights-based approaches to development in service of equity-focused evaluation: The case of German development cooperation

Each principle of the EEF was considered in relation to DEval's strategic evaluation of the private sector and financial system, and it follows accordingly in this section.

Principle 1: Evaluation and evaluative work should be in service of equity

Despite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) being adopted in 1948, human rights became important for international development and official development policies, but only with a time delay. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the 'third wave of democratisation' in Latin America, Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe heralded a turnaround at the beginning of the 1990s, which culminated in broad and systematic inclusion of human rights in development policy (Krennerich 2004). The UN World Conferences in the 1990s played a substantial part in this. A particular landmark was the 1993 Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. All states present expressly reaffirmed the UDHR even though they had already recognised it in the preceding years by ratifying the human rights covenants. Also, the final document drew attention to the equal value of all human rights: 'All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated' (United Nations 1993). Above all, this meant that civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural rights were to be considered on an equal footing and human rights apply to all people and have to be promoted, respected and protected by all states. Furthermore, the right to development was included in the final declaration and thus reaffirmed by all signatories as a 'universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights' (United Nations 1993).

A framework for promoting, protecting and supporting the realisation of human rights in development contexts is offered by human rights-based approaches to development. Some approaches require integrating human rights standards and principles into development processes and objectives

(Broberg & Sano 2018). Two of these core principles are non-discrimination and equality of opportunity. In international human rights law, non-discrimination encompasses direct and indirect discrimination. When referred to as non-discrimination, it is often used along with equality of opportunity. This implies that there is not only a negative obligation not to discriminate but also a positive obligation to recognise differences and take action to reach equality (Moeckli 2018). The principles indicate a shift in focus within the analysis of development processes towards the most marginalised and excluded groups of the local community, as well as the causes of discrimination against such groups (Robinson 2005).

Today, human rights and human rights principles are acknowledged in the development policies of many donors. In practice, human rights-based approaches are being applied in various forms (for a full account, see Polak et al. 2021). Germany's human rights-based approach to development, on which the evaluation presented here is centred – was adopted in 2011 and defines human rights as a 'guiding principle for German development policy' (BMZ 2011, p. 3). The human rights approach has since been further developed, and a new version has been available in Germany since 2023 (BMZ 2023). The evaluation serves as a single case to illustrate the potential for development projects to contribute to equality of opportunity and non-discrimination.

The German approach acknowledges the universal character of human rights and the extraterritorial obligations that have ensued from Germany's ratification of human rights treaties. This results in the overarching goal of German development cooperation to collaborate with partner countries in the realisation of human rights (BMZ 2011). To achieve this goal, human rights 'play a key role in shaping Germany's development policy objectives, programmes and approaches in cooperation with partner countries and at international level' (BMZ 2011, p. 3). The form this takes is a 'systematic integration of human rights obligations, standards, interpretations and principles' in development policy as well as a 'shift of perspective […]: partner states' institutions are now duty-bearers […] while […] 'people in need' become rights-holders (BMZ 2011, p. 7).

The approach itself is operationalised by four tracks or strains, through which German development policy intends to strengthen human rights in partner countries (see Polak et al. 2021):

1. By mainstreaming human rights standards and principles in all bilateral development projects, German development policy intends to, on the one hand, enable all projects to contribute to the realisation of human rights-related effects and, on the other hand, allow for ensuring human rights principles within project implementation. This encompasses ensuring equality of opportunity and non-discrimination by and through

all projects. Other principles consist of participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability.
2. By promoting and implementing specific human rights projects, German development policy intends to directly strengthen human rights actors as well as rights-holders with regard to rights-holders regarding human rights in partner countries.
3. By anchoring human rights topics in political dialogue and conditionality, German development policy intends to complement direct effects on the human rights situation in partner countries.

By contributing to the coherence of national and international policies with human rights, German development policy intends to indirectly influence human rights in partner countries by creating a favourable context. Equality of opportunity and non-discrimination as human rights principles are thus to be implemented by all development projects throughout the project's entire process cycle. Thus, they become binding for implementing bilateral development projects.

However, human rights-based approaches to development are not uncontested. Since the mid-1990s repeated debates have occurred, in which human rights have been called into question in part or in toto. From a cultural relativist perspective, it is argued that human rights go back to a Western philosophical tradition (in this debate, see Uvin 2004). The repetition of the content of the UDHR in the final declaration of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights was intended to unify perspectives on human rights and to demonstrate the universality of human rights. The inclusion of the right to development in the final declaration at the same time was intended to meet the Global South's ambition for global distributive justice. Nevertheless, both aspects remain under discussion (Hamm 2003).

In this view, human rights are based on an individualistic conception of man that is not in harmony with understandings that focus on the good of the collective over that of the individual. Accordingly, it is contended that there can be no universal legal standard (Oyowe 2014). The same perspective is reflected in the debate over the (in)compatibility of Confucian values with democracy in Asia (Zakaria & Yew 1994). A further critique stems from post-colonialism, which does not reject human rights per se but is critical of the 1948 Declaration. It contends that the former colonies were not involved in the negotiations and that the proclaimed universal validity of human rights is at odds with the marginalisation of people from the Global South during and after the colonial period (Huhle 2011; Martinsen 2019). The feminist critique of human rights is similar, although its origins go back to the 18th and 19th centuries. Here the universality of human rights is criticised because of the exclusion of the private sphere from human rights discourse (in contrast to the public sphere, which was still

dominated by men even in 1948). For example, states that violate human rights are sanctioned, whereas human rights violations in the domestic sphere are rarely talked about (Martinsen 2019). This critique was finally taken into consideration in the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

In countering this line of argument, it is pointed out that some regional additions to the human rights system were adopted very soon after the UDHR. Their core content follows the UDHR but they also include other cultural and regional aspects. Particular mention can be made of the African human rights system, the inter-American human rights system and the Human Rights Declaration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Kirchmeier & Krennerich 2015).

Context is therefore fundamental to equity-focused evaluations, and care should be taken to examine whether development programming (and the agencies that promote them) have sufficiently focused on context, culture and the impact of the legacy of colonialism on systemic inequality and inequitable development (Robertson 2015, p. 10). Segone (n.d., pp. 3–4) suggests that the disparities and social injustices that exist and which evaluators must consider are because of social context, rather than biological factors, which gives an indication of the importance of considering contextual factors that may affect the extent to which programmes, projects or policies may be construed as successful, in any evaluation.

The first principle endeavours to ensure that 'production, consumption, and management of evaluation and evaluative work should hold at its core a responsibility to advance progress towards equity' (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023, p. 3). On reflection, DEval's intentionality regarding adhering to the UDHR in service of equitable development, as well as its prioritisation of an evaluation whose aim was to evaluate the extent to which the principles of equitable development were adhered to in German Development Cooperation, adheres to this principle. Holding at its core the responsibility for advancing progress towards a human-rights-based approach to address the rights of marginalised people counts as an ideal fit with the first principle of the EEF.

Principle 2: Evaluative work should be designed and implemented commensurate with the values underlying equity work

Principle 2 provides that evaluative work should be designed and implemented in accordance with the values underlying equity work. The principle further provides that evaluation should be multi-culturally valid, and oriented towards participant ownership.

The evaluation team applied a theory-based design within the second part of the evaluation. As such, building on a reconstructed programme theory, the team aimed to analyse the processes and components that underlie development projects and programmes, which are intended to contribute to or lead to their effectiveness (Chen 2005; Funnell & Rogers 2011).

The methodology is based on a qualitative, comparative case study design, consisting of remote case studies (including mainly interviews) and desk-based case studies (including mainly document analysis). Additionally, the evaluation team conducted an evaluation synthesis.

The usual practice with case studies is to analyse a small number of cases in depth (Gerring 2004). This enables the examination of cause-effect mechanisms in complex contexts where it is not possible to control external factors (George & Bennett 2005; Yin 2014). The approach chosen in the evaluation thus allowed for the in-depth analysis of the cases systematically chosen based on criteria. Thus, 11 projects in total in Nigeria, Ghana, Egypt, Uzbekistan and India were chosen for analysis.

For the first component of the evaluation, projects in Nigeria and India ('remote case studies') were analysed using primary as well as secondary data. The evaluation team carried out semi-structured qualitative individual and small group interviews, as well as focus group discussions, which were conducted in part remotely. Interviewees included representatives of project-executing agencies as well as persons or representatives of organisations who were directly addressed by project activities. It is noted that group interviews differ from focus group interviews in that interaction between participants is expressly not desired (Mäder 2013). The participants included not only entrepreneurs but also workers in their capacity as rightsholders. Additionally, project documents were analysed.

The second component of the evaluation analysed secondary data of projects in Ghana, Egypt and Uzbekistan ('desk-based case studies') in which the evaluation team relied mainly on document analysis, from internal project documents. In addition to the analysis of project documents, an in-depth context analysis was conducted for every case country. To complement the desk-based analysis, in-depth individual interviews with project managers from the selected projects were conducted.

The third component of the evaluation was an evaluation synthesis, which involved an analysis of a representative sample of 44 evaluation reports from German Development Cooperation programmes. Findings of project evaluations from the organisations implementing bilateral development projects were systematically summarised using qualitative content analysis (Popay et al. 2006). It is therefore what is known as an integrative review, not an interpretative review (Dixon-Woods et al. 2005). Accordingly, the approach is oriented towards that of a narrative synthesis

which summarises and explains the findings of academic studies (Dixon-Woods et al. 2005; Popay et al. 2006; Ryan 2013). Here, the quality analysis of the underlying evaluation reports and studies establishes the basis for reliable and valid synthesis findings. To this end, the formal quality of the reports was examined as part of the synthesis before these were included in the analysis. This was based on five indicators derived from evaluations by DEval and others (see, e.g., ADA 2019; Habbel et al. 2021; Noltze, Euler & Verspohl 2018). All evaluation reports in the sample fulfilled these formal quality criteria. This permitted the generalisation of the case study findings.

Throughout the evaluation process, the evaluation team implemented a human rights-based evaluation (HRBE) approach, which ensured the consideration of human rights standards and principles in relation to the evaluand, the evaluation process and the methodology. In practical terms, this entailed for example ensuring the consultation of multiple perspectives in the data collection and analysis process, especially those of rights-holders, whose voices often go unheard. To this end, the evaluation team organised interpretation workshops with rights-holders in the remote case study countries (Nigeria and India). The evaluation team thus obtained a rich, multi-layered picture of the evaluand and was able to enhance the triangulation of sources.[7]

The evaluation, through ensuring the consultation of multiple perspectives in the data collection and analysis process, especially those of rights-holders, fulfilled the tenets of Principle 2, which requires that the design and implementation of evaluative work be commensurate with the values underlying equity work. Multi-cultural validity, although more complex than language, was at least partially addressed through the holding of interpretation workshops with rightsholders. Some findings of the evaluation are provided below to further demonstrate the equity lens of the evaluation and how the methods played an important role therein.

The evaluation found that marginalised groups are often explicitly targeted by interventions within the private sector and finance system development, (Although it is recognised that targeting only ‘marginalised groups’ is an over-simplification of the complex challenge of inequality and inequity and that the subject covers multiple dimensions such as political, economic, social and cultural (Bouquet 2005, p. 16)). The results of the evaluation synthesis show that 70% of the evaluation reports refer to projects intending to empower structurally marginalised groups either at the outcome or impact level. As can be seen in Table 5.1, roughly the same

7. Further information on the approach, its methodology as well as the implementation of methods – including selection criteria for cases and the sampling strategy for evaluation reports – can be found in the online-annex to the evaluation.

TABLE 5.1: Intended outcomes and impacts by specific groups.

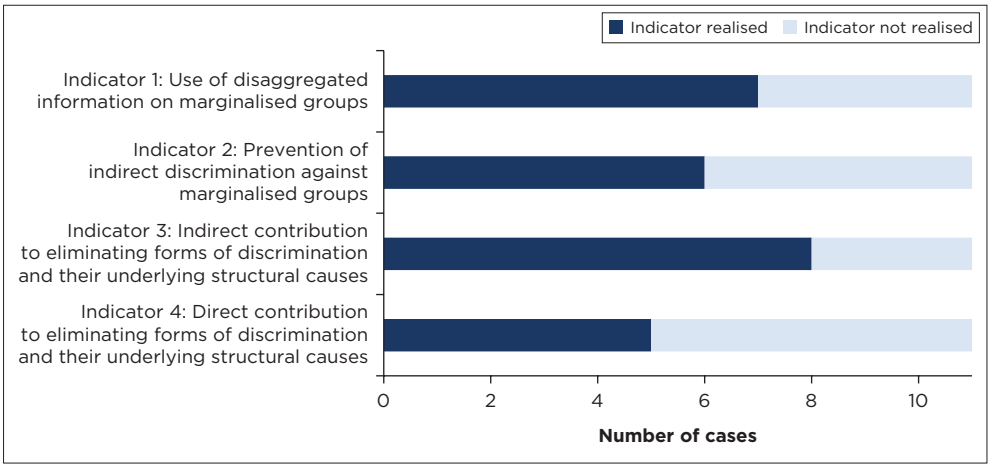
Category	Intended effects on outcome level		Realised effects on outcome level			Intended effects on impact level		Realised effects on impact level (plausibility)		
	n	%	*n*	% of projects assessed	% of all projects	*n*	%	*n*	% of projects assessed	% of all projects
Women	18	41	10	71	23	20	45	10	67	23
Youth and young adults	5	11	2	67	5	2	5	2	100	5
People with disabilities	1	2	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-
Indigene peoples and ethnic minorities	1	2	-	-	-	1	2	1	100	2
LGBTI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other marginalised groups	14	32	2	44	0	18	41	13	93	30
Marginal groups in general	24	55	14	56	39	23	52	17	77	39

Source: Own analysis based on the evaluation synthesis. $N_{\text{all projects}} = 44$. The values for 'marginal groups in general' are less than the sum of all particular groups, as projects mentioning more than one group are counted as one.

number of projects target these groups directly at the outcome level (55%) or indirectly at the impact level (52%).

Because corresponding indicators were not available consistently across projects, corresponding effects were not analysed in all of the evaluations in the evaluation synthesis. The evaluation also analysed those projects that directly target marginalisation and which have appropriate indicators (related to the empowerment of marginalised groups), which amounted to 25 reports. Of those, 56% (14 of 25 reports) demonstrably achieved positive outcomes. Impacts are seldom analysed in-depth within the evaluation reports. Instead, evaluators often refer to the plausibility of projects contributing to intended impacts. This was the case in 77% of the projects. When analysing all projects in the private sector and finance development (not only those explicitly targeting marginalised groups), the percentage of potential outcome and impact achievement is slightly lower. In this case, roughly a third (32%) of all projects successfully achieved their outcomes and contributed to empowering marginalised groups, while the plausibility that impacts have been achieved is mentioned in 39% of all projects.

While these results show that private sector and finance system development projects strengthen marginalised groups to a certain extent, further analyses reveal that German development projects focus only on a few specific groups (see Figure 5.1): 61% of the projects aim to achieve outcomes or impacts for women in particular. Other groups mainly encompass economically marginalised groups or people living in poverty. Half of the projects contain references to corresponding effects at outcome and/or impact level (22 of the 44 reports). Young people are addressed in



Source: Own analysis based on the case studies. $N_{\text{non-discrimination}} = 11$.

FIGURE 5.1: Realisation of indicators corresponding to non-discrimination and equality of opportunity in case studies.

only five reports at the outcome level and two reports at the impact level. Persons with disabilities and indigenous people are addressed in only one report each at the outcome and the impact level. None of the reports contain any reference to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) community.

The case studies bring to light a similar focus of projects on a few selective marginalised groups. However, they also yield examples of successful incorporation of efforts to address issues of intersectionality and multiple discriminations, such as one project geared towards the promotion of economically disadvantaged women.

Both the evaluation synthesis and the case studies reveal differences between project types. There are evident differences between projects focusing on technical development cooperation (TC) and financial development cooperation (FC). Different organisations are responsible for implementing technical and financial bilateral cooperation projects in German development cooperation. The Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is responsible for technical cooperation projects, and the development bank of the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) implements financial cooperation projects. These projects differ inter alia with regard to the type of finance: While technical cooperation projects mainly consist of grants, financial cooperation projects are implemented mainly by means of loans. In case study countries, TC programmes often contain capacity development elements for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, while on the other hand, FC programmes often focus on loans

for microfinance institutions. Intended effects on marginalised groups at the outcome level are mentioned more frequently in technical cooperation projects (15 out of 19 projects, or 79%) than in financial cooperation projects (9 out of 24 projects, 38%). The same difference, albeit somewhat less marked, is also found at the impact level (13 out of 19 projects, 68% for TC and 10 out of 24 projects, 42% for FC). It is also noted that technical cooperation projects tend to support a wider variety of target groups.

In sum, the results show that a rather large share of projects strive to strengthen marginalised groups in German development cooperation in general. Roughly one-third of all projects in the private sector and finance system development are sought to strengthen them directly at the outcome level. Around 40% of all projects plausibly contribute indirectly to strengthening marginalised groups.

One of the reasons for the aforementioned result is that equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are only partly systematically integrated throughout the whole processes of the analysed projects. This demonstrates that further work is required to comprehensively fulfil the tenets of Principle 2 so that there is a deeper and more thorough integration of equality of opportunity in both development cooperation as well as evaluation processes.

Principle 3: Anchoring equality of opportunity and non-discrimination

The third principle in the EEF is as follows:

Principle 3: Evaluative work can and should answer critical questions about the:

- Ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the condition to be addressed
- Effect of a strategy on different populations, on the underlying systemic drivers of inequity
- Ways in which cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself.

The evaluation analysed the implementation of human rights principles, operationalising these using four indicators: (1) the use of disaggregated information about structurally marginalised groups in their specific context, (2) the prevention of indirect discrimination (such as barriers to access) against marginalised groups within the project activities, (3) the intended indirect contribution to eliminating forms of discrimination and their underlying structural causes and (4) the intended direct contribution to eliminating forms of discrimination and their underlying structural causes.

As can be seen in Figure 5.1, the results from the case studies vary depending on the indicator:

On indicator number 1, the *use of disaggregated data*: the evidence shows that disaggregated information is available in the planning phase of most projects (7 out of 11 cases). In projects with a high risk of human rights violations, the implementing organisations conduct in-depth assessments. This entails preliminary studies, which very often identify structurally marginalised groups relevant to the project context and describe the reasons for their disadvantaged status. Some of these studies also use existing or collect new disaggregated data concerning the share of marginalised rights-holders addressed by the project.

With regard to indicator number 2, the *prevention of indirect discrimination against marginalised groups in the project's activities*: beyond the identification of marginalised groups, equitable access to interventions or outputs of the project is found in almost half of the cases studied (6 out of 11 cases). Some projects refer to specific aspects of marginalisation – especially the marginalisation of women – but do not implement measures to ensure the equality of opportunity for these groups. Some projects, for example, do not include measures to strengthen marginalised groups and even refer to the overrepresentation of women within the project's target group. Also, projects sometimes do not implement recommendations to fight marginalisation outlined in the project appraisal documents. This was the case in 5 out of 11 cases.

Regarding indicator number 3, *indirect contribution to eliminating discrimination*: often, especially when projects do not directly target rights-holders, projects indirectly include structurally marginalised groups in their programme theories (8 out of 11 cases). In these cases, upstream effects such as improved infrastructure or institutional reforms are expected also to benefit marginalised groups.

About the fourth indicator, *direct contribution to eliminate discrimination*, fewer than half of all projects (5 out of 11 cases) are aimed at achieving direct effects on structurally marginalised groups. Corresponding to the results with regard to the project's effectiveness from the evaluation synthesis, the projects analysed in case studies focus mainly on specific groups, especially women, migrants and Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) in rural regions. They barely address other context-specific relevant groups, such as children and young people or people with disabilities. Multiple discrimination is rarely considered; rather, projects usually focus on a one-dimensional definition of discrimination. Furthermore, very often, discrimination is primarily and exclusively defined in economic terms. Intended effects thus only relate to the economic empowerment of marginalised groups (as distinct from legal or political empowerment), but do not encompass other dimensions of marginalisation.

Thus, while most projects provide (disaggregated) information on context-specific marginalised groups, they only partly intend to eliminate discrimination and discriminatory structures directly. Moreover, discrimination in the participation of the project's activities is not fully prevented. Very often, existing information on relevant marginalised groups from ex-ante studies is put to limited use in the course of projects. Subsequently, appraisal recommendations often do not find their way into the project's formal target group description or their outcomes and corresponding indicators. In one case, for example, the appraisal documentation explicitly suggested that non-discriminatory access to the project's services should be written into the financing contracts or ensured by means of specific measures. However, this was not put into practice during implementation.

The evaluation also analysed interview responses within the evaluation reports, particularly those responsible for the projects. The analysis confirmed this finding: preparatory analyses tend to be seen as background documents, which are used for the onboarding of new staff, for example, but are otherwise of little operational relevance. One of the explanations for this limited use of the analyses is that project managers consider their own experience of implementation in the specific or comparable country and sector contexts more relevant for the conception and implementation of measures. Thus, some project managers and staff members question the relevance of the human rights-based approach to development. This goes hand in hand with limited knowledge of the approach and its elements. Also, the degree of sensitisation to human rights among project managers, project staff, implementation partners and also, in the MSME sector, among the rights-holders addressed by the projects, is a factor exerting an intensifying influence. Thus, building individual knowledge on and sensitivity towards aspects of the human rights-based approach is key for strengthening equality of opportunity and non-discrimination. In situations in which there is a rapid turnover of staff or organisational changes that affect staff placements, a common occurrence in development cooperation, its implementation is hampered further.

Another hindering factor can be identified within microfinance projects: in analysing interviewee responses, interviewees argue, that project specificities hamper the implementation of aspects of the human rights-based approach to development. Targeting marginalised groups is described to be in tension with the microfinance institute's necessity to be economically profitable and seen as less profitable and riskier. This is combined with a narrative that refers to the *do-no-harm principle*. Marginalised groups are often excluded from the credits of microfinance institutes by definition, as projects check the creditworthiness of potential clients. Therefore, particularly economically disadvantaged groups are often unable to obtain loans because of a lack of financial collateral (assets,

regular income) and concomitant risks of over-indebtedness. Interviewees refer to this and describe microcredit loans as inappropriate to strengthen all rights-holders because of the high risk of sub-borrower over-indebtedness. Because over-indebtedness has both economic and psychosocial consequences, respondents considered that in keeping with the *do-no-harm principle* and from a human rights point of view, it was essential to systematically weigh the repayment risks against the promotion of economically marginalised groups of people.

This stands in contrast to examples, that illustrate possibilities for microfinance institutions to build finance systems that do not exclude the most marginalised. For example, financial institutions might offer financial services targeted especially to poorer population groups without the risk of over-indebtedness. In one of the projects examined, an outcome indicator of higher deposits of savings at a partner bank was agreed upon and achieved. Another project was planning to support an insurance facility for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which mostly grant microloans, by putting an accompanying measure in place. One objective of this facility was to give micro-entrepreneurs easier access to loans; at the time of the evaluation, however, the measure had not yet been implemented. It is also possible to promote innovative financial services for marginalised groups by means of accompanying measures at the partner bank. Such measures were planned by one project analysed but were not put into practice.

The underlying question is whether this evaluation paid sufficient attention to Principle 3 in the EEF: firstly, the ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the conditions that prompted the development intervention; secondly, the effect of the intervention on different populations, as well as the underlying systemic drivers of inequity; and thirdly, how the cultural context is enmeshed in both the structural conditions and the intervention itself. These are addressed in the section that follows.

Discussion: Equity-focused evaluation to strengthen equality of opportunity and non-discrimination

The evaluation's results are ambivalent regarding strengthening equality of opportunity and non-discrimination: on the one hand, a significant proportion of projects in the private sector and finance system development either directly or indirectly intended to strengthen marginalised groups. Furthermore – considering the restrictions of the analysis especially with regard to indirect effects – there is evidence, that a lot of them reach their goals. On the other hand, however, most of the projects analysed are limited in their reach, as they focus on the economic marginalisation of individual groups – especially women and poor people.

Despite projects often collecting disaggregated data on marginalised groups during pre-planning or diagnostic phases, this knowledge is seldom used to conceptualise projects or guide project implementation. Measures to prevent and eliminate non-discrimination are therefore only partly integrated into development projects. Moreover, in some projects, the barriers to integrating equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are described as insurmountable. This is especially true for microfinance institutions, in which equality of opportunity and non-discrimination are often described to be in tension with the principle of '*do-no-harm*' and the economic prosperity of the institutions. This is despite existing examples of projects that have identified ways to overcome these perceived tensions.

The results of the study presented in this chapter demonstrate the challenges in economically empowering marginalised groups through development projects. It sheds light on the many complexities in achieving inclusive growth through development. Although a relatively large number of projects are aimed directly or indirectly at strengthening marginalised groups, there are individual cases in which systematic barriers inhibit this goal. The challenges described in microfinance projects, which incorporate a specific focus on marginalised groups, point to potential systematic barriers due to tensions between the economic rationality of the project and the goal of not leaving anyone behind.

Another challenge is related to tackling marginalisation in general. Most of the projects focus on singular marginalised groups, such as women or economically deprived people. This focus on women is reasonable against the backdrop of evidence that shows gender inequality has a significant effect on all of society and the economy at large. For example, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita can be cut by as much as 27% in particular regions if there are gender gaps in the labour market (Elborgh-Woytek et al. in Kedir 2014). Kedir (2014, p. 514) also quotes the World Bank Gender Action Plan that states 'gender equality is smart economics'. Development cooperation projects should, therefore, be focused on ensuring gender parity and addressing gender-based inequities in all development programming if it is to be successful in driving inclusive growth and an equitable development agenda. However, the projects do not reference intersectionality as a basis for marginalisation. This might be a sign of the risk of gender inequality being treated as an adjunct to the subject of equity and equitable development.

According to Alonso and Glennie (2015), one of the three major tasks of development cooperation is to support countries in achieving higher levels of income and wellbeing, and ensuring that comparatively extreme levels of inequality are addressed at a global level. Despite the consensus that reducing inequality and ensuring equitable access to opportunities to improve individual and national wellbeing, it is suggested that inclusive

growth (as a vector of addressing income disparities and achieving overall wellbeing) is largely still aspirational, rather than a reality (Samans et al. 2015). The challenge is the absence of an overarching framework, prescriptive indicators or guiding milestones that can help countries construct a socially inclusive economic strategy that focuses on comprehensive improvements in wellbeing and standards of living, beyond economic growth (Samans et al. 2015). Development cooperation is therefore left to decipher, from the large body of sometimes contradictory evidence, 'what works' in their processes of designing Theories of Change and Action that promote equitable development and inclusive growth.

Some scholars and practitioners question the assumption of a direct and linear relationship between economic growth and inclusive poverty reduction. For example, Kedir (2014) looked at various empirical studies on growth and income distribution and discovered that in the early stages of development, growth leads to a deterioration of income distribution. Later, however, as people migrate to urban areas as opportunities for industrial employment rise, income inequality reduces. Contradicting these results is a different study that showed a neutral effect of growth on income distribution on average (Kedir 2014, p. 15) as does Kuznet's (1955 in Nelson & Goel 2023, p. 1367)) seminal work in hypothesising nonlinear relationships between economic growth and income inequality (or the famous 'U-shape'). Providing further evidence of this debate, Samans et al. (2015) states that empirical evidence has shown that:

> [*T*]he current debate on inequality and social inclusion is unduly narrow and unnecessarily polemicized. It is possible, indeed essential, to be pro-labour and pro-business, to advocate a strengthening of both social inclusion and the efficiency of markets. (p. vii)

Some of the more radical arguments against what is considered neo-liberal notions of growth are what are termed the 'transition discourses'. These question traditional approaches to growth and development, and advocate for degrowth and post-development frameworks that 'call for a significant paradigmatic or civilizational transformation' (Escobar 2015, p. 251). These transition discourses include post-development movements such as those in Latin America, including Buen Vivir (BV), the rights of Nature, civilisational crisis and 'alternatives to development' (Escobar 2015). What is common among the various transition discourses is the emphasis on moving beyond the confines of current institutional and epistemic frameworks if significant transformation is truly desired (Escobar 2015). Escobar (2015) also encourages a re-think around the constructs of the Global North or Global South divide, advocating instead for building the conditions for dialogue around degrowth and post-development informed by a pluversal perspective. As Bouquet (2005)

reminds us, at the heart of development strategies is coordination and the collaborative stance required of all actors, working together in harmony and having fairly distributed obligations and responsibilities, if we are to take equity into account.

Although the evaluation itself was directed at examining the effects of the private sector and financial systems development programmes implemented through German Development Cooperation, some more work could be done in examining the ways in which historical and structural decisions have contributed to the condition to be addressed by the intervention. Through the disaggregation of some indicators, there is some indication that there is a deliberate attempt to understand the effect of the development cooperation strategy on different populations; however, an intensified effort at understanding the underlying systemic drivers of inequality in the context of those development cooperation programmes (including how the cultural context is tangled up in both the structural conditions and the change initiative itself) could yield strategically important information that could guide programme planning and design.

Implications

What do these challenges in strengthening equality imply for evaluation? Various schools of thought in evaluation offer ideas on how to deal with the challenges of equity and equality as an evaluand in a world in which inequalities prevail.

As espoused by Principle 2 of the EEF, the starting point for dealing with these challenges can be the selection of appropriate designs and methods. As an evaluator, the 'lens' with which one asks questions about the effectiveness, coherence, sustainability and impact of a policy or programme will shape the findings and recommendations – a narrow lens will elicit a narrow selection of methods and approaches, while a more open perspective will elicit a wider range of options (and hopefully evaluation results). A multitude of evaluation theories, approaches, methods and designs exist in the evaluation field. For example, the Evaluation Theory Tree (Alkin & Christie 2013) and African Evaluation Tree (Chilisa, Major, Gaotlhobogwe, & Mokgolodi 2016) are particularly important in crystallising these theories, approaches, methods and designs, as they provide the sector with a sound basis and a framework for selecting appropriate evaluation methods, questions, designs and strategies that may be useful for addressing the complexity of inequity. Corresponding to this is Feinstein's (2019, p. 21) concept of 'dynamic evaluation', which promotes a shift from linearity to complexity, from a micro to a macro perspective, from country to global level of consideration, from programmes or projects to strategies or policies

and from single to multiple methods of enquiry. Feinstein (2019) avers that as part of the process of 'dynamic evaluation':

> Evaluators should not be locked in single methods or single sources of data but should be willing to engage with different evaluation methods and techniques for capturing, processing, analysing, and synthesizing data. (p. 21)

To this end, the application of mixed-method and multi-method approaches has been a standard in good evaluative practice for years. The same is true for the selection of appropriate methods to the interest of knowledge of every evaluation. As such, a method-integrated approach can guide the selection of appropriate methods in order to best address the evaluative question and purpose.

Building on this, there are specific approaches that discuss the implications of focusing on equity as an evaluand. Segone (n.d., p. 7), for example, provides a detailed description of what equity-focused evaluation could look like. He inter alia proposes to include additional evaluation criteria such as coverage, connectedness and coherence, in addition to the more commonly used criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. He further avers that equity-focused evaluation is concerned with ensuring that the design, analysis and interpretation of evidence must be directed at those of concern to worst-off groups (Segone n.d., p. 7). Mertens (n.d.), referring to the UNDP Evaluation Policy (2011), confirms the international development community's (including evaluators') heightened attention to a human-rights imperative, quoting:

> Evaluation is guided by the people-centred approach of UNDP to development, which enhances capabilities, choices and rights for all men and women. Evaluation abides by universally shared values of equity, justice, gender equality and respect for diversity. (p. 26)

There are recent evaluation approaches that incorporate this line of thought as a basis for the design of an evaluation. UNWOMEN (2018) developed an approach of an inclusive systematic evaluation for gender equality, environment and marginalised voices and DEval is currently working on a human-rights-based evaluation approach (see for example Polak et al. 2022). This aligns strongly with Principle 3 of the EEF, which is concerned with different populations and how systemic drivers of inequity affect them, as well as understanding the complexity of how structural conditions influence how an intervention is designed, and how it is evaluated.

Recently there has been a growing normative debate on the need for evaluations to contribute to transformative change. Beyond the theories, methods and approaches – and commitments to equity – some voices call for transformative evaluation, which provides a way of thinking that goes beyond linear and conventional approaches to evaluation. Within this line of thought, evaluation approaches which are perceived as 'traditional', are

criticised for being too narrow, not useful for transformative change, and embedded in upward-accountability requirements that are useful only to donors, and not local to country governments, stakeholders and beneficiaries. Hopson, Kirkhart and Bledsoe (n.d.) agree that evaluators (together with the development community) have begun embracing new paradigms that include a transformative and equity-driven perspective.

It is argued that the value of a transformative perspective is that it provides a 'metaphysical umbrella', or one philosophical framework, as guidance to evaluators, to ensure the prioritisation of the needs and conditions of those who are oppressed and discriminated against in a multitude of ways (Mertens n.d.). Montrosse-Moorhead, Schroter and Becho (2019, p. 167) refer to transformative participatory evaluation as one approach in the 'garden' of evaluation. Evaluation is sought to thoughtfully consider the context within which development occurs, which is anchored by systemic structural power conditions that create a vicious cycle of inequity within and between nations. Therefore, Merten's transformative paradigm pays attention to the root conditions that are ensconced in power structures that either support the achievement of equity and the universal guarantees of human rights to all or maintain the oppression of the current inequitable conditions (Montrosse-Moorhead et al. 2019). According to Mertens (n.d.):

> The transformative paradigm provides one philosophical framework that provides guidance for practical methods in evaluation, which align the human rights mission of international development organisations with a human rights approach to evaluation. (p. 27)

In a further discussion on transformative evaluation, Magro and Van den Berg (2019) argue that evaluators should align themselves with systems-thinking approaches in order to be transformative in their practice of evaluation. Thereby, the line of argumentation and evaluation can have a more meaningful role in addressing the systemic and deeply-rooted challenges that lead to the prevailing inequitable developments. This is an approach with an ever-growing list of proponents, including pioneering concepts such as Blue Marble Evaluation (Michael Quinn Patton) and others who have written about this before (Magro & Van den Berg 2019). Magro and Van den Berg (2019) pose four challenges to evaluators to this effect:

> Evaluators need to become fluent in systems thinking to apply systems concepts, approaches and methods in their evaluations; Evaluators need to be open to evidence and sources of knowledge generated through systems analytics, including especially future scenarios and power law phenomena that lead to transformational change; Among the rich diversity of approaches, tools, and methods that systems analytics offer, evaluators need to be able to identify the ones relevant and significant for the task they are about to undertake; Evaluations need to provide insight and understanding of whether interventions and policies are able to reverse trends and may overcome barriers to move in sustainable directions. (p. 152)

Conclusion

This chapter provides a perspective on the implementation of development cooperation in service of equity using a human rights-based approach, while also considering the implications of this for equity as an evaluand, and evaluating equity in development programming. The case study of a strategic evaluation of Germany's human-rights-based approach to development cooperation provided a unique opportunity to unpack some of the more critical issues for evaluators facing questions of equity, using the Equitable Evaluation Framework (EEF) (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023) as a frame of reference. It showed how the evaluation considered the application of a human rights-based approach to development, where the focus is on promoting equitable development, particularly non-discrimination and equality of opportunity. The empirical results of the evaluation found that although most of the projects within the suite of development cooperation initiatives intended to address marginalised groups, systematic challenges to achieving the outcome of equitable development for marginalised or worst-off populations exist. Despite the intention of addressing inequity, the chapter showed that the many complexities and contestations relating to rationality, policy and development programming choices leave a murkiness in the 'how to' of equitable development. Many of these issues are usually not surfaced in final evaluation reports.

The contestation around whether or not poverty reduction, equitable development and growth are mutually exclusive are difficult debates, but these should not immobilise the evaluation community and prevent it from moving ahead with a transformative paradigm to ensure that a more equitable world becomes a reality. More work needs to be done in putting into practice the legal, moral and economic imperative to addressing the many inequities that continue to plague the planet. Furthermore, evaluation that pushes forward an equity agenda must be cognisant of the transformation agenda that is moving the field forward, away from linear and singular (ineffective) ways of doing evaluation that render it meaningless for either programmatic improvement or policy or systemic change. In order to ensure that evaluation drives forward the thinking and practice of equitable development, we believe being more strongly attuned to systemic change and transformative thinking and practice will prove helpful.

Chapter 6

Equitable evaluation through the triple lens: Commissioner, evaluator and wider benefiting community, to what extent do we espouse the trio in the African evaluation practice?

Rose Cathy Azuba
Department of Livestock and Industrial Resources,
School of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Biosecurity, Makerere University,
Kampala, Uganda

Introduction

Conversations around equity-focused evaluation principles and practices have intensified in the last three decades (2020 to 2022). Different perceptions and philosophies of equitable evaluation principles and how they should be integrated into practice continue emerging. This article illuminates and analyses the functional definitions of equitable evaluation, the perception of roles played by the evaluation commissioner, technical

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expert and community (the 'trio') in ensuring that equitable evaluation is practised, the possible shortcomings and challenges in the system of who is (not) playing their role and what can be solutions to address gaps.

Mohammed, Alhassan and Kanlisi-Kaba (2018, p. 173) indicated that the participation of communities in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of programmes is still low. Abrahams, Masvaure and Morkel (2022) discuss how colonialism took away African epistemic freedom, which denies Africans the freedom to think, theorise and interpret the world because of Eurocentrism. In discussing biased supremacy, Kubota (2020) and Masvaure and Motlanthe (2022, p. 3) observe that denying Africans freedom to think subjugates African knowledge, values, thoughts and procedures to Eurocentric approaches that were and are still regarded as superior to African epistemic approaches. They further submit that continued colonial power in sub-Saharan Africa affects the evaluation space and the development sector, with consequences of inequality, slow development outcomes and perpetuated poverty cycles.

While participation is only a small component of equitable evaluation and in itself is not the only indicator of equitable evaluation, Cloete (2016, p. 55) argued that evaluation practice on the African content is externally pushed, predominantly donor-driven and often unsuitable in lesser developed, non-Western cultural contexts. In this discourse, meaningful and satisfactory participation in a true sense is questionable if one contemplates who selects the people to participate in the evaluation, to what extent they are engaged to participate and how much freedom they exercise during participation. In this discourse on realism, a discussion on 'whose value system' informs evaluation inquiry, Mbava and Chapman (2020, p. 4) argue that 'whether an evaluator stems from a Western background or an African one, all values are critical to informing the very process of making value judgements' (Mbava & Chapman 2020, p. 1). The approach should not be a one-size-fits-all.

According to Briggs (2013), the lives of millions of persons in sub-Saharan Africa have failed to transform owing to these prescriptive 'mental and Western models' and also because of financial borrowing under conditioned and forced structural adjustment policies. Because meaningful engagement in evaluation practice on the continent has been deficient, evaluation capacities have not been sufficiently developed. Asymmetries still exist owing to strong disparities in power structures associated with biased identity and poor representation according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015, p. 25) while Mbava and Chapman (2020, pp. 1–11) contend that conservative and monolithic Euro-Western evaluation approaches that are prohibitive, culturally insensitive or lack equity-focus still exist, being partly because the evaluation agenda in Africa is oftentimes influenced by Donors'

Eurocentric priorities (Ngwabi & Wildschut 2019, p. 89) and even so, final recommendations that would stimulate change are made with undue regard of local context (Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019, p. 1).

In a number of reviews, inequitable evaluation is reflected in the failure to sufficiently embrace diverse and diverging perspectives of key stakeholders at all stages from design to utility of results. In the last three decades of 2020s, there have been more voices in Africa calling for increased participation in evaluation. Themes on Africa-led evaluation such as 'African rooted evaluation approach' (Cloete 2016, p. 55); 'evaluation in the African context' (Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019, p. 1) or 'Africanised' or 'indigenized' evaluation (Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018) and concepts of Evaluation 'Made in Africa' (Ramasobana 2018, cited in Uwizeyimana 2020) have continued to emerge. Uwizeyimana (2020, pp. 102–126) defined *Ubuntu* as 'an evaluation which is based on African indigenous traditions' as he comprehensively reviewed several discourses on the application of the Africa-rooted evaluation approaches versus Western or Eurocentric theories and practices.

Although non-indigenised African evaluation approaches have increasingly become unpopular, opposing views to the philosophy and practice of domesticating evaluation theories and practice on African content also exist. Chilisa (2015) cited in Uwizeyimana (2020, pp. 102–126) condemns approaches with inherent pre-determined standards and criteria being transferred to Africa and used without input from key stakeholders. Similarly, Mbava and Chapman (2020, pp. 1–11) appreciated the introduction of some adaptive Euro-Western models and theories such as 'Outcome mapping' and 'most significant change', arguing that they are externally designed and internally adapted for use on the continent and offer an equity focus in their methodologies. At the 2021 AfrEA conference, African evaluation principles (AEP 2021) safeguarding and nurturing diversity and inclusion were discussed. Addressing inequities and power asymmetries, cultural insensitivities were some of the key principles that were underscored.

Morkel and Sibanda (2022) maintain that evaluation systems are not designed or implemented with the perspective of citizens in mind; instead, they are often more focused on the agenda of the funders or decision-makers. Ngwabi and Wildschut (2019, p. 89) and Masvaure and Motlanthe (2022) have also mentioned that designs, implementation and commissioning of evaluations in the African context convey the values and viewpoints of the commissioners and funders, who mostly come from the Global North.

The realist's theories are alive to the existence of those who do not believe entirely in the imported Western and Eurocentric evaluation approaches, saying that adopting the 'Made in Africa' approaches raises its

own challenges. From the author's experience, firstly, selecting the 'appropriate culture' is bound to be a challenge in communities that are intensely multicultural. Secondly, espousing deep engagement and participation in conception, design and data collection is likely to attract a need for substantial financial and spatial resources. Thirdly, it is important to integrate the voices and lived experiences of the communities in data analysis and reporting. Additionally, providing sufficient time and ensuring a basic minimum of technical competency is essential for enabling full participation. Overall, dealing with diverse perspectives is a slow and costly process which would be perilous if ignored.

On the other hand, the desired equity-focused practices include: inclusivity, unlimited epistemic freedom, use of locally adapted and domesticated designs and tools, leave-no-one behind (LNOB) principles of participation, balanced citizen-empowered analysis of results and unprejudiced conclusions and recommendations voicing the opinions of the end users themselves.

This chapter is inspired by five reasons for evaluation in and out of Africa as mentioned in the AEP (AfrEA 2021) guidelines namely, that (1) evaluation demands responsible practice in the financing, commissioning, executing and using evaluation findings; (2) Africa is part of a world of interconnections and interdependencies and therefore its challenges are complex, and influenced by factors that cross geographic, sectoral, demographic and stakeholder boundaries; (3) Africa presents inspiring opportunities for evaluation which are premised in its diversity of the varying societies including the youth population; (4) Evaluation from Africa needs to be incorporated into the solutions that the world must provide to address the pressing issues of exceeding planetary boundaries, global disruptions and crises such as pandemics, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, extensive inequalities and geopolitical conflicts. This is because Africa's perspective holds significant importance and can contribute to finding effective solutions. The insights and experiences from such will enrich evaluation practice and developmental theories for all. (5) For the above reasons, evaluation in Africa needs to be rooted in Africa and therefore new perspectives, narratives and partnerships are essential and must be encouraged by new ways of thinking and working.

The questions addressed by this review therefore are:

- What are the functional definitions of equitable evaluation and to what extent are the concepts applied in evaluation processes and practice on the African continent?
- What are the key roles played by the trio in ensuring that equitable evaluation is incorporated in the evaluation design, execution and results management?

- What are the trio's possible shortcomings, overall challenges in the evaluation process and possible future solutions to address the shortcomings for purposes of gaining equity-focused evaluations and avoiding in-appeasable, inadmissible and non-usable results?

Method and approach

Short interviews were initially conducted with eight selected evaluation practitioners applying an exploratory approach in which views on whether inequality in evaluation practice is a reality and an issue worth a discussion. The discussions were directed at gathering experiential knowledge and views seeking to understand theoretical constructs of inequality in evaluation based on these selected persons' experiences in evaluation practice. These rather informal sessions boosted a preliminary understanding of definitional perspectives of inequitable evaluation, possible reasons and causes of its existence, and how it could be avoided. Using this information, a framework construct was developed outlining key thematic and generic areas for gathering secondary data, initially predominantly sourced from evaluation reports and articles from the African Evaluation Database (https://db.crest.sun.ac.za/afred/). The search had been delineated to published reports and articles in the last three decades (2005 to 2022) which was considered the prime period when discussions of the development theories of evaluation on the African continent were enhanced. With the increasing need to align evaluation practices to historical perspectives, the search was ultimately extended to include other earlier publications with significant historical and epistemological knowledge of evaluation practices and theoretical concepts on equitable evaluation. Ultimately, the search was expanded to include recent publications elucidating equitable evaluation frameworks and practices on a global horizon.

The data were predominantly extracted using specific selected truncated texts that would identify scholars writing basing on keywords, such as equitable evaluation, equity-focus evaluation, evaluation, evaluation commissioner, evaluation technical expert and evaluation community. The reference material from one publication was utilised to identify and search for the subsequent related literature. The literature search inclusion ultimately focused on all published materials with definitional concepts of equitable evaluation and illuminative thoughts about the obligations and duties of the evaluation commissioner, funder or investor, evaluator and the benefiting communities in applying equity-focused evaluations. Thematic analysis was used to analyse and report findings. Information documented before 2000 was excluded from the final write-up.

Review and findings

As deliberations and debates on improving evaluation practices globally intensify, specific discussions on evaluations being 'equity-focused' have also emerged. This section highlights what the review has found about the definitions and understanding of equitable evaluation or 'equity-focus' in evaluation.

Definitions and principles of 'equitable' and 'inequitable' evaluation

This review has encountered varying definitions of equitable or equity-focused evaluation. As early as 2005, Inouye, Yu and Adefun (2005, pp. 28–30) argued that equitable evaluation is a culturally responsive practice in which community members are engaged in evaluation design, planning, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results. These community members must be empowered sufficiently to critique or challenge the processes and results to their benefit. Bamberger and Segone (2011, pp. 9–10) describe equitable evaluation as an all-inclusive process that focuses on equity, power, socio-cultural relations and structures therein. In affirming the need for multi-cultural sensitivity in evaluation, Dean-Coffey, Casey and Caldwell (2014, pp. 528–530) further clarified that equitable evaluation designs are sensitive to societal complexities, identities and differing beliefs of the communities in question. Further asserting that inequality is about failing to embrace satisfactory representation, which may consequently affect the likelihood of various interests being heard or voiced.

The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention (US CDC 2014, pp. 5–21) defined cultural responsiveness in the evaluation as a process in which diverse segments of the community are engaged and have their views reflected in the evaluation questions, methods and analysis. In this process, the evaluation contextualises stakeholder definitions of success, experiences, perceptions and insights in the whole process of evaluation around them.

A group of evaluation practitioners, constituted as the Equitable Evaluation Initiative embarked on influencing philanthropic ethos and organisations (funders) to shift the evaluation paradigm to integrate equity in the funded evaluations. They defined equitable evaluation as a practice consistent with definitions under the 'Equitable Evaluation Framework' (Dean-Coffey & Cone 2023), which recognises team diversity beyond ethnic divides and multicultural validity and pays attention to systemic-level drivers of inequity. The drivers of inequity articulated included limited participant ownership, assigning value and merit in disrespect of diverse stakeholder

perspectives, and pushing for cultural norms that do not embrace ideologies from other cultures and that believe in white race supremacy.

Stern et al. (2017, p. 7) emphasise that equitable evaluation is a practice that must value 'the voices, knowledge, expertise, capacity, and experiences of all evaluation participants and stakeholders, particularly people of colour and other marginalized groups'. While equitable evaluation is recognised as a 'practice' in the evaluation framework (EEF 2021, p. 9), 'equity' is considered both a 'means' and an 'end'. The 'means' is explained as a process working towards outcomes that mould dignity, justice and love without re-creating harm in structures, strategies and working relationships. The 'end', on the other hand, denotes a product defined by the absence of unnecessary or remediable differences among groups of people irrespective of their social, economic, demographic or geographical differences.

From these reviews, an equity-focused evaluation underscores inclusivity and visible theories or practice as a first principle realised through the integrated engagement of a diverse team of evaluators, respondents and beneficiaries. The principle of equitable evaluation also underscores balanced socio-culture and power relationships between funders, commissioners, evaluators and beneficiaries. The points of discussion in the chapter further focus on reflecting evidence that satisfactory engagement and power relations are being pursued and to what extent. Where not, who is tasked to address the gaps? and how? The *trio* introduced as commissioner, evaluator and community beneficiary are expected to be at the hub of this function, that is defining objectives, executing evaluation processes, analysing findings and defining the future after–evaluation.

In contemplation of why equitable evaluation is not yet well engrained in evaluations on the African continent, the review then focuses on varying perspectives of inequitable evaluation and principles of equity-focused evaluation followed by an analysis of the function of the commissioners, evaluators and beneficiary communities (trio) to help contextualise the missing links. The discourse is premised on the understanding that the action to integrate equitable evaluation into practice is predominantly a preserve of the trio assisted by other stakeholders.

In the first decade of the 21st century, evaluators on the African continent started demanding evaluation approaches that do not simply embrace inclusivity through participation and ownership, but as an agenda that contextualises Africa's epistemologies and value systems in theory and practice. The founding of evaluation guidelines (Area 2017), later followed by evaluation principles, became a key milestone towards 'Africa-rooted evaluation approaches' (Cloete 2016, p. 55), 'Africanised' or 'indigenized' evaluation models (Gaotlhobogwe et al. 2018) or 'evaluation in the African context' (Mbava & Dahler-Larsen 2019) emerged.

Building on the discourses of the 'Made in Africa Evaluation', the Bellagio Conference Report of 2013 and Cloete (2016, p. 55), it was argued that evaluations in Africa are still predominantly commissioned by non-African stakeholders. These stakeholders primarily consist of international donors (Uwizeyimana 2020, pp. 102–126) or development agencies funded by donors. These views align with later discussions that observe that commissioners who are not funders make decisions that predominantly favour their funders even if the decisions are equity-blind. Although new concepts such as 'most significant change' or 'outcome harvest' that tend to stimulate wider involvement of users in defining evaluation processes and outcomes are being introduced (Tirivanhu 2022, p. 2; Uwizeyimana 2020, pp. 102–126), their adoption is slow. Evaluation practice in most parts of the continent still applies theories and concepts that are externally extracted from the Global North (Chilisa & Mertens 2021), despite their continued lack of multi-cultural African perspectives. Because there are no Universal worldviews and therefore values, cultures and contexts remain different, Masvaure and Motlanthe (2022) therefore question why evaluation commissioners with the opportunity and power to change for mindset do not do so.

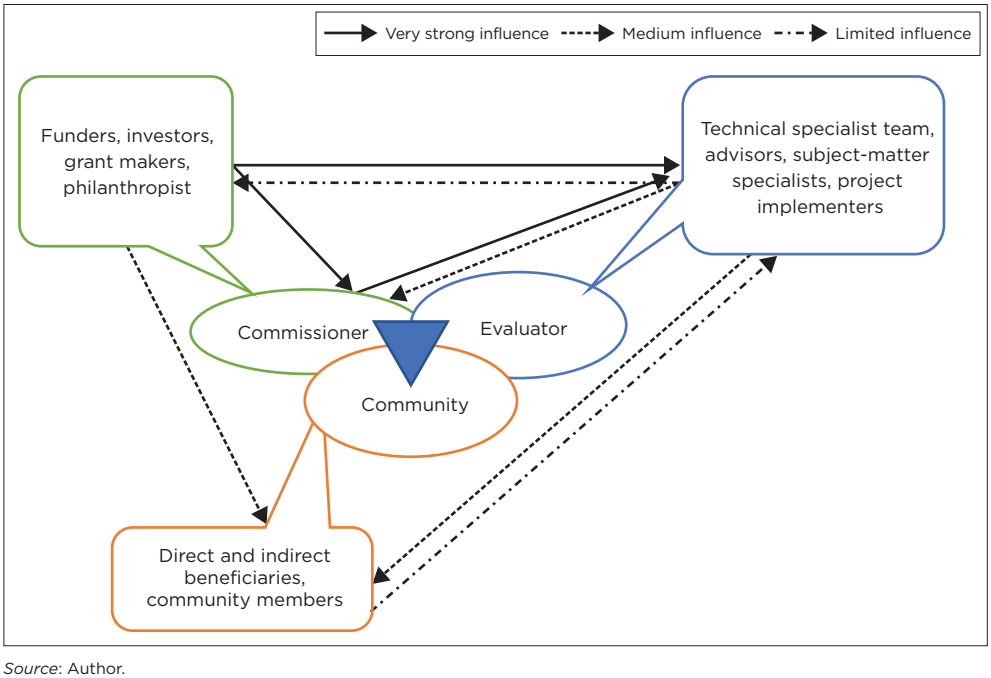
The solution is for the evaluation practitioners in the Global South to adapt their tools and model them to suit the African epistemologies. The African Evaluation Principle no. 1 and no. 4 (AEP 2021) call for evaluations that empower Africans and are rooted in Africa. It is important to recognise the need to draw knowledge from outside the continent as well (AfrEA 2021). To improve power dynamics and visibility of vulnerable stakeholders, the EEI members and their funders agreed to increase support for integrating cultural competence and equity into evaluation measurements in 2021. Evaluators from Africa must therefore take advantage of such a positive mindset change towards equity benefits.

What are the key roles played by the evaluation commissioner, technical expert and community in ensuring that equitable evaluation is incorporated in the evaluation design, execution and results management?

To improve the evaluation learning process, the review next reflects on who is responsible for ensuring equitable evaluation. The broader and key questions are: What must be learnt? Who must learn from whom? Who has the power to push and leverage the change to address the weaknesses identified from within and outside the African continent? Specifically, this review explores the roles of the evaluation commissioner, evaluator and community

beneficiary as key actors in the evaluation system. Although the *trio* has a role to play in ensuring equitable evaluation at the design, implementation and analysis stages, in the true sense, the evaluation intricacy may go beyond these three to reflect additional players along the chain. In the EEF (2021, p. 5), the other players are advisers to the commissioners, practitioners and funders, investment partners, grantmakers and philanthropists who finance the evaluation. The investment partners are those who provide financial resources, while practice partners are those actively engaged in ensuring the adoption of the evaluation findings. The funders and investment partners have a strong influence on the technical or evaluation specialist teams. They often dictate the terms for evaluation including recruitment of the evaluation team. The project implementers are quite often classified among the technical specialist team and, in a few cases, among the beneficiaries. A figurative conceptualisation (Figure 6.1) of how the trio is interrelated and who has dominancy and influence over the other is indicated in Figure 6.1.

A solid arrow indicates dominancy, while dotted arrows show medium and weak influence. The characteristics of each of the trio are further analysed and shown in Tables 6.1–6.3. Using the equitable evaluation lens as a point for analysis. Each member of the trio is discussed with a focus on who they are, their key roles in an evaluation, their potential deficiencies and their implication to the equitable evaluation process.



Source: Author.

FIGURE 6.1: Inter-relations between the trio – commissioner, evaluators and communities in evaluation and degree of influence.

Commissioner

Based on a compounded understanding of the definition from different perspectives, an evaluation commissioner is an agency, unit or responsible individual from those units who are tasked with organising and coordinating the evaluation process. The United Nations Development Organization evaluation guidelines (UNDP 2021) define the Commissioner as the entity that calls for the evaluation and is, therefore, the 'owner' of the evaluation plan. The EEI group and its members defined the *commissioner* from a philanthropist view as a funder or funding agency who have expressed growing interest in funding evaluations. In some organisations, there is a separation of roles between the commissioner and evaluation manager, while in others they are one-in-one and perform tasks defined for both. Under the World Bank guidelines (IEG 2015, p. 8), an evaluation commissioner and evaluation manager's duties are to oversee and coordinate the evaluation. Table 6.1 presents a summarised view of who the commissioner is, their key roles and perceived deficiencies from other scholars' views and thought processes with the selected evaluators who participated in the preliminary discussions.

TABLE 6.1: The role of the commissioner in designing and implementing equitable evaluation.

Who are they?	What are the key roles of the evaluation commissioner?	What is their deficiency in handling 'equitable evaluation' in the African context?
The funder, the head of the department, ministry of agency with a need to engage an evaluator	**Task pronouncement:** They define the task – what is to be evaluated and they develop the evaluation terms of reference, spelling out who must be involved, who may be involved and who need not be involved. They are the conduit between the funder and the evaluator. **Seal procurement process:** They source and procure the evaluator, define and present the terms, and will often have a strong hand in steering the recruitment process **Approve evaluation design:** They have almost the final say on the evaluation process, including work plans and methods **Result management:** They receive the results and decide which results are essential, to who, what evidence is relevant or not, and decide who should and will access the results	In equitable evaluation, the community should contribute to the discussion of objectives and the design of the evaluation but they do not. • The commissioners in the African context, who often are different from the funder, front the interest of the funder rather than the benefiting community • The commissioners are more thoughtful towards available funds and the 'must spend' proportion of funds rather than equitable alignment to the realism of the evaluation task magnitude and scope. Commissioners tend to unreasonably slash the evaluation budget without considering the content to be covered. • Whereas the evaluator may have an opinion about the content, at the design stage, and this is every so often not fully accepted, especially if it has budgetary implications • Priorities often reflect the interest of the funding agency and are often detached from the communities, less about whose voice needs to be heard. They take charge when difficult results have to be discussed.

Source: Author's interpretation.

For the majority of donor and multi-lateral organisations[8] supported developmental programmes on the African Continent, the commissioner is the task manager recruited from 'on' or 'off' continent to represent the interests of the funding agency. Their task definition includes participation in the recruitment of the lead evaluator and overall charge of the planning and design process to ensure that the final product complies with and represents the interests of the funder or the organisation. In the selection of the 'off-continent manager', there is a tendency to recruit 'white' lead evaluators or those from foreign countries who may have limited contextual and cultural knowledge of the surrounding value systems and end up focused narrowly on the agenda of the funders or decision-makers.

In the public realm, especially in ministries and national entities, the commissioner serves as the head of the department or section where the evaluated programme was implemented. In such a setting, the commissioner is aided by technocrats from the procurement or M&E specialists' sections. The commissioner defines the evaluation task, makes the final approval to the recruitment of the evaluator, and is informed of and discusses or approves the evaluation design and implementation process. The commissioner also approves the final results and makes decisions on result use with the funder, which places him at the helm of institutionalising the evaluation and approving processes. Details are elaborated in Table 6.1. Because these functions are participation-driven, the commissioner has room to ensure that the planning and design are equity-focused. Dean-Coffey (2018, p. 27) noted that the commissioner has powers to counter biased unbalanced power dynamics that are not equity-focused. Some authors (Masvaure & Motlanthe 2022; Morkel & Sibanda 2022) contend that biased commissioning of evaluations has resulted in conveying values and viewpoints of commissioners and funders from the Global North, which lack the perspectives of citizens.

In discussing the role and approach taken by funders and evaluators, some proponents EEF (2022, p. 17) observed that sometimes methodologies and experimental designs are neither culturally sensitive nor equity-focused. They are favoured and used without consent from benefiting communities. In this context, it is desirable for a commissioner to ensure that the tenets of equitable evaluation are integrated into the planning and design of the evaluation at all levels. A summed-up opinion from Table 6.1 is that commissioners more often than not, prioritise the funders's agenda, in disregard of the power at their disposal to underscore equity-focused designs.

8. United Nations Organizations (UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, UNAIDS, UNHCR [...]), United States Agency for International Department (USAID), World Bank (WB), Swedish International Corporation Agency (SIDA), UK AID, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Netherlands Development Cooperation.

Evaluator

The evaluator is the 'technical expert' hired to conduct the evaluation. Presenting one as a technical expert generates multiple definitional challenges for equitable evaluation as the expert struggles to prove their worth as an expert in the different aspects of managing the evaluation. The evaluator is a facilitator, researcher or trainer expected to have the capacity to capture key issues and use the information to generate recommendations that are evidence-based. Hind and Bradly (2021) further observe that the evaluator's skill set must include interpersonal skills to secure client trust and communicate effectively and responsively to stakeholder needs.

In most evaluation guidelines including the African Evaluation Guidelines of 2021, the evaluator is charged with an amorphous responsibility of design, execution and reporting. In Table 6.2, the roles and deficiencies of the evaluator are described. The commonly observed practice is that the evaluator spends time with the commissioner at the beginning, planning and contextualising the evaluation, with the evaluation team – designing data collection tools, with beneficiaries – implementing data collection and time with the commissioner or funder – discussing results and results use. Although discussions of equity considerations are often visible during the design and planning phase, holistic and balanced equity assimilation along the entire process is often minimal as detailed in Table 6.2.

Being the central person who interacts with all other stakeholders, the evaluator has the widest opportunity to reflect, integrate and propose solutions for equity concerns at all stages of the evaluation by nature of assigned tasks and the previously held worldview that the evaluator is the most technical person in the evaluation process.

However, new thinking about equitable evaluation by some members of the EEI group (EEF 2021) has started dissenting from this position that the evaluator is the technical expert who knows all. It is fronted that the evaluator needs to learn how to deal with diversity in people, culture, and disparities in races and/or tribes. Understanding varying organisational norms and how they affect equity in evaluation practice is the key principle now. In Table 6.2, the evaluator and their roles, potential and deficiencies in espousing equitable evaluation are discussed. In a quote from Sundstorm (EEI, 2022) a member of the EEI group at Vantage Design Lab Colorado stated:

> Equitable evaluation takes a lot of personal work. I went into this, thinking I had a good understanding of equity issues and how I interact with the world. But I was wrong. Dismantling inequities takes constant learning. You must challenge yourself to be uncomfortable and confront your own implicit biases. In short, there is no separating your personal self from your professional self. [...] We must have humility in our field. As evaluators, we are trained to be experts. We are hired to be experts. But applying an equity lens to our work forces us to let go of being the expert all the time.

TABLE 6.2: The role of the evaluator in designing and implementing equitable evaluation.

Who are they?	What are the key roles of the evaluator?	What is their deficiency in handling 'equitable evaluation' in the African context?
Any technical person in the field of evaluation Free of any conflict of interest by not having been part of the design or implementation of the programme or project to be evaluated	**Design evaluation:** The evaluator designs the evaluation study, develops tools and shares all with the commissioner or the funder **Data collection:** As the team lead, the evaluator is often responsible for data collection with assistants and has a principal role in creating impartial teams, training them, giving instructions, and guiding and supervising high-quality and impartial data collection. How and with whom to engage is often in the domain of the team leader, and he or she is in the driving seat and has the opportunity to ensure that the process embraces equity at all times. **Data analysis and reporting:** The evaluator cleans and analyses data according to the theory of change, and evaluation questions posed by the commissioner and in accordance with the standard evaluation criteria. This is the expected mandate. The evaluator then has the sole mandate of deciding which results to present and which ones not to. The decision of what to omit or underline as 'the' critical step in the evaluation is a determinant of the final product to be presented to the discussion table. However, it is not the final sieve and may often be revisited at the demand of the commissioner or funder. The ultimate user besides the commissioner and funders such as the beneficiary and broader community is therefore at the clemency of these funder and commissioner as they have exclusive ownership of the product.	• Evaluators develop evaluation designs possibly with the project or programme implementers. The designs are approved by the manager, commissioner, funder or their representatives, often without input from the communities or beneficiaries. • Unfortunately, the rapport with the communities or beneficiaries is not established earlier than the point of data gathering. This practice is traditional and lives on in our African evaluation context. • Occasionally, the evaluator and/or the team have default biases, including divergence in language, culture, tribe, race, political or religious affiliations. This can create biased opinions that are not independent or impartial. However, it is not uncommon for such biases to be picked at evaluator shortlisting by the commissioner. Surprisingly, such biases may be the preferred points of acceptability by some commissioners. In the experiences discussed, this practice happens in several areas on the African continent. • The evaluator does not represent the communities and if he or she did, this would be declared a source of conflict. A good evaluator would empathise with the lived experiences of the communities. Is it possible to select an evaluator known to the community without this being a source of conflict? If being equitable is being impartial, where is the equity on the side of the evaluator? On which side is the conflict? • According to Stern et al. (2017), for equitable evaluation, results are meaningful if culture, context, systems, structures, institutions and underlying drivers of inequity are analysed. This gives stakeholders the opportunity to participate in the analysis, the question being to what extent are they often involved? Findings should reflect both evaluators' and stakeholders' interpretations of the data, but do they? Stakeholders are brought in to listen to an external person's view about them. In reality, the room for communities to respond is narrower compared to the implementers, who are quickly given a chance to defend the results they do not desire. • As it were, the evaluator is the 'employee', and the commissioner and funder are the 'proprietors'. As goes the adage 'the piper calls the song'. The African beneficiary is rarely the piper.

Source: Author's interpretation.

Community

Earlier studies by Inouye et al. (2005, pp. 27–30) and later CEI, IFDL, DAJCP and Luminaire Group, cited in EEI (2022) envisioned an equitable evaluation as that process in which both community and funders contribute to the goals and design of the evaluation. Stern et al. (2017) and Mbah, Bailey and Shingruf (2023) in discussing community-based participation observe that an evaluation team must comprise people who share the identities and experiences of community members, asserting that if community members are engaged in the entire process from planning to data collection and interpretation, the drivers of inequity are minimised. Patel (2013, p. 51) further argues that an inclusive guiding framework is better structured to address deficiencies in stakeholder engagement, value identification and rights of human participants as key elements that could stir up inequality.

This review recognises that several attempts have been made to make the evaluation culturally relevant. Several scholars (Chilisa et al. 2016; Tirivanhu 2022, p. 13; Uwizeyimana 2020, p. 116) have overtime underscored the global failure to sufficiently incorporate African voices as a means of ensuring culturally-responsive evaluation practice on the continent. Stakeholder participation at the design stage is limited and yet they are expected to inform the evaluation with honest views. Keane, Khupe and Seehawer (2017) asserted that knowledge, value systems and perspectives should reflect the ideologies of stakeholders and beneficiaries in the design and process to ensure value to those who contributed to the evaluation, while others such as Chilisa and Mertens (2021) advocated for methodological pluralism, especially of the local persons as community beneficiaries. These discussions underline the gaps in the participation of communities as beneficiaries and seem to further suggest that the beneficiaries have little control over the extent to which their views are fully reflected in the evaluation reports. The information gathered and the author's experience indicate that severally, the beneficiaries are fed back on what is already analysed and concluded upon with limited opportunity for profound participation in the final decisions and actions that arise thereafter. They are not expected to share feedback. The summary from Table 6.3 is that communities are predominantly information givers.

The African evaluation's key principles underscore a technically robust and ethnically sound Africa-centric evaluation that empowers Africans on the one hand but keeps them connected to the rest of the world on the other hand. This underscores participation which is strategically designed not only to supportbut improve the capacity of members to participate.

TABLE 6.3: Role and characteristics of the community or beneficiaries.

Who are they?	What are the key roles of the community in evaluation?	What is their deficiency in handling 'equitable evaluation' in the African context?
The community consists of men and women organised at different levels projected to benefit from the project or programme being evaluated They are expected to have received the benefits as individuals, organisations, communities and neighbours of the project or programme to be evaluated	**Design:** Minimal input **Data gathering:** Predominantly information givers. They respond and give feedback to the evaluation because they are the beneficiaries. They often have a structure through which they are organised and communicate. For data collection, they are critical in mobilising the participation of all key stakeholders in the evaluation. **Result processes:** A few selected representatives may attend the feedback workshop and determine to what extent the results trickle back to the rest of the community. In general, they minimally participate in decisive processes but will be informed of the final actions on the direction of the project or programme.	• For equitable evaluation, the community needs to feel appreciated. They could participate in the design, data gathering and data response, data analysis and interpretation. • However, currently, they are predominantly the information givers • In their report, El Baradei, Abdelhamid and Wally (2014), while studying development evaluation and being monitored by respondents, noted that inequity is because of several factors which include: lack of interest, failure to understand M&E and funding agencies being non-committal to their decisions

Source: Author's interpretation.

Equity – related concerns reported as challenges in evaluation reports

Using a text-specific search, the review analysed sub-sections and contexts often referred to as challenges in the evaluation reports from the African Evaluation base and the reports voluntarily shared by the evaluation experts who were consulted. The purpose is to enlighten further on additional explanations as to why conducted evaluations are not always totally informative. This would also enhance our understanding of the challenges being encountered and how to address them in future. The analysis focused on thematic concerns already identified as spots for equity-focused evaluations, that is *limited participation in design*, *data collection and results analysis*, *unfavourable and non-equity-focused evaluation designs*, *constricted conceptualisation of cultural diversity in the selection of participants and engagement of communities and unsatisfactory engagement of beneficiaries in lesson learning and utility of results*. In 10% of reported challenges, concerns were raised regarding the narrow definition of evaluation objectives by the organisation. Some interpreted this as prioritising the interests of funders, mainly focusing on accountability, while giving limited attention to the perspectives of beneficiaries and community learning. Another 30% of the concerns were about equity-blind evaluation designs which were regarded as either funder, commissioner or

evaluator imposed. Whereas the reports mention that the designs and/or data collection processes had restricted stakeholder views, and it was not clear why and who was to blame, a sizeable proportion of 45% of the reported challenges were related to inaction and/or limited post-evaluation action. The duty bearers and administrators within agencies and institutions, organisations or states in question have severally failed to address evaluation recommendations. Five per cent echoed community concerns of not having access to the results or the lack of space to voice their dissatisfaction about the foregone evaluation exercises. This was predominantly a community concern.

Discussion

Leigh et al. (2015, p. 15) underscored the challenges faced by governments to institutionalise, coordinate and harmonise their M&E systems. Roles and responsibilities are neither well-defined nor harmonised. The author also notes a multiplicity of challenges in data design, gathering and verification, and failure to use the M&E results for strategic decision-making. In their discussion of country-led systems, Morkel and Sibanda (2022, p. 5) asserted that advances already gained in ensuring participatory M&E processes and systems may fail to last. The reasons cited include power asymmetries, disparities or bureaucracy continuing among key actors, namely, civil society, funders, state and beneficiaries.

The review also unveiled that it is a common practice for only a few selected participants to participate in the discussion of results. While financial resource facilitation may be a limiting factor, the review unveils the occasional failure of commissioners to appreciate the net value of stakeholder learning as an evaluation objective contrary to the underscored AEP. The discourse is consistent with the discussion of barriers to evaluation capacity enhancement by Masvaure and Fish (2022, p. 5), in which accountability rather than learning was underlined as the predominant objective for M&E. Further, products and results are still not effectively shared between stakeholders. Mistrust between actors exists, and some assert that some funders, government bureaucrats and political actors still fail to appreciate broad reasons why M&E is critical. Further, Eckhard and Jankauskas (2019, p. 62), in their submission on politics of evaluation, emphasise that human and access to budgetary resources, power politics and agenda-setting strongly influence the participation of stakeholders. They also observed that the administrators as opposed to member-states held the highest bureaucratic dominance on evaluations.

The review has so far indicated that stakeholder participation, multicultural engagement, competence, evaluability and an enabling

environment are central to ensuring equitable evaluation. The findings agree with Dean-Coffey et al. (2014, pp. 90–92) who maintained that an evaluation lacking equity is likely to betray its intended effectiveness including affecting those who are part of the evaluation process and potential users of the evaluation findings.

In rethinking how to improve equitable evaluation for developing countries, the EEI group members noted that asymmetrical relations in evaluation are real. This discourse has been and is still being tabled by evaluators on the African continent. Encouragingly, Euro-America-based evaluators and others from the Global North are now debating several discourses with a nexus on improving stakeholder engagement – expanding reach through improved depth of interaction (Omidyar Network [ON]), reinforcing commitment (Ford Foundation), buy-in and engagement by all stakeholders (Irvine Foundation) and broadening stakeholder inclusion, knowledge-sharing and more innovative approaches (Rockefeller Foundation) (EEI 2022, pp. 4–14). Fixed organisational or personal agenda, one of the weaknesses underscored in this review, does not allow for comprehensive equitable evaluation designs as Mpofu and Govender (2022) also extensively discuss relationships between donors, funders and non-governmental organisations stating how critical such interactions and communications are in the delivery of evaluation.

Commissioners, managers and evaluators must improve inclusivity in favour of multi-cultural dispensation in participation, decision-making, data collection, analysis and sharing of findings as guided by OECD (2021). Commissioners and evaluators are hereby called upon to be more cautious at agenda and design setting by ensuring that whoever is selected to participate in data collection or respond to evaluation questions and/or participate in result analysis is sensitised to good practices of equitable evaluation prior to engagement. The key to good practices is to ensure that participation goes beyond simply tallying and recording the number of stakeholders involved. It is important that the views of key stakeholders hold significant weight throughout the entire process, from design to the acceptance of results and these views are valued and taken into account. This is predominantly a preserve of the evaluator.

In true recognition that equitable evaluation requires broad and in-depth inclusivity, this review cautiously reflects on OECD's (2021) guidance that it is better to have a limited number of criteria and ensure sufficient depth of analysis and conceptual clarity rather than expanded inclusivity in light of diminishing resources. It may be dangerous to adopt this view wholesome without a balanced thoughtful consideration of the wider impact on equitable evaluation.

What is the future for equitable evaluation on the continent? What are some of the recommendations that the chapter presents as actions by the trio to address inequitable evaluation?

Given the above information, this review reflects on the final pertinent question of who is the most strategic partner to hold the hard conversations with governments and donors to inform them that the systems they generate and support sometimes lack decorum within and without. Moreover, post-evaluatively, 'who defines? Who promotes? Who will reinforce the commitment to address imperfections reflected as evaluation inequity impartially?'

Globally, the subject of improving equitable evaluation practice and how disparities and failures could be addressed shortly is increasingly coming to the front. Some of the recommendations include sensitising duty bearers and politicians on the need to address equity, and creating special channels of communication like this publication to gather and regularly disseminate evidence-based information or equity-focused data and publications as part of advocacy and capacity demand for action. For the African continent, the participation of stakeholders may be expanded as public access to improve evaluation asymmetry. In their report on participation in M&E, Mohammed et al. (2018, p. 192) underscored the importance of effective stakeholder participation in M&E, noting that when communities are amply involved, their actions and attitudes including transparency, accountability and sustainability in handling projects, improve. For this review, a critical question is who will champion and sustain the commitment to change and whether equitable evaluation shall remain a 'means' or 'end' to what we desire to see as acceptable in the future. In reflecting on the role of the trio, we have an obligation to remind ourselves why an evaluation must be carried out, whether the evaluation objectives are clear to every key stakeholder and to candidly reflect on the intentions of the commissioning agency. It is imperative to know who needs the evaluative evidence, who is likely to use the results and what for. Candid answers will take us to the next level, as we ponder about the future of equity in evaluation.

Planning

The commissioners need to be honest about their need for the evaluation in order to keep their demands in perspective, focused and under control. Commissioners often request a lot of information and set a standard that demands high deliverables, even in contexts that have limited resources.

Commissioners must present clearly designed, realistic and fully informative terms of reference (ToR) that are well conceptualised and tailored to the evaluation in question. The ToRs ought to reflect honest opinions of why the evaluation is being carried out and not simply lifted from a previous evaluation or generally conscripted organisational document. Whereas the commissioners hold the full responsibility of ensuring that ToRs are not equity–blind, both the commissioner and the evaluator should work jointly towards ensuring and assuring quality and integration of equity in the evaluation.

Evaluation and development will always suffer from a challenge to Western hegemony. The author concurs with Masvaure and Motlanthe's (2022, p. 192) argument that evaluators and development practitioners in the Global South should first free themselves from Western epistemological dominion by commissioning and funding their own evaluations and development programmes.

Resources

Evaluators ought to learn to interrogate the objectives of the evaluation and delineate boundaries for equity considerations. Open space and information are prerequisites for both the evaluator and commissioner to level terms of engagement and decisions as they will save time spent on negotiations. The experience of the evaluator and willingness to adapt and adopt equity considerations will still find little room for negotiations if evaluation designs continue being fixed on 'money for value' and not the traditional 'value for money'.

Being explicit with the expectations at the onset will make room for reasonably-costed evaluations so that any additional requirements for equity considerations are well-justified.

Data and information sharing

Letting the evaluators know about expected sensitive data beforehand will neither compromise the data-gathering process nor the evaluator's credibility and compliance with evaluation principles. There is a need to demystify the 'better-is-less' myth in favour of crediting the evaluator to find a balance in reporting on what appears sensitive against personal convictions on equity and ethical considerations.

In guidance on how to write ToR for Evaluation, the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank (IEG 2015) observes that commissioners should take into consideration the difficulties evaluators face in collecting confidential data and presenting findings that might prove threatening to particular groups of stakeholders.

Multi-cultural diversity

Given the diversity that defines stakeholders on the African content, it is next to impossible to develop 'one-size-fits-all' guidelines and benchmark them for cultural integration. Implicitly, community norms, diverse cross-cultural sensitivities, political differences and differing perspectives in the African context are indispensable and here to stay. Evaluators should learn how to accommodate various views by reducing disparities and increasing ownership. On the other hand, the commissioners and evaluators from outside the continent need to anticipate the above as part of their 'equitable evaluation journey discovery' and not as a challenge. Learning and re-learning is the message. Where the need arises, it is recommended to seek advice and support from experts such as sociologists or conflict resolution experts locally from the continent rather than external experts as this will be more communally accepted as a practice of what is being preached.

Participation

Modest participation, at different levels, is a 'must-embrace' even against the seemingly enormous task because of multiple diversity. By embracing community participation, the natural forces will impulse communities to decide for themselves what is culturally acceptable and what is not and when ownership is fostered.

Knowing that every step of the design, especially data collection comes with a cost and cognisant of the reality around resource limitations, fair participation demands that we review evaluation designs and methodologies to meet resource constraints and create simple enough processes to enhance community participation. Evaluations must advance non-biased mechanisms on how to engage communities meaningfully although cautiously knowing that some cultures have limitations including gender biases.

The journey towards equitable evaluation demands that commissioners and evaluators appreciate the evaluative capacity of their communities and secure confidence that communities have the capability to participate in analysing findings and their implications.

Designing and executing equitable participation is not a myth and should not be discounted as a difficult-to-attain practice; it is all about calmly holding difficult conversations as we aim to sustain evaluation rigour in serving mankind.

Conclusion

We conclude this section by agreeing to practical, equitable considerations that:

There is a need to build an enabling environment for evaluation to integrate equity not only with the trio but also in the public policy sphere as earlier observed by Knox (2021). To achieve this, all stakeholders and key actors, including the national evaluation associations and public institutions, need to be involved, and there should be a wide and accessible platform for sharing information, public data and statistics, as underscored by members of the EEI group (2022).

Evaluation managers should consider evaluability, data limitations and access when commissioning an evaluation at the design and inception (OECD 2021, p. 48). It is important to identify and discuss evaluability challenges early in the evaluation design so as to find mechanisms for mitigating them.

Practical strategies for culturally competent evaluations, including engaging stakeholders to reflect the diversity of the community and laying clear ground rules for participation are required to establish equality and equity (US CDC 2014, pp. 6–9). Understanding what must be done, why and by whom is paramount to securing trust and collaboration between parties.

Chapter 7

Gender and equity responsiveness in evaluation: The case of South Africa

Stanford Muhomba
Citofield Consulting,
Pretoria, South Africa

Khumo Pule
Centre for Learning on Evaluations and Results (CLEAR-AA),
Faculty of Commerce Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand,
Johannesburg, South Africa

Lungiswa Zibi
Department of Science and Innovation (DSI),
Pretoria, South Africa

Introduction

The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC 2022) wrote that the apartheid era, spanning from 1948 to 1994, institutionalised racial segregation and entrenched gender-based discrimination. Apartheid policies enforced strict racial classification, leading to the marginalisation and oppression of non-white individuals, including women. The legacy of apartheid and the ongoing challenges faced by marginalised communities make it imperative to evaluate policies and programmes through an equity lens. Recognising that individuals and communities experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, evaluations consider the intersections of gender with race, class, disability and other social

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identities (Grande 2008). This approach ensures that the evaluations capture the complex and intersecting dimensions of inequality and provide insights into the specific challenges different groups face.

Even though there has been wide promotion of using evidence in decision-making, the question that seems rhetoric is how South Africa as a nation can better harness the wealth of evidence that is being generated in all the commissioned evaluations by the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) to develop wisely and equitably under the diverse conditions that the nation is thriving on. Regrettably, despite the rhetoric around the significance of evidence, the use of evidence for policy and practice in gender and equity issues remains challenging and somewhat elusive (DPME, 2018a). Goldman and Pabari (2020) mention that there are no constraints regarding the availability of data and information at this juncture with technology increasing access exponentially, but the challenge is the usefulness of the data and its relevancy to address the needs of all. Conversely, DPME (2020a) states that evidence is derived from a panoply of sources ranging from scientific research, evaluations, indigenous knowledge and administrative data to surveys of public opinion. However, to respond to our developmental challenges, we need to be able to recognise and access evidence that is relevant, credible and robust.

Therefore, the main objective of this chapter is to explain the initiatives that the South African government has undertaken to mainstream the principles of equity and gender in planning, commissioning and undertaking evaluations – based on analysis of the evaluation reports in the National Evaluation System (NES) that is supported by the National Evaluation Plan(s) (NEP) which are five-year rolling. The secondary objectives are: (1) to describe the different processes undertaken by the South African government to incorporate gender and equity dimensions and (2) to describe and explain challenges faced in pursuance of incorporating gender and equity dimensions in evaluations. Lastly, through the discussion, other countries can glean from South Africa's experience and learn valuable lessons.

This study employed a qualitative research methodology to analyse themes emerging from academic literature and evaluation reports available in the DPME repository from the period 2010 to 2022. The use of qualitative methods allowed for an in-depth exploration and understanding of the gender and equity issues addressed within the selected sources. The selection criterion included evaluation reports that incorporated a gender analysis, exploring the differential impacts of programmes on men and women, boys, and girls and the disenfranchised. The approach excluded evaluations that only touched on gender and transformation tangentially, without substantial analysis of gender issues. In addition, the analysis

further excluded evaluations that are too old and may not reflect current gender dynamics or programme approaches. The aforementioned criteria ensured that the selected gender and transformation-focused evaluations provide comprehensive insights into gender and transformation-related issues, contributing to a more informed understanding of gender and transformation equality and the effectiveness of gender-related policies and programmes within the repository.

Five evaluation reports produced between 2016 and 2021 were screened based on their relevance to the study's objectives. Resource constraints, feasibility, scope and expert judgement informed the sample size. This enabled a manageable assessment of evaluations and the addition of evaluations which focused on government initiatives which had a high potential for meaningful results. Data were extracted from these reports to capture the key findings, recommendations and discussions pertaining to gender and equity issues. The data obtained from the literature review and evaluation reports were analysed using Atlas.ti. The process commenced a coding process by assigning descriptive labels (codes) to segments of text that represented specific themes, topics or concepts. This was followed by creating a hierarchical coding system with main codes and sub-codes to organise the data. The writer then used the Atlas.ti to assist in organising the findings and writing up the results.

Background and context of equity and gender-focused evaluations in South Africa

According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2022), gender disparities inflict injustice on women and hold back progress in education, limit job creation, poverty reduction through labour-market inefficiencies, etc. Failure to tackle the gender and equity issues is already undermining livelihoods, exacerbating human emergencies and trapping communities in vicious cycles of poverty and social injustice. As explicated by the Melinda Gates Foundation (2023), gender and equity-focused evaluations provide a lens to identify and understand the specific challenges, barriers and disparities faced by different genders and social groups. By interventions through gendered and transformation perspectives, these evaluations can reveal hidden biases, discrimination and unequal power dynamics. This knowledge is essential for developing targeted strategies and policies to address gender inequalities effectively.

Understanding gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations refers to the extent to which evaluations are conducted to consider the different needs, experiences and perspectives of women, men and other groups that

may be marginalised or disadvantaged (Grande 2008). Evaluations that are gender and equity-responsive recognise that social and cultural factors, as well as individual characteristics, can affect the outcomes of interventions. Therefore, evaluations that incorporate a gender and equity perspective aim to ensure that all individuals, regardless of their gender or other characteristics, have equal access to and benefit from the programmes, policies and interventions being evaluated. However, there are challenges to ensuring gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations (Bebbington & Davies 1983). One challenge is that gender and equity considerations may not always be explicitly incorporated into the evaluation design or data collection and analysis methods. Gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluations look explicitly at the equity dimensions of interventions, going beyond conventional quantitative data to the analysis of [behavioural] change, complex social processes, and attitudes, and collecting information on difficult-to-reach socially marginalised groups (Roberts 1991, p. 297). However, it has been acknowledged that evaluations of all kinds – design, implementation, outcome and impact – often perpetuate the status quo by failing to adequately incorporate issues of gender equality, social inclusion and human rights into their purview and methodologies (DPME 2021). This can result in gender and equity blind or neutral evaluations that have findings and recommendations that do not assist end-users of the evaluation (government, development partners, civil society organisations, etc.) to fundamentally address and transform the inequities in the sector or society they are evaluating.

Undertaking gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluations means that the entire life cycle of the evaluation – from conceptualisation through to validation – needs to have these lenses mainstreamed throughout the evaluation process cycle. According to Elster (1995), the skill sets required to undertake gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluations include the ability to apply equity-focused analytical methodologies such as intersectionality, feminism, indigeneity and human rights. The concept of 'intersectionality', for example, can be applied in the evaluation to understand and deconstruct multiple and overlapping identities (for example, black rural disabled women) and to determine the extent to which specific groups of women and girls (or indeed men and boys) may have benefited from a government or donor-funded interventions (Grande 2008). These enable evaluators to examine through frameworks such as gender analysis or critical theory how development programmes operate within power structures, systems and processes that may be creating or perpetuating gender inequalities or exclusionary practices (Barry 1989). Gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluations are, by their nature, culturally sensitive and pay explicit attention to ethics.

Challenges in ensuring gender-focused evaluation

For inclusivity to take place, there is a need to strengthen or establish evaluative evidence on gender equality and equity to go beyond the use of merely disaggregated data by sex to understanding the underlying causes of gender disparities and effectively addressing them through informed policy actions. (United Nations Women 2021). In addition, 'comprehensive qualitative and quantitative evidence is essential to indicate progress, and to appreciate the reasons behind the successes and the challenges in achieving gender equality' in the programming of public interventions (Naneix & Negroustoueva 2019, p. 20). Unfortunately, according to Fan et al. (2019), despite the 'selected reference to sex-disaggregated monitoring data, evaluation receives little attention, and evaluative evidence, particularly related to equity and gender equality, is not commonly used to inform policymakers' in many instances (Naneix & Negroustoueva 2019, p. 20).

Several nations, including South Africa, have worked on mainstreaming [equity and] gender in policies and programmes for such issues as poverty eradication, education, health, employment, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, migration and combating violent extremism (United Nations Women n.d., p. 7; DPME 2022):

> Many have also worked to bolster cooperation between national machinery and ministries. In some countries, intersectoral coordinating structures have been established to spearhead and coordinate gender mainstreaming in ministries, departments, and agencies. (United Nations Women n.d., p. 7)

However, the issue of equality in societies needs to go beyond rhetoric and political correctness and do a critical assessment of equity quotas and gender mainstreaming as mechanisms to foster genuine equality, reflecting the ongoing discourse in gender studies and social policy (Bahl & Smith 2020).

Evaluations that are gender and equity-responsive are crucial for promoting social justice, reducing inequalities and improving development outcomes (Elster 1995). However, despite the importance of gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations, significant gaps remain in this area. Many evaluations fail to adequately address gender and equity issues, leading to a limited understanding of the impact of programmes on different gender and equity groups. This can lead to the perpetuation of gender and equity disparities, as programmes may inadvertently exacerbate these inequalities.

According to Peled and Spiro (1998), there are several challenges to achieving gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations. One challenge

is the lack of understanding of gender and equity issues among evaluators, which can lead to a lack of attention to these issues in evaluation design and implementation (DPME 2022). Additionally, there may be limited data available on gender and equity issues, making it difficult to conduct rigorous evaluations that fully consider these factors. This can result in gender-blind evaluations that overlook the gender-specific needs and priorities of programme beneficiaries. Gender-sensitive evaluations require understanding gender theories, gender analysis frameworks and gender-responsive evaluation methods. This can be a challenge for evaluators who have not received training in gender analysis and gender-responsive evaluation (DPME 2022). Therefore, there is a need for research to explore effective strategies for promoting gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations.

Another challenge that was cited by Törnblom and Karzemi (2011) is that gender and equity-responsive evaluations require collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data to identify gender-specific outcomes and impacts. This includes examining how the programme or policy affects different groups of women and men and identifying any differential impacts based on gender. Unfortunately, gender-disaggregated data is often lacking or incomplete, making it difficult to assess the impact of policies and programmes on gender equality. Without reliable data, it is challenging to identify and measure gender-specific outcomes. Collecting gender-disaggregated data is essential for conducting gender-focused evaluations. However, there is a lack of gender-disaggregated data, in many contexts, making it difficult to identify gender-specific outcomes and impacts (American Evaluation Association [AEA] 2011).

Gender and equity mainstreaming often involves challenging existing gender norms and power structures. There may be resistance to incorporating a gender perspective in evaluations, particularly in contexts where gender equality is not a priority (AEA 2011). This can lead to a lack of political will to implement gender-sensitive evaluation policies and practices. In addition, this can create resistance among stakeholders who may be invested in maintaining the status quo. Resistance to change can make it difficult to incorporate gender and equity lenses in evaluations, as stakeholders may not see the value of conducting gender-focused evaluations (Bishop 1998). Bustelo (2003) mentions that gender mainstreaming requires political will and commitment from policymakers and programme implementers. Without political will, limited resources may be allocated to gender-focused evaluations and gender mainstreaming efforts may not be prioritised.

In conclusion, incorporating a gender lens into evaluations can be challenging because of various reasons (Elster 1995). Addressing these

challenges requires training evaluators in gender analysis, collecting reliable gender-disaggregated data, building political will for gender mainstreaming, allocating resources for gender-focused evaluations, addressing gender biases and stereotypes, and engaging stakeholders in the evaluation process (Hermes 1998).

Findings and discussion

Understanding the context of South Africa in equity and gender mainstreaming

South Africa's context necessitates evaluations that consider intersectionality, recognising that individuals experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage based on factors such as race, gender, class and disability. On the other hand, the South African Constitution, adopted in 1996, is renowned for its commitment to human rights, gender equality and social justice (Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities 2018).

In South Africa, there has been remarkable progress since 1994 in closing the gender and equity gaps across the social, political and public sectors, but the inclusive, equitable economic and financial participation of the vulnerable population, which includes women and youth, remains a challenge that still needs to be addressed. To ensure that policies being developed respond to these stated challenges, the South African government has introduced a panoply of transformation initiatives, one of which is strengthened M&E processes and systems. The main strategy employed is establishing and institutionalising M&E to improve public sector interventions, accountability and evidence-based decision-making and to generate knowledge about what is working and what is not working. In 2011, the need for an evaluation system was agreed upon, following which the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) was approved by the Cabinet in 2011 and revised in 2019. The South African NES, pioneered by the DPME, gained traction in government with over 100 evaluations commissioned, linked to government priorities and the National Development Plan (NDP), currently, eight provinces have provincial plans covering over 181 evaluations; 61 departments have departmental plans and 29 guidelines and templates on various components of the system developed (DPME 2020a).

Although substantial progress has been made in the evaluation landscape in South Africa over the past few years, there have been several strengths and notable weaknesses. The core successes and achievements are comprised of various key elements including coordination of the system, capacity

building, guidelines and tools, partnerships, evaluation dissemination, communication and uptake of the NES by departments in various spheres of government. Equally, there have been several limitations and challenges regarding the implementation of the NES. A notable area of improvement before the review of the NEPF was the lack of a coherent response to vulnerable groups and beneficiaries of the evaluated interventions. There were very few evaluations in the system that focused on interventions aimed at children, youth, women, persons with disabilities and gender equality, as the majority of DPME terms of references (TORs) did not cater sufficiently for equity and gender-responsive evaluation questions and issues of equity. The scarcity of evaluations focusing on children, youth, women, persons with disabilities and gender equality suggests a potential underrepresentation of these marginalised groups in the evaluation process. This oversight may result in a limited understanding of these groups' specific challenges and needs. In addition, the lack of equity and gender-responsive evaluation questions may inadvertently perpetuate inequalities and exacerbate existing challenges faced by marginalised groups. Evaluations that do not consider equity and gender may overlook unintended consequences that can further marginalise vulnerable populations. This hampers efforts to ensure that development initiatives are inclusive and equitable.

As part of strengthening the demand for and use of evaluation to inform public policies that are equity-focused and gender-responsive, the NES had to be intentional and provide comprehensive guidelines and tools to support government departments that have an aligned approach. The DPME and other government organisations have implemented the following interventions to institutionalise these focus areas.

Gender responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and auditing framework, 2019

According to the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) (2018), the gender responsive planning, budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and auditing framework (GRPBMEAF), developed in consultation with the DPME:

> [/]s … imperative in achieving the country's constitutional vision of a non-sexist society. It is aimed at ensuring better outcomes for women and girls and more tangible gender impacts in South Africa. Investing in women's empowerment and reducing the gender gap is an important driver of inclusive economic growth and development and will benefit both women and men, boys, and girls. (DWYPD, 2018, p. 28)

Thereby it:

> … focuses on mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in all evaluation components. It states that evaluations should be

> gender-responsive, with an explicit focus on women's rights and empowerment. It also recommends that gender-responsive evaluations be applied to any project or programme that aims for social impact, whether it has specific gender-sensitive objectives. (DST n.d., p. 7)

The framework is being implemented across all spheres of government and the DWYPD monitors its implementation.

☐ Gender responsive evaluations guideline: How to conduct gender-based evaluations?

The Guideline was approved in 2020. It:

> [*A*]ims to support and guide evaluators and commissioners of evaluation in initiating, managing and/or using gender-responsive evaluations by providing direction, advice, and tools for every step in the evaluation process: planning and budgeting for evaluations, commissioning evaluations, preparation, conducting, reporting, evaluation use and follow up and the institutionalisation of evaluations. It further seeks to support the mainstreaming of gender in government policies, planning, budgeting, legislation, programmes, and knowledge management [(DPME 2020b). The main purpose of the guideline is] to ensure that evaluations address the government's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. (DPME 2020b, p.1)

☐ Draft evaluation guideline: Integrating a transformative equity criterion in evaluations for promoting transformative systemic change

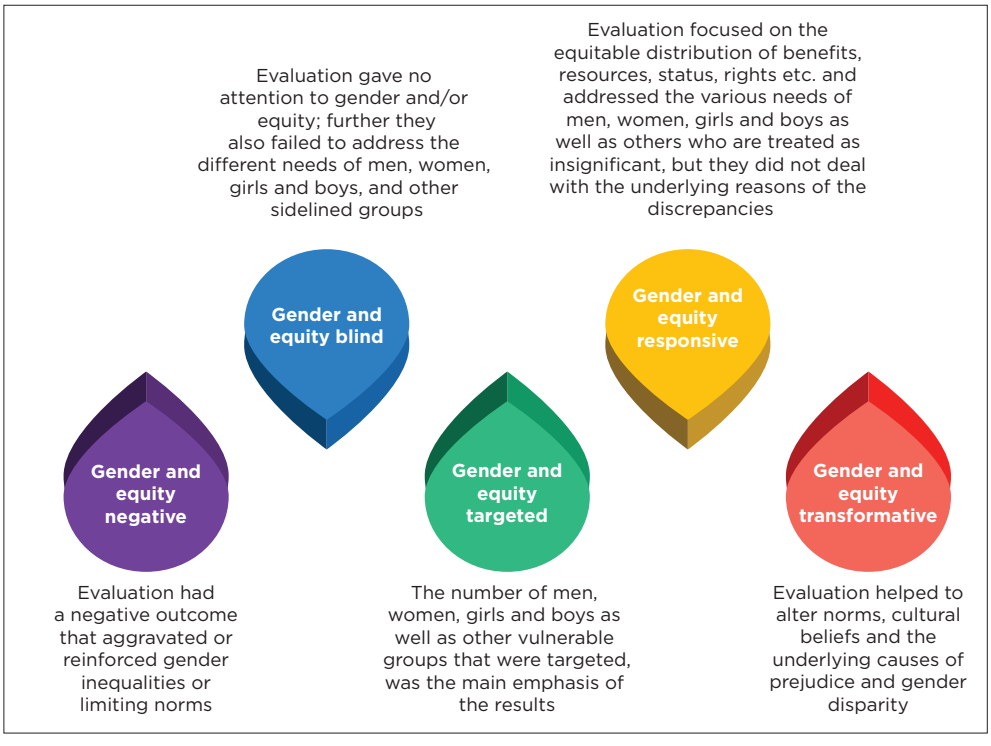
As part of strengthening efforts to improve the government's response to addressing equity issues in assessing the implementation of interventions, the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA) developed the guideline in partnership with the DPME in 2022. The purpose of this guideline is to guide NES stakeholders on applying an equity criterion to the life cycle of evaluations. Further to this broad objective, this guideline is designed to inform evaluators and commissioners of evaluation on how to incorporate the new transformational equity criterion and lens when planning and conducting evaluations to ensure that evaluations assess the extent to which interventions under review address the national commitment to redress inequalities that affect different sections of society. These guidelines were developed with the intention that any evaluation, regardless of the evaluand objectives or evaluation type, can integrate transformational equity as one of the different lenses by which the evaluand is assessed (DPME 2022).

Currently, the SAMEA has taken the lead in championing the inclusion of transformation, equity and gender issues in evaluations across South Africa. The recent piloting of the guidelines in two evaluations and the

facilitation of several workshops reflect the organisation's commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable practices within the evaluation field. By piloting the guidelines, SAMEA has taken a proactive stance in ensuring that evaluations in South Africa capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of all stakeholders involved. This step is crucial for accurate and comprehensive evaluations and for advancing social justice, empowerment and equality within the country. By organising and facilitating these workshops, SAMEA creates a platform for sharing best practices, fostering dialogue and building capacity among evaluation practitioners. These initiatives not only promote the adoption of inclusive evaluation approaches but also contribute to evaluators' professional development, ultimately strengthening the evaluation ecosystem in South Africa to be transformative.

Assessment of gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations conducted in the South African government

In the context of development initiatives and policies aimed at addressing unequal power dynamics between genders, the assessment of gender and equity responsiveness within evaluations conducted by the South African Government holds particular significance. Intentional consideration of 'Who benefits or who loses' and 'Who is included or who is excluded' in the intervention and evaluation process should be carefully considered. In evaluation planning and process, deliberate inclusion of those potentially disempowered by the initiative or intervention – meaning the historically marginalised, otherwise voiceless – must also be carefully thought about. Efforts must go beyond a 'do no harm' approach, ensuring that development policies and practices do not maintain or aggravate inequalities, discrimination and exclusion. The extent to which a programme's objectives, design, implementation and impact contribute, or do not, to addressing systematic inequities and promoting a more inclusive society should form part of policy formulation and implementation. As highlighted by Meyer et al. (2018), achieving gender equality, equity, women's rights and empowerment necessitates a deliberate focus within all stages of policy implementation, including evaluation processes. In this section, we delve into the methodology and criteria employed to evaluate the gender and equity responsiveness of governmental evaluations. Central to this assessment is the concept of inclusive transformation, emphasising the need for systemic changes within both the evaluand and the evaluation approach. An adaptation of the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) Gender Results Responsiveness Scale UNDP (2022) illustrates the key elements utilised in measuring gender and equity responsiveness, providing a roadmap for our discussion (Figure 7.1).



Source: UNDP (2021).

FIGURE 7.1: Adaptation of the Independent Evaluation Office Gender Results Responsiveness Scale.

To gauge the extent of equity and gender mainstreaming in evaluations led by the DPME, we assessed the gender and equity responsiveness of a purposefully sampled set of five evaluations. This assessment was conducted using an adaptation of the IEO Gender Results Responsiveness Scale, as per the UNDP guidelines from 2022. The evaluations undertaken by the DPME between 2016 and 2021 represent a diverse range of sectors, such as basic education, criminal justice, etc, reflecting the breadth of governmental initiatives under review (Table 7.1). This report summarises the findings from this assessment and details whether each evaluation met any of the criteria outlined in the adopted IEO responsiveness scale. A legend has been attached to the table to facilitate clearer interpretation and provide insight into the sectors covered by each evaluation.

TABLE 7.1: Rubric for measuring gender and equity responsiveness in evaluations conducted in the South African government.

Evaluation topic	Sector	Gender and equity negative	Gender and equity blind	Gender and equity targeted	Gender and equity responsive	Gender and equity transformative
1. Impact Evaluation of Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) in South Africa (2016/17)	Basic education	✗	✗	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓
2. Implementation Evaluation of Detective Services and Crime Investigation (2017/18)	Criminal justice or safety	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
3. Diagnostic Evaluation on Gender-based Violence and Femicide (GBVF) in South Africa (2016/17)	Social, criminal justice or safety	✗	✗	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓
4. Evaluation of the Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises (ISPESE) (2017/18)	Economy	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
5. Evaluation of Government Business Incentives (GBI) (2016/17)	Economy	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗

Source: UNDP (2021).

Legend

✓ Included before implementation ✓ Included during implementation ✓ Included after implementation ✗ No ✗ Yes

Impact evaluation of early grade reading study in South Africa (2016/17)

The Impact Evaluation of the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) in South Africa for the 2016/17 period initially did not include gender and equity considerations in its evaluation framework. However, both elements were subsequently integrated into the evaluation process during and after implementation. Notably, the evaluation was not gender and equity blind, as it acknowledged and addressed the distinct needs observed between girls and boys within the educational context.

The evaluation identified that improved classroom management and increased individualised attention could potentially enhance boys' engagement in learning activities, thereby bridging the performance gap between girls and boys. This insight underscores the importance of considering gender dynamics in educational interventions to ensure equitable outcomes.

To sustain the gender and equity responsiveness of the EGRS programme, the evaluation recommended tracking the original cohort of EGRS Grade 1 learners to assess the long-term benefits of interventions such as daily lesson plans and integrated Learning and Teaching Support Materials (LTSM). This proactive approach aims to continuously adapt and improve the programme to meet the diverse needs of learners.

Moreover, the evaluation highlighted the transformative potential of EGRS in addressing underlying causes of gender inequality. For instance, it revealed that in contexts with large class sizes, boys may face challenges in active learning participation because of limited individual attention and increased management complexities. By recognising and addressing these systemic barriers, the evaluation contributed to reshaping classroom dynamics and fostering a more inclusive learning environment.

Overall, the Impact Evaluation of EGRS in South Africa not only assessed programme effectiveness but also provided valuable insights into the importance of integrating gender and equity considerations in educational interventions to promote equitable outcomes and address systemic inequalities.

Implementation evaluation of detective services and crime investigation (2017/18)

The Implementation Evaluation of Detective Services and Crime Investigation for the 2017/18 period revealed significant shortcomings in addressing gender and equity dimensions throughout the evaluation process. Initially, the evaluation did not incorporate gender and equity

considerations either in the pre-evaluation phase or during the evaluation itself. The lack of explicit prioritisation of gender and transformation as key evaluation criteria within the evaluation's focus and methodology further exacerbated this oversight.

The absence of specific gender-related indicators or analytical frameworks limited the assessment of the programme's gender-sensitive outcomes and its potential for transformational change. Consequently, the resulting evaluation report failed to capture the nuanced impact of the programme on gender dynamics and the potential for transformational change within the targeted communities. Moreover, the lack of gender-disaggregated data and analysis hindered the understanding of how the programme affected different gender groups differently, impeding the identification of potential disparities.

While the ToR for the evaluation did specify the allocation of a percentage of person-days to women and youth, the actual exclusion of women and youth from the evaluation team contradicted this requirement. As highlighted by the DPME, the inclusion of women and youth in evaluation teams is crucial for providing diverse perspectives and experiences essential for conducting comprehensive gender and equity-focused evaluations. The exclusion of these groups not only perpetuated power imbalances within the evaluation process but also undermined the quality, relevance and effectiveness of the evaluation itself.

This exclusion rendered the evaluation gender- and equity-blind, as it failed to acknowledge or address the dimensions being assessed. It missed crucial opportunities to incorporate diverse viewpoints and experiences, limiting the understanding of gender and equity issues within the programme's implementation. As a result, the evaluation overlooked opportunities for empowerment and participation, ultimately diminishing its overall effectiveness in promoting gender-responsive and equitable outcomes within the criminal justice system.

In summary, the Implementation Evaluation of Detective Services and Crime Investigation for the 2017/18 period underscores the critical importance of integrating gender and equity considerations throughout the evaluation process to ensure comprehensive and effective assessments of programme impacts on diverse populations.

Diagnostic evaluation on gender-based violence and femicide in South Africa (2016/17)

The diagnostic evaluation on gender-based violence and femicide (GBVF) in South Africa for the 2016/17 period is notable for its intersectional approach, acknowledging the complex identities and experiences of

individuals and communities. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the diverse challenges faced by marginalised groups. Throughout the evaluation report, there is a clear effort to address the various needs of marginalised groups and advance women's rights. The evaluation focused on elements such as the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status and rights among marginalised groups and women, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity, fairness and sensitivity to their experiences.

However, despite these strengths, the evaluation was categorised as gender and equity blind, indicating a failure to explicitly consider gender and equity dimensions throughout the evaluation process. Additionally, it did not meet the last three criteria, suggesting a lack of responsiveness to gender concerns and a failure to address the underlying causes of gender inequality.

Nevertheless, the evaluation's explicit consideration of gender concerns underscores the recognition of gender's significant role in shaping individuals' experiences, opportunities and outcomes. By placing the experiences and voices of marginalised individuals at the centre of development initiatives, the evaluation contributes to more sustainable and inclusive outcomes.

In summary, while the diagnostic evaluation on GBVF in South Africa (2016/17) demonstrates strengths in its intersectional approach and acknowledgement of gender concerns, it falls short in explicitly addressing gender and equity dimensions, as well as meeting the last three criteria outlined.

Evaluation of the integrated strategy for the promotion of entrepreneurship and small enterprises (2017/18)

The Evaluation of the Integrated Strategy for the Promotion of Entrepreneurship and Small Enterprises (ISPESE) for the 2017/18 period initially lacked a gender and equity dimension in its pre-evaluation phase. However, equity was recognised as a critical area during the implementation phase of the evaluation. The evaluation identified Small, Medium and Micro-enterprises (SMMEs) as pivotal in addressing the economic and social wellbeing of impoverished communities in South Africa, particularly by integrating individuals from survivalist, lower-level and informal economies into the economic mainstream.

Efforts were made during the evaluation to identify plausible explanations for disparities, rendering it gender and equity-responsive. The evaluation

highlighted the role of the informal sector in promoting inclusive growth by providing opportunities for individuals with limited skills, women and young people to generate income. Furthermore, the adoption and amendments of certain acts were cited as facilitating more skilled and targeted service delivery to recipients of social grants, potentially impacting the participation of individuals in the informal economy since 2004.

However, despite these strengths, the post-evaluation phase failed to reflect any specific recommendations or plans related to gender and equity. This oversight diminishes the evaluation's overall effectiveness in addressing gender disparities and promoting equity within the context of entrepreneurship and small enterprises.

In summary, while the Evaluation of the ISPESE (2017/18) demonstrates efforts to address gender and equity considerations during the implementation phase, the absence of specific recommendations or plans in the post-evaluation phase limits its impact in promoting gender equality and equity within the targeted communities.

Evaluation of the gender-based initiative (2016/17)

The Evaluation of the Gender-Based Initiative (GBI) for the 2016/17 period faced limitations in its pre-evaluation phase by failing to incorporate gender and equity dimensions. However, the intervention's logic model predominantly featured indicators tied to gender, suggesting partial responsiveness to gender and equity considerations. Despite this, the evaluation fell short of achieving gender and equity transformative outcomes.

An absence of evidence to assess the evaluation's gender and equity responsiveness post-evaluation further compounds its limitations. This failure to integrate gender and equity dimensions during the pre-evaluation phase represents a significant oversight, potentially resulting in missed opportunities to identify and address gender-specific needs and barriers. A more robust inclusion of gender and equity considerations could have informed more targeted data collection and analysis, thereby enhancing the evaluation's depth and relevance.

While the presence of gender-related indicators indicates some level of responsiveness, it is essential to scrutinise the depth and breadth of these indicators. The evaluation should have assessed whether these indicators merely capture surface-level gender-related outcomes or go beyond to address underlying gender disparities and power imbalances.

In summary, while the Evaluation of the GBI (2016/17) demonstrates some responsiveness to gender and equity through the inclusion of

gender-related indicators, its failure to incorporate gender and equity dimensions during the pre-evaluation phase and lack of evidence for post-evaluation assessment represents significant limitations in achieving transformative outcomes.

Lessons learnt

The journey towards integrating equity and inclusivity assessments into policy formulation and implementation has unveiled a series of critical lessons. The DPME in 2022 highlighted that such integration necessitates comprehensive data collection, rigorous analysis and extensive engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, particularly marginalised communities. This collaborative effort ensures that policies not only prioritise inclusivity but also effectively address systemic inequities, paving the way for a society that champions social justice and enhances the wellbeing of every citizen.

One of the foremost insights gained is the pivotal role of gender and equity-focused evaluations in shaping targeted and effective policies. These evaluations enable policymakers to identify and address systemic inequities, ensuring that policies are deliberately designed to benefit the most vulnerable and marginalised sectors of the population. Such a targeted approach not only maximises the impact of policies but also ensures that resources are allocated where they are most needed, promoting a more equitable distribution of resources. Moreover, the process of assessing the impact of policies on inclusivity empowers policymakers to make informed decisions regarding the continuation, adaptation or discontinuation of policies. This evidence-based approach guarantees that policies contributing positively to marginalised groups are not only sustained but also expanded. Integrating equity and inclusivity assessments into policy-making processes enhances accountability and transparency. Policymakers are thereby held accountable for the creation of policies that aspire towards a more inclusive society, fostering public trust and confidence in governmental actions.

One of the most transformative lessons learned is that policies addressing systematic inequities and fostering inclusivity have the potential to effect long-term systemic change. These policies challenge and aim to dismantle structural barriers and inequalities, laying the groundwork for profound social progress. Adaptive policy development emerges as a crucial strategy, with continuous monitoring enabling policymakers to respond to emerging needs and challenges promptly. This flexibility ensures that policies remain relevant and effective in addressing the dynamic landscape of societal needs.

Furthermore, inclusive policies significantly contribute to social cohesion and stability. When policies make all segments of society feel valued and included, it nurtures a sense of belonging and diminishes social tensions. A critical aspect of this process is the commitment required to challenge existing power structures and amplify the voices of those historically marginalised. Incorporating the perspectives and experiences of these communities in the design, implementation and evaluation of interventions not only acknowledges and prioritises their needs but also empowers these communities, promoting a broader sense of social justice.

In summary, the lessons learned highlight the indispensable need for gender and equity-focused evaluations in the realm of policy formulation and implementation. Such evaluations not only foster targeted and effective policies but also promote equitable resource allocation, accountability, long-term systemic change and social cohesion, all of which are foundational to building an inclusive society.

Recommendations

Promoting accountability and ensuring the uptake of evaluation recommendations is crucial to leveraging the potential impact of gender and equity evaluations. In addition, ensuring that equity and gender issues are adequately addressed in evaluations requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach. Here are some recommendations for the South African government to consider:

Recommendation 1: Policy integration – the government should develop and implement policies that explicitly integrate equity and gender considerations into the evaluation process. This could include guidelines or frameworks that mandate the inclusion of gender and equity indicators, data collection methods and analysis techniques in all evaluations conducted across government departments.

Recommendation 2: Capacity building – the government should invest in building the capacity of evaluation practitioners to address equity and gender issues effectively. This can be achieved through training programmes, workshops and knowledge-sharing platforms that equip evaluators with the necessary skills and tools to conduct gender-responsive evaluations. Additionally, efforts should be made to diversify the evaluation workforce by promoting the inclusion of women and youth as evaluators.

Recommendation 3: Inclusive stakeholder engagement – evaluations should involve the active participation of diverse stakeholders, including women, youth and marginalised groups. The government should establish mechanisms for meaningful stakeholder engagement, such as consultation

processes, focus groups or participatory evaluation methods. This ensures that the voices and perspectives of those most affected by equity and gender disparities are heard and considered in the evaluation process.

Recommendation 4: Data collection and analysis – evaluation design should incorporate gender-sensitive and equity-focused data collection and analysis methods. This includes disaggregating data by gender and other relevant demographic factors, employing intersectional approaches and using qualitative methods to capture nuanced experiences and perspectives. The government should provide clear guidance on data collection protocols and ensure the availability of reliable and up-to-date data on gender and equity indicators.

Recommendation 5: Reporting and dissemination – evaluation reports should clearly articulate findings, recommendations and lessons learned regarding equity and gender issues. The government should prioritise the dissemination of evaluation results to key stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society organisations and the public. Efforts should be made to present the findings in accessible formats and engage in targeted dissemination strategies to maximise impact and understanding.

Recommendation 6: Monitoring and accountability – establishing mechanisms to monitor the implementation of evaluation recommendations related to equity and gender is crucial. The government should hold relevant departments and stakeholders accountable for acting on evaluation findings and integrating them into policy and programming decisions. Regular monitoring and reporting on the progress made in addressing equity and gender issues will help drive continuous improvement and ensure the sustainability of evaluation efforts.

Recommendation 7: Learning and knowledge sharing – the government should encourage learning and knowledge sharing across different evaluation initiatives. This can be achieved through platforms such as communities of practice, conferences and workshops that facilitate dialogue, collaboration and the exchange of best practices. Creating spaces for evaluators and stakeholders to share experiences and lessons learned will contribute to the collective understanding and improvement of equity and gender-responsive evaluations.

By adopting these recommendations, the South African government can create an enabling environment for the effective integration of equity and gender considerations in evaluations. This will lead to more informed decision-making, improved policies and programmes, and enhanced progress towards achieving gender equality and equity in the country.

Conclusion

The main lesson learnt is that incorporating gender-sensitive and equity-focused data collection and analysis methods in the evaluation design is vital for generating insights into the impact of programmes and policies on marginalised populations. Gender and equity-focused evaluations help assess the effectiveness and impact of policies, programmes and interventions in addressing social justice issues. They examine whether these initiatives are reaching and benefiting all individuals equally, or if they inadvertently perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities. By measuring outcomes and identifying unintended consequences, these evaluations provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of interventions, helping to refine and improve future efforts. Evaluations that prioritise gender and equity considerations generate valuable data and evidence that can inform decision-making processes. Policymakers, organisations and stakeholders can use this evidence to shape policies, allocate resources and prioritise actions that promote social justice. These evaluations provide a robust foundation for advocating for change, influencing public opinion and fostering accountability.

Integrating evaluative evidence into policymaking processes is essential for promoting evidence-based, inclusive and equitable development strategies. Unfortunately, many of the evaluation reports in the DPME repository have insufficiently (Naneix & Negroustoueva 2019):

> [/]ntegrated or reported on elements of gender-responsive assessment or gender analysis… In [several instances,] reports included annexes with sex-disaggregated data but without relevant analysis in the body of the report itself. [Limited explicit gender-responsive evaluative evidence was found.] The overarching conclusion is that [respective of the] selected reference to sex-disaggregated monitoring data, evaluation receives little attention, and evaluative evidence, particularly related to equity and gender equality, is not commonly used to inform policymakers in the [evaluation reports] reviewed. (pp. 19–20)

The findings highlight the need to strengthen equity and gender mainstreaming efforts in evaluations as evaluations are valuable tools for assessing the effectiveness and impact of policies and programmes, and their findings should play a more prominent role in informing policymaking. Lastly, the underutilisation of evaluative evidence related to equity and gender equality suggests that evidence-based insights may not fully inform policy decisions. This may result in the continuation of policies that perpetuate inequalities and hinder progress towards gender equality.

Chapter 8

Current epistemological challenges in evaluation perpetuating inequality 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

Vongai Chibvongodze
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 ability to use evaluation evidence to bring about transformative change in pursuit of equity is predicated upon the kind of evidence generated and the quality thereof. Scientific evidence is needed for decision-makers and policymakers to know 'what works' or which strategies will best achieve development goals (Parkhurst 2017). For a long time, the most trusted evaluation evidence came from quantitative-statistical (primarily experimental) studies, and how these studies are conducted, or the information produced went unquestioned. Recently, however, the so-called pure objectivity, neutrality and value-free rigorous application of these methods have been shown to, in fact, be subjective and value-laden

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(Clark 1998; Picciotto 2020). Thus, it calls into question the foundations of evaluators' methods to generate evidence and their appropriateness for assessing development interventions.

In truth, the generation of evaluation evidence is a complex process that begins with the philosophical assumptions that inform an evaluator's understanding of reality, knowledge and values. Most often, however, evaluations are method-driven (Jones et al. 2016), meaning that evaluators tend to select methodologies based on hierarchies of evidence or current discourse. 'Rather than to seek a methodology which can deal with the problems, evaluative researchers have tended to search for some view of the problem which fits available methods' (Ball 1977, p. 2). Similarly, Layder (2021) argues that problem-driven research should be at the centre of the social sciences. An important quality of an evaluation is the information it provides, which should be credible and useful; however, when blindly applying methodologies which were developed in and for a different context, evaluators compromise the integrity of the results.

The guiding principles for evaluators developed by the American Evaluation Association (2018) suggest that efforts to achieve equity involve alleviating historic disadvantage and the structural inequalities still in existence. Historically, Africa has experienced epistemic violence from the Global North, exemplified by the dominance of evaluation theories and approaches from Western countries, which trivialised and ignored indigenous knowledge systems (Dighe 2023). Africa is facing complex development problems that are rooted in histories of oppression, exploitation and violence, which created legacies of systemic and structural inequalities, and an intersectionality of suffering, that cannot be understood and explained by simple numeralisation, rationalisation and decontextualisation of complex phenomena offered by positivist (quantitative) methods of inquiry (Jones et al. 2016). Considering equity in African evaluation practice requires a different view of reality, a different understanding of what constitutes knowledge, and very different values from those that were imposed on us by Western theories, models and methods.

Historically, development problems have been isolated by development interventions at their lowest form, the individual or community level, while issues at this level are merely byproducts of issues at higher systems and sectoral levels. Without a full view of these problems, evaluations will never contribute to transformation. In its current form, evaluation continues to serve the interests of funders and commissioners and marginalises those it should truly be serving. To promote equitable development in Africa, evaluations must be guided by epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions that ensure suitable responses to the complexity of the social problems on the continent, and the underlying historical, socio-economic, cultural and political inequalities that exist.

While some of the seminal literature and frameworks on equitable evaluation, developed in other contexts, have argued for a paradigm shift in evaluation, as they challenge how we perceive and conceive reality, knowledge, evidence and truth (EEF 2021), this chapter recognises that in fact when an evaluator needs to make decisions pertaining to what to investigate; how to investigate it; what data to generate; how to ensure its validity, credibility and usability; how to analyse the data; and what conclusions can be drawn, the evaluator 'unconsciously turns to paradigmatic rules to find out what to do' (Patton 1982, p. 4). This means that when evaluators are faced with decisions about designing evaluations for assessing development interventions they revert to the standard practice and sets of rules found in the evaluation models and theories in which they were trained and socialised, without a conscious understanding of the philosophical assumptions that underpin them (Muchanga 2020; Patton 1982).

This chapter argues that equitable evaluation in Africa challenges evaluators to make the 'unconscious' conscious through unpacking the epistemological, ontological and axiological assumptions that inform methodological decisions and their incompatibility with an equitable worldview. Above all, however, this chapter asserts that equitable evaluation in Africa needs to embrace the Afrocentricity paradigm, a philosophical theory of social change by Molefi Kete Asante, which puts forward a worldview where African people and their experiences are at the centre. If this paradigm underpins evaluation practice in Africa, epistemologies and methodologies arising from it will be focused on knowledge generation for the purpose of activating the African consciousness, to achieve the liberation of African people in every sphere of society.

History of evaluation research paradigms

It is not possible to discuss epistemologies without discussing the entire philosophical frameworks (i.e. paradigms) from which they originate. The discussion on paradigms is relevant in evaluation because while it is a distinct field, the use of research methods when conducting evaluations began early on when there was a realisation that these methods could be applied to understand and generate knowledge on real-world problems, and through their application to determine the value, merit and worth of government programmes (Deane & Harré 2016).

Definitions

Paradigms (philosophical frameworks) were first defined in the context of scientific inquiry by Thoman Kuhn in 1962 for use in the natural science field and then were later adopted and applied to the social sciences (Aliyu

et al. 2014). The reason the term 'paradigm' was utilised by Kuhn was to illustrate the way in which a specific school of thought and practice becomes hegemonic and accepted as normal scientific practice. Also arguing that a new type of scientific thought and practice can compete with it and replace it as dominant. One of the key achievements of using the concept of paradigms was 'to make explicit the existence of premises on which all intellectual inquiries are necessarily based, thus rendering the idea of scientific neutrality and universality untenable' (Mazama 2001, p. 390). The definition of paradigms as we know them in the social sciences today, including the evaluation field, largely stems from the central tenets argued by Kuhn, comprising of cognitive and structural elements. The cognitive component has three different levels: (1) a metaphysical level (i.e. involving the basic organising principles and foundational set of beliefs), (2) a sociological level (i.e. collective practices and norms of the scientific community and shared commitment) and (3) exemplars, concrete problem-solutions encountered (Mazama 2001).

The second central aspect of Kuhn's definition of a paradigm is the structural aspect, which scholars assert refers to the community structure, that is the community of practitioners engaged in the cognitive component. It is argued that this aspect is critical because Kuhn argued that a paradigm required a community of practice as a precondition. He argued that continuous problem-solving only occurs when a group of scientists exists who share a set of beliefs and consensus around the phenomena under investigation and the methods used, etc. (Mazama 2001).

The concept of 'paradigm' was further expanded and applied to the social science field. Patton stated that 'a paradigm is a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world' (Patton 1975, p. 4). However, the definition and additional tenets proposed by Guba and Lincoln provide some of the basis of the arguments made by this chapter. Guba and Lincoln (1982) defined paradigms as 'axiomatic systems characterised essentially by their differing sets of assumptions about the phenomena into which they are designed to inquire' (Guba & Lincoln 1982, p. 233). An axiom is defined as a principle that is widely accepted based on its inherent merit, or regarded as self-evidently true, while its adjective is defined as 'obviously true and therefore not needing to be proved' (Cambridge Dictionary 2023). This alludes to one of the key challenges in the generation of evidence, as evaluators accept methodologies taught and apply them without critically considering the basis of these approaches and the implications that that has on the kind of information that is produced.

An important new element that Guba and Lincoln added in their publication of the *Handbook of Social Research Methods* in 1994 was axiological assumptions as a category of paradigms (Lincoln & Guba 2011, p. 169). An axiology is a philosophical assumption about the

nature of value (what is good, right or of value?). Thus, Guba and Lincoln defined paradigms as philosophical frameworks consisting of assumptions relating to reality (ontology), epistemology (knowledge) and ethics (axiology) which guide systematic scientific research (methodology) (Alele & Malau-Aduli 2023; Mertens 2012). This additional category is particularly critical when thinking of equitable evaluation, and the various paradigms from which its approaches are derived. Equitable evaluation approaches differ from other approaches in evaluation, in that those mainstream methodologies are guided by ontologies and how they affect epistemologies and axiologies. In equitable evaluation, however, the axiological assumptions guide the thoughts and assumptions around ontologies and epistemologies (Mertens 2012).

Paradigm wars

The importance of paradigms in social inquiry was long debated in what was known as the 'paradigm wars' in the 1960s and 1970s when the legitimacy and merits of the paradigms that underpin quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods were questioned, and there were disputes over dominance. The paradigm wars centred around the opposing ontological as well as epistemological positions guiding quantitative as well as qualitative research and evaluation. What is currently understood about the differences between qualitative and quantitative research relates to the use of quantified or numeric data for the one school of thought and non-numeric data, preferably words, for the other school. During the time of the paradigm wars, however, the conflict between the two schools of thought was not primarily centred around technical issues but rather the philosophical underpinnings of the two. This means the debates were primarily concerned with theories on the best ways to study human beings and their societies, which are the fundamental aspects of the 'social' sciences. The focus on the philosophical assumptions of the different methodologies offered intellectual reasoning and legitimacy for the emergence of qualitative research methods in the 1970s (Bryman 2008). These wars were actually triggered by the scholarly work of Thomas Kuhn who insisted that scientific research evolves through the successive replacement of one scientific paradigm by another, none of which could be combined because of their incompatibility (Bryman 2008; Mertens 2012).

The notion of evidence-informed policymaking and programming has been traced back to the 1930s but grew significantly following World War II when evaluations were conducted on national educational and crime prevention programmes in the United States of America (USA) and Europe (Hogan 2007; Parkhurst 2017). For decades what was referred to as the evaluation research field back then was dominated by the 'scientific or positivist paradigm', derived from the natural sciences (Guba &

Lincoln 1982). This meant that programme evaluations were exclusively conducted using quantitative, experimental designs and analysed using multivariate statistics based on the positivist paradigm (Lincoln & Guba 1986; Patton 1975). Patton (1975) indicated that from the 1960s in conferences and literature, there was consensus in the evaluation and policy research fields that the positivist paradigm offered the most desirable research methods, with some scholars arguing that this paradigm was 'the only available route to cumulative progress' (Patton 1975, p. 12). The positivist paradigm was viewed as the epitome of good science in the social sciences.

Literature at the time presented several reasons for the dominance of the positivist paradigm, which go beyond the merits of the methodologies themselves such as the fact that the proponents were based at universities and thus, not only used it in their evaluation research but also instilled a commitment to it in their students (Patton 1975). This then makes paradigms normative, because they guide and govern practitioners' work, including what is viewed as important, legitimate and reasonable; thus, they remove any need for thinking around the assumptions underpinning this work. The latter, according to Patton (1982) is their weakness. Patton (1975) criticised the proponents of the positivist paradigm in the evaluation field, arguing a lack of interest in the relevance of the information collected to the programme evaluated; whether decision-makers and programme participants utilised the evaluation information; whether the outcomes measured were of importance to the programme funders, administrators and participants; and whether the evaluation design and results were understandable to the commissioners. The heavy reliance on quantitative methodologies proved more problematic in practice than in theory, which also led to critiques of the positivist epistemology that forms its basis (Reichardt & Cook 1980). In addition, scepticism emerged as the achievements of the evaluation field at the time were questioned.

Patton presented an alternative, methodological paradigm in 1975, which he referred to as the 'naturalistic' paradigm (known today as the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm). He stated that this paradigm was derived from anthropological field studies, specifically from the fields and theories of phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, psychology, ethnomethodology, critical theory and the doctrine of Verstehen. The latter doctrine claimed that human beings are different from other objects of study because they have purpose and feelings, and their values, plans and purposes influence their behaviour. Human beings make meaning of the world they live in and their actions have meaning, unlike the actions of non-human subjects, which have no meaning (Patton 1975, p. 13). Unlike the positivist paradigm which has the goal of predicting, Patton (1982) referred to the alternative (constructivist) as a holistic-inductive, anthropological paradigm which aims to understand social phenomena.

Triggering alternative paradigms

Scholars have provided information pertaining to the different assumptions of these two paradigms about the nature of reality, knowledge, values and attribution or explanation of action, and assumptions about the inquirer-object or evaluator-participant relationship (Guba & Lincoln 1982; Williams 2020). The scientific or positivist paradigm attempts to apply the natural science view of reality, which is focused on searching for general and natural laws. The thinking in modern positivism was derived from the work of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), which advocated for science as the most appropriate means of studying people and the society in which they live, coining the term positive philosophy, to express the idea that there exists both positive and negative philosophy (Corry, Porter & McKenna 2019).

In terms of its ontological assumptions, the positivist paradigm argues that there is a single, tangible reality, a 'real' world which exists outside of the perception and comprehension of human beings. It is the principle that reality is free and independent of those who observe it. Some scholars have referred to this ontology as naïve realism (Lincoln & Guba 2011). It is the belief that the world is made up of natural laws which are permanent and unchangeable, which explain cause and effect. Thus, people's actions are subject to social laws and rules, like those of the natural world. Objectivism characterises the belief of positivist proponents around epistemology (Aliyu et al. 2014). This means that the knowledge is objective truth, and it is the goal of the researcher or evaluator to uncover it through the collection of facts about these laws. Positivists refer to these social laws as 'empirically observable relations of cause and effect' (Corry et al. 2019, p. 3). It is this reality of cause and effect which can be studied and predicted by scientific research (Abuhamda, Ismail & Bsharat 2021; Guba & Lincoln 1982).

One of the major problems identified across the literature (both in earlier decades and more recently) is the reductionism of the positivist paradigm (Aliyu et al. 2014). Scholars argue that 'quantitative methods have, it is true, been largely underpinned by positivist principles, and they have contributed more than anything else to the over-simplification or reduction of human experience (reductionism)' (Ryan 2006, p. 20). In the context of evaluative research, scholars have criticised the reductionism of the 'what works' question. Parkhurst (2017) argued that:

> '[*E*]quating policymaking with questions of 'what works' serves to replace the challenging, but essential political question of 'what should we do in our situation? with the simpler (more attractive) question of 'what produces an effect'. (p. 94)

The criticism by proponents of the naturalistic or constructivist or interpretivist paradigm is that the positivist paradigm presents a problematic

assumption of reality because the kind of phenomena that are of interest to the social sciences, including the evaluation field, are not the tangible events themselves but the meanings and interpretations that people assign to them because it is this meaning that mediates human behaviour (Lincoln & Guba 2011). The meanings or constructions exist only in the minds of people. Instead, the naturalistic or constructivist or interpretivist paradigm proposed that multiple, intangible realities can be studied holistically. These multiple realities are a result of multiple constructions of reality by different people. 'The basic ontological assumption of constructivism is relativism, that is, that human (semiotic) sense-making organises experience to make it comprehensible and explainable' (Guba & Lincoln 2011, p. 1). The latter scholars argue that within the relativism ontological belief is the idea that an objective truth does not exist.

Regarding knowledge accumulation (methodology), the positivist paradigm believes that the aim of quantitative research is to produce a nomothetic body of knowledge (i.e. search for general and universal laws), which is the knowledge that is best captured in generalisations. Generalisations are referred to as truth statements of enduring value which are context-free. Generalisations are made up of similarities among units of analysis, so to this paradigm, differences are not of interest. The constructivist paradigm states that qualitative research aims to produce knowledge relating to specific and uniquely describing individuals, cases or groups and their particular experiences (i.e. idiographic knowledge). To the constructivist paradigm, making general deductions about social phenomena is not possible because phenomena do not occur in a vacuum, meaning they are affected by the context and time within which they occur (Guba & Lincoln 1982). This paradigm believes that people are constantly interpreting occurrences within their contexts (Bryman 2008). Thus, the more individuals an evaluator studies, the more realities they encounter. This means then that research into these multiple realities will diverge so they cannot be manipulated and predicted but it is possible to understand individuals within their contexts (Guba & Lincoln 1982).

Regarding axiology, the positivist paradigm states that inquiry is value-free, which is guaranteed by the objectivity of the methodology used. The argument is that quantitative methods ensure the neutrality of the evaluator and rigour, and generate data that 'speak for themselves' (Hampson & McKinley 2023). While the constructivist paradigm argues that inquiry is always value-driven in a variety of ways. Firstly, the values of the researcher or evaluator always influence the choice of study topic and the way in which the problem is framed. Secondly, research is influenced by the values of the paradigms underlying the approaches selected. Thirdly, the values of the researcher or evaluator also influence inquiry through other choices made such as the theories and methods used for data collection and

analysis. Fourthly, research is influenced by the values that are intrinsic to the context within which social phenomena occur. Lastly, there is what is termed 'value-resonance', which refers to congruence between the social problem, paradigm, methods and context, which the constructivist paradigm asserts, is required to obtain meaningful research results (Chilisa & Kawulich 2017; Guba & Lincoln 1982).

What is critical to understand is that while these two paradigms were the two extremes which were pinned against each other, there were other alternatives which were developed by scholars and researchers who criticised the positivist paradigm and offered alternative conceptualisations of reality, truth, knowledge, methodologies, etc. One such example is the postpositivist or poststructuralist paradigm. While this paradigm shares the basic beliefs and principles of the positivist paradigm, it differs in some important ways, including a belief that it is futile to think that definitive knowledge of reality (i.e. knowledge that is certain) can be obtained. There was the argument that the unobservable exists just as much as phenomena that could be observed, thus rejecting a strict dichotomy of the positivist and constructivist paradigms but rather being the first proponents to advocate for a paradigm or epistemological pluralism (Clark 1998). The latter is what Patton referred to as 'a paradigm of choices' (Chafe 2023, p. 5). Epistemological pluralism means that there is no such thing as one correct scientific method, but rather that the selection of methods should be guided by the research or evaluation questions (Wildemuth 1993). The post-positivist paradigm maintains that reality exists apart from our understanding of it; however, it does not agree that methods can be used to ensure certainty and universally generalisable knowledge, nor can it be value-free but assumes that what is possible are context-dependent generalisations, which require replicability of methods in those similar situations (Cooper 1997; Panhwar, Ansari & Shah 2017).

Post-positivism is the beginning of the conceptualisation of mixed methodology. The seemingly fundamental and irreconcilable differences between the positivist and constructivist paradigms, which formed the essence of the paradigm wars, made the rationale for a paradigm for mixed methods designs difficult. The reasons which relate to the key arguments by Thomas Kuhn, include (1) the fundamental differences in philosophical beliefs and assumptions would make it impossible for proponents from the two schools of thought to communicate and work together and (2) evolution within scientific research occurs when social phenomena can no longer be explained by old approaches and methodologies, requiring the development of new ways of conducting research (i.e. a paradigm shift) (Aryal 2023; Orman 2016). It was initially argued that mixed methods were not possible because of the 'seemingly incompatible paradigms underpinning them' (Hall 2013, p. 2).

According to one of the most well-known proponents of the pragmatic paradigm (John Dewey), both the post-positivist idea that reality exists apart from our understanding of it and the constructivist idea that reality is created by our constructions of it, have the same level of importance in articulating the nature of the human experience. The pragmatic philosophical framework emphasises human experience and views research as an experience. It believes that the experiences of human beings of the world are limited by the nature of that world but also that their understanding of the world is also inherently constrained by the way they interpret those experiences (they look different, but they refer to the same thing).

The pragmatic paradigm adopted the notions of 'shared beliefs within a community of researchers who share a consensus about which questions are most meaningful and which methods are most appropriate for answering those questions' (Morgan 2007, p. 53). The term paradigm is understood by the pragmatic school of thought as shared worlds within which practitioners can exercise their influence regarding the nature of meaning and which actions can be used to capture it (Coates 2021; Morgan 2007). As Mertens so aptly put it, the fundamental principle of the pragmatic paradigm informs mixed methods in that it argues that there is no knowledge assertion that may be regarded as providing the 'truth', instead this paradigm argues that different knowledge assertions emerge from engaging differently with the world (Kelly & Cordeiro 2020; Mertens 2012). This argument propelled the importance of mixed methodology in current evaluative research practice.

According to Mertens (2012), scholars promoted the notion of a single paradigm to explain mixed methods. Within this school of thought three different paradigms allow for epistemological pluralism, including (1) dialectical pluralism, which integrates both the constructivist and post-positivist paradigms; (2) the pragmatic paradigm and (3) the transformative paradigm (Hall 2013; Mertens 2012). Dialectic pluralism argues that the combination of the quantitative nature of the post-positivist paradigm and the qualitative nature of the constructivist paradigm in both data collection and analysis means that deeper meaning can be obtained through the alignment and misalignment of the approaches used. The pragmatic paradigm supports the mixed methods approach as appropriate because of the belief that no single method is appropriate for explaining social phenomena; instead, this paradigm believes that the selection of methods should be based on alignment to the research or evaluation question and which method would be most effective (Mertens 2012).

Unlike the third paradigm proposed as guiding mixed methodology (i.e. transformative paradigm), in every other preceding paradigm, epistemological assumptions (i.e. philosophical theories of what constitutes knowledge) are guided by ontological assumptions (i.e. theories of the

nature of reality), while axiological assumptions (i.e. theories of the nature of value, right or good) (Westhorp 2018) were either overlooked or were thought of with regards to the standards and quality of inquiry, which is in fact not the intention that Lincoln and Guba (2011) had when they developed the notion and introduced it into the categories of paradigmatic frameworks.

Axiology is described as the division of philosophy that studies values, including those of aesthetics, ethics as well as religion. Instead, they stated that 'arguably, axiology has been defined out of scientific inquiry for no larger a reason than that it also concerns "religion". But defining "religion" broadly to encompass "spirituality"' (Lincoln & Guba 2011, p. 169). These scholars assert that understanding axiologies as philosophical assumptions about spirituality would make constructivists more open to participative researchers or evaluators and would make critical theorists more open to both constructivist and participative researchers. These scholars argued that the decision to include axiology as an element of the paradigm construct was based on the endeavour to harmonise the different models within the constructivist research paradigm. These scholars argue that axiologies offer legitimacy to exploring spiritual phenomena within scientific inquiry, and make it possible to explore the 'sacred' aspects of the human experience. It is where 'the spiritual meets social inquiry' (Lincoln & Guba 2011, p. 169). The latter notions that informed the inclusion of axiologies in the conception of the term paradigm were derived from work by scholars such as Peter Reason.

Peter Reason (1993) argued that:

> [*S*]cience is inadequate for our times and points to the pressing need to re-sacralize our experience of ourselves and our world. It suggests that a sacred human inquiry based on love, beauty, wisdom and engagement is one of the highest virtues and possibilities of human consciousness. (p. 273)

The latter suggests that this scholar proposed that social research be guided by virtues and morality because (Reason 1993) argued that the:

> [*K*]ey characteristic of the human person is the capacity for self-direction. If we are to fully respect this capacity … we must treat all those involved in an inquiry as at least potentially self-determining, and thus see them as co-researchers involved equally in the action. (p. 275)

His thoughts were among those that informed participatory methodologies. This scholar together with John Herem introduced what they called the participatory or cooperative paradigm.

Building on the importance of axiological assumptions asserted by the preceding scholars, Donna Mertens proposed the transformative paradigm as a manner through which to express the need for mixed methods designs as this integration is believed to be better able to capture the complexities of social issues and present more comprehensive resolutions (Mertens 2012). She stated that the transformative paradigm stems from

an ethical position which highlights the importance of pursuing social justice and the human rights of citizens. The ontological assumption here is that reality is multi-faceted and reflective of different power positionalities in society. Thus, she argues that those working within the transformative paradigm should integrate cultural responsiveness into social inquiry. 'The transformative ontological assumption rejects cultural relativism while recognising that different versions of what is believed to be real exist' (Mertens 2012, p. 806). This scholar and others within this school of thought assert that harm to participants arises when adopting a view that acknowledges the existence of differing perceptions of reality but, overlooks factors which favour one reality over others, including political, socio-economic, ethnic, cultural, gender and disability lenses shaping people's view of reality, etc. Furthermore, the ontological assumption within this paradigm stresses the fact that what is regarded as reality is, in fact, a socially constructed state of the world that has been shaped by historical circumstances such as oppressive social systems and policies (Mertens 2012).

These ontological beliefs inform the epistemological assumptions as these scholars posit that the influence of power and privilege needs to be considered when studying what constitutes knowledge. Mertens (2012) states that:

> [*T*]o understand differing versions of reality and how they are synergistically related to power issues, the researcher needs to establish an interactive link with community members. This involves understanding the historical and social contexts, as well as building relationships that acknowledge power differences. (p. 807)

These beliefs paved the way for the development of the indigenous paradigm by Chilisa, which is central to the decolonisation and indigenisation of African research and evaluation practices (Burton 2012, p. 46), which influenced the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE). This later led to her development of the African-based relational paradigm. She argued that indigenous MAE frameworks are important because they redress the epistemic violence experienced by African scholars and practitioners. Chilisa and Mertens (2021) posit that for evaluation to contribute to the achievement of transformative change in Africa, attention should be given to contextual and cultural issues such as incorporating indigenous scholars, and should be informed by ethics and good values.

This chapter takes this argument further to say that to truly contribute to achieving transformative change, evaluative research in Africa should be underpinned by the Afrocentricity paradigm developed by Asante, as it goes beyond the experience of Africa evaluators and centres inquiry on the worldview of the African people who are often simply the units of analysis from which evaluation extracts its information. The proposal of the

importance of this paradigm for guiding equitable evaluation in Africa is that it removes the Anglo-European gaze on African people and the African experience, and argues that African people define themselves, their reality and their knowledge on their own terms, instead of 'accepting Europeans' definition of their reality [*and identity*]' (Mazama 2001, p. 398). Asante asserted that at its core, Afrocentricity is about the promotion of the self-consciousness of African people, and its ultimate goal is the liberation of African people. Thus, African scholars, researchers and evaluators are instructed to 'produce emancipatory knowledge' (Mazama 2001, p. 399).

Evaluation, evidence and paradigms

The important link between the research paradigms that were discussed, and the evaluation field dates back to the work of Donald Campbell in 1969 where he wrote about the 'Experimenting Society' in his study Reforms as Experiments. He made the assertion that scientific evidence should be integral to the development of social policies, and advocated for the specific use of randomised experiments, with a strong focus on bias control and validity. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, experimental methods had already dominated the performance assessments of those evaluating government social programmes since the 1930s and 1940s in the USA and Europe. However, the period of Campbell's seminal work was critical because it spurred the 'What Works' Movement in evaluation (White 2019). This movement was based on the premise that society could be improved by implementing social reforms that are underpinned by experimental evaluation (Sithomola & Auriacombe 2018). This was the beginning of the evidence revolution, which began in the health sector with evidence-based medicine and criminal justice (Goldman & Pabari 2021).

Pawson and Tilley (1994) indicated that during this period (1930's to 1960's) there were inconsistencies in the results of social programmes, and while many argued that this was related to poor designs and implementation, insufficiently articulated project objectives, politics, etc., these scholars, however, assert that 'methodological failure is at the root of the capriciousness of evaluation research and that we should ponder the real possibility that research sloth rather than policy blight is responsible for us being unable to speak with confidence about "what works in programming"' (Pawson & Tilley 1994, p. 292). The 'black box problem' in evaluation referred to the situation where the effectiveness of social programmes was assessed based on its effects, with little consideration for the processes that produced those effects (Astbury & Leeuw 2010).

Pawson and Tilley (1994) urged that the dominance of experimental or quasi-experimental approaches to evaluation should end because while they may have been successful at evaluating performance in controlled

environments such as science experiments however often fall short in capturing the complexities and dynamic changes inherently found in social programmes, resulting in difficulties determining causality in such interventions. These scholars advocated for the adoption of the realism approach, which asserts that the outcomes of social programmes uncovered through empirical studies can only be explained if evaluators understand the mechanisms that cause them and the contexts that maintain them. This means that evaluators should know the reasons for particular outcomes and impacts, and under what conditions they occur prior to determining whether they work (Pawson & Tilley 1994).

Critiques of orthodox evaluation

Lincoln and Guba (2011) indicate that the issues most often under debate in the paradigm discourse are the study aims, research agenda, data collection and analysis methods, rigour, validity, and reliability, issues around values, ethics and voice and hegemony. The various criticisms of the positivist paradigm led to the evolution of philosophical frameworks and their associated research methods (Corry et al. 2019).

What to investigate

Considering that the focus of this chapter is on the perpetuation of inequality in Africa, it is critical to begin this discussion with the hegemony of white Anglo-European evaluation practice and evidence with the issues that feminists had in the 1970s and 1980s regarding the appropriateness and adequacy of positivist paradigms and their associated quantitative methods in capturing women's experiences and everyday lives. One of the major criticisms of orthodox evaluation practice by feminist evaluators is best captured in the following statement, 'the power to define is the power to control, to include and exclude' (Patton 2002, p. 99). This means that those who have the power to set the evaluation agenda such as donors, often holds the power to the entire evaluation process including how it is undertaken, and determining the inclusion and exclusion critera.

Feminist evaluators criticised firstly the definition of evaluation, as this was used to create parameters around the pursuit of evaluative activity. They argued that regarding evaluation as the judging of merit and worth of social interventions, it means that the activity would only focus on that; if it is viewed as the use of research methods to assess intervention effectiveness, then the focus would be solely on that; if an evaluation is regarded as the determination of the extent to which social programmes achieve their goals, then that will be the priority. These purposes of evaluation were encapsulated in the dichotomy of formative and summative evaluations.

The best example of this patriarchal ideology within evaluation is shown in the words of Scriven (1999):

> [/]n program evaluation, we are concerned to establish the merit, worth, quality, or value of programs, in whole or in part, at the request of some client or clients, and for the benefit of some audience. To do this we do not need to know how the programs work or why they fail to work, or even what their components are. (p. 521)

For Scriven, formative and summative evaluations covered the entire purpose of evaluation. He defined formative evaluation as improvement-oriented, while summative evaluation was viewed as judgement-oriented evaluation. The latter generates knowledge that is intended for instrumental use, meaning that direct decisions or actions would result.

Several scholars in the 1980s and 1990s believed that there were other critical uses of evaluation findings, which Patton (1996) referred to as conceptual use. Conceptual use refers to using findings to assist stakeholders, implementers and decision-makers to better understand the social issues being addressed and the intervention itself, providing a knowledge base for policy. These evaluations were referred to as knowledge-oriented, and Chen proposed the best example of the approach, which he called 'theory-driven' evaluation. While a theory-driven approach to evaluation offers models for summative judgement or formative improvement, this approach was also a beginning of knowledge generation to increase understanding about how effective programmes work in general (Patton 1996). Proponents of the theory-driven approach argued that evaluation findings must improve programme implementation by informing the improvement of implementation theory. It was argued that this kind of knowledge generation activity is future-oriented by aiming to inform the designs of future policies and programmes, not only limiting focus on a particular programme (Patton 1996). The underlying difference between these views of the purpose of evaluation is underpinned in the philosophical frameworks. The guiding prism of formative and summative evaluation was positivism, while the notions of moving beyond outcomes and effectiveness to understand processes were guided by constructivism or interpretivism, and other subsequent paradigmatic frameworks.

'Feminists waged a long and wide epistemological critique of positivism as a philosophical framework and its detached and "objective" scientific approach that objectified research subjects' (Doucet & Mauthner 2008, p. 330). There were critiques around the hegemony of masculine bias in the concerns of evaluation practice and their methods, such as rationality, autonomy, neutrality, objectivity, etc. There were three specific epistemological critiques from feminist evaluators. Firstly, there was a significant absence of attention to women and female-dominated industries in much of social research, such as childcare, domestic work, caretaking of

the sick and elderly, etc. Secondly, it is quite pertinent to the conversation in this book that black women more profoundly experienced this absence, as their experiences were invisible and excluded from academic, public and political portrayals of women's lives, even after the women's and feminist movements. Thirdly, there were concerns about the preference for using the quantitative survey as the data collection method and problematising whether this method could be able to obtain the complexities women face because men designed these instruments and thus, they reflected their lives. Hilary Graham beautifully phrased this critique in the early 1980s when she asked: 'Do her answers fit his questions?' (Doucet & Mauthner 2008).

Feminist evaluation is an attempt at redefining evaluation practice, specifically referring to the definition regarding the assessment of worth and merit to establish the effectiveness of a programme. This kind of evaluation practice is defined as the judgement of merit or worth, using social science methods to determine the effectiveness of efforts, as well as the measurement of the achievement of goals; however, these activities are viewed as a means to an end, in this case, 'increased social justice for the oppressed, especially, but not exclusively, women' (Patton 1996, p. 100). Sielbeck-Bowen et al. (2002) stated that feminist evaluation primarily focuses on gender inequities that lead to social injustice. It acknowledges the structural and systemic nature of these inequities and recognises that evaluation is a political endeavour. As such, it becomes a powerful tool for those who create, possess, and distribute it. The authors assert that certain ways of acquiring knowledge have been favoured over others and that the knowledge produced is influenced by social, cultural and temporal factors. Moreover, the knowledge generated is also shaped by the evaluator's interpretation. The evaluator, as the instrument of data collection and analysis, inevitably brings their own biases into the process (Sielbeck-Bowen et al. 2002).

Similarly, it is impossible to debate issues of equity and equitable evaluation without highlighting racial inequity and racial inequality as race and racism are at the centre of many issues of bias and discrimination found at individual, organisational and systemic levels in Africa. Issues of race in evaluation have long been ignored as the agenda was always set by white heterosexual men. Race is important to this discussion of epistemology because, while initially portrayed as a biological component of human beings, it has now long been understood as a social construct created by white Europeans as a means of justifying and legalising slavery (Dean-Coffey 2018). Racism, both in the West and in Africa, was institutionalised at governance levels and led to racialised policies in various sectors, including education, health, housing, criminal justice systems, etc., as well as economic sectors. Public policies perpetuated unequal treatment and

access to opportunities for people based on race. While scholars have acknowledged efforts of governments, such as in the USA and Africa, to change policies and practices which perpetuate racism in different spheres, these efforts have predominantly failed. Dean-Coffey (2018) cites the 'white racial frame' as the major limitation of these efforts. The white racial frame is 'the dominant racial frame that has long legitimated, rationalised, and shaped racial oppression and inequality' (Dean-Coffey 2018, p. 529). This scholar asserts that 'framing' is a critical aspect of equitable evaluation because often, the bias and prejudice that is consistent with this 'framing' are viewed as reflecting the truth. This is because framing happens primarily unconsciously and thus, evaluators are often unaware of the inherent bias in their hypotheses and assumptions of the unit of analysis under study. The issue of framing is important in development aid and evaluation because, unfortunately, racial equity is non-existent in the white racial frame, and thus, equitable evaluation 'challenges what practitioners accept as valid, rigorous, and objective' (Dean-Coffey 2018, p. 529).

Even more relevant is the discourse around the decolonisation of evaluation on the African continent as it centres around issues of race and the absence of African voices in the conceptualisations of evaluation theories, models and methods even in scholarship on culturally and contextually responsive evaluation. Made in Africa Evaluation is an epistemological critique of the lack of cultural responsiveness, ethical grounding and consideration of the values of the African communities in which programmes are implemented (Chilisa & Mertens 2021). Western evaluation models and approaches do not attend to African and particularly rural issues. Firstly, Africa is an incredibly unique and diverse continent given its multitude of cultural dynamics, politics, history, languages and knowledge systems (Masuku & Ijeoma 2015). The current Western approaches largely focus on indicators that reflect functionality in their societies while not accounting for the scope of the African context. The implications are that programme design and the ability of evaluation to detect whether equitable outcomes are truly achieved or hindered on the continent are compromised.

How to investigate it

The best place to begin this section is with a criticism of the ideas of the positivist paradigm of what is knowable. The first challenge with this line of thinking was based on the argument by Kant, who made a distinction between what is referred to as 'noumena', which are things in themselves, and 'phenomena', which are how things appear to human senses. Kant argued that only phenomena are knowable; the world, in its objective nature, is not knowable. It was these ideas that inspired the work of

Max Weber. He took these critiques further by highlighting the significance of subjectivity, refuting the ability of positivist-influenced research methods to explain human behaviour. This sparked the influence of the constructivist paradigm on the social sciences (Corry et al. 2019).

The second criticism that emerged pertained to the role of the researcher. While within the positivist paradigm, the social scientist's role simply involved uncovering the universal and causal laws which underpin the behaviour of people. Instead, the work of sociologist Karl Marx led to a shift in the role of social researchers from passive observers and collectors of empirical data to active participants in the pursuit of social justice, through critically analysing and challenging existing social structures in an effort to inform political action to promote change and address inequality. This led to the emergence of the critical theory paradigm, which guided critical theory and asserts that explaining social reality requires examining and critiquing one's own self-understanding (Corry et al. 2019). The critical theory paradigm argues that social science research can never be truly objective and/or value-free. Furthermore, the influence focus of Karl Marx on inequalities of social class led to a paradigm that operates from the view that social research should be conducted with the goal of social change (DeCarlo 2018).

The third criticism relates to theories on causality. Proponents of the realist paradigm argued that positivists misunderstand the nature of causation, based on their belief in David Hume's theory of empiricism. Empiricism equates causation to constant conjunctions (i.e. a philosophical term that explains the relationship between two events, where one immediately follows the other). Instead, the realist paradigm asserts that causal forces have an independent reality, which is viewed as ontologically different from the events they create. Shifting from the notion of causation as constantly conjoined events to a notion of generative mechanisms (i.e. forces that affect behaviour) had important implications. This meant that the new focus of social sciences, including evaluation practice, on explaining causal mechanisms, meant that they could provide insight into the means through which and the reasons certain outcomes occur (Corry et al. 2019).

In addition to the arguments of proponents of alternative paradigms, there were criticisms within the positivist school of thought pertaining to the ideas around causation, mainly Hume's inductivism which argues that the systematic gathering of information generates knowledge to show causality through constant conjunctions (i.e. epistemological empiricism). These arguments were led by post-positivists, who argue that knowledge cannot simply be obtained from facts empirically (induction), but rather that developing knowledge requires the generation of theoretical hypotheses that need to be tested (i.e. deduction). This belief then changed the notion of the social scientists or researchers as passive and neutral gatherers of objective data to individuals with a role that is both creative

and active to play in social scientific inquiry. These proponents share the positivist beliefs in ontological empiricism (where causal relationships can be observed in reality) but reject epistemological empiricism (Corry et al. 2019). This means that even though the method of identifying causal relationships changed from inductive reasoning to deductive reasoning, the goal did not change.

Contrarily, the transformative paradigm asserts that philosophical assumptions should reflect ideal notions of the world (Corry et al. 2019). This is especially true for the indigenous paradigm that underpins the MAE practice. In particular, the paradigm draws upon relational approaches developed by African scholars, which are based on indigenous knowledge systems, cultures and values. Based on the assertion by Correy et al. (2019) above, if this kind of evaluation is to reflect ideal notions of the world, then it should be based on a paradigm that aims to produce knowledge that sets African people free. The paradigm in question, though, is the Afrocentricity paradigm developed by Molefi Kete Asante. He stated that Afrocentricity is a philosophical paradigm that places African people at the centre of their cultural and historical contexts. This paradigm is focused on shifting discourses relating to African people and their experiences from the Eurocentric perspective to an Afrocentric perspective. It is argued that Afrocentrists should seek to advance the agency of African people in every place where the assessment of African people occurs. One of the key assertions made by Asante in various descriptions of the Afrocentricity paradigm is that 'our main problem as African people is our usually unconscious adoption of the Western worldview and perspective and their attendant conceptual frameworks' (Mazama 2001, p. 387). These Western ideas, theories and models have pervaded the lives and work of African people under the guise of being natural and normal, including the lack of critically challenging concepts (Mazama 2001).

The only way in which evaluation can truly contribute to equitable development in Africa is if it is guided by a paradigm that places African knowledge, experience, understanding, values, etc., at the forefront, and does not privilege the Anglo-European perspective over other perspectives. In this paradigm, Africa is at the centre of the world for Africans. According to Mazama (2001), 'while Eurocentrism imposes itself as universal, Afrocentrism demonstrates that it is only one way to view the world' (Mazama 2001, p. 389). The argument here is that social phenomena should be investigated from the perspective of African people, scholars, theorists and evaluators.

What data to generate

The initial goal of programme evaluation was determining the success or failure of programmes, meaning that evaluation questions focused on

whether the programme objectives are being met (i.e. outcome evaluation), comparisons between different programmes, and their cost-effectiveness (i.e. cost-benefit analysis). These were all methodologies used for summative evaluations, as decision-makers were mainly interested in finding out about the overall success of an intervention. Initially, evaluations predominantly involved quantitative-experimental methods, underpinned by the positivist paradigm. The primary method used was the randomised control trial, as this was regarded as the golden standard because it was believed they have a greater ability to determine causal relationships in programmes. However, several problems led to questions about the validity and reliability.

The first issue was that the statistical results from these experimental studies were not a true reflection of evaluators' observations when assessing the programmes. The primary reliance on quantitative methodologies meant that the complexity of social programmes was reduced to the measurement of a small number of indicators, which scholars argued failed to capture the complex nature of government programmes and the varying perspectives of the different stakeholders. In addition, the presentation of the statistical findings was regarded as incomprehensible and irrelevant to stakeholders, thus, alienating them from the evaluation and making the findings not usuable (Deane & Harré 2016).

The second issue was that evaluations placed sole focus on assessing the effectiveness of social programmes, and thus evaluations provided no insight into the reasons why and how programmes worked or did not work and what the processes were that led to change, making it impossible to either improve or replicate them. This is how the label 'black box' arose. According to Deane and Harré (2016), these are problems that led to what was known as the 'utilisation crisis', which prompted the development of alternative approaches to evaluation which paid greater attention to processes and the involvement of stakeholders, through a shift towards the naturalistic or constructivist paradigm. The use of qualitative and participatory approaches became a way of capturing a holistic and in-depth perspective of social programmes as it includes analyses of processes, involvement of stakeholders and inclusion of the perspectives of programme beneficiaries.

How to ensure its validity, credibility and usability

Validity, credibility, reliability and quality of data have consistently been regarded as important criteria for judging the rigour and usability of evaluation information (Lincoln & Guba 2011; Patton 1999). The latter are critical concepts in the evaluation field that ensure that the data produced for informing decision-making and policymaking is of high quality. The challenge experienced with the varying paradigms (philosophical frameworks) is that varying conceptualisations of the terms and mandates

for validity, credibility and quality exist. For instance, scholars argue that 'radical reconfigurations of validity leave researchers [and evaluators] with multiple, sometimes conflicting, mandates for what constitutes rigorous research [and evaluation]' (Lincoln & Guba 2011, p. 178). In the positivist paradigm, rigour relates to the application of methodology. However, it was with the development of the alternative paradigms that questions pertaining to the rigour of the interpretation of data arose. In this space, criteria have been created to guide the judgement of social inquiry.

The increased use of qualitative approaches (with their subjective worldview, focus on values and belief in multiple realities), resulted in questions about rigour and ability to produce results which can be trusted. There were arguments that qualitative methodologies meant that the rules around rigour were loosened even further than when using quasi-experimental methods. Lincoln and Guba (1986) challenged the continuation of the need to hold other methods to standards of quantitative methodologies, requiring rigour to be judged the same way, using the same criteria even though the paradigm underpinning qualitative evaluation approaches is completely different.

The scholars within this school of thought, including Patton (1999) and Lincoln and Guba (1986), argue that qualitative approaches and the underlying naturalistic paradigm provoke different evaluation questions and a different set of issues and thus require entirely distinct criteria, including trustworthiness and authenticity. Lincoln and Guba (1986) explain that 'the criteria for judging an inquiry themselves stem from the underlying paradigm' (Lincoln and Guba 1986, p. 18). The first attempt at creating criteria to determine rigour for qualitative methods (i.e. criteria of trustworthiness), used the quantitative criteria as a reference, internal validity was replaced by the term 'credibility', external validity was replaced by the term 'transferability', reliability was replaced by 'dependability' and objectivity was replaced with 'confirmability'. The second attempt involved creating unique criteria (i.e. criteria of authenticity) for qualitative research, which were ontological authentication, catalytic authentication, tactical authenticity, educative authentication and fairness (Lincoln & Guba 2011). The latter criteria, however, suffered from much of the same issues that many new concepts do, as they were not operationalised sufficiently to provide accurate guidance for implementation.

How to analyse the data

Analysing data is particularly difficult for those working within the constructivist or interpretivist paradigm. Because interpretive research is inherently subjective, determining the credibility and accuracy of

interpretations is difficult. A number of epistemological problems exacerbate the complexity of data analysis within this paradigm.

First is the claim that interpretation is a widespread aspect of every person's effort to understand the world, life, etc. According to the interpretivist school of thought, it is impossible to understand people's experiences, create meaning and generate evidence without some level of interpretation. This means that interpretivists argue that there is, in fact, no such thing as an 'interpretation' of the value of a social policy or programme and, on the one hand, 'evidence' of the value of that policy or programme. This means that interpretivists believe that the 'very act of generating evidence or identifying something as evidence is itself an interpretation' (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba 2007, p. 11).

The second claim is that interpretation is biased to some extent unconsciously by the background, beliefs and views of the researcher or evaluator. This paradigm, however, does not regard all interpretations as subjective. It is the opposite because these scholars argue that every interpretation will always have an inter-subjective feature. The third claim is a consequence of the first two arguments, which acknowledge that interpretations inherently carry political and ethical implications linked to power issues, meaning that interpretation is not solely a cognitive activity but is also a political and social exercise (Schwandt et al. 2007).

What conclusions can be drawn

When turning our attention to issues of transformative change in evaluation, which falls within the transformative paradigm, issues around the quality of evaluation need to shift away from a sole concern with the question of 'Are we doing things right?', to asking questions about the value of evaluation including 'Are we doing the right thing?' and 'What makes this the right thing to do?' (Schwandt & Gates 2016).

In the development aid space, specific criteria were developed to judge the quality of evaluations by the OECD Development Assistance Committee in 1991. These criteria were the first of their kind, their credibility may be judged on the fact that they have been used worldwide, even beyond their initial purpose, which was for the evaluation of international development aid, although they acknowledge their wide application for the evaluation of public policies and programmes worldwide. In the context of transformation, however, various scholars have criticised their irrelevance (ALNAP 2023; Ofir 2017). Patton (2021) argued that:

> [*T*]he revised Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or Development Assistance Committee criteria are adequate for business as usual summative and accountability evaluations but are inadequate for addressing major systems transformations. (p. 53)

These criteria have been criticised for their inability to evaluate transformational change, insufficient focus on gender, equity or human rights concerns, and lack of recognition of the significance of culture and cultural differences. Furthermore, they have been criticised for their Western or Global North origins, in terms of whose perspective was used in defining the specific evaluation questions, as well as how effectiveness and impact are determined, which relates to the issues raised by the proponents of the decolonisation of evaluation (ALNAP 2023). The latter speaks to the importance of having contextually and culturally relevant evaluation criteria developed to strengthen equitable evaluation aimed at facilitating equitable development outcomes in the Global South, but in our context, criteria are needed for evaluation practice on the African continent. Masuku and Ijeoma (2015) support this argument, asserting that Western evaluation models and standards do not attend to African, particularly rural issues, which means that they are not fit for purpose when attempting to ensure the quality of evaluative practice on this continent. This is because Africa is an incredibly unique and diverse continent given its multitude of cultural dynamics, politics, history, languages and knowledge systems. All of which should be reflected in any evaluation standards or guidelines for evaluation in Africa.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, we provided a quote by Richard Ball (1977) explaining that in the earlier decades of evaluation practice, methods dictated how social phenomena were understood and studied. This argument was supported by much of the literature reviewed and by the history of evaluation presented. This chapter has attempted to make the point that evaluators need to understand that the methods they choose to use when conducting evaluations have underlying foundational presumptions about the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge and ways to acquire knowledge, and the nature of values. These supporting philosophical frameworks or worldviews may not be explicit but have far-reaching implications for the kinds of information produced and the message that information brings across about a programme or the individuals and groups supported by those programmes. Thus, the design and planning phases of a programme evaluation must include explicit discussions and debates about which paradigmatic frameworks should be guiding that evaluative work and let that be the starting point for all discussions about evaluation questions, approaches and methods. Moreso, this chapter aimed to demonstrate that equitable evaluation challenges the notion of a 'question–method fit' and promotes a 'context–paradigm–method' fit. This means that we are strongly recommending that the context in which an intervention or phenomenon is evaluated should guide

the worldview of the evaluators undertaking the study, and this local worldview should then guide the evaluation questions asked, the evaluation team selected, the population and sample chosen, the evaluation criteria followed, how the information or data is collection, understood and interpreted, and also how the information is presented. The latter alludes to the importance of using paradigms and methods that fit the African context, including the African people's knowledge, values, needs, purposes and methods. We argue that it is the paradigm that makes it clear what the purpose of the evaluation is. For the Afrocentric paradigm, the purpose of generating evaluation evidence in Africa should be to contribute knowledge that facilitates the liberation of black African people in every sphere of society.

Chapter 9

Cash-based transfers – transfers a double-edged sword: Lessons for evaluators

Andiswa Neku
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

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

In the development space, it has been known that the actions of individuals, organisations and governments produce unintended consequences. Despite this understanding, there have been limited actions to address unintended consequences at the programme design, implementation and evaluation levels. The focus has been on programme logic models, theories of change and the results chain that shows how intended results are to be

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achieved with limited capacity to identify how an intervention can trigger positive and negative unintended impacts. Moreover, evaluation is also shaped by the same thinking, where it is used as a tool that measures the intervention goals against what the intervention achieved. The lack of focus on unintended consequences is critical, especially in sub-Saharan Africa where several inequities are systematic or interlinked, and an intervention with good intentions can exacerbate these.

In this chapter, we start by making an argument that interventions offer resources, rather than producing results. Ascertaining results depends on how recipients respond to resources – this varies according to context (Randell, Greenhalgh & Dowding 2015). If the response to intervention varies according to contextual factors such as values, culture, religion, gender, etc., then it is important to examine how these variations produce unintended consequences and how these can be addressed throughout the intervention programme cycle. The law of unintended consequences is a commonly observed occurrence where any action yields outcomes that were not originally intended by the actor (Boudon 2016). This chapter aims to examine how programme unintended consequences can have a positive (unanticipated benefit that emerges from an action) or negative effect on new or prevailing inequities in communities, using interventions that use cash transfers to deliver resources to the targeted communities. The chapter further examines the unintended consequences of cash-based transfers and their impact on the ideals of promoting an equitable and just society. In the end, the chapter provides lessons for evaluators on what they should do when evaluating cash-based transfer interventions.

Background

The current approach to development can be regarded as an extension of colonisation in a different form. Underdevelopment in Africa is a direct result of colonisation and its associated deprivation that created structural, institutional and social inequalities. Masvaure and Motlanthe argued that the current international development approach is a colonial project that seeks to perpetuate colonial inequities in another form (Masvaure & Motlanthe 2022). This was also echoed by Tusalem who highlighted that the current fragility and development in the Global South can be directly linked to colonial history (Tusalem 2016). Mbembe and Sarr also highlighted that the end of colonisation did not mean the end of 'coloniality' but the perpetuation of colonisation in a different form (Mbembé & Sarr 2019). Suppose one agrees that the current development approaches are linked to the colonial history of the countries in the Global South. In that case, there is an inherent responsibility for the development intervention funders, implementers and evaluators to think about the consequences of their

interventions on the prevailing inequities in the Global South. This is paramount because colonisation was based on the principle of deprivation based on skin colour and race.

In this chapter, we recognise that inequity and inequality are often used conversely, whereas they are in fact different. Inequities are regarded as a form of inequality, as they define 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 2022). Inequities typically arise when certain demographic groups are unjustly denied access to fundamental resources that are accessible to other groups (Stewart 2013). Social inequalities arise from individuals' backgrounds and the opportunities they have been granted or denied because of systems such as capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, classism and other forms of oppression (Hasty et al. 2022).

Inequities can be affected by unintended consequences, both in a positive or negative manner. Unintended consequences may appear immediately or may take several years after an intervention has been implemented (Caleo & Heilman 2019). The common approach to development interventions for both the public and the non-state sector is to design interventions that run for five years and then review or evaluate them to determine whether to continue or terminate the programmes. The implication is that some unintended consequences may not yet be realised within the five-year period, or those that have already appeared may not be noticeable because the programme design and its tools, such as monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems, are not designed to capture them. Hence the communities are left on their devices to address these unintended consequences as no organisation has complete control over how an intervention will pan out.

Furthermore, in the African context, several scholars have alluded to the fact that evaluations that are conducted in the continent are mainly for accountability purposes, that is accounting to the programme funders so that they show them if the resources were used as per initial agreement (Conlin & Stirrat 2008). Although such evaluations are important, their design and adopted approaches lack the capacity to reveal the unintended results of the programmes. The evaluations also do not go beyond the narrowly defined evaluation questions aimed at showing if the project or programme has achieved the intended results. Our collective experience in the evaluation space shows that cases, where unintended consequences are unravelled during the evaluation or programme implementation process, are regarded as anecdotes that are not pursued further because they are out of the scope of the evaluation.

In addition to the accountability focus, there is also growing evidence that most of the development interventions implemented in the African continent have limited learning systems that enable the programme implementers to learn while the project is being implemented (Conlin & Stirrat 2008). The implication is that without learning and reflecting on the emerging results, implementers lose the opportunity to course-correct and address some of the adverse consequences of the programme. This also means that programme implementers lose the opportunity to refine and think about evaluation questions that might lead to a better collection of evidence that will provide an understanding of the unintended consequences. For example, it has been shown that in several impoverished African countries programmes that promote growing cash crops had unintended consequences of increasing malnutrition, gender discrimination and disempowering women because the land for cash crops is taken from land allocated for women (Baada, Najjar & Seifu 2023). In this chapter, we will discuss the cash-based transfers.

Cash-based transfers

In a changing world that is evolving and embracing new technologies cash-based transfers have been introduced as part of interventions that are tailored to address several development challenges. Several international development agencies such as the World Food Programme (WFP), World Bank and other international development agencies have adopted cash-based transfers when delivering aid in the Global South. The use of cash-based transfers as a form of social protection has been part of government social protection systems; however, this was only limited to citizens receiving grants. The current practice is to use cash-based transfers as substitutes for actual goods and services. Recipients are expected to acquire the goods from the market. For example, in cases of food insecurity, the beneficiaries are expected to use the cash provided to purchase food from the market. The benefits of cash-based transfers are very plausible; however, within these benefits, there are inherent risks that evaluators need to address. These risks are ingrained in the recipients' context, power dynamics, culture and values. Literature has shown that cash-based transfers can trigger both positive and negative unintended consequences.

Women especially in the Global South have been highlighted to be vulnerable in relationships and always receive the short end of the stick when it comes to domestic violence, gender-based violence or intimate partner violence (Dekel & Abrahams 2021). Several interventions are being implemented to address these types of abuses, violence and social inequities in the Global South. Cash-based transfers can either have a positive or negative impact on social inequality. Although cash-based transfers are not primarily concerned with addressing social inequality or

any other form of violence against women, evidence has shown that they influence and alter household power dynamics and in turn, influence gender inequality outcomes. Often evaluators of cash-based transfer interventions focus on examining the efficiency and the effectiveness of how cash was transferred to the beneficiaries and the 'income effect' of the cash on household poverty or food security.

Unconditional cash transfer programme vs conditional cash transfer

Conditional and unconditional cash transfers are two policy initiatives that have become a popular way to alleviate poverty through direct cash and benefit transfers. Unconditional cash transfers also referred to as basic income offer universal benefits, while conditional transfers offer benefits exclusively to those who meet specific eligibility requirements. Conditional cash transfers are not universal as they are specifically intended to provide relief to disadvantaged households with strings attached to allow families to 'stabilise their budgets, invest in productive assets, plan their futures, provide health care for their children, and send them to school' (Fultz & Francis 2013). Because conditional transfers are intended to target the poorest families, there is a greater need to develop suitable eligibility criteria to avoid exclusion errors which could potentially prevent households who should be receiving the benefit. Similarly, suitable eligibility criteria are imperative for conditional cash transfers to avoid inclusion criteria where households that should not receive the benefit receive it. Because conditional cash transfers are dependent on certain conditions for eligibility, they require increased monitoring and enforcement to ensure the conditions are met (Fiszbein & Schady 2009). There are other ways in which cash transfer programmes have been defined, including 'middle-income cash transfer programmes' and 'low-income or fragile cash transfer programmes', distinguishing types of programmes implemented in different sub-Saharan African countries. Garcia, Moore and Moore (2012) described middle-income cash transfer programmes as cash grants established and funded by government institutions and expected to continue indefinitely. These programmes form part of rights-based social assistance systems, often developed in the colonial era. These cash transfer programmes are focused on assisting impoverished individuals, reaching a wide range of vulnerable groups. Their continuous nature serves both a proactively focus on the preventive and promotive roles of social protection. Conversely, low-income and fragile cash transfers often have a short-term nature, with the goal of assisting beneficiaries to transition from the programme within a relatively short space of time. These are generally humanitarian programmes aiming to address emergency situations such as natural disasters and are funded by development partners. The focus is mostly on reducing food

insecurity or building human capital. The target population is generally a small subset of a population, often a specific vulnerable group, based on donor preferences (Garcia et al. 2012).

In Africa, cash transfer programmes were adopted in response to the failure of emergency food aid, particularly because it resulted in welfare dependency (Garcia et al. 2012). Cash transfers primarily serve the achievement of either development goals or humanitarian emergency relief. The expansion of cash transfers in low- to middle-income countries has resulted in approximately 130 countries having at least one unconditional cash transfer programme including poverty-targeted cash transfers and old-age social pensions, with their growth in Africa even higher as research shows that more than 40 African countries out of the 54 countries on the continent are implementing at least one unconditional cash transfer programme (Bastagli et al. 2016). The argument for unconditional cash transfers is that the primary constraint for people from impoverished backgrounds is the lack of money and that they are best positioned to decide how to spend it. The underpinning assumption of unconditional cash transfers is that money will be utilised to meet basic needs or be invested in livelihoods. Conditional cash transfers, on the other hand, place certain requirements for eligibility into the programme that recipients including performing public works or the creation of community assets (i.e. cash for work programmes), enrolling children in school, having children vaccinated, attending a training course, in humanitarian settings it may also involve physical labour to contribute to disaster clean-up efforts, etc. (Doocy & Tappis 2017).

Uses of cash-based transfers

Low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) have increasingly used cash transfer programmes as key strategies for poverty reduction and social protection. Cash transfers are a type of social protection programme known as social assistance or safety net programme, which refers to a 'non-contributory transfer programmes targeted in some manner to the poor and those vulnerable to poverty and shocks' (Garcia et al. 2012, p. 24). The major objectives of social protection programmes are to (1) alleviate poverty and inequality; and (2) break the intergenerational transmission of poverty (Mokomane 2013).

Social protection programmes have become a crucial mechanism for governments and development agencies to assist millions of vulnerable individuals and households worldwide. Their positive impacts have demonstrated their critical role in achieving national development goals and their integral contribution to achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). The impact of cash transfer programmes, specifically in relation to

SDG 1 (ending poverty) and SDG 5 (gender equality) will be discussed in this section. Gender has long been a focus within anti-poverty programming, but it is only recently that gender equality has been recognised as inherently important within social protection policy. This shift is partly attributed to the increasing body of literature showing that cash transfers can have a range of positive effects for women, including unintended impacts on domestic violence, emotional wellbeing, intrahousehold dynamics and women's empowerment, as evidenced by Peterman, Valli and Palermo (2022).

While cash transfer programmes may strive to reduce income inequality, studies contend that more information should be gathered to determine how well these programmes address gender inequality (Ladhani & Sitter 2020; Levasseur, Paterson & Carvalho Moreira 2018; Van Daalen et al. 2022). What are the implications of these options for gender inequality? There is uncertainty about whether either option can effectively alleviate social inequality and the potential to increase the gendered division of labour within and outside households (Ladhani & Sitter 2020; Levasseur et al. 2018). The role of conditionality and the recipient's gender in achieving cash transfer programme objectives is actively debated by policymakers (Van Daalen et al. 2022). Some studies argue that whatever policymakers choose, it must work in tandem with other programmes targeted at eliminating socio-economic inequality (Ladhani & Sitter 2020; Levasseur et al. 2018; Van Daalen et al. 2022). This is crucial when examining the appropriateness and effectiveness of various policy alternatives that aim to address multiple causes and impacts.

Benefits of cash-based transfers

Reduce poverty

Cash transfer programmes are generally directly aimed at reducing poverty (Handa et al. 2018; Hjelm et al. 2017; Peterman, Yablonski & Daidone 2017). There are many ways in which poverty is measured, including absolute and relative poverty, which are measured through consumption and income levels. Absolute poverty is a financial situation wherein an individual or household does not have the means to meet their basic needs, including food, clothing, shelter, education, basic medical care, etc. Relative poverty is measured as income poverty compared to others within the same area or economy (World Bank 2021). Literature indicates that cash transfers have proven to be one of the most effective strategies for poverty reduction (Guven, Jain & Joubert 2021). Studies show the effect of unconditional and conditional cash transfers on total household expenditure on food, essentials, clothes, services, etc., through increased purchasing power. Food expenditure is regarded as an important measure of poverty because

it is often the biggest expenditure item for poor households (Bastagli et al. 2016). Studies show that cash transfers also increase household food consumption, with corresponding reductions in poverty headcounts (Tirivayi, Waidler & Otchere 2021). Research also shows that cash transfers can affect the poverty levels of beneficiaries and thus have moved households above the poverty line and reduced the severity of household poverty (Bastagli et al. 2016).

Improve nutrition and increase dietary diversity

Often, conditional cash transfers are provided to improve beneficiaries' welfare, specifically encouraging behavioural changes related to nutrition and health (Taylor, Thome & Filipski 2014). Studies have shown that cash transfers promote dietary diversity by enabling individuals and households to purchase a wider range of food items (Jaspars et al. 2007). Studies consistently show that cash transfers play a critical role in increasing the dietary diversity of recipient households (Bastagli et al. 2016); however, with less evidence showing that they positively affect the height and weight of children (Hagen-Zanker et al. 2016). Cash transfers for nutritional benefits are generally targeted at young children and pregnant women (Gertiler et al. 2012). Studies provide evidence of improvements in maternal diets and nutritional status during pregnancy (Harris-Fry et al. 2018). One systematic review showed that cash transfer programmes targeted to households with young children improved their growth and contributed to reduced stunting. These scholars found that 'the likely pathways were through increased dietary diversity, including through the increased consumption of animal-source foods [...]' (Manley et al. 2020).

Financial savings

Cash transfers have positively impacted various household-level economic security outcomes, such as savings and investments (Buller et al. 2018). Research has shown that providing small, frequent and reliable cash payments to impoverished households can improve the utilisation of financial savings services, especially when the transfer method involves a digital platform like a mobile money account. These platforms often offer access to various financial services, including savings, insurance and credit (Chehade, McConaghy & Meier 2020). It is important to note that households need to have the financial capability to address their immediate consumption needs before having funds available for savings or other investments, as indicated in the literature. Basic financial literacy and encouragement have been identified as crucial factors in prompting the saving of cash transfers (Hendricks & Chidiac 2011; Karlan, Ratan & Zinman 2014). For instance, a study conducted by Mercy Corps (2015) demonstrated that mobile-based

savings encouragement, delivered through a series of voice messages alongside a cash transfer programme, had a positive impact on the use of formal and informal savings products.

Better educational outcomes

Vast evidence confirms that cash transfers affect access to education, particularly in the short term, by eliminating the direct and indirect financial barriers to education (Bastagli et al. 2016). Conditional cash transfer programmes have been popularly used to improve education outcomes in developing countries (Ferré & Sharif 2014). However, a systematic review covering 35 different studies found that both conditional and unconditional cash transfers improve school enrolment and attendance, compared to not participating in a cash transfer programme (Baird et al. 2014). Another systematic review revealed similar results, showing considerable and consistent evidence linking recipients of cash transfers to improvements in school attendance. However, a smaller number of studies found an impact on 'learning outcomes, measured by test scores, and cognitive development outcomes, [*measured by*] information processing ability, intelligence, reasoning, language development and memory' (Bastagli et al. 2019).

In LMICs, the focus of a cash transfer programme with an educational component is often on female children who show less attendance and higher dropout rates at both primary and high school levels. Baird, McIntosh and Özler (2019) report on a five-year evaluation of a cash transfer programme targeted to adolescent girls in Malawi showed sustained improvements in the educational outcomes of initially out-of-school females. Interestingly, there are mixed results on the role played by programme design features. For example, a meta-analysis conducted by García and Saavedra (2017) found that the effectiveness of cash transfers on primary and secondary school outcomes across 47 conditional cash transfer programmes in LMICs did not depend on programme characteristics, including female recipients, duration of payment period, pilot, or full-scale nature, etc. However, in their review of 201 studies, 99 of which were on education, Bastagli et al. (2016, p. 57) found studies that showed:

> [*T*]he role of design and implementation features on the education outcomes, [*including no difference in impact when*] transferring cash to males versus females no, impact on the schooling outcomes, and little [*to*] no evidence [*showing an effect of increasing transfer amounts, but found*] that the length of exposure and cumulative cash transfers received [*can*] have significant effects on cognitive development and [*number*] of [*years of*] education. Similarly, conditioning transfers on educational outcomes [*may*] have differential impacts.

However, this is more effective than unconditional transfers.

Unintended consequences of cash transfers

Extensive literature shows the effectiveness of cash-based transfers on health outcomes, nutrition, poverty, dietary diversity and educational outcomes. However, minimal literature focuses on the unintended consequences of cash-based transfers because they are treated as anti-poverty programmes (Dervisevic, Perova & Sahay 2022). Cash-based transfers are generally targeted at female caregivers or mothers in a household (Simon 2019). This targeting approach has been touted as key to empowering women; however, there is limited evidence to support this narrative – it is only supported by anecdotal evidence. Evaluation reports also focus on the intended results and do not dig deeper to understand how cash-based transfers affect gender norms and intra-household power asymmetries, especially in a continent that is defined by various forms of inequities. The implied reason for non-examining these unintended consequences has something to do with how evaluation questions are framed and narrow interpretations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) criteria – these focus mainly on the programme logic model and theory of change that, in most cases, do not delve deep into the issues that are outside the ambit of the criteria.

Issues of addressing gender-based violence have been mixed, with some scholars indicating that cash transfers have been effective in empowering women, while others found that the onset of cash-based transfers has seen an increase in violence and threat to the female members of the household from their partners (Bobonis, González-Brenes & Castro 2013). Studies have shown that there are three ways in which cash transfers affect gender-based violence; 'economic security and emotional well-being, intra-household conflict, and women's empowerment' (Dervisevic et al. 2022).

Cash-based transfers provide economic security and emotional wellbeing, especially to women in the Global South who have low labour force participation because of structural and social inequities in the communities (Razavi 2011). Cash-based transfers are a source of additional household income that reduces poverty in the household. Furthermore, economic security improves emotionally limited income in households, which is always a source of conflict and affects emotional wellbeing negatively. Additional income reduces poverty and financial-related stress in the household (Dervisevic et al. 2022).

Several studies have shown that cash transfers reduce intrahousehold conflict because additional cash resources lessen disagreement on household resource allocation and prioritisation. However, other studies have also highlighted that the additional cash resources can also trigger

violence, with men demanding access to the cash and spending it on 'sinful' goods such as alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

In addition, if the cash transfers are targeted at women, it provides them with independence and bargaining power regarding household decision-making. This empowers women regarding household decision-making and teaches them lessons of dependency on the male household member. The assumption is that the bargaining power will reduce vulnerability to violence and abuse. However, it is also important to note that the bargaining power can increase the vulnerability to violence and abuse by the partner. Hence, examining the positive and negative unintended consequences is important.

What should evaluators do?

The literature reviewed in this chapter shows that there are benefits to cash transfers; however, there is limited literature on the unintended consequences of cash transfers. We argue that the limited literature is because of limited studies commissioned to examine the unintended consequences. We also contend that most of the cash transfers are development interventions that are routinely evaluated, and the evaluations focus on the intended results instead of unintended results. In this section, we present some propositions evaluators must consider. The propositions are guided by an adapted statement from Bastiat Fredric when he was writing about a good economist. We substituted the word economist with evaluator, and the shoe fits:

> There is only one difference between a bad 'evaluator' and a good one: the bad 'evaluator' confines himself to the *visible* effect; the good evaluator considers both the effect that can be seen and those effects that must be *foreseen*. (Bastiat 2016)

We argue that unintended consequences are invisible, mostly not foreseen in evaluations, and result in being neglected during the evaluation phase. We propose that evaluators take cognisance of the following when evaluating cash transfers to ensure equitable evaluation.

Explore culture, values and gender social norms

Culture, values and gender social norms are critical in shaping how targeted communities react to the resources provided by the development intervention. For example, culture and values define how things are done in a community and influence every intervention. Exploring the culture, values and gender social norms as part of evaluation planning enables the evaluator to ask relevant questions examining cash transfers' unforeseen and unintended consequences. Through exploring the culture, values and gender social norms, the evaluator will understand how the intra-household

power dynamics affected the intervention, thereby producing the effects and outcomes seen at the evaluation. Exploring culture, gender and social norms feeds into the evaluator's current evaluation discourse about cultural competence. Evaluators are not only expected to understand the culture so that they can engage with intervention beneficiaries but also to understand how culture, values and gender norms affect the programme results. Furthermore, we argue that through exploring culture, values, gender and social norms, the evaluator will have an opportunity to understand the various inequities in the community and how they were affected by the intervention.

Evaluation questions are framed so that they are holistic

As highlighted earlier in this chapter, evaluation questions should not be narrowly defined so that they are only focused on the cash-based transfer 'income effect' of the intervention. Instead, we are proposing that evaluation questions should be framed to capture the intervention's unintended consequences. This can be achieved by using evidence from the exploration of cultural and gender norms. Questions such as, how did or will the intervention affect gender intra-house gender relationships? What are the results of cash-based intervention on women's empowerment? Such questions are critical, further exploring the intervention's effects, such as the 'income effect'.

Explore the invisible effects of the programme

We argue that the current limited effectiveness of development interventions is a result of not embracing a systematic approach to understanding development challenges, which are interlinked. The development space is also struggling to define and explain the mechanisms that are driving under-development in the Global South. Hence, several communities are still experiencing the same challenges despite significant investments in addressing them. We argue that evaluations are also complicit in focusing on understanding a component instead of the components within their broad system. For example, a food security intervention evaluation should not only focus on the food security parameter but also on health, education, climate change adaptation outcomes, etc. We are calling for evaluators to examine the programme logic, theories of change and results matrix to understand other aspects that are not covered by the programme but have the potential to result in unintended consequences. In the examination, the evaluators should also pay attention to the inequities and their effect on the targeted population. By doing so, evaluators will move from regurgitating surface reality to understanding the mechanisms that drive surface reality.

Ex-post evaluations

Ex-post evaluations designed and timed correctly can also help understand the unintended consequences of interventions after the intervention has been discontinued. Ex-post evaluations verify whether the outcomes that the project aimed to achieve are continuing beyond the intervention. We are arguing that if the design of the ex-post evaluation is based on the end-line evaluation, it will be able to pick and pursue any anecdotal evidence of unintended consequences of the programme. This will allow the programme funder and implementer the opportunity to address any adverse impacts of the programme beyond the normal programme cycle.

Conclusion

While cash transfer programmes hold promise for poverty alleviation and social protection, their success hinges on a deep understanding of the cultural, social and gender contexts in which they operate. The unintended consequences of interventions, such as those that arise from the use of cash transfers, pose a risk to the development aspirations of communities in the Global South who do not sit at the table where the decisions regarding their issues are discussed. Despite the good intentions of development interventions, there is always an inherent risk of exacerbating inequalities, especially in contexts that are marked by fragility, poverty and underdevelopment. Evaluators should play their role in addressing this risk by adopting approaches and methodologies that gather information that provides insights into adverse outcomes of programmes. Through comprehensive evaluation methodologies and a commitment to addressing inequalities, evaluators can contribute to more effective and sustainable development outcomes in the Global South.

Chapter 10

In quest of equitable evaluation

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

Introduction

The two volumes of the book have revealed that achieving equitable evaluation requires those who are working in the development space to rethink what they want their programmes to achieve. The chapters in this volume have demonstrated that achieving equitable evaluation alone will not address the key issues that mark inequalities in the Global South. The chapters advocate for a holistic look at development and development interventions that aim for equitable outcomes. For evaluation to be transformative and promote equity, it should be prefaced with programme design, implementation and monitoring that seeks to address inequalities in communities, and this is achieved through two things. Firstly, funders

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making deliberate actions to fund interventions that are grounded in promoting equity and doing no harm in communities. Secondly, through designing and implementing interventions that are informed by the prevailing context and an understanding of the inherent inequalities within the context in which they are being implemented. Thirdly, the chapters have highlighted that equitable evaluation is elusive in the absence of monitoring that adopts an equitable lens. Fourthly, evaluators should not blindly apply evaluation approaches and methodologies without carefully considering how inequalities within the programme's context may influence its results, whether during its implementation or after. In this chapter, we are not going the route of summarising the chapters. Instead, our focus is on calling the programme funders, designers, implementers and evaluators to action, so that they can all do their part to stem the source of inequalities in the Global South.

A call to action for programme funders

The development context of the Global South is heavily influenced by funding from the Global North. As highlighted in this book, the funding comes from foundations, non-profit organisations, international non-governmental organisations, governments and United Nations agencies. The implication of the funding is that, to a large extent, the funding agencies decide on what to fund and to some extent, they also influence programme designs. The Global South has perfected the art of fundraising for development programmes. Within the art, there is a realisation that programmes that receive favourable consideration are those that reflect the ideals of the funders. In addition, because of the power asymmetries between the funder and recipient, there are limited opportunities for strategic engagements between the two on what is regarded as equitable development. For communities, these are some of the problems. This top-down approach to development in the Global South contributes to the perpetuation of the ineffectiveness of interventions to address major challenges.

Neo-liberal development approaches have a limited impact on addressing inequality

The majority of the development programmes are centred around neoliberal development thinking. The implication is that because the funding for the development is from the Global North, the funding is not geared towards a holistic approach to addressing inequality but is focused on a few selected issues that 'tickle' the mind of the funders; hence they are piecemeal and, in most cases, do not make a dent on the broad array of inequalities in the Global South, including Africa. The funders need to think hard about how

their programmes can holistically address inequality in the Global South, considering the unique context and drivers of inequality in Africa and other parts of the Global South.

The history of development on the African continent is marred by neoliberal policies that have only exacerbated and compounded the inequalities faced by people in Africa (United Nations Research Institute for Social Development 2022). The structural adjustment programmes that were developed and funded by multilateral organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, etc., which emphasised macro-economic stabilisation, privatisation and free market development, were heavily criticised for paying little attention to the social dimension of development and considering the limitations placed by the institutional weaknesses of governments in developing countries (Heidhues & Obare 2011). It was in the 1990s that a broader view of development was accepted, which now took into consideration issues of gender equality, human rights, demography, social development and environmental sustainability. Development policy then began focusing on three critical issues including ensuring food security, reducing poverty and protecting the environment (Heidhues & Obare 2011). Evaluation practice on the continent, however, seems to be lagging, as knowledge production approaches continue to be guided by models of evaluation as an accountability and results-based management tool and not as a learning tool and mechanism for transformation, as articulated by Norins et al. (2023) in Chapter 11 of Part 1 of this book.

‘Mind my privilege and biases’

We are calling funders to action so that they first understand that power asymmetries themselves often mute Global South voices, leading to them being mere recipients of programmes that are often ineffective or perpetuate inequalities. We are also calling for programme funders to think beyond the proposed programme design and examine the unintended consequences of the programme (beyond the specific issues that are covered by the programme ‘Mind my privilege and biases’.)

Do not treat symptoms and no universal programme design

Several chapters highlighted that a programme design might be prudent and plausible. However, the context (culture, values, etc.) in which it is going to be implemented may trigger inequalities or perpetuate them. The book also highlights that some programmes are designed to address symptoms of inequality without necessarily addressing the root cause of

the programme. For example, unequal education access creates other challenges, including poor access to health services.

Learning focus instead of accountability

We are also calling programme funders to think beyond accountability-focused evaluations. Is the focus on accountability stemming from mistrust? Although accountability is key to ensuring an efficient programme, evaluations should mainly focus on programme results and learning from how the results were achieved. The current practice in the Global South is that evaluations are accountable; hence, terms of reference, scope and evaluation questions are framed in such a way as to fulfil the funder accountability requirements, which are not necessarily for programme implementers and targeted communities to learn. The accountability focus is also reflected in how programmes are monitored.

Ex-ante evaluations are key to doing no harm

We are calling for the funders to use one of the evaluation tools, the ex-ante evaluation tool, which is a forward-looking assessment tool. The ex-ante evaluation should provide a roadmap to achieve equitable development. It should be robust and establish the basis for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). It should also be linked to developing the theory of change, design and implementation of the programme. Within the ex-ante evaluation, there is a need to meaningfully engage with stakeholders to determine their priorities and understand the inequities and how they affect the targeted beneficiaries.

A call to action for programme designers and implementers

Be deliberate about learning and adaptive management during programme implementation

One of the key equitable evaluation objectives is to push the needle towards practical and adaptive management and learning that informs equitable development programming. This volume has shown that achieving equitable development requires programmes designed and implemented with a learning and reflective approach that supports adaptive management. This kind of approach will allow programme designers to understand early what is working and why. It also allows the implementers to correct the course instead of waiting for the evaluation phase. Adaptive management and learning should be accompanied by robust monitoring systems that

are designed for learning purposes, not only for accountability purposes. Implementers should also make changes to the programme design and how it is implemented if it assists the programme in achieving equitable development.

Achieving equity is not optional at the design phase

This volume has shown that inequality permeates all development sectors in the Global South, including in Africa. Hence, every programme should adopt the equity lens at the design phase so that inequalities are factored into the programme design. The current practice is that an equity lens is an afterthought regarding programme design. Addressing equity and inequality should not be left to the end of the programme cycle. From this view, programme designers and implementers are envisioned to play a critical role in capturing crucial components and being responsive to multiple intersecting issues perpetuating inequality and inequities throughout the programme cycle. In cases where inequalities are not known, programme designers and implementers need to apply approaches that apply evaluative thinking (Buckley et al. 2015):

> [*C*]ognitive thinking 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)

Programme designers and implementers must also consider inequality trade-offs and unintended consequences. Development programmes must be designed to correct inequitable outcomes by addressing the structural elements that create inequity. These programmes should aim to produce social justice outcomes aimed at dismantling systemic inequity factors to address injustice at its root.

Factor in political economy

Various studies in both volumes reveal the importance of understanding the political economy factors that impede equitable results and assess what is politically feasible as well as the complexity of the national and international development systems. Mapitsa, in this volume, discusses the interface between achieving equity-focused development and the difficulty of moving beyond what is politically feasible. Even though equity may be beneficial to the wellbeing and prosperity of communities and individuals, the likelihood of undertaking equity-enhancing interventions depends on political economy factors, which programme designers and implementers

are often limited. Nonetheless, political economy analysis can be used as a tool to assess politically informed agendas using various approaches for exploring the role that economic and social forces, as well as the distribution of power, play in managing resources – particularly in donor-funded intervention within development partner countries – and thus affecting the achievement of equitable development. Even in cases where equality is a deliberate objective of programme design, it is important to assess various institutions and stakeholders' perspectives on the nature, extent, focus and causes of inequality. Political economy assessments can involve various analytical tools, such as institutional reviews, historical analysis and stakeholder analysis (Reich & Balarajan 2012, p. 9). Due to their significant utility in analysing the intricacies of institutional and human relationships that influence the outcomes of development programmes and in informing strategic programme design that responds to these realities through re-evaluation and course correction, these tools should be included as part of the evaluators' toolkit for centring equity and equality in evaluations.

Co-create and adapt to community priorities

Co-creating the programme design and implementation with communities is paramount for addressing key inequality issues in communities. Co-creating ensures that the programme design is aligned with targeted community priorities. Evaluations have shown that several development programmes do not necessarily align with community development priorities. However, targeted communities cannot reject the programmes because of power asymmetries. At the design level, what should be prioritised are the community-raised issues, and it is within those priorities that opportunities and trade-offs to address inequality occur. At the implementation level, it is important to involve the targeted communities or individuals so there is co-implementation, not a giver–receiver relationship. If learning occurs, it should be happening with the targeted communities.

A call to action for evaluators

Be prepared to displease the funders and programme implementers

The chapters in this volume highlighted that evaluators find themselves kowtowing to the demands of the evaluation commissioners and often are limited from examining further beyond the programme and the evaluation questions. Hence, their evaluations have limited capacity to expose the inequities. We are calling evaluators to go beyond programme evaluation and explore and examine all the unintended consequences of the programme and how the intervention was or has influenced the context in

which it is being implemented. We are cognisant of the reality that this might displease funders and programme implementers who might be interested in very narrow aspects of the programme.

Examine the root cause of the problem that is being addressed by the programme

As evaluators, we tend to take the theories of change and programme design as being immersed in evidence and end up not examining the root cause of the problem the programme is addressing. We end up evaluating the symptoms, not the actual root cause of the problem. Evaluators need to understand that 'inequality has been both a root cause and an amplifier of multiple crises – economic, social, political and ecological' (UNRISD 2022, p. 3) and group identities such as race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, nationality, etc. play a critical role in determining people's capabilities and social outcomes. This means that in addition to the traditional focus on summative judgement-based evaluation criteria, including relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, equitable evaluation requires evaluators to explicitly assess the equity dimensions of development projects, programmes and policies. This kind of evaluation requires evaluators to move beyond collecting and analysing quantitative data towards the analysis of behavioural change, complex social processes and attitudes; collecting information on hard-to-reach, socially marginalised groups; and understanding the context within which a programme is implemented, including key systems, structures and power dynamics (Stern et al. 2019).

Assess if a programme is contributing to or perpetuating inequalities

Evaluators are also required to assess how much an evaluation contributes to inequities or perpetuates inequality in a particular context. We are calling for evaluators not to make this optional but integral and compulsory to the evaluation process. While champions of equity in evaluation strongly believe that it is 'a non-negotiable characteristic of high-quality evaluations' (Stern et al. 2019, p. 2). Evaluators should embrace equitable evaluation and also emphasise the importance of scrutinising programme designs, adopting truly participatory evaluation approaches that empower the targeted communities and applying an equitable lens at the analysis level. The targeted communities should also scrutinise the evaluation design, provide an understanding of the context, validate or challenge evaluation findings, and ensure that those findings are meaningfully shared and applied to future practices and policies.

A call to challenge Global North's grip on evaluation approaches and methodologies

There is a need for a paradigm shift in evaluation practice on the African continent, away from the hegemonic ideologies of the Global North towards a practice led by the needs of African people. Evaluators need to shift their ontologies, epistemologies and axiologies away from what they learned from evaluation courses, whose curricula are predominantly informed by Western models, theories and approaches (developed in different historical, social, cultural, economic and political contexts), towards a practice that is led by the realities on the African continent and the lived experiences of its people. It is only when we shift the lens through which we view development projects, programmes and policies that the evidence that is generated will truly become useful to African governments and other stakeholders (including affected communities) working towards bringing social change. Evaluators should embrace context-specific evaluation approaches and methodologies.

Objectivity does not justify continuing with the status quo

Evaluators must ensure that the quests to address inequality should not die on the hill of objectivity. Several studies have shown that several evaluators use objectivity as a tool to thwart transformation within the evaluation space. Objectivity is a judgement based on observable phenomena and uninfluenced by emotions or personal prejudices. The evaluation process is marked by four main processes: (1) the choice of the evaluation questions; (2) the gathering of evidence about the problem; (3) the judgement made on the interventions or problem based on the evidence and (4) the use of the results or evidence in decision making. Objectivity as the goal of the evaluator is problematic because if the evaluator is the operator of the instruments of investigation and the decision-maker in these four processes, then this goal is an illusion. The decisions made during these processes are filled with subjectivity and are value-driven. Acknowledgement of the human element involved means that evaluators can understand that methodologies, particularly quantitative ones, are not set in stone and that ideas and methods for 'randomisation', inclusion and exclusion criteria, etc., can be altered to serve better the purposes for which evaluation is utilised in the development sector. For example, the significance of impact evaluations cannot be overstated; however, its 'objective' methodologies are often reified by evaluators.

Methodological implication

We are not oblivious to evaluators' key question, which is what the methodological implications of evaluations are. In these two volumes, our

focus is on revealing how evaluations oftentimes miss ingrained inequalities in pursuit of programme evaluation. Hence, the deliberate intention is to change the mindset of everyone involved in the development space. We also believe that evaluators with an inquisitive mind, not encumbered by maintaining the status quo, will adapt their approaches and methodologies to achieve equitable evaluation. In short, evaluators need to use approaches and methodologies that examine issues of inequity and inequality in each development evaluation. Evaluators must understand that these issues are incredibly complex and are underpinned by structural and systemic inequalities that manifest themselves in social norms, biases, prejudice and forms of privilege that are all internalised by individuals and at organisational and systemic levels, working to perpetuate advantages for certain groups and disadvantages for others (Dean-Coffey 2018). A systems approach is critical to equitable evaluation because development interventions are multi-faceted and complex, influencing and influenced by various parts of the systems in which they are implemented.

We are more worried about the inequalities created by the programme than about the inequalities that existed before the programme was implemented

Development theory has primarily been concerned with inequalities of outcomes, which refer to the material dimensions of human wellbeing (Choo, Andersson & Sokou 2017). These are measured by standards of living, such as inequalities in income or wealth, education, health, nutrition, etc. (UN 2015). However, new measures of inequality that are increasingly being considered and that are critical to equitable evaluation, are measures that view inequality resulting from unequal life chances (i.e. inequality of opportunity) (World Bank 2019). Inequality of opportunity occurs because individuals belong to or identify with certain groups (race, gender, age, culture, ethnicity, religion, ability or disability, sexual orientation, etc.) and thus experience prejudice, discrimination, marginalisation or advantage because of circumstances they have no control over. This also includes inequality that occurs because of social circumstances such as country of residence, community of residence, home environment, parents' background, upbringing, etc. In practice, evaluators would take a systems approach by examining the extent to which development policies, programmes and projects compensate for the disadvantageous circumstances that people are facing, thus addressing inequality of opportunity (United Nations 2015; World Bank 2019).

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee criteria are for guidance purposes

Several evaluations use the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria as the basis for framing evaluation questions. We are calling for evaluators to use the DAC criteria as guidance and for them to be innovative when it comes to framing the questions so that the questions provide insight into the inherent inequalities in the contexts in which programmes are being implemented. While there is an argument by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC that the evaluation criteria implicitly deal with issues of equity, it is important that evaluators consider alternative criteria which explicitly question issues relating to equity or inequity. A good example of a criterion that is contextual, relevant and developed by African evaluators is the transformative equity criterion mentioned in volume one of this book. These authors use the term 'transformative equity' because the criterion emphasises the assumption that for equity to exist, a transformation of systems and structures is required, both in the intervention and in the evaluation. It draws the attention of the evaluator to the way systems have been designed, established and maintained to perpetuate inequities.

Role of targeted communities in advancing equitable evaluation or equitable development

The current discourse on transforming evaluation ascribes too much power to programme funders, implementers and evaluators with limited consideration of how the targeted communities can advance the transformation that furthers their development objectives. We often regard the targeted communities as devoid of intellectual capacity, lacking the power to determine programme design and the ability to steer the programmes in a sustainable and impactful direction. This is evidenced by the poor value ascribed to indigenous knowledge systems. The current approach in the evaluation and research space is more extractive, as highlighted by several chapters in the two volumes, with limited decision-making and sense-making of the evaluation by the relevant stakeholders. This is mainly caused by narrow evaluation questions that do not ask the right questions because they are accountability-focused. We call evaluation commissioners to promote 'engaged evaluation' – an evaluation that includes goals, concerns and the stakeholders' perspectives. The key to engaged evaluation is the understanding that evaluation results or evidence should inform the stakeholders' decisions, especially those of the targeted communities. Often, the communities where programmes are

being implemented have no opportunities to comment on the results or findings of the evaluation, and they are treated as nonentities.

Furthermore, evaluation approaches and methods that are aligned with the values and principles of equitable evaluation should first be people-centred, meaning that they need to prioritise the views, opinions and knowledge systems of the people supported by the development interventions through the entire evaluation project cycle, from the design through to report writing and dissemination. Secondly, there is a need to utilise approaches and methods that acknowledge and attempt to dismantle power imbalances between stakeholders and users of the evaluation, as well as between the funder(s), evaluator(s) and community members (i.e. evaluation trio). Thirdly, evaluation teams must comprise all key stakeholders, including representatives from the funders, representatives from the respective governments, evaluators and members of the community. This will ensure that any potential biases are mitigated, as the team will include people who understand the context, culture, languages and as well the needs of the communities.

Conclusion: Advancing equitable evaluation

The two volumes have highlighted that to achieve a just and equitable society, there is a need to have all hands on deck. Firstly, there is a need for a systemic shift in how programmes are funded, designed, implemented and evaluated. The volumes have highlighted an inherent need to always put an equity lens throughout the programme cycle, that is from funding decision-making to the evaluation phase. Furthermore, there should always be the realisation that whatever good outcomes a programme is achieving there is an inherent risk of causing unintended consequences on other facets of targeted individuals or communities, hence the need for a careful examination of the holistic influence of the programme on the targeted communities.

As we stated in the two volumes, our objective is to stimulate debate and create an understanding of the complexities around achieving equitable development in Africa. The two-volume collection has demonstrated how development and evaluation practice is in tangent with addressing inequality in Africa. We are highlighting that there is further research needed that focuses on how development practice and evaluation can achieve social justice and equitable development in Africa. To be specific, we are advocating for further development of evaluation methodologies and programme design approaches that ensure that programmes and evaluations address issues of equity in the Global South, particularly in Africa. This research should lead to developing the tools to help programme designers and evaluators contribute to the achievement of equitable development.

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The authors have done an exceptional job of bringing evidence to address their primary research questions. This book is worthy of attention from scholars interested in evaluation challenges. This book calls every evaluation scholar to action and to go beyond programme evaluation and explore and examine all the unintended consequences of the programme and how the intervention has influenced the context in which it is being implemented. The authors have highlighted that evaluators find themselves serving particular demands of evaluation commissioners rather than what is necessary for the core programme and the evaluation questions in their quest to please their funders and programme implementers. Thus, in the network of relationships between evaluators, evaluation commissioners and programme implementers, a system has grown, over time, which is limiting the evaluators from further examining beyond the programme and the evaluation questions, rendering their evaluations limited in capacity to expose inequities. More interesting is that this book is written by the evaluators themselves, which assures us that, as evaluators, while encouraging other evaluators to take action, they will also examine the root cause of the problem the programmes are addressing.

Dr Limkile Mpofu, Department of Health Economics, Faculty of Health Economics, HIV/AIDS Research Division (HEARD), University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

This book is the second volume on equitable evaluation, written from the Global South/ Southern Africa. It provides a strong argument for an alternative approach to evaluation methods and implementation using a southern and decolonising perspective. The review of history, the analysis of current day evaluation approaches and the need for using a more diversified Southern perspective are all powerfully argued. Most effectively, in this volume, the editors and authors provide strong practical measures to implement the results of their lens. For those wishing to join the decolonising Southern perspective movement and, more importantly, wishing for ammunition to convince others of its importance, this volume is both a valuable and readable text.

Dr Richard Longhurst, Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University, Brighton, United Kingdom

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