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Events

National

Consultation cum workshop on Strategies for Evaluating SDGs – equity and equality, by ECOI, NILERD & ISST, 9th March 2016

National Institute of Labor Economics Research & Development (NILERD) under NITI Aayog, Government of India in association with the Institute of Social Studies Trust (ISST) and the Evaluation Community of India (ECOI) organized a consultation cum workshop on various issues relating to Evaluation of SDGs with gender and equity focus in context of India on March 9, 2016 at NILERD, Narela Institutional Area, Delhi.



gender-responsive national evaluation systems

- Demand for & use of evidence from equity-focused and gender responsive evaluation to inform equitable development

ECOI website (www.ecoionline.com) was launched on this occasion. The outcome report of the workshop is available [online](#).

International

Leave No One Behind: High-Level Event and Technical Workshop, New York, 15th -17th March 2016

The Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of UN Women, [EvalGender+](#) and United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) in collaboration with EvalPartners, Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), and various other national and international organisations organized a workshop to reflect on how to evaluate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with an equity-focused and gender-responsive lens. Dr. Rashmi Agrawal and Rituu B. Nanda, from the ECOI, attended the workshop and shared the outcome report from the consultation cum workshop mentioned above. More information at [Key learning's from discussions on evaluating SDGs with an equity and gender lens](#), by Rituu.

The themes included:

- Relevance of “new metrics” (measurement tools and indicators)
- Evaluation & complexity
- Towards equity-focused &



Reflections

Learning from Experience

Contributed by *Dr. Sunita Palita, Director, SAHAS India and member ECOI*

Having failed to achieve the Goal-3 of the Millennium goals pertaining to gender-equality particularly about empowerment of women in life-spheres, the social-sector professionals seem to be feeling a sense of despair.

An empirical estimation that as many as 39 million girls had not enrolled in schools by the year 2011(UNESCO-IIEP) saw the educational fraternity demanding focus on head-on measures to attain the desired goals by the year 2015. Despite the commitment, the goals today are far-fetched and the lacunae cited, are many.

From socio-cultural factors inhibiting the girl-child enrolment at school, to misperceived interventions, leading to ineffective measures of development are the obvious barriers which ought to be crossed by practitioners of gender equality.

To quote the most recent example of the govt. scheme, offering financial assistance to the parents of the girl-child, one cannot deny it as an incentive for enrolment in schools but is definitely reinforcing the age old beliefs regarding the gender disparity already prevalent in social-systems. A promise to the “Laadli” as she attains the age of 18, a few thousand rupees which most parents take as her dowry to be given to the prospective groom and his family at the time of her marriage, is sad but a grassroots reality (Kumari Project finding).

The fact brings us to think about assessment of educational interventions for purposes geared towards SDGs.

That, gender equality is about looking beyond numbers is an emerging belief, thus bringing us to put emphasis on learning experiences turning to tangible gains. Kumari Project undertaken by SAHAS India has inferred that pointers to Sustained Development Goals ought to be measured by:

- Right to Education: Access to Education in terms of affordability and physical access (demographic)
- Rights within education: Culturally compatible educational input (belief patterns of families and role allocation)
- Right through Education: Self-perception and decision making ability (choices available with regard to sexuality and age at marriage and spacing of children)

What better can be the enumeration than by Lumby (2011:3) asserting that sustained Development Goals can be envisioned much faster than ever before if fears can be put to rest by accepting that -“we do spend too much time counting and measuring rather than changing policy and failing to see gender as an enabler as opposed to a barrier”.

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Role of Communities in Development Evaluations

Contributed by *Manas Bhattacharyya, Manager, Evaluation, Association for Stimulating Know How (ASK) and member ECOI*

Any kind of development program by any agency (Government, Corporate or NGOs) is ultimately aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of one or more vulnerable community/ communities. Thus the vulnerable communities & cross sections of the society are the primary stakeholders in any such program and the development sector in general emphasizes a lot on the need for their active participation in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation.

From the participatory evaluation experiences of ASK, we have seen that the following principles & practices can lead to significantly enhance the role of the

communities in evaluations:

- The perception, attitude and orientation of the “evaluator” towards “role of community” in any evaluation are extremely important, and a deciding factor what role the communities will play in the evaluation: passive observers (and merely data / information providers) or active players in each process, starting from designing the evaluation to owning the findings & suggesting way forward measures? We, as External Evaluators, need to believe that “community can / needs to play a very important role” at each stage of the evaluation and need to have a positive and facilitative attitude towards the same.
- Sensitive consideration of suitability of “community timings” is essential: often the members lose their “daily wage” to attend the evaluators & respond to their queries: schedule for community visits needs to be finalized in consultation & agreement with the community, based on their suitability and availability, and without any loss to their livelihood.
- Ensuring participation of the “most marginalized, vulnerable and excluded” cross sections is a real challenge during any evaluation process. Within the poor communities also, there are several power relations / dynamics / gaps that work as barrier. Discussions during pre-evaluation visits (if there is any), using participatory processes, tools & methodologies that encourage actual and meaningful participation of the “excluded and most vulnerable communities” (and not only the comparatively vocal / empowered community leaders or CBO leaders), visiting the houses / families for one-to-one interactions, and conducting separate meetings with non-vocal, excluded & discriminated, less capacitated & less confident community members to create space for open communications are some of the strategies that might be helpful.
- Share major findings with the community before leaving the field is important: communities are generally not part of the briefing or debriefing processes: holding a debriefing session with the community, including the individuals and groups that are sufficiently representatives of the community, and encouraging and engaging them to share / generate realistic and feasible strategies for improvement and change are quite helpful
- In case community debriefing is not realistically possible to facilitate by the external evaluators, the implementing organizations need to ensure that they go back to the community, share the evaluation findings and consult with them further for way forward measures.
- We, as external evaluators, must have the required skills to be able to listen, dialogue, and communicate with community stakeholders by creating a non-threatening environment and be empathetic.

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How the MIS of two iconic programmes is effective?

Contributed by *Professor I.C.Awasthi, GIDS, Lucknow and member ECOI*

The MIS portal of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) provides a single-point access to all stakeholders. The aim is to generate transparent and user friendly data. The portal places complete transaction level data in the public domain for job cards, demand for work and attendance-cum-payment sheets for workers. Proper checks are used to validate the data through the biometric data base introduced by the Unique Identification Authority of India. This is expected to bring about more transparency, to curb irregularities and to reduce corruption.

While the system has considerable value, it could be improved as follows:

- The delivery monitoring unit (DMU) treats employment generation, assets and

finances as ‘outcomes’ but does not capture impact (e.g. human wellbeing indicators)

- Inconsistencies between MGNREGA information and data included in the Prime Minister’s Office DMU data base need to be resolved. There appear to be excessive time-lags in the transmission of information at various administrative levels (village committees, blocks, districts, States and the GOI Ministry) particularly, in small states/union territories.
- Lags in transmitting or updating data hinder effective use of MIS findings, e.g. the MGNREGA MIS system did not raise a timely alert regarding major delays in wage payments.
- The number of productive assets created and completed is reported but there is no information regarding their durability and sustainability.
- No analytical reports are being generated.

A web-based online system has been developed for the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) to facilitate monitoring, increase transparency and improve decision making geared to on-time delivery, cost management and quality control. Citizens have direct access to the data base.

The MIS suffers from the following shortcomings:

- It largely focuses on inspection of contractors’ compliance with engineering quality standards and fails to monitor and evaluate development effects.
- Most of the information provided is qualitative
- The judgments offered are not independently verified
- The MIS does not track overall implementation progress relative to original plans.
- No information is provided about decisions made in response to MIS findings

It emerges that compliance with sound principles is critical in order to justify the expense associated with MIS. A good MIS would deliver enormous benefits in terms of improved decision making and effective implementation. Among the shortcomings observed in the two programmes reviewed above are: (i) irregular reporting; (ii) lack of independent data validation processes; (iii) little analysis and inadequate data on interlinked activities, (iv) limited MIS utilization. This suggests more emphasis on reporting than on action. Since the two programmes reviewed above have the most comprehensive MIS of all it would appear that addressing the lacunae identified in this note would help improve the overall performance of infrastructure and social programmes. Given their size and ambition good MIS practice would make a major contribution to the achievement of India’s development objectives.

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Members’ Column

ECOI encourages formation of thematic and activity specific interest groups open to ECOI members. The following groups have been constituted.

ECOI Action Group	Coordinator	Members
1. Evaluation field building with various stakeholders	- to be decided -	Dr. R.S. Goyal, Shubh Kumar-Range, Richa Saxena, Dr. Anita Rego
2. Indian Evaluation Policy framework	Dr. Rashmi Agrawal	Dr. Shachi Joshi, Dr. Sunita Palita, Suraj Jacob, Raj Pal Singh, Dr. Nandlal Jotwani, Neha Kumra
3. Capacity building in	Shubh Kumar-	Dr. R.S. Goyal, Vijender

Evaluations	Range	Kumar, Suraj Jacob, Tanvee Kakati, Bidhan Chandra Singh, Paul Asare, Shyam Singh, Nilangi Narendra Sardeshpande, Harjit Kaur Ahuja
4. Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation	Rituu B Nanda	Dr. Rashmi Agrawal, Richa Saxena, Raj Pal Singh, Khilesh Chaturvedi, Shyam Singh, Mohar Singh Meena, Manas Bhattacharyya, Yashpal Malik, Harjit Kaur Ahuja, Vijender Kumar, Paul Asare, Chittaranjan Mishra, Savina Claudia Ammassari, Tanvee Kakati, Madhu Jagdeeshan, Nabesh Bohidar
5. Evaluations in context of SDGs – framework, measures and mechanisms beyond surveys	Nabesh Bohidar	Dr. Rashmi Agrawal, Dr. Shachi Joshi, Rituu B Nanda, Neha Kumra, Raj Pal Singh, Shyam Singh, Mohar Singh Meena, Nilangi Narendra Sardeshpande, Subhalakshmi Nandi
6. Repository for Good Evaluation Practices	- to be decided -	Tanvee Kakati, Paul Asare, Raj Pal Singh, Jyotsna Sivaramayya

More people are welcome to join the various groups.

International News

- The final version of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 (EvalAgenda2020) is now available [online](#).
- Jim Rugh was granted an IOCE/EvalPartners award (Lifetime Achievement Award) in recognition of his exemplary contributions to IOCE and the Global Evaluation Community, at the Global Evaluation Forum in Kathmandu on November 23. His career has included 52 years in international development, 32 of them as a specialist in evaluation.

Capacity building & Training

IRMA Monitoring and Evaluation Training Workshop (23-25 February, 2016)

Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA) organized a Monitoring and Evaluation training workshop to build capacity of development professionals involved in government programs, civil society interventions, and CSR initiatives. The workshop focused on programme design, implementation and collection of data for results-based monitoring and evaluation. The programme aimed at enhancing participants' knowledge and understanding of fundamental M&E principles and frameworks; provide analytical tools and enable them to apply these to their work. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Vivek Pandey and Dr. Shyam Singh.

IRMA Impact Evaluation Training Workshop (1 - 5 March, 2016)

IRMA organized a five-day training program on impact evaluation methodologies.

The program was based on mixed method approach, which includes experimental and quasi-experimental designs as well as qualitative methods of impact evaluation. The workshop was attended by development practitioners, academicians, research scholars, government functionaries and CSR professionals. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Vivek Pandey and Dr. Shyam Singh.

Getting involved

Active participation is possible through innovative ideas, discussion forums, blogs, networking, sharing knowledge, feedback, latest information on M&E, future activities, strategic inputs, capacity building, and other contributions.

Membership drive

All professional evaluators, scholars, practitioners, development officials, young professionals, project managers, implementers, civil society, academicians and students interested in the field of development and evaluations are welcome to join. The membership is open to individuals.

How to be a member?

Please fill the registration form and pay Indian Rs. 500 or US \$15. For more details please contact at the addresses mentioned below.

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