



Towards a Vibrant Evaluation Ecosystem: Creativity, Collaboration and Convergence

New Delhi, India (in virtual mode)

21st – 25th February 2022

Background

The Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that aims to improve the theory, practice, and use of evaluation across the Asia-Pacific region. The Evaluation Community of India (ECOI) is a voluntary organization of professional evaluators, established in 2015 with objectives of promoting evaluation culture in the country and contributing to evaluation capacity building. APEA has organized two regional evaluation conferences in 2016 and 2019 and ECOI has held two knowledge-sharing events in 2018 and 2020 (EvalFest 2018 and EvalFest 2020). The two bodies have now come together to organize their first joint ‘evaluation knowledge-sharing’ event, “*The 3rd APEA Conference and EvalFest 2022*” during February 21-25, 2022. Considering the still partially prevalent COVID 19 pandemic, the event will be conducted in virtual mode.

Theme of the Event

The adoption of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the global development agenda has injected a sense of urgency in the field of evaluation. Given the enormity and transformative nature of changes envisaged in these goals and the massive deployment of resources they imply, generation of high-quality evidence on what works and to what extent and, more importantly, its utilization in shaping policies and programmes is essential to ensure that nations are on the right development path. This calls for strong national evaluation ecosystems that foster an awareness of the importance of evidence-based decision-making at all levels, induces a high demand for quality evaluations, and ensures steady

supply of professionalized evaluation manpower satisfying the competencies requirements of the profession and conforming to the highest professional and ethical standards to enhance use of evidence generated through evaluations in policy planning and implementation. The setback to global development due to the emergence of COVID 19 pandemic has further deepened the need for influential evaluations, a need that Eval4Action drives home. **Various ingredients constitute strengthening the larger evaluation ecosystem. To develop evaluation eco-system in a country or in a region or at global level both demand for it and supply of quality evaluators are pre requisites. Demand and supply will emerge from large scale awareness and advocacy about the importance of evaluations in the development agenda. The ecosystem must ensure development of institutional and individual capacities of the evaluators to the required level for professionalism. A strong evaluation eco-system will require innovations and collaborations.**

Such a system can only be achieved by going beyond evaluators spaces through **collaborative** efforts and alignments by all the stakeholders – governments, legislators, civil society organizations, academia, media, industries and professional bodies of evaluators – supplemented and supported by cooperation from international and regional organizations. The complex nature of SDGs has brought home a realization that the traditional approaches and evaluation techniques might not be adequate to assess progress, and the societal restrictions following the pandemic have been forcing the evaluation profession to adopt newer evaluation practices. Thus, **creativity** and innovation in both evaluation knowledge and practice has become essential. The third element of crucial importance in building a sound evaluation eco-system is the pursuit of this goal by all the stakeholders involved through knowledge synthesis leading to **convergence** of action, dovetailing and supplementing each other's efforts.

The overarching theme that underpins the 3rd APEA Conference and EvalFest 2022 and informs all its sub-events is, therefore, **“Towards a Vibrant Evaluation Ecosystem: Creativity, Collaboration and Convergence”**. The topic reflects that evaluation ecosystem needs to be energetic and dynamic that responds to the emerging and evolving evaluation arena with pro-active thinking. This would no doubt need be creative and innovative with full of illuminating ideas to resort to and should be based on partnerships and cooperation that could take all together in terms of stakeholders and innovations.

Sub-themes

Within the ambit of this broad theme, the event will provide scope for deliberations on the following sub-thematic strands:

Leveraging partnerships for strengthening the evaluation ecosystem

The evaluation ecosystem comprises of elements that promote demand for evidence, deal with the supply of evaluators and that facilitate the demand-supply matching process with establishing partnerships. Smooth functioning of the system calls for mutual cooperation and support between the elements, through sharing of knowledge, best practices and other forms of resources. COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of Communities

particularly most marginalised as co-owners of Evaluation. The event will highlight the importance of community role in evaluation.

Institutionalisation of evaluations

Institutionalisation of evaluation is a process that establishes an evaluation system through specific policies or strategies. The institutionalisation on one hand needs policy support while on the other hand there is a need to professionalise evaluations. The system has to function as per contextual social and cultural milieu. Professionalisation of evaluation generally strengthens supply side.

Innovations in evaluation practice and solutions in humanitarian crises

Evaluation of progress towards the complex SDGs has prompted rethinking about the adequacy of traditional evaluation approaches and look for innovations and consideration of systems approach. Also, the spread of pandemic Covid-19 and reoccurring of humanitarian crises has forced evaluators to adopt fresh or adapt existing methods of generating evidence and provide solutions. These innovations deal with identifying and using newer forms of data such as Big Data, use of data collected through monitoring system, analysis of available secondary data and filling the gaps. Various techniques are emerging to collect on-line data raising issues of ethics, its appropriateness and challenges in collecting data that is more personal or relates to sensitive issues.

Role of YEEs in building a vibrant evaluation ecosystem

Evaluation profession has a large number of youth and emerging evaluators pursuing the evaluation as a career. They bring in fresh thinking, enthusiasm and are ready to experiment and learn. It is important to ensure that they are mentored and guided to pursue evaluation following the professional and ethical standards. It is also important to consider the young people affected by evaluation decisions, or the young who have a stake in evaluations and plan for their involvement and representation as stakeholders in any evaluation. Future of evaluations depends upon 'Youths', the torch bearers; it is better to catch them young and groom. Strategies for such efforts are to be well planned and converted into action. A well thought of career path also needs to be established to this effect to attract youth to this field.

Towards SDGs: LNOB, evaluative evidence and achievements

The Sustainable Development Goals are a collection of 17 interlinked global goals designed to be a "blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". Leaving no one behind (LNOB) is the mainstay of so-called 2030 Agenda. Monitoring and evaluation plays crucial role to inform whether countries are on or off track in realizing the goals and targets. A common observation about the Voluntary National Reports (VNR) of countries on SDG progress presented to high level global political forums is that they contain mainly information from the national monitoring systems with scant mention of evidence from evaluations. The complex nature of SDGs suggests that all relevant information cannot be incorporated in the statistical systems and needs to be supplemented and verified by

evaluative evidence. Deliberations on this sub themes will provide important input for improving reporting in VNRs.

EvalFest 2022 will be organised in partnership with the 3rd APEA Conference, EvalYouth at regional and national levels, Inter Regional Initiative for Professionalization of Evaluation (IRIPE) and others and, expects to bring together specialists in evaluation theory and practice to share knowledge and experience encompassing the above sub-themes. Some of the topics on which presentations could be made may include, but not confined to:

a) national evaluation policies, b) partnerships between VOPEs, government, academia and private sector to boost demand for evaluations and capacity building, c) competencies and testing mechanisms, d) mainstreaming evaluation education in academic institutions, e) innovative methods of generating and utilizing evidence in crisis situations (pandemics and natural calamities), f) global, regional and national scenarios of institutionalization of evaluation, g) gender transformative evaluations, h) country-led versus donor-led evaluations, i) role of young and emerging evaluators in strengthening evaluation eco-system, and j) role of VOPEs in building a strong evaluation ecosystem.

Structure

The event is spread over 5 days – 21st to 25th February 2022. The main conference will take place from 23rd to 25th February 2022, while on the first two days (February 21 & 22, 2022) capacity building workshops will be conducted. Each workshop will be of half a day.

During the main conference, each session of around 90 minutes will have presentations by either individual or panel (of 3 to 5 presenters) followed by Q&A. The OpenSpace will provide opportunity to a number of young evaluators, innovators and other participants to showcase their ideas and products in short presentations of 15 – 20 minutes followed by Q&A.

Contact us

For more information, please write to

- Asela Kalugampitiya, President, APEA apeaeval.president@gmail.com
- Madhuka Liyanagamage, APEA Coordinator, apea.coordinator@gmail.com
- Rajib Nandi, Co-leader, ECOI, rajib@feministevaluation.org
- Rashmi Agrawal, Co-leader, ECOI, rashmi.agrawal56@gmail.com
- Yatin Diwakar, Co-leader ECOI and EvalYouth India, yatindestel@gmail.com