The state of SDG Evaluation in Anglophone Africa and Latin America: a CLEAR-AA, CLEAR-LAC and DEval perspective

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Agenda

I. Introduction

We are a cross-continental working group from Europe, Latin America and Anglophone Africa.

We came together with the intention of strengthening efforts towards **promoting SDG evaluation.**

For this presentation we draw on findings resulting from a consultancy study commissioned by the group.

II. Objective

- Assess the use of **SDG evaluation evidence** when measuring progress made by (selected) African and Latin American countries *vis-à-vis* achieving the 17 SDGs.

- Present the **findings** of our research on key *lessons learnt* from country processes of developing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).

III. Context

- Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, countries around the world have rallied to include the SDGs in their national development planning, particularly at the level of short-term plans.

- Almost halfway to the deadline, countries have all started new cycles of development planning enabling them to consider and integrate the international agreements in national frameworks.

- Despite the efforts to incorporate the 2030 Agenda into national planning, this approach has not been operationalized in the guidance, discussion, statements and analysis of VNRs.

What is our aim?

Contribute to the **ongoing discussion on the role of evaluation in SDG reporting** with a view to a more effective interaction between monitoring/data and evaluation/public policies and their governance structure as part of national, regional and global VNR processes and their respective governance

Inform and provide inputs to **regional knowledge sharing among key stakeholders**, including the ones involved in CLEAR platforms, based on common challenges, successes and potential best practices regarding VNR reporting and the use of evaluation therein

Provide data and analysis to inform further action to **advocate for improved reporting requirements** at the global level (VNR guidelines by UN DESA), particularly to reflect the role of evaluation in the achievement of the SDGs

IV. Methodology

In a joint design along with two expert consultants, we have embarked upon a new path to understanding the role of evaluation in informing VNR processes in **four** Anglophone African and **four** Latin American countries, selected based on the SDG group's understanding of the region.

The consultants carried out an extensive **desktop analysis** and research that has been triangulated through a **series of interviews** of key stakeholders in the region who have provided with unique insights.

Along the process, the discussion and feedback with the SDG group has generated a series of preliminary findings on this matter.

Anglophone Africa

1. Botswana

2. Lesotho

3. Malawi

4. Uganda

Botswana

Latin America and the Caribbean

1. Mexico

2. Costa Rica

3. Colombia

4. Ecuador

V. Emerging lessons - Anglophone Africa

- There is work to do in creating an enabling environment for the institutionalisation of evaluation (govt)

- Evaluation systems, policies, and standards **only emerging**

- Heavy focus on statistics and monitoring in VNR (legacy of donor/IFI influence; UN SDG Indicator framework perpetuates dominance of monitoring+statistics)

- Governments generally guard against evidence that may expose them to criticism at multilateral forums (UNHLPF, UNGA).

- Evaluation may therefore not be a politically expedient input in VNRs

V. Emerging lessons - Anglophone Africa

- Lack of evaluation databases among AA governments and development partners is another impediment to the use of evaluation in the VNR process

- AFRED (by CLEAR-AA and CREST) is a solution to this gap in evaluation databases, making evaluations readily available to VNR development processes

- **Sources of evidence for VNRs in AA:**

  - Statistics by national statistical offices;

  - Performance monitoring reports

  - Public sector annual performance reports;

  - Applied research studies (particularly on social factors such as poverty)

  - CSOs conducting public policy assessments;

Emerging good practices in AA

Govt of Lesotho commissioned National University of Lesotho to write evidence-based papers on Lesotho's SDG progress for Lesotho's 2019 VNR report

→

HEIs host many research centres that produce evidence on many SDGs anyway, so it is valuable to include them in the VNR development process

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Uganda has an SDG-focused roadmap to guide its pursuit of the SDGs. Very practical and institutionalised means of pursuing SDGs

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This is good practice to be emulated elsewhere

V. Emerging lessons - Latin America

- In general, **evaluation systems** are advanced and consolidated towards an improved management of the public policy cycle.

- While the related systems are not yet **directly addressing the 2030 Agenda** in most cases, there is ample potential to evaluate the SDGs using and adapting these arrangements; however, this **adaptation** has been **challenging**.

- **Although the 2030 Agenda** a key element for **planning,** it is much less contemplated in **evaluation.**

- Overall, public policies in social sectors have **integrated operational elements** for implementation of global commitments, such as **dedicated institutional arrangements** and **updated normative frameworks**, but in practice, policies and programs appear to have been **slow** to integrate specific orientation towards **SDGs** and their targets.

Emerging good practices in Latin America

- **Colombia**
  - Inclusion of **civil society organizations** and **private sector** association through the creation of the platform "SDG for all" which involves non-state actors producing 2030-related data and information

- **Costa Rica**
  - Integration of the SDGs is not limited to policy design. Costa Rica has been piloting the **full inclusion** of SDGs and targets in the public policy cycle, including in design, planning and budgeting.

- **Mexico**
  - Has reformed its **Planning Law** in 2018 to incorporate principles of the 2030 Agenda. This new law also mandates the Ministry of Finance to link **budget programs** to the SDGs and targets.

VI. Conclusions

- While all countries mapped for this analysis have integrated the SDGs to varying extents in their overarching national planning, only limited progress has been made to ensure that SDGs and targets are taken as key references for sector-level planning

- There is a profound need to raise awareness as well as a common language on what SDG evaluation entails since there is a concentration of efforts on data-driven monitoring of the SDGs that has led to a shortage of time and resources to invest in building the necessary conceptual and methodological ground for SDG evaluation.

VII. Next steps

- Discussion Report has been made fully available to countries who were at the 13 September dissemination workshop for comment

- Dissemination to countries is for practical application/learning and possible sharing to VNR and other SDG multilateral fora

- Dissemination is also important for research and ECD community (empirical evidence+analysis)

- Final report will be trimmed/shortened, with graphic layouts

- Possible journal article

Thank you

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