

African Evaluation Association
Promoting Africa-rooted and
Africa-led evaluation



Association Africaine d'Evaluation
Promouvoir l'évaluation créer et mené
par les Africains

THE AFRICAN EVALUATION PRINCIPLES

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INTRODUCTION TO THE AFRICAN EVALUATION PRINCIPLES (AEP)

- ❖ **The African Evaluation Principles (AEP)** have been developed in service to all who commit to evaluation that serves the people of Africa as they strive to chart a bright path to the future. They are to be used by individuals, organisations and coalitions who finance, commission, manage, conduct and educate about evaluation in Africa. All stakeholders who have an interest in furthering evaluation in Africa have the responsibility to help ensure that they are widely applied.
- ❖ **The AEP 2021 replace the African Evaluation Guidelines** that have been in use for two decades, and complement other evaluation guidelines and standards around the world, including the Indigenous African Ethical Protocol for Evaluation developed by EvalIndigenous.
- ❖ **The AEP 2021 reflect the demand for evaluation that is 'Made in Africa'** – rooted in and tailored for African contexts, needs and knowledge systems, yet informed by international insights, theories and good practices.
- ❖ **The AEP 2021 are intended to**
 - i. confirm the value of evaluation as an important practice that can help protect and advance African societies in unity with the natural ecosystems on which all life depends;
 - ii. cultivate a common understanding and consistent application of the features of high quality evaluations that are valuable in Africa, and fit for the opportunities and challenges of the Anthropocene era;
 - iii. support the design and implementation of monitoring, evaluation and learning systems and can inform decisions and strategy, 360-degree accountability, the generation of knowledge, and advocacy;
 - iv. assist educators and mentors in preparing the next generations of evaluation professionals;
 - v. inform the professionalisation of evaluation in Africa and worldwide.
- ❖ **The AEP 2021 were developed** between 2019 and 2021 under the auspices of the African Evaluation Association by a group of more than 30 Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) representatives and volunteers from across Africa, and launched at the 10th AfrEA Conference held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 17-19 November 2021.
- ❖ **The AEP 2021 will be tested and revised** after 1-2 years to help ensure that it is useful and used. Afterwards it will be revised when necessary to reflect the changing demands on evaluation as contexts change and opportunities emerge.

THE INSPIRATION FOR EVALUATION IN AND FROM AFRICA

Evaluation demands responsible practice. Evaluation can affect the lives of millions of people and the natural ecosystems on which all life depends. Financing, commissioning, doing and using evaluation in Africa are therefore highly responsible tasks, especially when dealing with vulnerable communities and economies, developing institutions, and the rich diversity of worldviews, experiences and traditions that define African societies.

Africa is part of a world of interconnections and interdependencies. The world connects the local and the global; the rich and the poor; humanity and natural ecosystems; the economic, political, socio-cultural, technological and environmental. Its challenges are complex, influenced by factors that cross geographic, sectoral, demographic and stakeholder boundaries. As responsible citizens and co-stewards of the world, we need to honour that which is important for humanity, and for our beautiful continent and planet.

Africa presents inspiring opportunities for evaluation. In Africa, policies and strategies have to enable progress across many fronts, simultaneously and in sequence. Its youthful population and the creativity inspired by the unique features of its many diverse societies – their histories, philosophies, values, mindsets and capabilities – bring many opportunities to support the aspirations of African societies through the practice of evaluation.

Evaluation from Africa has to be part of the solutions the world needs now. Evaluation has the power to help accelerate change and transformation. We are therefore called upon to act in an era defined by the overshoot of planetary boundaries, and by global disruptions and crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, massive inequalities and geopolitical strife. As their effects are often most felt in Africa, insights and experiences from this continent have to enrich evaluation and development theory and practice worldwide.

Evaluation in Africa has to be rooted in Africa. The African evaluation community has to contribute to evaluation theory and practice while drawing from experiences and initiatives in other parts of the world. In this process, Africa's knowledge systems must be strengthened, revitalised and afforded respect.

New perspectives, narratives and partnerships are essential. For decades, North-South cooperation has determined the priorities and direction of evaluation in Africa. South-South cooperation encourage new ways of thinking and working, informed by different principles, development models and modalities of support. South-South cooperation in evaluation therefore also opens up new possibilities for innovation, and for new narratives about development and evaluation in Africa.

The African Evaluation Principles

The following **Key Principles** provide a guiding framework for good evaluation practice in Africa.

1. The evaluation empowers Africans
2. The evaluation is technically robust
3. The evaluation is ethically sound
4. The evaluation is rooted in Africa, yet draws from across the world
5. The evaluation shows the connectedness of the world, with special attention to where humanity's footprint calls for new ideas and knowledge for change and transformation.

While the five Key Principles stand side by side, two – 'Africa centric, yet open to the world', and 'Connected with the world' – can be seen as cutting through all.

Twenty-two Implementation Principles accompany the five Key Principles. They are summarised in the table and described in the section that follows.

Summary of the African Evaluation Principles 2021				
P. Powerful for Africans	T. Technically robust	E. Ethically sound	A. Africa centric yet open	C. Connected with the world
P1. Conduct an appropriate, empowering process	T1. Be systematic & analytical	E1. Be sensitive to stakeholders and relationships	A1. Engage with issues that matter in Africa	C1. Acknowledge interdependence and interconnectedness
P2. Encourage reciprocity, including mutual accountability	T2. Be transparent & clear	E2. Protect the rights of people	A2. Consider framings and methods from Africa	C2. Foster the evaluation of sustainability in keeping with key international agreements, and with the stewardship of nature
P3. Enable learning for useful insights	T3. Be aware of dispositions	E.3 Safeguard diversity and inclusion	A3. Learn and adapt from the Global South, indigenous communities, and other contexts	C3. Strive to contribute to the urgent need for sustainable and transformative change
P4. Value and strengthen domestic capacities	T4. Ensure a feasible evaluation	E.4 Address inequalities and power asymmetries		
	T5. Be efficient	E.5 Be free from vested interests		
	T6. Be culturally responsive	E.6 Consider trade-offs		

KEY PRINCIPLE P: THE EVALUATION EMPOWERS AFRICANS (*P = POWERFUL*)

Design, conduct and share evaluations in a manner that strengthens the agency of stakeholders in Africa.

Implementation Principles P1-P4

P1. Design and conduct the evaluation process so that it empowers participants through new insights, accountability and ownership.

Engage stakeholders in the evaluation process in a manner that facilitates self-discovery and learning, develops accountability, builds capacity in evaluative thinking, and gives life to the notion of self-determination and 'nothing about us, without us'. Where possible, while maintaining the integrity of the evaluation, co-create the evaluation approach. To the extent that it is feasible and useful, engage with stakeholders about pre-final findings, and consider their perspectives and any supplementary evidence.

P2. Focus on reciprocity and mutual accountability.

Value and recognise stakeholders' contributions, whether data, information, knowledge, resources, time or goodwill. Find opportunities that allow the evaluation to contribute to the wellbeing of participants. Cultivate an approach where the evaluation commissioners, evaluators, participants and intended users of the evaluation are accountable to one another for credible, legitimate and useful processes and results.

P3. Enable a useful, learning-oriented evaluation.

Design and conduct the evaluation, and engage and communicate with primary stakeholders in a manner that provides them with the insights and energy to gain new insights, adjust, plan, be accountable, and use the results. Tailor engagement and communication processes for a diversity of stakeholders and potential users, with consideration for their local languages, and in formats and ways that are appropriate. Make it possible for the evaluation to contribute knowledge also to a wider audience.

P4. Value and ensure team evaluation capacities and contributions.

Make sure that all evaluators are treated as equal and respected partners in the team, with balanced responsibilities and fair remuneration. At the same time, commit to showing or gaining the capabilities to justify being treated as trusted, responsible members of the team.

KEY PRINCIPLE T: THE EVALUATION IS TECHNICALLY ROBUST (*T = TECHNICAL*)

Design and conduct evaluations to be trustworthy, feasible, effective and efficient.

Implementation Principles T1-T6

T1. Be systematic and analytical.

Carry out all aspects of the evaluation, from the design to the sharing of results, in a systematic and technically and analytically rigorous manner. Use defensible evidence from diverse sources – from the literature, past experiences and the conduct of the evaluation. Respond to the evaluation questions and follow clear evaluative reasoning. As appropriate and feasible, work with stakeholders to help ensure the validity of findings, and meaningful recommendations.

T2. Be transparent and clear.

Clearly identify the purpose, focus and intended users of the evaluation. Design, conduct and record the evaluation so that stakeholders understand its purpose, approach and process; the findings, judgments and conclusions and how they were reached; and the principles, values and assumptions behind the evaluative reasoning and judgments. Document the evaluation process to be traceable and auditable. Disclose limitations and disagreements that affected the process and results.

T3. Acknowledge own dispositions.

As evaluator or evaluation commissioner, monitor and recognize own values, worldviews, biases, practices and/or experiences that might unduly influence the credibility or integrity of the evaluation. Account for these during the design, execution and communication of the evaluation, and consider how they can be countered.

T4. Safeguard the feasibility of the evaluation and its recommendations.

Make sure that the design of the evaluation is fit for purpose, so that the evaluation questions can be answered in line with expectations and within the available time frame, capacities and resources. Formulate realistic recommendations based on the evaluative findings and conclusions - whenever possible, in cooperation with those with a stake in their implementation.

T5. Ensure efficiency.

Conduct the evaluation with the efficient use of resources – financial, human and time - in order to get a positive return on the investment by all stakeholders.

T6. Be culturally responsive.

Actively search for, respect and treat with sensitivity any contextual and cultural vulnerabilities, and differences in values, beliefs, knowledge systems, practices and experiences that might affect the evaluation. Consider whether the theories, approaches, questions and criteria as well as the data collection, analysis and sharing of results, reflect the context and traditions of the society in which the evaluation is implemented. Ensure that the assessments and conclusions are accurate and credible across the range of cultural contexts, and respectful of the diversity of perspectives. Ascertain the meaning of ‘success’ – of that which is being evaluated, or of the evaluation - where stakeholder perspectives on the issue might differ.

KEY PRINCIPLE E: THE EVALUATION IS ETHICALLY SOUND (*E = ETHICAL*)

Design and conduct evaluations in a manner that respects and values the dignity, knowledge and experience of individuals, the relationships between them, and the rights of the community, society and nature.

Implementation Principles E1-E6

E1. Be sensitive to stakeholders and relationships.

Initiate and conduct the evaluation in a manner that strengthens trust and respectful relationships. Consider those with stewardship over knowledge and resources. Agree contractual and ethical procedures for the conduct and communication of the evaluation that are fair and just to all, and that acknowledge the values, traditions, protocols and priorities important to key stakeholders. Include impartial, culturally sensitive dispute resolution mechanisms that safeguard the credibility of the evaluation process and results.

E2. Protect the rights of the evaluator and of the evaluation stakeholders.

Ensure adherence to ethical guidelines and procedures that protect confidentiality and privacy, personal data and intellectual property, as well as the physical safety and dignity of participants, including in terms of their religious, gender and cultural beliefs. Identify and manage potential risks for individuals and societies, and actively guard against negative effects of the evaluation process. Avoid intimidation of stakeholders, and resist any pressure to act against the integrity and credibility of the evaluation. Negotiate upfront with commissioners such issues as authorship, publication and copyright.

E3. Safeguard and nurture diversity and inclusion.

Design and conduct the evaluation process in a manner that respects and values cultural, religious, ethnic, gender and age differences, and that strives to include all relevant perspectives and experiences - irrespective of professional context or social structure - including those of traditionally disenfranchised, marginalized and hard-to-reach groups.

E4. Address inequities and power asymmetries.

Seek out and consider inequities throughout the evaluation process, including those resulting from imbalances in power. Highlight the consequences of such imbalances, and conduct the evaluation in ways that minimise or balance out power inequalities between participants; between participants and the evaluator; and between members of the evaluation team. Handle the asymmetrical relationship between the evaluation commissioner and the evaluator with respect for the professional responsibilities of both.

E5. Guard against vested interests.

Ensure that the design and conduct of the evaluation, and the sharing of its results, are clear of any vested interest that might affect its credibility, legitimacy and utility.

E6. Consider the implications of trade-offs.

Make an assessment and record the implications of trade-offs that had to be made, both in what has been evaluated and in the evaluation process – including trade-offs between the rights of individuals, communities, societies, and nature.

KEY PRINCIPLE A: THE EVALUATION IS ROOTED IN AFRICA, YET DRAWS FROM ACROSS THE WORLD (*A = AFRICA-CENTRIC*)

Give Africa's priorities, philosophies and knowledge systems their rightful place - informed by international developments, with special attention to the Global South and indigenous communities across the world.

Implementation Principles A1-A3

A1. Take care to address issues of importance in African contexts.

Ensure that the evaluation considers issues and norms that are sensitive and important in African contexts, including power dynamics, the relationships between people, the policies and priorities for development, different ideas about what 'success' is and how it can be measured, and the balance between the rights of individuals, societies and nature. Make sure that that it helps to bring out the resilience in communities and institutions where this can help overcome challenges they face. Use evaluation where there is opportunity to create cohesion, harmony and healing in the society. Assess whether the value added by the intervention is sufficient, attends appropriately to cultural aspects and to the need for revitalization, and is mindful enough of the need for change that sustains or evolves into something else that makes a positive difference.

A2. Engage with African priorities, framings and narratives as complement to other international theories and practices.

Ensure that the evaluation questions, criteria and processes reflect the development contexts, priorities and needs of Africa, including alignment with Agenda 2063 of the African Union. Fully informed of international good practices in evaluation, focus on how to bring together indigenous, local and international knowledge to strengthen the theories, frameworks, models and methodologies used in the evaluation. Determine whether dominant narratives about change or development are relevant, and whether new ways of thinking about it is necessary. Where feasible, aim to contribute to new thinking and practices.

A3. Learn from Africa's relationships with the Global South and from indigenous knowledge systems worldwide.

In the Global South and among indigenous communities worldwide, histories, experiences and philosophies often have similarities not found elsewhere. Help bring more plurality into evaluation theory and practice by making a special effort to seek out expertise, frameworks, models, methodologies and development narratives with their origins in the Global South and in Indigenous communities worldwide, in addition to those from the Global North.

KEY PRINCIPLE C: THE EVALUATION SHOWS THE CONNECTEDNESS OF THE WORLD

(C = CONNECTED)

Show how responsible evaluation in Africa can foster relationships between people and nature, and contribute to the sustained wellbeing of communities, societies and natural ecosystems worldwide.

Implementation Principles C1-C3

C1. Acknowledge that humanity lives in a world made up of connections.

Recognize that development requires a complex systems-informed approach to evaluation that links the socio-cultural, economic, political, technological and environmental; the local with the global; and Africa with the world. Include appropriate evaluation questions and criteria in line with state-of-the-art guidance. Structure the design and conduct of the evaluation mindful of the connections between people and the ecosystems on which they depend.

C2. Foster the evaluation of sustainability in keeping with key international agreements and the need for stewardship of nature.

Consider whether and if so, how the evaluation can support global priorities such as the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; help prepare Africa for disruptions such as the Covid-19 pandemic, climate change, the negative effects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, and many others. Strive to balance the wellbeing of communities and societies with the wellbeing of nature.

C3. Strive to contribute to durable (sustainable) and transformative change.

Encourage, develop and use state-of-the-art evaluation concepts, questions, criteria and methodologies that can ensure positive changes endure, and that can help accelerate and scale efforts to address the urgent challenges that communities, societies and ecosystems face across the world, and in particular in Africa.

ANNEX

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