THE AFRICAN EVALUATION GUIDELINES

2020 VERSION

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION

14 April 2020

INTRODUCTION TO THE AFRICAN EVALUATION GUIDELINES 2020

❖ **The 2020 revision of the African Evaluation Guidelines** is available for use by all who commit to ensuring that evaluation serves the people of Africa as they strive to chart a bright path into the future. It provides a set of principles that professionals dealing with evaluation in Africa – irrespective of where in the world they are based – can and should use to guide their practice. They are to be used to complement and inform other resources that provide theoretical or practical guidance on how to approach and execute evaluations.

❖ **The AEG 2020 aim to**
  o confirm the role of evaluation as an important practice that can help protect and develop African societies and the ecosystems on which they depend;
  o cultivate a common understanding and consistent application of the features of high-quality evaluations that are valuable and useful in Africa;
  o assist educators in preparing the present and next generations of evaluation professionals;
  o inform the professionalisation of evaluation practice in Africa and worldwide.

❖ **The AEG 2020 complement** other international evaluation guidelines and standards in use around the world. They reflect the demand for evaluation that is 'Made in Africa' –-tailored by and for African contexts, needs and knowledge systems, yet informed by international good practice insights, theories and practices.

❖ **The AEG 2020 are for the effective use** by individuals and organisations who finance, commission, manage or conduct evaluations in Africa. They are intended to inform the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems that support learning for decision-making, downward and upward accountability, knowledge generation and advocacy. They are also intended to help guide evaluation specialists who work in and for Africa, irrespective of where in the world they are based. This means that the AEG have to be accessible and its use promoted by all evaluation stakeholders who have an interest in furthering evaluation in Africa - especially evaluators, commissioners of evaluation and those who use it for educational purposes.

❖ **The African Evaluation Guidelines were revised** under the auspices of the African Evaluation Association by a group of Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) representatives and volunteers from Africa, and approved in *…tbc…* 2020 by *…tbc…* (*list VOPEs at end, place*). They will be revised at certain intervals to reflect the changing demands on evaluation with changing contexts, challenges and opportunities.

This version is the fourth version of the AEG, following the first published in 2002, the second in 2007 and the third in 2012.

Evaluation compels responsible practice. Evaluation is meant to be used. It can affect the lives of millions of people, and of nature on which they depend. Financing, commissioning, doing or using evaluation in Africa is therefore a highly responsible task, especially when dealing with vulnerable economies, evolving institutions and the rich diversity of worldviews, experiences and traditions in African societies.

Africa is part of an interconnected world. The world connects the local to the global; the rich and the poor; humanity to natural ecosystems; the economic, political, socio-cultural, technological and environmental. Challenges and solutions are complex, influenced by factors that cross geographic, sectoral, demographic and stakeholder boundaries. Evaluation therefore cannot be thought of, and done in isolation of the systems that are influenced through intervention – or in isolation of the urgent challenges confronting us all. As responsible citizens of the world we need to honour that which is important for the global community and for the co-stewardship of our beautiful planet.

African evaluation has to be part of solutions the world needs now. Evaluation has the power to help accelerate change. It can support development that is transformative. The global evaluation community therefore has to act in the face of problems within and across borders - in an era defined by the Anthropocene, and by rising global disruptions, inequalities and geopolitical tensions. This is especially important for Africa. Insights from the African continent can complement and enrich evaluation theory and practice worldwide.

Africa presents distinctive opportunities and challenges. In African contexts, policies and development interventions have to enable progress both simultaneously and in sequence across many fronts - mobilising its youthful population and recognising the unique features in its many diverse societies' histories, philosophies, values, mindsets and capabilities. Africa has to cope with some of the most severe consequences of humanity's actions both on the continent and globally, including climate change disasters, ecosystems destruction, accelerating inequalities worldwide, violent conflict, and state collapse or incompetence. Here, appropriate solutions are most urgently needed to meet the aspirations of African societies.

Evaluation in and for Africa has to be rooted in Africa. The African evaluation community has to contribute to evaluation theory and practice of value to the world, while drawing from experiences in other parts of the world. In this process, Africa's knowledge systems must be enhanced, revitalised and afforded respect. At the same time, evaluation in and for Africa has to be informed by international, regional, national and local agreements, policies and efforts that aim to advance the wellbeing of African societies and ecosystems.

New perspectives and partnerships are essential. For decades, North-South cooperation has determined the priorities and direction of evaluation in Africa. South-South and triangular cooperation aimed at development in economically poorer countries 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.

The African Evaluation Guidelines therefore aim to foster evaluation that is

- o useful and empowering for the stakeholders, especially those in Africa - through accountability, new insights and ownership of both evaluation and the changes around them

- o technically robust and efficient

- o ethically sound

- o Africa-centric, yet open to the world

- o connected to, and therefore caring about the world

- o centred on opportunities and solutions suited to this era, where humanity's footprint on the world calls for new ideas and knowledge for transformative change, from local to global level.

Five Key Principles provide a framework for evaluation practice conducted in and for Africa.

Twenty-two Implementation Principles elaborate the five Key Principles.

While the five Key Principles stand side by side, two in particular – A and C – can be considered as overarching, able to cut across the other three.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EVALUATION IN AND FOR AFRICA

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 global agreements and the need for stewardship of nature
P3. Enable learning for useful insights	T3. Be aware of (pre)dispositions	E.3 Safeguard diversity and inclusion	A3. Learn from the Global South, indigenous communities and other contexts	
P4. Value and strengthen local capacities	T4. Ensure a feasible evaluation	E.4 Address inequalities and power asymmetries		C3. Strive to contribute to the urgent need for durable and transformative change
	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, and especially local 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-T5

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 (pre)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 timeframe, 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 and analysis, and sharing of results reflect the context and traditions of the society in which the evaluation is implemented. Take care 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, and including those of traditionally disenfranchised, marginalized and hard-to-reach groups.

E4. Address inequities and power asymmetries.

Seek out and include in assessments 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 interests 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 or societies, and/or 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. Use evaluation where there is opportunity to help 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 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 among 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 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[1]. 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 global 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 Fourth Industrial Revolution, and strive to balance the wellbeing of communities and societies with the wellbeing of nature.

C3. Strive to contribute to durable and transformative change.

Encourage, develop and use state-of-the-art evaluation concepts, questions, criteria and methodologies that can ensure that 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.

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[1] For example, *Principles for the Effective Use of Systems Thinking in Evaluation*, developed by the AEA SETIG, 2018. See https://www.systemsinevaluation.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/SETIG-Principles-FINAL-DRAFT-2018-9-9.pdf