

How to Engage Parliamentarians in Evaluation

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This One-Pager summarises the main issues raised in an online discussion on 'How to Engage Parliamentarians in Evaluation' hosted by the International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth (IPC-IG) <www.unteamworks.org/NEC> as a follow-up to the 18 National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) commitments adopted during the last NEC conference in São Paulo. Contributors shared their experience in implementing National Evaluation Policies (NEPs) and in engaging parliaments to ensure policymakers make good use of evaluation.

Parliamentarians, as policymakers, have a great need for verified data and can support the establishment of National Evaluation Policy and Systems. During the online discussion, examples of successful initiatives that aim to engage parliamentarians were presented. In Uganda a number of policies have been put into practice: encouraging parliamentarians to take field trips; promoting the development of studies to identify critical sectors in parliamentary research departments; training the Public Accounts Committee to ascertain impact; and conducting group discussions in constituencies. The country was also responsible for sponsoring a Ugandan Evaluation Week. In Malaysia the Integrated Results-Based Management System (IRBM) combines the RBM system and the MyResults software so as to integrate outcomes-driven development with outcomes-driven budgets.

Morocco has shown commitment to institutionalising evaluation and engaging parliamentarians, as its 2011 Constitution states that the parliament should be involved in evaluating public policies. In Malawi the focus is on monitoring, not evaluation—an issue also observed in Kenya—though an NEP exists. There are sector working groups, the Office of the President has a Programs and Projects Monitoring Unit that uses an Independent Evaluation Committee, and the Ministry of Finance has a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) section. Nevertheless, the parliament has little knowledge of programmes' performance.

Kenya has developed a National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES), coordinated by the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate; together they are building an NEP. Policymakers in the country are involved in M&E, since its governance consists of not only parliamentarians but also governors.

Challenges in developing strong NEPs were identified, such as officers being more engaged in intelligence activities than in M&E practices, NGOs being too involved in projects to evaluate and critique them, and local governments not taking into account evaluations carried out by NGOs. Also, district M&E officers passively wait for reports and do not resort to verification, whereas NGOs do not prepare annual reports and operate on donors' conditions, not on nationally established terms. Often, donors stop funding projects not only because money is embezzled but also due to a lack of M&E. In many countries, M&E is only working at the local government level.

Participants also mentioned challenges regarding the engagement of parliamentarians. Parliamentarians' political needs were mentioned, and it was suggested that, to overcome this problem, the political party system in developing countries should be restructured. Another suggestion was to convince parliamentarians that promoting evaluation could be good for their

prospects of re-election—for instance, by ensuring that the promise of the Kenyan Devolution Agenda is delivered. To make them understand this, it was mentioned that young people are key actors, since they are the ones that suffer from unemployment and have greater access to social media.

Other challenges include evaluation policies in developed countries. In Europe, countries have NEPs, but they are not always functional. Canada also has an NEP, but it only works at the national level, as the provinces have their own systems.

Some initiatives were praised, such as a public hearing at the European Parliament conducted by the European Evaluation Society (EES); the Parliamentarians Evaluation Seminar, organised by the Malaysian Evaluation Society; and the workshop on results-based M&E promoted by the Moroccan Evaluation Association. In addition, the South Asia Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation (PFDE) <www.pfde.net> is engaged in building a model NEP and is conducting a 'regional consultation on NEPs'. With support from EvalPartners, it has documented case studies on NEPs in six countries; these and other relevant resources are available on the organisation's website. Also, EvalPartners will host a meeting on 'Towards a Global Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation' in Dublin in conjunction with an EES conference, while Nepal launched the first National Parliamentarians Forum on Development Evaluation Policy. As regards knowledge-sharing, EvalPartners has a toolkit on Advocacy for Evaluation and an e-learning course that has a module on the subject.

Regarding the future, the majority of participants agree that institutionalising evaluation is a major step in ensuring that policymakers make good use of evaluation and that parliamentarians are aware that they should engage in evaluation and demand it. In addition, it is important to build capacity and improve policy frameworks. Also, the subject of engaging Voluntary Organisations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) and parliamentarians in building national evaluation systems was brought up and supported by many participants, who emphasised the fact that it is in the best interest of VOPEs to do so, as they could gain national visibility and recognition.

There were many contributions on how to strengthen and enhance evaluation policies, such as reporting documents with best M&E practices, engaging parliamentarians by conducting quarterly surveys on M&E systems and building strong connections between parliamentarians and research departments. As evaluation practices are usually carried out at the administration level, some competencies should be transferred to parliaments. Also, a link must be built between administrations and parliaments, to involve civil society in evaluation. To ensure ministries are informed by evaluation, strong legal frameworks must be built. Finally, to safeguard citizen participation and transparency, there must be a focus on pluralism and on multidisciplinary policies in civil society.

Notes:

'Mapping Status of National Evaluation Policies' final report at <<https://www.unteamworks.org/node/417283>>

'Model National Evaluation Policy With Key Elements' at <<http://www.pfde.net/images/pdf/MNEP.pdf>>

'Ten Reasons for Parliamentarians to Engage in National Evaluation Policy Process' at <<http://www.pfde.net/images/pdf/101.pdf>>