



gLOCAL Evaluation Week

Proceedings Report

June, 2025

Strengthening Evidence for Policy in Polarized Times: The role of evaluation associations and networks

June 6th, 2025, Online

1. Overview

On June 6, 2025, the African Development Bank's Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) and EvalPartners organized a session during the 2025 gLOCAL Evaluation Week on the theme "Strengthening Evidence for Policy in Polarized Times: The Role of Evaluation Associations and Networks."

Moderated by Karen Rot-Münstermann, Evaluator General at the AfDB, the discussion explored how evaluation associations and networks can help evaluators generate and apply credible, policy-relevant evidence, particularly in politically polarized contexts.

Through a curated dialogue and dynamic Q&A, participants exchanged fresh insights and identified practical strategies to foster dialogue, strengthen public trust, and promote the use of evidence in policymaking on critical global issues such as climate change, equity, and peace. Ultimately, the session underscored the pivotal role of evaluation communities in bridging evidence and policy, offering participants actionable approaches to advance inclusive, evidence-based decision-making in challenging times.

2. Key Highlights

Opening Remarks

The session was opened by **Karen Rot-Münstermann**, Evaluator General at AfDB, who set the tone by underscoring the importance of evaluation in addressing today's complex challenges, particularly political polarization. She emphasized that in an era where facts are increasingly contested and evidence is politicized, evaluation must go beyond technical reporting. Instead, it should be used as a transformative tool to foster trust, inform public dialogue, and support inclusive decision-making. She stressed the critical roles of evaluation associations, networks, and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) in upholding impartiality, quality standards, and facilitating policy dialogue rooted in evidence and credibility.

Panel Discussions

The panel featured four distinguished speakers who offered diverse regional and institutional perspectives on how evaluation systems can respond to polarization and strengthen evidence-informed policymaking.

- **Khalil Bitar** (President of the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) and co-chair of EvalPartners) highlighted the importance of global coalitions and thematic networks such as EvalYouth and EvalSDGs in promoting equity-focused evaluations. He called for greater activism among evaluators and emphasized the development of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2.0 to reassert the relevance of evaluation in a divided world.
- **Cécilia de Decker** (Special Evaluator of the Belgian Development Cooperation and Vice-President, OECD/DAC Evaluation Network) discussed the development of universal evaluation norms and the need for adaptable, inclusive practices, especially in non-DAC contexts. She emphasized communication strategies tailored to specific audiences and the need to safeguard evaluation independence in politically charged environments.

- **Millicent Tshivhase** (Senior Evaluation Specialist, Department of planning, monitoring and evaluation, Government of South Africa) shared practical insights into South Africa's institutionalized evaluation system. She discussed how evaluation findings are integrated into national strategies and policy reforms on youth, gender, and disability inclusion.
- **Romulo Miral** (Deputy Secretary General of the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department of the House of Representatives, Parliament of the Philippines) illustrated the role of evaluation in depoliticizing policy debates, highlighting how the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) program gained political and legislative support due to robust evidence. He emphasized the role of Parliament's research office as a neutral knowledge broker and stressed the need for more systematic M&E integration.

Q&A highlights

The Q&A segment allowed participants to engage directly with the panelists. Key questions explored how to move from short-term capacity building to long-term sustainable evaluation ecosystems, especially in politically unstable or under-resourced contexts. Responses emphasized the need for legislative frameworks, institutional integration of M&E, and the development of national evaluation blueprints. Participants also asked how to strengthen the actual use of evaluations. Panelists recommended that evaluations be demand-driven, timely, and linked to real policy needs. The conversation also addressed the importance of shifting from audit-style evaluations to learning-oriented processes that engage citizens and ensure relevance.

Closing Remarks

In the closing segment, each panelist reinforced the call for strengthened evaluation systems that are politically aware, socially inclusive, and technically sound.

- **Khalil Bitar** highlighted the dual role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in both supporting and threatening evaluation credibility and advocated for continued coalition-building and community engagement.
- **Cécilia de Decker** called for early integration of evaluation into policy design and the use of foresight tools to anticipate long-term impact.
- **Millicent Tshivhase** emphasized sustained investment in evaluation capacity and the need to institutionalize evaluation as a strategic government function.
- **Romulo Miral** advocated for stronger performance indicators and international collaboration to build resilient national M&E systems.

The session clearly positioned evaluation associations and networks as central actors in advancing evidence use amid political uncertainty. The discussion concluded with a collective affirmation of the need for inclusive coalitions, advocacy for credible evidence, and the empowerment of local champions to shape the future of evaluation.

3. Key Messages and Takeaways

The roundtable produced several key insights and lessons for evaluation practitioners, policymakers, and networks:

- **Evaluation must be repositioned as a strategic, transformative instrument**—not merely a technical exercise. It has the potential to foster constructive dialogue and bridge ideological divides, especially in polarized or fragile contexts.

- **Strong coalitions are critical to evidence credibility and use.** Evaluation associations, VOPEs, governments, academia, and civil society must work together to uphold standards, promote demand for evaluation, and ensure results are used to inform decisions.
- **Legal and institutional embedding of evaluation is essential for sustainability.** Countries like South Africa and the Philippines demonstrate how formal policies, frameworks, and oversight mechanisms support the systematic use of evaluations in public policy.
- **Communication is key to evidence uptake.** Findings must be delivered in audience-appropriate formats—clear, relatable, and accessible—ranging from simplified briefs to culturally adapted channels like community radio.
- **The role of champions and activists within the evaluation ecosystem** cannot be understated. Whether in parliament, VOPEs, or government agencies, passionate individuals are instrumental in institutionalizing evidence use and resisting misinformation.

4. Quotes

“Evaluation must go beyond technical reporting to become a transformative tool that fosters dialogue, informs decision-making, and builds bridges across divides.” — **Karen Rot-Münstermann**, Evaluator General, IDEV/AfDB

“Evaluation networks should adopt an activist posture... engaging stakeholders through accessible communication enhances ownership and use.” — **Khalil Bitar**, President, IOCE and Co-Chair, EvalPartners

5. Resources

- [Session recording](#)
- [Speech by AfDB's Evaluator General](#)

Other valuable tools, frameworks, and initiatives were also referenced throughout the session, including:

- [South Africa's National Evaluation Policy Framework \(NEPF\)](#): A comprehensive system for planning, conducting, and quality-assuring evaluations across the public sector.
- [27 public evaluation guidelines by DPME \(South Africa\)](#): These guide methodological approaches and quality standards and are freely accessible.
- [Global Evaluation Agenda 2.0](#) (EvalPartners): A strategic framework developed through global consultation to guide evaluation practice in a rapidly changing world.

6. Participants

The event brought together a diverse global audience from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Attendees included government officials, parliamentarians, leaders of evaluation associations, international organizations, academics, consultants, communication specialists, and Young and Emerging Evaluators. This rich mix of high-level officials, technical experts, and youth fostered a dynamic, multi-generational exchange of knowledge and strategies.

7. Contact Person

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