

**AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP
INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION**



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gLOCAL Evaluation Week 2025

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

Date and time: 6 June 2025, 12pm GMT

Dear Panelists

Dear participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening to all of you joining us for this vital conversation during gLOCAL Evaluation Week 2025. Greetings from Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

It is a privilege to open today's session on "Strengthening Evidence for Policy in Polarized Times: The role of evaluation associations and networks." I want to begin by expressing my heartfelt appreciation to the organizers and our dedicated partners from evaluation associations and networks, government institutions, parliaments, and civil society. Your presence here today speaks volumes about your commitment to advancing the use of evidence in public policy, especially in moments when it is most urgently needed.

IDEV shares your commitment. We are dedicated to evaluating the work of the African Development Bank, and ensuring that our findings and lessons are applied in new policies, strategies, processes, and operations for greater development effectiveness. Our membership of various evaluation networks such as the Evaluation Cooperation Group, the OECD/DAC Evaluation Network, APNODE, and EvalPartners helps us in our work. We learn from others, and that makes us stronger.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In recent years, we have seen a sharp rise in political polarization across many regions of the world. In such climates, evidence often becomes contested, its legitimacy questioned, and its usage challenged. Evaluators, researchers, analysts, institutions, and decision-makers find themselves navigating environments where facts and findings are politicized and trust in public institutions is weakening. This makes our mission more difficult, but also more critical.

The role of evaluation in such times cannot be overstated. Evaluation is not just a technical exercise. It is a powerful tool. It can illuminate complex realities, offer common ground for dialogue, and help build bridges across divides. But for evaluation to truly play this role, we must remain steadfast in our commitment to impartial, credible, transparent evidence and to

collaboration. Only then can we ensure that evaluation informs action, fosters accountability, and drives meaningful change.

Today's roundtable explores the transformative potential of collaboration among evaluation associations and networks, governments, parliaments, and civil society to safeguard the credibility, independence, and utility of evaluation. These actors together form the backbone of what we might call "evidence coalitions" - alliances that can withstand political tides and anchor policymaking in the realities and needs of people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), regional and global networks such as the OECD/DAC EvalNet and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, and initiatives such as EvalPartners are more than knowledge hubs. They are stewards of evaluation ethics, champions of quality standards, and enablers of policy dialogue. They support their members in producing and disseminating quality evidence, and in remaining steadfast when evidence is questioned, dismissed, or misused.

But evidence has little impact unless it speaks to the priorities of decision-makers and the lived experiences of citizens. This is where governments and parliaments come in. Governments develop and propose policies and programs for the benefit of citizens. Parliamentarians are uniquely positioned to champion the use of evaluation in legislation, budget decisions, oversight, and inclusive policy debate. Both their roles are vital in translating evaluative findings into real policy shifts that reflect the needs of the people they serve and represent.

Let me thank the many parliamentarians and government officials, past and present, who have worked tirelessly to embed evaluation in governance. You are the bridge between technical evidence and public accountability. And you remind us that evaluation is not only about what works, but about what matters to communities, to taxpayers, to future generations.

We are also seeing encouraging progress in cross-sectoral collaboration. Governments increasingly work with evaluation associations and networks to co-create policies that are not only informed by evidence, but also shaped by local knowledge, political realities, and long-term goals. This roundtable is a prime example of how shared commitment to credible evidence can create common ground, even in politically fragmented environments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me close by highlighting one core message: Collaboration is our best response to polarization. By fostering partnerships rooted in trust, professionalism, and mutual accountability, we can restore confidence in public decisions, enhance transparency, and make evidence matter where it counts most in the lives of people.

On behalf of the African Development Bank and IDEV, I thank all speakers and participants for your engagement. Let today's discussion be a spark that strengthens not only our networks, but also the political and social fabric that evaluation ultimately serves.

Thank you.