

Voices from the Field

Pakistan: Moving Evaluations from Fear to Learning, by [Mussarrat Youssuf](#), UNICEF Pakistan



Catalysing transitions toward evaluative thinking needs continuous attention and upkeep. Especially more so when vast grounds have many gate keepers and players. One needs to engage with all as none can be ignored for the sake of joint victory. Thus, since the inception of its National Evaluation Capacity Development (NECD) initiative in 2014, UNICEF Pakistan steadily focused on building national evaluation capacities of key stakeholders such as the federal and provincial Planning & Development Departments (P&DDs), UN agencies, civil society, academia and the parliamentarians through an integrated approach. It helped, though slowly, yet effectively, in moving evaluations from the shelf of fear to one of learning both within the country office as well as among the public sector partners with whom we engaged. However, moving from one shelf to another could mean evaluations would still remain on the shelf, failing in making the required contribution to evidence-based decision making at the appropriate time. Therefore, advocacy for use of evaluations and processes to make it happen were strengthened. It also meant deepening the work within provinces through respective departments such as the Directorate General of M&E (DG M&E), P&DD in Punjab. Technical competencies to undertake high quality evaluations were focused on as well as stronger quality assurance. Quickly learning from UNICEF, DG M&E set in motion the system of management response on evaluation recommendations, resulting in strengthened use of evaluations and a culture of evidence-based decision-making.

Bestriding our work in Punjab, UNICEF engaged with other provinces as well and created appetite for evaluation policies within the government. The work on provincial evaluation policies is not just ground breaking, it's timely as well. The [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) stresses accountability. Can we nurture accountability without strengthening evaluative thinking and evaluation systems, quality and use? The evaluation capacity building work serves as the bedrock for erecting bigger structures required for SDGs. The NECD symphony needs to be sung anew at a much higher pitch. Pakistan has started humming the SDG tone already by transforming the fear of evaluations into the passion for learning more from experience to reach its development goals.

The Application of Game Theory and New Institutional Economics to Evaluation Capacity Development, by [Denis Jobin](#), UNICEF Nigeria



In Nigeria, there is a plethora of evaluators found in the over 90 universities, specialized educational institutions and private research organizations. However, there is limited or no opportunity for networking among the evaluators from similar and different programmatic specializations. After applying the determinant framework to assess the evaluation capacity development situation in Nigeria, UNICEF agreed with the Ministry of Budget and National Planning (MBNP) that it will be strategic to support the establishment of a Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluation (VOPE). The VOPE will support both the demand and supply side of evaluation. From the demand side, the VOPE will ensure that government policy exists for a strong and effective evaluation function. For instance, the VOPE will create space for debates; promote discussions within government relevant circles, such as engaging parliamentarians, and public media on the role of evaluation in government policy. On the supply side, it is expected that the VOPE will play a greater role in professionalizing in-country evaluation services, and develop for instance, national evaluation standards and engage its members in evaluation capacity building activities.

Several leaders in evaluation were competing just as recently for occupying the national space reserved for a national VOPE. These leaders were in a none-cooperative environment, where the benefit of not cooperating, due to the local rule of the game, were greater than cooperating. After applying game theory and institutional economics, we realized that the Nigerian stakeholders were trapped in an institution such as a Nash equilibrium game view. This is generally understood as a player who has no interest in changing his moves given he knows what other players will do for each scenario. This explains why Nigerian evaluation leaders were not able to cooperate for the last two decades. To break this barrier, along with the MBNP, we proposed a new deal to the leaders which had the advantages of reshaping the rules of the game. We proposed a federation of associations, akin to a coalition in game theory. The result was that all leaders came together under this umbrella organization, to celebrate the evaluation year in 2015, and committed under the Abuja Declaration on Evaluation to register and establish an association, with an elected board, a written constitution, and election bylaws. The association is governed by a Board of trustees, which is chaired by the former Minister of Planning. Elections are planned for the end of 2017.