

Professionalization of Evaluation

Launch of Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring & Evaluation in one of the leading universities of Sri Lanka on Sunday, June 4th, 2017.

On June 4th, 2017, Prof. Sampath Amaratunga, Vice Chancellor, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, proudly announced the official launch of the programme that has long roots in the history of Sri Lankan efforts to instill monitoring and evaluation culture in the country. He emphasized the need to institutionalize evaluation practice in the country: "...the budgetary allocations and expenditure for various state projects and programmes are subject to annual audit, with hardly any monitoring and evaluation process that follows in estimation of the success or the failure of these projects where funds has been allocated". He stressed out that the aim of evaluation is not only to assess the relevancy, efficiency, effectiveness and the sustainability of the projects but to ensure continuous learning from the previous lessons to be carried-on to successive projects.



Prof. Sampath Amaratunga, Vice Chancellor, University of Sri Jayawardenepura

It is worth mentioning in this context that the national evaluation policy which is expected to regulate and install an independent monitoring and evaluation process into all government undertakings, is currently being debated in the Parliament of Sri Lanka. Once the policy is approved, it will become mandatory for government agencies to monitor and report on the progress of their undertaking as well as to conduct a series of evaluations. Currently, there is a dearth of monitoring and evaluation professionals in the country and an increasing demand for these professionals now and in the near future. Hence, the need to educate and train professionals to take up monitoring and evaluation.

In order to fill in the current gap, the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Sri Jayawardenepura, has partnered with UNICEF Sri Lanka to improve in-country capacity for equity-focused and gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation. The support includes revision of existing curriculum to suit the development needs of the country, especially with the view to the Sustainable Development priorities declared by the President; and establish an institutional support system under the auspices of the university that will also include a Centre for Evaluation as a centre of excellence and support for M&E capacity-building initiatives. **Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies**, warmly welcomed the first batch of postgraduate students: "This is one of the first postgraduate course in monitoring and evaluation in South Asia. We count on you as champions in promoting the evaluation culture in Sri Lanka."



Prof. Hemanthi Ranasinghe, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

The attempts to introduce evaluation courses in academic institutions in South Asia aimed to enhance professional development in the region, started many year ago. One of the most successful regional initiatives supported by the UN was called *Teaching Evaluation in South Asia (TESA)*, 2010. It included development of postgraduate diploma in Evaluation which was piloted in several countries, including India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka. The current course builds on the successes and lessons from TESA. **Prof.**

Soma de Silva, former UNICEF Regional Advisor on Monitoring and Evaluation, South Asia, highlighted that “years of experience, across the world, have shown the United Nations the absolute importance of evaluations as a vital tool in generating the evidence needed to ensure that we are being as effective as possible. But we have also seen that the building of an evaluation culture, whilst not easy, is substantially more effective and long lasting when led and owned by governments.”

Ms Paula Bulancea, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Sri Lanka, highly appreciated commitment of the Parliament and key government institutions in driving evaluation at the core of the state planning and public investments that places Sri Lanka in a strong position to deliver on the global Goals for Sustainable Development. She emphasised that this commitment “will ensure that Sri Lankans, both children and adults, including the most vulnerable, will benefit for many years from the skills, knowledge and expertise developed here”.



Ms Paula Bulancea, Deputy Representative, UNICEF Sri Lanka

She also stressed out the importance of the centre for evaluation that has the potential to bring real change: “not only will the centre benefit from tapping into the academic excellence, capacity and prestige of the university, the university itself will benefit from, and be able to incorporate the latest best-practices into its evaluation curriculum, of benefit for students and staff alike”.

The main objective of this postgraduate diploma course is to produce a steady stream of highly qualified professionals trained in monitoring and evaluation with awareness on sustainable development goals. It is open to students and professionals qualified in diverse development-related study areas to obtain professional qualifications in evaluation. The course is carefully designed by a group of national and international professionals to impart state of the art knowledge in evaluation theory and practice. The knowledge gained will enable the graduates to perform as professional

evaluators as well as manage evaluations in public and private sector, and in international organizations.

The blended approach to the course structure combining both online and classroom activities, allowed to engage as visiting lecturers and resource persons a number of outstanding national and international experts in the domain of monitoring and evaluation: Prof. Soma de Silva (Fmr. Regional Advisor Monitoring and Evaluation UNICEF South Asia, Fmr. President of International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE)), Mr. Velayuthan Sivagnanasothy (Secretary of the Ministry of National Integration and Reconciliation, Co-chair of the International Reference and Management Group on the Evaluation of the Implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness), Ms Dorothy Lucks (Executive Director - SDF Global Pty Ltd and Independent International Advisor Australasian Representative to the International Organisation for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE); Ms Natalia Kosheleva (Evaluation Expert, Fmr. President IOCE), Mr Asela Kalugampitiya (EvalPartners Executive coordinator) and Ms Isha Wedasinghe (Independent M&E Expert, EvalPartners), to name just a few.

Establishment of the Centre for Evaluation under the auspices of the University will be mutually beneficial: the Centre will tap into the existing university resources in academic experience, capacity and prestige and will benefit from the semi-government university mechanisms to administer, operate, monitor progress, and manage finance within an audited system. The University will expand its sphere of influence and will be able to incorporate latest good practices into the newly created (in the process) evaluation curriculum and provide all students and university staff with easily accessible resources on evaluation.

The collaboration with University is one of the initiatives supported by UNICEF within a wider framework of strengthening Sri Lanka's monitoring and evaluation system at both national and subnational levels along the four essential dimensions that make up the core of the Evaluation Agenda 2020: enabling environment, institutional a capacity and individual capacity and linkages between the three components.



More about the programme:

<http://graduate.sjp.ac.lk/up-courses/postgraduate-diploma-in-monitoring-evaluation/>

<http://graduate.sjp.ac.lk/news/inauguration-ceremony-of-postgraduate-diploma-in-monitoring-evaluation/>

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