Webinar Series
Evaluation and Complexity in the SDGs Era
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Part 2: Applying complexity-responsive evaluation to the SDGs

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Linkages among the 17 SDGs and the 200+ targets
OUTLINE

1. Quick Recap of Session 1
2. Brief introduction to systems approaches
3. A user-friendly complexity-responsive approach for evaluating the SDGs
   [time permitting]
4. Applying a complexity framework to the evaluation of a 10 year program to combat violence against women [SDG 5.2]
1. QUICK RECAP OF PART 1
DEMYSTIFYING COMPLEXITY
THE COMPLEXITY MAP

- The system in which the program operates
- Institutions and stakeholders
- The intervention
- Causality and change

Complexity of the evaluation

Multiple contextual factors
Example: The complex nature of institutional and stakeholder dynamics

1. Multiple stakeholders: different priorities – often competing
2. Political dynamics: pro-government and anti-government actors
3. Who selects indicators, who interprets them?
4. The purpose and administration of funding often not clear.
   • Multiple bottlenecks, delays and “leakage”
5. Pressure to focus on monitoring data rather than impact assessment
6. Most agencies have little interest in sustainability
**COMPLEXITY CHECKLIST**  
**Dimension 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension 1: The nature of the Intervention</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Objectives</td>
<td>Few and relatively clearly defined</td>
<td>Multiple, broad and often not clearly defined</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Nature of the problem</td>
<td>Well understood/ high level of agreement</td>
<td>Not well understood/ high level of disagreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Size</td>
<td>Affecting small population</td>
<td>Affecting large population</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Stability of program design</td>
<td>Relatively stable</td>
<td>Emergent design</td>
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<td>5. Implementation procedures</td>
<td>Clearly defined in project design</td>
<td>Often not clearly defined and changing</td>
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<td>6. Services or components</td>
<td>Relatively few</td>
<td>Large number</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Technical complexity</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Social complexity</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Duration</td>
<td>Clear start and end date</td>
<td>No clear end date and sometimes no clear start date</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Is the program design well tested</td>
<td>Well tested and used many times</td>
<td>Relatively new and untested</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total dimensions score [N/2]</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Each value is rated on a scale from 1 to 5.*
Step 1: Mapping the complexity dimensions

Step 2: Selecting a unit of analysis

Step 3: Selecting the best evaluation approaches for each component/unit

Step 4: Reassembling the findings of the individual evaluations into a whole

Step 5: Going back to the big picture

The Unpacking-Reassembling Evaluation Approach

Mixed Methods Approach

EMERGENCE
2. A QUICK INTRODUCTION TO SYTEMS ANALYSIS
A systems analysis focus is needed to understand the complexity dynamics of the SDGs .......

- Understand interactions among the 4 complexity dimensions
- Model complex processes of organizational and behavioral change
- Interactions among SDGs
- Critical intervention points: bottlenecks and leverage
- Contextual factors affecting implementation
- Modeling change over long periods of time
- Model EMERGENCE and constant change
Challenges applying systems approaches to SDGs

• Interlinked levels [local, regional, national, international]
• Linkage among 17 SDGs and around 200 targets/indicators
• Limited data accessibility and ability to analyze complex data
• Values and politics
  • Different stakeholders have different values/ approaches/ interpret indicators differently
  • Political pressures and priorities
A sample of systems analysis approaches

A. System mapping
B. System dynamics
C. Social network analysis
D. Critical systems heuristics (defining boundaries)
E. Network mapping
A. Systems mapping: Combatting Violence Against Women

- Donor A
- Donor B
- President’s Office
- National media
- Congress
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Finance
- Ministry of local Government
- 7 participating municipalities
- Mayor’s Office
- Local media
- Education
- Police
- Schools
- Communities
- 7 control municipalities
Systems mapping analysis: tracking changes over time or between programs

• Frequency/ intensity of communications
• Proportion of positive/negative/neutral communications
• Proportions of: commands/ technical information/ network building communications
• Decentralization of control
• Changes in bottom-up versus top-down communications
B. System dynamics: a causal loop diagram of a micro-loans program

C. Social Network Analysis
D. Critical systems heuristics: Defining boundaries

- **Narrow**: only impacts on defined target population
- **Secondary level**: other household members or people in the community
- **Tertiary level**: surrounding communities
- **Macro level**: region or nation

*** Boundary definitions are based on values ***
E. Network mapping: Linkages among the 17 SDGs and the 200+ targets
The International Council for Science approach to network mapping

7 types of interaction between SDG goals or targets

+3 indivisible
+2 reinforcing
+1 enabling
0 consistent/neutral
-1 constraining
-2 counteracting
-3 cancelling
Wins and losses en route to zero hunger

• Zero hunger (SDG 2) interacts positively with:
  • Poverty eradication (SDG 1) [+]
  • Health promotion (SDG 3) [+]
  • Education (SDG 4) [+]

• Reducing hunger can have **positive and negative interactions with climate change**
  • Potential competition with sustainable energy
    • Agriculture produces 20-35% of greenhouse gas [-]
    • Reinforced by stable climate [+]
    • Cattle-ranching may counteract ecosystem maintenance or forest conservation [-]
BREAK FOR QUESTIONS
3. EVALUATING THE SDGs WITHIN A COMPLEXITY FRAMEWORK
Where to begin?

• **Defining the Focus?**
  - A single target [e.g. Target 5.2: eliminate violence against women]
  - A single SDG [e.g. Goal 2: End hunger]
  - A group of related SDGs [e.g. 1. Poverty, 2. hunger, 4. education, 5. gender]
  - The total SDG program for a country or region

• **Defining the Level?**
  - Only one primary level of focus
    - local, regional or national
  - The interactions among all levels – effects on a particular goal or target
  - Working up or working down the levels
Defining boundaries:
Evaluating Impacts of a micro-credit program targeted for women

• Narrow: only impacts on defined target population [women beneficiaries]
• Secondary level: other household members or people in the community
• Tertiary level: surrounding communities
• Macro level: region or nation

*** Boundary definitions are based on values ***
The importance of a mixed methods approach

• Need to combine depth (qualitative) and breadth (quantitative) approaches
• Triangulation and combining multiple perspective
• Values and voice
• Capturing group dynamics and processes of change
• Observing complexity in action
Defining the level and scope at which the evaluation will be conducted

Examples of 3 options
[Option 1] SDG Target 5.2  Eliminating violence against women: Assessing outcomes at all levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Target SDG 5.2</th>
<th>Single SDG</th>
<th>Group of SDGs</th>
<th>All SDGs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
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**[Option 2]** Interactions among a group of SDGs: The impacts of a program covering poverty, food, health and education on women’s and children’s health

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
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<td>XXXXX</td>
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**Option 3** Assessing the combined impacts of a national SDG program on women’s empowerment [SDG 5]

<table>
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<th>All SDGs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>xxxxx</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
<td>XXXXX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local</td>
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Identifying the evaluation focus: leverage points, critical interactions and risks

- What are the essential interactions for a program to be successful?
- What are the critical bottlenecks/strangulation points that must be addressed
- Identify multiplier effects
- What are the risks/challenges
  - Power and Exclusion
  - Unintended outcomes
  - Identify and negotiate trade-offs
Practical considerations when planning the evaluation

• How much relevant data can we collect?
• How much can we analyze?
• How much can stakeholders absorb/understand?
• Boundaries: Direct, secondary and tertiary impacts — and accountability
• Start simple and see how far you can go
• Multiple voices
• Selecting a mixed methods approach
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VOICE AND AGENCY

KEY BUILDING BLOCKS FOR AN SDG EVALUATION

MIXED METHODS
Further reading

Bamberger, Vaessen and Raimondo. 2016. *Dealing with complexity in development evaluations*. Chapters 1-4, 7 and 15

EVALSDGs Insight 1: Evaluating the complexity of the 17 SDGs


The following example will be discussed if time permits
4. APPLYING A COMPLEXITY-RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

Evaluating a 10 year program to combat violence against women in a Central American country
“No mas violencia contra la mujer” - “No more violence against women”
Program Goals and Scope

Goals

- A 10 year program to put in place mechanisms to reduce violence against women

Levels

- Central America [migration, cross-border conflict and violence]
- National [congress, ministries, media]
- Municipality
- Police district
- Community
- Household and individual
Program components

1. Demonstration programs in 7 municipalities
2. Promoting critical thinking and ability to prepare proposals
3. Political advocacy
4. Advocacy through social media
5. Awareness raising and women’s empowerment

Example
- How police respond to accusations of GBV
- Preparing proposal to improve performance of the judiciary
- Legal and policy reform
- Mass media campaigns
- Community awareness training for young women and men
The 5 step approach for evaluating this complex program

Step 1: Mapping the 4 complexity dimensions

Step 2: Selecting a unit of analysis

Step 3: Selecting the best evaluation approaches for each component/unit

Step 4: Reassembling the findings of the individual evaluations into a whole

Step 5: Going back to the big picture

The 10 year program is evaluated in 3 phases
Combatting Violence Against Women Project: systems map

Donor A

Donor B

National media

Congress

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Justice

Ministry of Finance

Ministry of local Government

President’s Office

7 participating municipalities

Mayor’s Office

Police

Schools

Communities

Education

Local media

7 control municipalities
Units of analysis used to “unpack” and evaluate different components of the El Salvador case

- Central ministries: justice and education
- A sample of municipalities
- A sample of police districts
- A sample of local communities and individuals (females and males)
- A sample of advocacy campaigns
- Testing hypotheses relating to a level of the theory of change (e.g. activities).
Step 3 Choosing an approach for the evaluation of the unpacked components

1. Case-based comparisons of municipalities with and without the program
2. Analysis of social media campaigns
3. Rapid surveys of households in communities with awareness raising campaigns
4. Social network analysis: changes in group structure, communication patterns and leadership at the community and municipal levels
5. Participant observation of how police stations processes complaints of violence and sexual harassment
Level 5  Going back to the big picture

1. Emergent, spillover and displacement effects
2. Coordination issues
3. Accounting for policy coherence
   • Internal
   • Historical
   • Horizontal
   • vertical
Re-assembling the component evaluations to assess the big picture

- Policy reform
- Sector goals
- Increased women’s agency
- Reduced violence of all kinds
Thank you and wishing you success with your SDG evaluations

Michael Bamberger