EvalColombo 2018
Responsible Parliaments – Embracing Evaluation for Agenda 2030
Parliamentarians Evaluation Forum
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Evaluation evidence and development
It is widely acknowledged amongst the evaluation community (and amongst a growing number of governments worldwide) that greater use of evaluation evidence within national decision-making processes is a key step to accelerating development and to ensuring that it is both equitable and inclusive (Porter & Goldman, 2013); in fact, the assumption underpins much of the discussion and evaluation debate across the globe. The reality is of course that the extent to which evidence is actually used in decision-making at all levels of government falls short of the ideal (UNICEF, 2008) with subsequent consequences for social development and economic growth.

The role of legislatures
Parliaments with their workforce of democratically elected representatives of citizenry, represent one of the central pillars of democratic process and are rightfully identified as playing a crucial role in driving and sustaining equitable development within the state (UNDP, 2015). The support of growing demand for, and use of evaluation evidence within Parliamentary oversight systems is therefore an intervention that has the potential to benefit both poor and previously disadvantaged groups through strengthening political representation and building government’s accountability to citizens.
A growing accountability of parliamentarians to citizens

Across many countries parliamentarians themselves are coming under scrutiny from the public through direct media broadcasts of day-to-day parliamentary proceedings and indirect performance monitoring by civil society. In Kenya, Mzalendo, a local non-partisan NGO examines and analyses the performance of parliamentarians, publishing reports to the electorate. Parliamentarians who step up to the challenge and make use of robust evidence for decision-making not only benefit through being seen to perform well in the eyes of constituents, but also stand to deliver on their constitutional responsibilities as elected representatives.

Evaluation evidence as a foundation for robust debate between political parties

Despite recent and international moves towards what is perceived by many to be an era of “post truth politics” (Brekon, 2016), sound evaluation retains the potential to provide irrefutable evidence on which to ground political debate around governments delivery of development. In a worldwide context of on-going consolidation of democratic process (Menocal, 2013) evaluation specifically provides those who are governing with an opportunity to demonstrate performance (and ongoing capacity for office) while for those in opposition, it provides an robust means to hold government to account on their developmental promises to citizens.

The recent growth in interest by parliamentarians in evaluation evidence for oversight

Over the last few years, and as a result of the above, there has been a rapid growth in interest amongst parliamentarians across the globe in the use of evaluation evidence for oversight. Across Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa parliamentarians have come together to form regional fora and advocate for greater access to, and use of, evaluations as part of their responsibility of serving citizens.

Following the landmark establishing of the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation (PFDE) in South Asia in early 2013, regional parliamentary fora on the use of evaluation have been created in Africa, the Middle East and North Africa and Latin America. At national level dynamic, cross-party parliamentary caucuses have been established in Nepal, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Kenya and Tunisia.
The Parliamentarian movement and the Global Evaluation Agenda

Within this context of rapid growth, the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE) was launched on 25th November at the Parliament of Nepal. This milestone lent significant weight to the launching at the same event of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 and to the celebrating of the International Year of Evaluation 2015, supported by the international network EvalPartners.

The Global network has already successfully completed a number of initiatives including;

Parliamentarians for Evaluation Advocacy Campaign: The campaign widely disseminates brief videos with key messages from parliamentarians to strengthen an enabling environment and to create an archive of shared knowledge for the global evaluation community. It has engaged over 120 parliamentarians in the advocacy campaign, which is taking place through different social media channels and with the support of several VOPEs. Parliamentarians around the world have been invited to advocate for evaluation in the context of Agenda 2030 (SDGs) in line with the EvalAgenda 2016-2020.

Meet a Parliamentarian webinar series: The purpose of the webinars is to promote engagement of policy makers in evaluation and promote policy makers and evaluation professionals working together in enabling environment for evaluation. Several webinars have been conducted and scheduled more in the context of the 2018 event. Each webinar is facilitated by a parliamentarian, an evaluation professional and a moderator.

Promoting National Evaluation Policies and systems: GPFE has been working directly with parliamentarians, governments, VOPEs (Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation), civil society and other stakeholders to promote national evaluation policies. A global study, “Mapping National Evaluation Policies” commissioned by GPFE, is available online together with many other related resources. An EvalPartners publication, guidelines on “National evaluation policies for sustainable and equitable development: How to integrate gender equality and social equity in national evaluation policies and systems” has been constructed using knowledge and information generated in regional consultations on national evaluation policies.

Recognising the need to formalise its mandate and being conscious of its strategic responsibility as a global parliamentarian’s network, GPFE has reflected on its role in relation to other regional parliamentary forums and has drawn up a constitution and a framework for engagement. These

“Our vision is that evaluation becomes so embedded in good governance that no policy maker or manager will dare hold an important meeting, or reach an important decision without having reviewed relevant evaluation information.” – Hon. Kabir Hashim, Minister of Public Enterprise Development and Sri Lanka Chair of the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation
important documents will be ratified by GPFE members and other key stakeholders at the proposed event in Colombo.

**Relevance for development partners**

For development partners, this recent growth of interest by parliamentarians in evaluation provides an unprecedented opportunity; despite a range of challenges that include institutional capacity, expertise and facilities that are in short supply, parliamentarians and parliaments have a unique role in ensuring that development resources are used effectively. (Africa all party parliamentary group, 2008).

For countries that are transitioning to more democratic forms of governance, the processes associated with the generation and use of evaluation data can serve to cement nascent practices that ensure accountability and that have the potential to deliver equitable development for all.

Through greater use of evaluations, parliaments, parliamentarians and in turn citizens can hold their governments to account thereby reinforcing good governance and the state’s potential to deliver on the needs and rights of its people.

**Parliamentarians and the SDGs**

As the global family of nations move into the next era of global development driven by a vision of ending poverty, protecting the planet, and ensuring prosperity for all, we need stronger M&E frameworks that inform learning, decision-making and accountability. Parliamentarians with their unique role in overseeing the work of governments have an opportunity to drive the demand for evidence that informs that decision-making around the SDGs and ensures that progress overall means progress for all - ensuring that no one is left behind.

**Rationale for EvalColombo2018**

Within this context, parliamentarians from across the globe together with representatives of development partners, have recognised an opportunity to facilitate a critical dialogue that supports the on-going growth of this movement towards greater use of evaluation evidence within legislatures. Critical to this is an invitation from the Chair of the GPFE, Hon. Kabir Hashim and Chair of the Sri Lanka Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, Hon. Ananda Kumarasiri, who together with the speaker and other members of parliament is ready to host the event. The three-day event is scheduled to take place between 17th and 19th September 2018. The first two days will be at the Hilton Hotel, Colombo and the third day will be at the Parliament of Sri Lanka.

The three primary objectives of the forum are to;

- Build capacity amongst parliamentarians so that they can better demand and use evaluation evidence in parliament,
- Promote dialogue between parliamentarians, government, evaluation practitioners, and civil society to pave the way for more conducive environments for development evaluation,
• Build support at a global level amongst parliamentarians and other key stakeholders for national evaluation policies and systems to improve decision-making on development,

Additional objectives of the forum are that participants;

• Learn more about the diverse range of political contexts in which parliamentarians operate worldwide and how they might be supported to make greater use of evidence,
• Share success stories that demonstrate how evaluation has been used within parliaments for constructive oversight and decision making on pressing development challenges,
• Explore how best the Global Parliamentarians Forum on Evaluation can relate to, and support the growing number of regional networks of parliamentarians that are committed to using evaluation evidence as an integral part of their decision-making,
• Identify and support regional parliamentary champions who can confidently espouse the movement’s vision and trigger change within their own institutions and political systems.

Development of the agenda
While an outline agenda is mentioned below, the detailed programme is under development, as parliamentarians themselves are surveyed on its content to ensure that the final components of the forum are designed to deliver tangible outputs that directly support the growing demand for, and use of evaluation in parliaments across the globe.

Day 1: Inauguration, Key note speech, Case presentations by countries for peer learning, Welcome dinner

Day 2: Key note speech, Regional discussions on how evaluation can contribute to make parliaments responsible, Country commitments, Group discussions and plenary on strengthening parliamentarians movement

Day 3 (at the parliament): Programme to be finalized including declaration from parliamentarians

Participation
Committed Parliamentarians from across the globe will be invited to attend the event, both those who are currently members of regional parliamentary forums and those who have potential to become vibrant members that can influence others.

Participation will be in the following forms:

• By invitation from GPFE and the Sri Lanka parliament
• By nomination from national parliaments (acceptance subject to a pre-determined quota)
• Self-nomination (acceptance subject to pre-determined criteria)

Champions of evaluation from within Government, experienced practitioners drawn from the global evaluation community, development partners and civil society will add to the richness of discussions while an anticipated participation of delegates from Africa, Asia, Middle East and
North Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Eurasia and the Global North will ensure that the event has the legitimacy to inform visioning that is global in scale and decision making that is critical in its development implications.

It is anticipated that 150 delegates (the majority of which will be parliamentarians) will attend the event. Particular measures will be put in place to ensure that the profile of invited delegates reflects the global community of parliamentarians and is representative in terms of gender and minority groups.

**Organization and resource mobilization**

An organizing committee made of parliamentarians’ representatives from different regions, representatives from EvalPartners, development partners, evaluation community and from the host country has started the event organizing work. The budget includes two components:

1. Core Budget to cover general expenses including the conference facilities, parliament day expenses, event management, welcome arrangements, printing, secretarial expenses etc.
2. The expenses of participation which includes air tickets, accommodation and meals, visa etc of each participant. It is estimated $2000 -3000 per parliamentarian for participation depending on where they are coming from. It is planned that each parliamentarian is supported by a development partner directly. The organizers will also support parliamentarians travel depending on funds availability.

The organizing committee is in the process of raising funds for the Core Budget and the Travel Budget. The organizers appreciate generous support from governments, United Nations, development partners and the private sector. In the meantime national level Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) and organizers will liaise with development partners at country level to obtain support for the event as well.

It is suggested that the travel costs of representatives of development partner agencies be at their own cost.

**Contact details and further information**

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