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Message from the Chair

By: Lennise Baptiste, President

The joint IDEAS RELAC conference held in Guanajuato provided the opportunity for some members of the CEI to meet one another for the first time. I was proud of our motivated, engaged and energetic CEI members who displayed a shared passion for the field of evaluation, desiring to make a greater contribution to the evaluation field.

The articles in this edition of the newsletter focus on the experiences of the team and the exploration of different perspectives about the evaluation of sustainable development goals. The signing of the MOU between CEI and IDEAS and CEI's continued participation in the South to South initiative our members will have increased opportunities to share their knowledge and skills with other organisations while also learning from them.

I cannot believe that we are already into the 2018 hurricane season. Memories and evidence of nature's force in our region from the 2017 hurricane season are still fresh. Thus, the CEI must work with our regional leaders to utilise the work undertaken by our evaluation professionals in the areas of the environment, public health and education, as they make decisions and aim for sustainable development.

CEI members have been advised of the plans to hold elections in September 2018 and we look forward to our members participating and offering themselves for service.

The voice of the CEI was heard in Guanajuato, Mexico

By: Lennise Baptiste



L-R , Jan Voordouw, Juliana Bravo, Susan Branker-Greene, Claudia Nicholson, Lennise Baptiste, Asa Johansson, Aru Rassappan (Asia Pacific Association), Paul Williams

The CEI was proudly represented at the RELAC IDEAS Conference held in December 2017 in Guanajuato, Mexico, thanks to support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Caribbean Development Bank. The focus of the Conference was Evaluation of Sustainable Development Goals, and team members contributed to three panels. The first panel, *Enriching evaluation worldwide through robust South-South Collaboration* was chaired by Zenda Ofir, an independent international evaluator from South Africa. The panelists were the leaders of evaluation associations in the Global South which included Dr. Baptiste of the CEI. These leaders fielded questions about what had changed in the past 20 years and in particular since the IDEAS 2005 conference. Ofir introduced the session by stating that globally, the architecture to support the profession had increased opportunities and participation in evaluation capacity-building and advocacy for evaluation use.

There was consensus at the South-to-South Evaluators (S2SE) meeting, which preceded the panel, that a North-South power imbalance remains. This is despite donor and development agencies' efforts to empower government personnel and independent consultants to engage in evaluation activities intended to serve the interests of the Global South.

The following questions were posed for consideration. Who decides what gets evaluated? Whose questions and voices matter? What are the funding asymmetries and financial flows? Whose knowledge matters? Who are we doing this for? What are the responsibilities and accountabilities necessary from the north and south?

The S2SE initiative thus needs power to change the status quo. Change begins with respect for professionals from the Global South, not just from authorities in the North but especially from our own governments, agencies and citizens.

Dr. Lennise Baptiste chaired a second panel, *Perspectives on evaluation of the SDGs from global organisations*. Panelists included Elvis Fraser of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Kathryn Newcomer, American Evaluation Association (AEA) president, and Ada Ocampo from UNICEF. Through its work in health, agriculture and finance, the BMGF positions itself as a catalyst for change, and working through partnerships is critical for this process. The organisation has focused on building infrastructure to provide valid credible evidence, strengthening statistical capacity, and remote sensing and the collection of data in real time.

UNICEF believes that partnerships are “the way forward”. Through partnerships, resources can be pooled and used with greater efficiency and effectiveness to address complexities in the implementation context. Newcomer, the AEA president, shared that in the field of evaluation, we must look for linkages across sectors, and at evidence for accountability versus evidence for learning. We have to be clear about what evidence is, and the evidence we need. Who is using the evidence? What is or is not working?

Lastly, the CEI contributed to a third panel, *South-South Exchange of Evaluation Experiences between Asian and Latin American Countries*, and was represented by Susan Branker-Greene of Barbados and Dr. Baptiste. Participation of the CEI on this panel followed from a recommendation from the Head, Office of Independent Evaluation at the Caribbean Development Bank, that the CEI present on experiences in the English-speaking Caribbean. Chaired by Rakesh Nangia, Evaluator General of the African Development Bank, this panel explored perspectives about funding flows, knowledge flows, accountability, sustainability and development. It also raised issues around the funding of projects versus the funding of development while exploring the question of “whose agenda”? In the three panels, ideas on evidence and partnerships were at the forefront to ascertain the progress towards the SDGs.

The South to South Evaluation Initiative

By: Claudia Nicholson and Juliana Bravo



The South-to-South Evaluation (S2SE) Initiative is a collective of six regional evaluation associations representing Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. The group is a collaborative umbrella group that builds on the concept of “Made in Africa Evaluation” that promotes the development of African-rooted evaluation. The S2SE is spearheaded by six regional voluntary organizations of professional evaluators (VOPE): the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA); Caribbean Evaluators International (CEI); Asia-Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA); Community of Evaluators South Asia (COE-SA); Pacific Islands Network of Evaluators (PINE); and the Latin America Network of Evaluation, Systematisation and Monitoring (RELAC).

The S2SE first convened in March 2017. With support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 42 evaluation leaders came together in Kampala, Uganda for a 2-day session around culturally-embedded

evaluation theory and practice and how to promote and use these in evaluation practices in the Global South. Seven CEI members participated in the Kampala meeting, which was held in conjunction with the 8th Annual AfrEA conference.

Building on discussions initiated in Kampala, the S2SE formed a working group composed of two representatives from each of the six associations to continue the discussion. The CEI representatives on the working group are Dr. Lennise Baptiste and Ms. Claudia Nicholson. The working group has developed drafts for a theory of change, a concept note, a 3-year work plan and a brochure to articulate the objectives, outcomes and goals of the S2SE.

In December 2017, again with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the S2SE working group held a 2-day meeting in Guanajuato, Mexico, at the same time as the joint RELAC-IDEAS evaluation conference. The mission of this meeting was to critically review and finalise the documents that were developed after Kampala, and to plan a strategy for moving forward. Together with leaders from the global evaluation community, the working group prepared a paper for external distribution and to solicit funds for this important work.

Why a S2SE Initiative? Little has been done to address the asymmetries that exist in the evaluation of development programming for the Global South. Many inequalities persist, and lingering questions remain, such as:

- Who decides what gets evaluated and what does not?
- Whose questions, values, and voice matters?
- Who controls funding flows for evaluation?
- Whose knowledge matters?
- Who are we doing this for, and how are they involved?
- Who conducts evaluations?
- Who commissions evaluations?

The goal of S2SE is to ensure that the inequalities in the evaluation ecosystem and other asymmetries between the Global South and the Global North are addressed in ways that serve the whole global evaluation community and, most importantly, the sustainable development of our nations in the Global South.

What does the S2SE mean for CEI? The participation and leadership of CEI during these transformative events have been very meaningful to the CEI organization and to the Global South Evaluation community. With the work the group is planning to undertake, it aims to elevate the leadership, positioning and influence of southern evaluators in the global development agenda, raising the knowledge and skills of the Global South, and embracing new partners and solutions to the challenges of global development and evaluation.

In Mexico, the CEI contribution was strengthened by CEI member Juliana Bravo who was self-funded, and whose professional experience with development assistance agencies added to the illumination of the issues encountered in the evaluation arena in the global south. CEI members can contribute to the S2SE movement by sharing their knowledge in conferences and professional development activities within the organisation and with members from other evaluation associations.

Some experiences during the Joint Conference of RELEC-REDLACME-IDEAS, Guanajuato,

Mexico 4 - 8 December 2017

By: Jan Voordouw, www.janvoordouw.com



INTRODUCTION

The CEI sought funding for members who had demonstrated interest in attending the joint conference by their submission of proposals.

The Caribbean Development Bank offered four partial fellowships to attend the global evaluation conference in Guanajuato, Mexico and I was one of the CEI members selected. I enjoyed tremendously to meet, exchange and learn from so many colleagues, in particular those from Latin America and of course also from the Caribbean.

The themes of the Conference included: (a) M&E and the SDGs, (b) specific approaches and methodologies, (c) use of evidence (mostly for governmental decision making), (d) roles of evaluation networks and associations and (e) an evaluation agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean.

I concentrated on items (b), (d) and (e) with objectives to: (b) address the enormous diversity of theories and practice; (d) promote cooperation in evaluation community, and (e) reflect on diverse regional perspectives.

SOME SELECTED EXPERIENCES

One thing that really struck me during both the pre-conference workshops and the conference, was the repeated call for using innovative methodologies. It made me realize that, despite the conference objective on “enormous diversity of theories and practice,” (see b above) we evaluators are still far too much following the book and not approaching problems with a truly open mind and in problem-specific ways. This also shows that there is a place for localized Caribbean approaches and methodologies, which should be promoted to the international level.

But I was heartened by listening to sophisticated thinking relating to one of the mantras of the SDGs: “Nobody left behind!” Substantive work is being done to better map vulnerable groups in evaluations, explain why certain groups get left behind and to provide more documentation of the relevance and effectiveness of targeting such groups. It was found that lessons learned and recommendations should be listed more prominently in evaluation reports as they usually are; more to the front and more central to the conclusions. Finally, some participants suggested that evaluators should demand a management response to evaluation reports, as is done for financial audits. They dubbed this a “President Report on the Implementation Status of Evaluation Recommendations and Management Actions (PRISMA).”

Projects targeting “Most Vulnerable Individuals (MVIs)” can be costly (due to the need for disaggregated indicators and data), politically sensitive and have a high risk of failure. But when implemented and evaluated successfully, the question comes up if they are models and can be scaled up. Is it a “Proof of Concept” and is success achievable at a higher level? I found these debates extremely useful for our work in various Caribbean contexts.

One more discussion I like to highlight, relates to the Duties of evaluators as brought forward by a plenary session. We evaluators should communicate the value of evaluation in whatever forum we find, pursue the learning of our evaluation work and promote cross-fertilization (“How does this work in another context?”). We have a duty to contribute to capacity development in our countries (Yes CEII!) and to really cooperate with development stakeholders because evaluation should stimulate innovation across the board of projects and programmes. Which brings me back to my first point.

NETWORKING – GLOBAL, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL

There was much to learn about organizational networks. In addition to RELAC, REDLACME and IDEAS (which will be highlighted elsewhere in this newsletter), the organizers of the conference included the State of Guanajuato and the University of Guanajuato where the conference was held. An important backer was also the Ministry of Finance and Public Credit (SHCP) which develops “financial inclusion” policies and is a big user of evaluations. I found it fascinating to learn that Mexico has a National Independent Evaluation Commission (CONEVAL), reporting to parliament and feared by the government. There is also an active Mexico VOPE, called ACEVAL which in its 3-year existence has organized four courses, established scholarships, supported the creation of EvalYouth Mexico, held talks, chat shows and exchanges. Other organizers include the Latin American and Caribbean Professional Community for Results Based Management (CoPLAC GpRD), CLEAR (a network for learning) and the IDB.

I found it rewarding to explain particularities of our Caribbean work and of small island states to our Latin American colleagues often so easily add the “C” to the “LA” without realizing that this means a true investment of time and interest.

Monitoring & Evaluation in the Caribbean in the Era of SDGs

By: James Melanson - Head, Office of Independent Evaluation, CDB and Kaia Ambrose, Evaluation Officer, Office of Independent Evaluation, CDB



The targets laid out by the SDGs can serve as guidelines to help governments at all levels to develop implementation strategies for sustainable development. Progress towards these SDG targets will be measured through a set of globally harmonized indicators. However, monitoring and evaluating the SDGs poses several challenges to governments in the region.

The minimum requirements for national evaluation capacities should be assessed given the challenges of working in small-island states with limited personnel dedicated to monitoring and evaluation. Both the supply of sound evaluations for development plans, and the demand for their relevant and useful evidence is often limited. This in turn affects national policy development.

A starting point is the putting in place of national evaluation policies for those countries that do not yet have them. These policies are explicit institutional frameworks that require consistent assessment of the results of public programmes. They include data collection, analysis, disclosure through reporting, and adaptive management and accountability. In turn, the policies encourage adequate national evaluation capabilities within government as well as high quality evaluation consultants; and engaging with partners on evaluation.

In a series of briefings developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (<https://www.iied.org/effective-evaluation-for-sustainable-development-goals>) on evaluation for the Sustainable Development Goals, the authors point to the need to build capacity of evaluation commissioners and evaluation users. This is certainly applicable to the Caribbean, and merits some unpacking, to understand what type of capacity building is needed.

- Building an environment of evaluative thinking: Building evaluation capacity is not only about designing methods and tools to collect and analyse data. Building and supporting evaluative thinking is an important and complementary task. From project managers to national policymakers and parliamentarians, using evaluative thinking means using critical thinking. It means not only establishing value, worth and merit, but analysing arguments, assessing claims and understanding the complexities of the environment within which programmes unfold.
- Ensuring a practice of adaptive management: Exploring emerging and alternative ways to meet objectives and targets and using knowledge from monitoring and evaluation to develop new understanding and new ways of acting. Social norms and invisible power pose huge challenges to the predictability of programming outcomes and impact; paying attention to these, through assumptions around context and actors, can facilitate fast feedback and mid-course corrections to interventions.
- Focusing M&E on use and users of data: evaluation does not facilitate organisational learning if it fails to feed strategy formulation, to amplify the voice of stakeholders and/or to provide credible and reliable performance information to management and higher government authorities. Crowdsourcing, improved connectivity, statistical modelling, greater amounts of high quality environmental and geographical data now exist. These, if communicated in a manner that can be understood and applied by decision makers, possess huge potential for devising the appropriate policies and interventions needed to achieve the SDGs. M&E data needs to be digestible and applicable for policy makers. Data which has been effectively communicated can help to assess inequalities within countries, better inform decision-making and resource allocation at all levels. It also provides the transparency that is necessary to hold governments accountable on progress.

These concepts are not new; they are drawn from numerous organisations that have spent years developing systems and building capacity for data collection, analysis and use – whether it be for internal learning, policy influence or broader communications. While these may seem obvious, the experience of these organisations tell us that there is certain behaviour and practice change that needs to happen internally for an 'evaluative culture' to grow and thrive. Time and space must be dedicated to reflection and learning around evaluation results, monitoring must play a key role in supporting evaluation efforts, and the ability to build a theory of change and a theory of action that considers the nuances of context and the actors and factors that interact within a given context must be improved.

There are no wheels that need to be reinvented; lessons and methods are widely available. What is needed is buy-in by the governments in the region and dedicated champions who can oversee and support processes that build evaluative thinking and capacity in each country.



Evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals: transforming life through global and regional partnerships, with an emphasis on Latin America and the Caribbean - A Review

By: Shari-Ann Henry

I attended two workshops: (1) "Thinking large: moving forward with evaluation competencies and professionalization in evaluating the SDGs" and (2) "The development and implementation of M+E Systems for the SDGs." The first workshop exposed me to the value of professionalization in monitoring and evaluation (M+E). As regional evaluators, we need to understand the progress we have made towards professionalization, determine where we want to go and develop a plan for how we will get there.

The second workshop was illuminating, and I took many notes. M+E systems must be established and linked to national policy, so that information can flow into the decision-making process. Evidence should be based on well-founded data supported by rigorous evaluation design and quantitative and qualitative methods. If we want to know if indicators have changed, statistics alone will not tell this. The qualitative aspect of an evaluation is also very important, as M+E systems don't tell us why changes occurred. Furthermore, an evaluation should produce and disclose valid information. And at the outset, during planning, M+E must be defined as a priority task and stakeholders must understand its purpose.

A highlight of the second workshop was a group exercise in which there were delegates from Jamaica (myself), South Korea, Malta, Mexico and Chile. Our task was to identify the biggest barriers in our respective countries, to implementing M+E systems. All of us cited a lack of political will as a major hindrance to proper monitoring and evaluation. We agreed that we need to find ways to reduce that problem.

I walked away from the Conference with three major takeaways. One, I now have relationships with a plethora of experienced professionals from all over the world. I also realized there is an obvious absence of CEI in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Two, I feel more empowered and have greater appreciation for my areas of expertise, which are development studies/statistics and social policy. I must say, some of the presentations triggered my knowledge. Three, I came away with renewed appreciation for the significance of professionalism in evaluating the sustainable development goals. Typically, many would think that anyone could evaluate the SDGs if, for example, they had years of experience in a ministry or other organization. The December conference showed me, however, that prospective evaluators require significant training.

CEI and IDEAS sign MOU



Lennise Baptiste, CEI and Rob van den Berg,
IDEAS



Claudia Nicholson, CEI and Pablo Rodriguez-
Billela, IDEAS

The signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the CEI and the International Development Evaluation Association (IDEAS) in December 2017 was a momentous occasion for our organisation. Forging such partnerships with national, regional and international associations constitutes one aspect of the CEI's strategic goal of having a cadre of trained professionals in our network. The MOU provides a framework for collaboration and reciprocal support between the two organisations.

The next step will be to develop an action plan for the implementation of activities that could include but are not limited to joint evaluation training programmes, evaluation workshops and conferences. Members will be asked to volunteer to develop the action plan.

The steps toward signing an MOU began three years ago with a bold self-funded move by CEI members Lennise Baptiste, Claudia Nicholson and Juliana Bravo to attend the American Evaluation Association (AEA) 2014 Conference in Denver, Colorado, USA. The CEI exhibition table at that event, happened to be situated opposite to that of the African Evaluation Association (AFREA). Conversations were had between representatives manning the respective exhibits and this led to more formal conversations between AfREA president, Adeline Sibanda, Elvis Fraser of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), Lennise Baptiste and Valerie Gordon on the occasion of the 2016 AEA Conference in Atlanta, regarding possible collaboration between the organisations. The discussions culminated in a 7 person CEI delegation attending the first S2SE meeting in Uganda in March 2017, compliments of the BMGF.

While in Uganda, CEI board members met with their IDEAS counterparts, to discuss the possibility of formalised collaboration. Discussions between the organisations continued after the S2SE meeting and, finally, at the joint conference of IDEAS-RELAC in December 2017, a MOU between CEI and IDEAS was signed. At the ceremony, IDEAS president, Rob van den Berg urged his members to get involved and not wait on leadership to act. The CEI board agrees and also invites our members to reach out to the CEI leadership team to explore ways in which they can become more involved in the activities of the organisation.

Perspectives after Mexico from members of the CEI

Susan Branker-Greene – Barbados

It was a great privilege to fly the Caribbean flag in Guanajuato and to be among hundreds of evaluators of diverse backgrounds from across the globe! The networking, as well as opportunities for sharing and exchanging lessons, challenges and successes was phenomenal. Beyond all, I felt enormously proud to

be a member of the CEI, which certainly left its mark on the conference. In fact, many participants I interacted with in various settings spoke highly of the contribution made by CEI to the conference sessions and panel discussions. CEI's representation at the conference certainly served to further strengthen its reach in Latin America and cement its international gravitas.

Asa Johanssen – Grenada and Sweden

This was my first time participating in an IDEAS conference, and I was amazed to meet so many interesting colleagues from all over the world.

With the option of so many tracks and themes, I had to make hard choices between the various seminars and workshops. One regret was that I missed the panel, Innovation, qualitative innovative methods to measure outcomes and long term results. I was also unable to participate in Gender focussed workshops as these were only available in the UNWomen workshops.

I was particularly impressed by the panel, *Enriching evaluation worldwide through South-South Collaboration*. As a panellist, CEI chair, Lennise Baptiste ably represented our organisation. This was a valuable dialogue on collaboration between the South, and one in which CEI has an important role. As a new member, I was also very pleased to meet other CEI colleagues and witness the historic signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between IDEAS and CEI. One significant outcome of the conference is my participation in a thematic group on evaluation of situations of conflict, fragility and marginalization. A preliminary activity plan is currently in progress, and I hope that this group will be able to present its work at the next IDEAS conference.

Juliana Bravo – Canada

How do I feel about the 2017 conference? In one line, "Chicken soup for an aching Southern Evaluator soul!" I was fortunate to attend the RELAC-IDEAS Conference in Guanajuato, Mexico, which was very meaningful. It gave me a chance to see, hear and feel the strength of evaluation practice in the South from the voices of people who live where most development audiences are based. I try to stay abreast of current trends, theories and challenges in evaluation. I follow networks and fora of great value to my evaluation practice. But, I can't avoid noticing that most of the time, mainstream platforms focus on views, theories and initiatives that are not indigenous to where our program users live and where we come from as Southerners. I truly appreciate having access to reflections from "the roots", where problems take place and where we need to look for solutions. RELAC-IDEAS and the chance to exchange with the S2S initiative was inspiring and uplifting.

Paul Williams – Guyana, Secretary CEI

Three lasting ideas have been reinforced for me. From Workshop 1, the 5th bullet says, "If you can not recognize failure, you can not correct it." To me, this speaks to introspection: what we profess; what we do; and how we do what we do. From Workshop 2, everything is related; and therefore we may be guilty of attending 'to the tree, as if it's the forest.' Then, finally, a senior member of IDEAS spoke of a new, needed era of letting new voices and standpoints into the M&E discussion. These three ideas collectively suggest movement away from linear and non-systematic thinking and approaches; the 17 SDGs are not isolates ... but really trees of a forest, all related and connected. The key,

therefore, is to seek those relationships through a multi-disciplinary tactic.

The screenshot shows a mobile browser view of a Google Drive presentation. The address bar shows 'RBME - Google Drive' and 'https://drive.google.com'. The presentation content is as follows:

Slide 1: The Power of Measuring Results
 M&E workshop - ... resentation.ppt

- If you do not measure results, you can not tell success from failure
- If you can not see success, you can not reward it
- If you can not reward success, you are probably rewarding failure
- If you can not see success, you can not learn from it
- If you can not recognize failure, you can not correct it
- If you can demonstrate results, you can win public support

Adapted from Osborne & Gaebler, 1992

Slide 2: Introduction to Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation
 What Are We Talking About?

- Results-based monitoring and evaluation measures how well governments are performing
- Results-based monitoring and evaluation is a management tool!
- Results-based monitoring and evaluation emphasizes assessing how outcomes are being achieved over time

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Slide 3: Who Are Stakeholders That Care About Government Performance?

1. Results-Based Management for Evaluation of the Sustainable Development Goals (sponsored by IDEAS) Ray C. Rist, Co-Director of IPDET
2. Developmental Evaluation for the SDGs: applying systems thinking and complexity theory for the Global Systems Change (sponsored by IDEAS). Michael Q. Patton, Founder and Director of Utility-Focused Evaluation



L - R: Pablo Rodriguez-Billela, IDEAS, Lennise Baptiste and Claudia Nicholson (CEI) and Rob van den Berg, IDEAS



L - R: Shari-Ann Henry and Lennise Baptiste



James Melanson, CDB, (4th from left) with CEI members L - R: I Paul Williams, Claudia Nicholson, Lennise Baptiste, Shari- Ann Henry and Juliana Bravo



From left: Elvis Fraser - Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNICEF representative, AEA President 2017, Lennise Baptiste (session Chair)

Reminder

Re-registration

Members are asked to re-register on the CEI website so that we can have all member records updated.

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