National Evaluation System
Institutionalizing and Mainstreaming Evaluation in Government

Mr. V. Sivagnanasothy

Secretary

Ministry of National Policies, Economic Affairs, Resettlement and Rehabilitation, Northern Province Development and Youth Affairs

&

Secretary

Presidential Task Force on Northern and Eastern Provinces Development

Government of Sri Lanka

sivagnanasothy@hotmail.com

Definition of Evaluation

❑ Evaluation is a critical analysis of achievements and results of a project, programme, policy or institution.

❑ An assessment, as systematic as possible of the on-going or completed projects ….. It's design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. An Evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision – making process. – (DAC/OECD)

The need for Country-led National Evaluation

A favorable climate for evaluation

- Growing complexity of development projects
- Drying-up of resources for development
- Need to maximize value for money
- Need to improve planning, budgeting and policy making process

Why Country- Led National Evaluations

- Accountability for results – is the public spending making a change
- Learning from successes and failures - continuous improvement on policy and programme
- Generating knowledge (knowledge management) – increasing knowledge about what works? What does not work ? And why?
- Improving decision making, - terminating, scaling-up, scaling-down and modification of programmes

The need for Country-led National Evaluation

Smart Interventions

Evaluation helps to formulate **smart projects** with sound "theory of change " with well designed, objectively described, results oriented programmes at country-level to achieve SDGs.

Development is a learning process

"Development is rather a learning process in which mistakes are unavoidable despite all efforts not to make them. All involved parties must learn from past mistakes and adjust projects and plans accordingly".

" There must be a **learning** focus rather than **punitive**. So punish people not because they make mistakes, but if they don't learn from the mistake"

Institutionalization of Evaluation in Government

- GOSL was supported by ADB / UNDP in early 1990s to
  - ✓ Establish Evaluation Institutional Architecture - Evaluation unit in MPI
  - ✓ On-the job training for senior Government Officials
  - ✓ Develop Evaluation guideline, methodologies, procedures and systems and support to adapt OECD Evaluation Quality Standards
  - ✓ evaluation module in SLIDA / University Curriculum
  - ✓ establishment of EIS (repository) to store and retrieve evaluation findings, recommendations, lessons and issues
  - ✓ Sensitization of Policy Makers to create demand for evaluation

- Evaluation Training / orientation for national and sub-national level

Institutionalization of Evaluation in Government

Types of Evaluations

❑ **Ex –Ante Evaluation** (Appraisal)

❑ **On-going Evaluation** / Mid Term Review/ Interim Evaluation/ Formative Evaluation

- Projects may run into problem during implementation
- Requires fresh look

❑ **Ex- Post Evaluation** / Summative Evaluation
Some years after the implementation is completed.

❑ **Impact Evaluation**
Considerable years after implementation is completed

Improving Quality by recognizing triple Elements in Evaluation
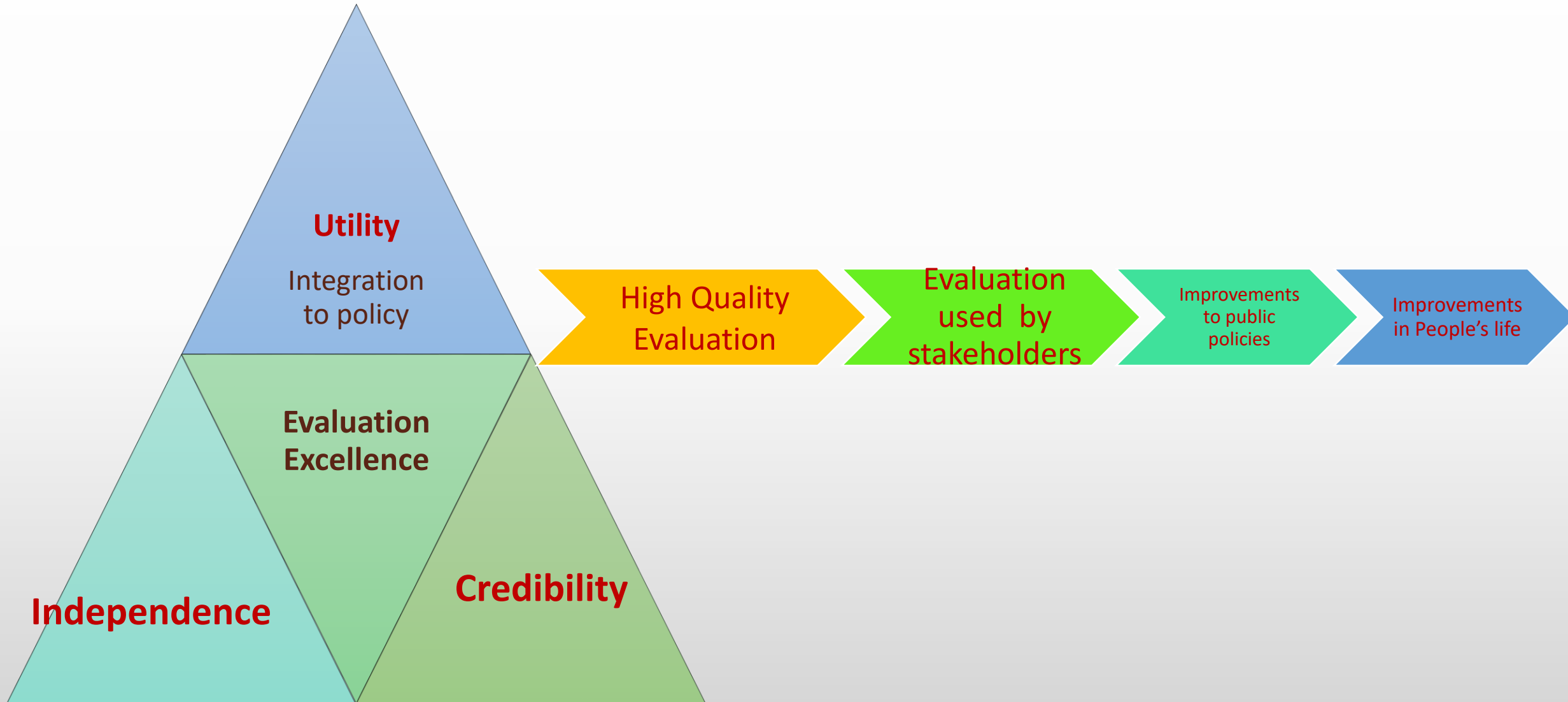
Balancing the Tension between "Accountability and Learning"
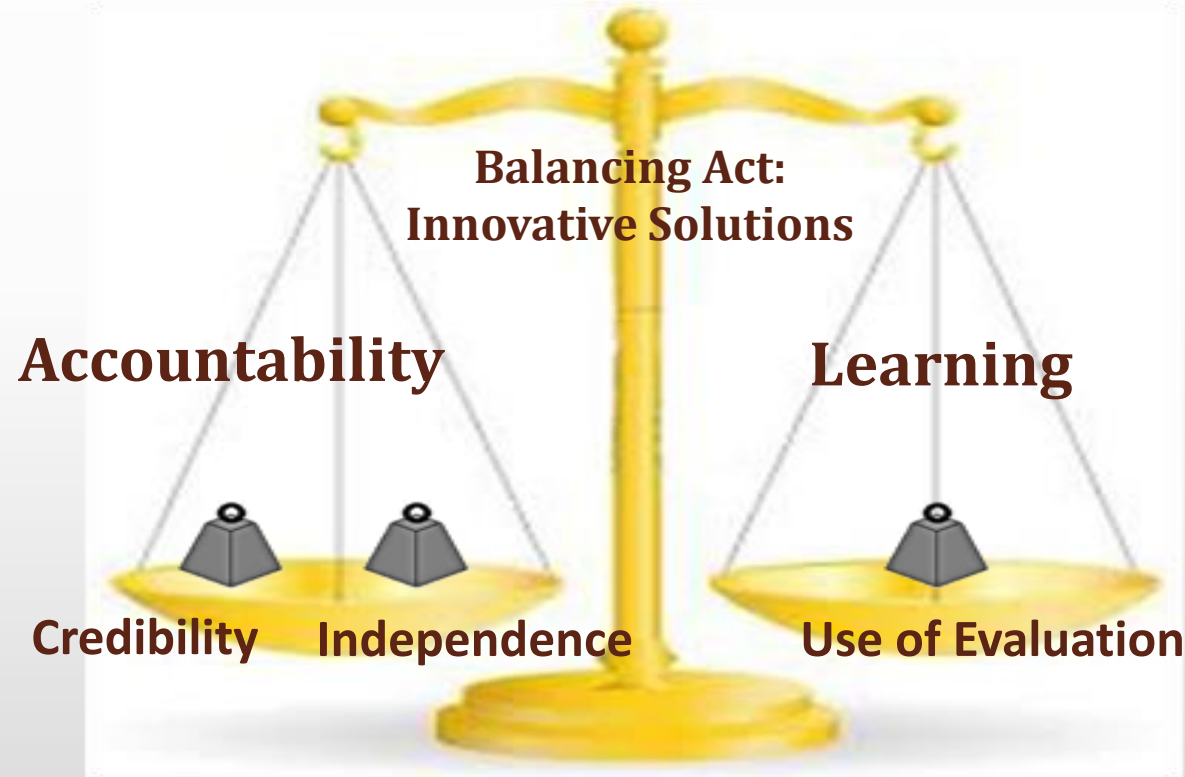
Donor Driven Evaluations

- Multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor funded projects initiate their own accountability based evaluations to meet their **project administration requirements**

- They were stand alone evaluation studies with donor centric approach and overly emphasized on **independence, credibility and impartiality** with less emphasis on utility/feedback

- Partner Countries did not take them seriously due to **lack of ownership of the findings** and as such they were not integrated into their national policy/programme/ project cycle management.

- Not used as a learning tool or **feedback** process by partner countries. Hence, There is a shift in focus from donor driven evaluation to country driven evaluations

Partner Donor Joint Collaborative Evaluations as an Interim Step

- Joint evaluations were recognized to replace donor driven evaluations.
- Evaluations getting integrated into the planning, design, management, policy making and budgeting process as part of the national policy cycle
- Global shift in thinking – Country Ownership and Leadership
- Joint Steering Committee, Joint Reference Group, Peer Reviews, joint evaluation questions which are utility focused
- Viewed by partner countries as part of Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD)

Learning Oriented Country-Led Evaluations

1. **Country ownership and leadership** is vital for both learning and accountability (key stakeholders involved throughout the process from evaluation design to validation of findings and recommendations)

2. Country led evaluations focused on learning and feedback process with emphasis on **utility as the prime requirement**

3. Evaluation Units in LMs and sub-national level (provinces and districts).

4. **Localized methodologies** / approaches/ systems (methodological pluralism) , guidelines and standards

5. **National Evaluation Policy Framework –** Government wide covering Central and Provinces

6. **National Evaluation Plan** (Inter-Ministerial Committee) **Ministry Evaluation Plan (3 year plan)** – Ministry level committee

Learning Oriented Country-Led Evaluations

7. **Provincial Evaluation Plan** (CM Led Provincial Committee) **and Provincial Ministry Evaluation Plan** (Provincial Minister led Committee)

8. **Budgetary allocation** for evaluation

9. **Independent external service providers** undertake evaluations and manage by Steering Committee and Reference Group

10. **Dissemination of evaluation findings**

11. **Management Responses**

Recommendations	Agreed / Disagreed	Reasons for Disagreement

12. **Improvement Plans**

Agreed Action	Priority L/M/H	Responsibility	Deadline (Time)	Current Status of Progress

Learning Oriented Country-Led Evaluations

- Evaluation Report (1/3/20)

  1 page Policy Summary

  3 pages Executive Summary

  20 Pages main Report

- Contents – Overall Assessment / Key Issues / Lessons Learnt/ Follow-up Actions and recommendations

  Evaluation report goes to Cabinet of Ministers and made available for public

- Evaluations were placed in **national EIS (Repository)** for wider use

- **Evaluation Networks** and CoPs were emerging – SLEvA, Parliamentary Forum on Development Evaluation

Criteria for Selection of Projects for Evaluation

- Projects of a strategic nature (national important)
- Projects of Public interest
- Large scale projects
- Projects that are likely to be replicated
- Projects of an innovative nature or unusual nature where feedback is sought / best practices
- Project that may be running into problems (decision to terminate or re-adjust) – under-performing projects
- Projects which may throw light on new or upcoming policy initiatives.

Conditions under which evaluation studies are in-appropriate

1, One Time Programme : No potential for continuation (Not Replicable); No sufficient impact to warrant evaluation.

2, Absence of commitment for use of Evaluation Results : Projects for which administrators are unwilling to discontinue (personal or political reasons) or make changes.

3. Strong Pre-conceived Notion – Client or sponsor is not open to contradictions.

4. Absence of valid and dependable information

5, Evaluation is pre-mature for the stage of the programme – e.g. pre-mature summative evaluations or impact evaluations (Timing)

6, Consensus cannot be achieved among major stakeholders on programme model and desired evaluation plan.

Strategies to promote better use of Evaluation

- Utilization focused evaluations – **Needs of the cliental** – Policy makers, planners and decision makers should be given consideration in designing evaluation questions

- Ensure **buy-in** at the beginning and throughout – **active engagement** of users and all stakeholders

- **Involve planning, budgeting** , programme management and policy making functions in designing , implementation and post implementation of evaluations

- Provide **credible and independence evidences**

- Emphasize on **Management Response** and **Improvement Plan**

- **Disseminate findings** through workshops, seminars , synthesis report, EIS

- Incorporate evaluation lessons into **Project Submission** Form

Challenges

- Rigorous evaluations take more time –piloting **rapid evaluation methodology useful**
- Inadequate **supply of skilled evaluators** in Government and Service providers . (Evaluation capacity and professionalization)
- Credible **Data**
- Weak **programme theory** and **evaluability**
- Lack of **buy-in**
- Ensuring **quality** (peer reviews, quality assessment
- Use of Evaluation – involve users in Reference Group, scoping session with evaluation questions meeting the **user requirements**.
- Feedback related challenges
- NEC – Enabling Environment, Institutional and Individual

Conclusions

- Evaluation to reach Cabinet of Ministers and Parliament and planning, budgeting, programming and policy making. **Influential evaluation** – Evaluation to make a change – Management Response and Improvement Plan is vital.

- Auditor General moving towards **performance audit** or Value for Money Audit (VFM).

- **Focus more on rapid evaluations** to support evidenced based decision making by top management and Utilization Focused Evaluations.