

6.7 | Session A7: Engaging society to strengthen National Evaluation Systems

Moderator

- ♦ **Iryna Kravchuk**, Board member and co-founder of Ukrainian Evaluation Association

Panellists

- ♦ **Giorgi Kldiashvili**, Executive Director, Institute of Democracy and Freedom of Information, Georgia
- ♦ **Matodzi Amisi**, M&E Specialist, Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR Anglophone Africa), former Chair SAMEA, South Africa
- ♦ **Mamadou Coulibaly**, Permanent Secretary of the Ivorian Monitoring and Evaluation Network, Vice- President of the Francophone Evaluation Network, Ivory Coast
- ♦ **Kassem El Saddik**, Evaluation Practitioner/ Consultant, Vice President LebEVAL, Lebanon

What role do civil society, academia and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) play in strengthening National Evaluation Systems?



- ♦ **Civil society plays a crucial and strategic role in establishing and sustaining resilient National Evaluation Systems.** They are, or can be, unique and strategic actors for democratic, inclusive, innovative and vibrant evaluation ecosystems and promoting constructive social dialogue and multi-stakeholder engagement.
- ♦ **Civil society plays many critical roles within a NES.** This ranges from oversight to design, management and effective functioning of the NES. They provide objective analysis of government policies, programmes and strategies through evidence-based research, data and information, help bridge the capacity gaps to rollout the NES, and bring in the voices of citizens to the evaluation process.

- ♦ **Civil society can be an important knowledge broker.** Citizens in influential M&E positions – notably academics, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector – can demonstrate the added value of evaluation by applying it to the main issues the government is trying to address as a policy enabler. They bring various interests into evaluation, including those who conduct evaluations, academics who teach courses related to evaluation, people who work in agencies that commission evaluation, those responsible for government policies and systems related to evaluation, etc. Different groups bring diverse skills and expertise and can play critical roles in the NES.
- ♦ **Civil society helps to co-create and enhance ownership of the NES** through their convening power, which can bring together different groups who have a stake in the government policies and programmes and shared values. This empowers stakeholders, increases co-ownership of policies and increases sustainability.
- ♦ **The representation and legitimacy of civil society presents a key challenge.** However, it is important to recognise that civil society does not constitute a homogenous group. They range from citizens to NGOs, academic institutions, think-tanks to VOPEs and other non-state actors engaged in delivering global public goods. To build legitimacy, there is a need to invest in building trust and relationships with State actors for sustained and inclusive dialogue, which leaves no one behind.
- ♦ **The engagement of civil society should not be an afterthought; it should be integral to the design of the NES.** They should be part of the process from conceptualization, design and implementation of the evaluations; engaging in the development of the TORs, developing evaluation questions, participating in reference groups, steering committees and communication and the use of evaluation results.
- ♦ **The role of civil society needs to evolve** from their conventional roles in capacity-building through training, advocacy for setting standards and quality assurance, to a greater role in shaping and establishing NES through facilitating, catalysing efforts to sustain results-based management practices, leveraging partnerships and playing an integral role in the successful implementation of reforms.
- ♦ **The role of civil society is not always apparent in the NES architecture.** There is a need to build incentives for their engagement through enabling policies and guidelines.
- ♦ **For a NES to be resilient, its key components should be resilient and able to adapt and recover quickly from challenges.** At the same time, for civil society to be resilient, it should recognise and address its internal tensions and external challenges. This requires critical reflection of its internal tensions, which includes governance, membership, mandate and increased professionalization.

Conclusion

Civil society plays a critical role in building resilient and sustainable NES. This can range from establishing evaluation policy and governance, standards and values, processes and resources, as well as the partnerships that govern, manage and support the demand, supply and utilization of evaluation to inform decision-making and ensure accountability and learning. While their enormous potential as key, strategic, influential actors in the NES is high, this needs to be further strengthened and made clear within the NES architecture. From a systems perspective, civil society is an important countervailing and contributing partner to keep NES vibrant, responsive and inclusive, and contribute to boosting creativity, collaboration and convergence.

Quotes

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“Civil society plays a crucial role for any National Evaluation System”.

— **Giorgi Kldiashvili**, Executive Director, Institute of Democracy and Freedom of Information, Georgia

“Civil society is a powerful ally to advance the practice of evaluation”.

— **Matodzi Amisi**, M&E Specialist, CLEAR Anglophone Africa, (former Chair SAMEA), South Africa

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Watch the session



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