Abstract for the 2024 NEC Conference: Responsive Evaluation – Practical Insights and Innovations

In August 2023, I was honored to lead the evaluation of the project "Together Against Child Labour" (PROTECT) project in Tunisia. This project was funded by the United States Department of Labor (DOL) Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) and implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) from September 2016 to August 2023. With a funding level of $4,000,000 spanning fiscal years 2016 to 2023, PROTECT was designed to support the Government of Tunisia and other key stakeholders in implementing the National Action Plan Against Child Labor in Tunisia (NAPTN) and to help prevent and reduce child labor in Tunisia.

The project was designed with a participatory approach, engaging various stakeholders from different Tunisian ministries responsible for child welfare. However, the project had different partners and management leads, which resulted in varying project strategies. The monitoring and evaluation plan was independently designed by the main implementation partner, ILO, without the substantial engagement of governmental partners in the ongoing monitoring plan. Despite the project’s over six-year lifespan, there were no systemic opportunities for participatory learning or informative consultations to inform project decisions, adapt the theory of change, or update the results indicators.

**Purpose of the Presentation:** In this presentation, I aim to illustrate the importance of responsive evaluation and the necessity of a participatory, multi-stakeholder evaluation plan that shares the responsibility of designing indicators and steering the project toward its objectives throughout its lifecycle.

This presentation should respond to the conference objectives and more specifically, my presentation aligns with Stream A of the conference.

In this study, I will use the PROTECT project as a case example to delve into the unique challenges encountered in creating a strong monitoring and evaluation system. These insights will yield documented recommendations for enhancing evidence-based decision-making at various project stages.

I will address the obstacles to and solutions for integrating continuous monitoring and evaluation into national policies and frameworks. Furthermore, I will illustrate how the lack of national capacity in monitoring and evaluation could potentially expose the resources of collaborating state institutions, as well as the sovereignty and autonomy of the relevant state partners, and the well-being of beneficiaries, partners, and civil society, in line with the "do no harm" principle.

In conclusion, this presentation underscores the crucial importance of project monitoring and evaluation systems and the need to strengthen these structures within partnering state organizations. By sharing my experience and insights from evaluating the PROTECTE project, I aim to demonstrate how a robust evaluation framework can significantly enhance project outcomes and support the successful advancement of national objectives against child labor in Tunisia. The ultimate goal is to maximize project efficiency and effectiveness, advance toward developmental objectives, and ensure sustained impact and success.