**ABSTRACT**

**Topic: Stream A: National Evaluation Systems – Building strong evaluation systems ensuring use.**

Building robust national evaluation systems (NES) in the country at all levels both in the public and private sector is pivotal for inclusive and sustainable development. In the spirit of ensuring that no one is left behind, these systems facilitate comprehensive assessments of national policies, strategies and programs, providing a foundation for evidence-based decision-making at the country, regional and international level. Despite their importance, several challenges, including limited capacities, unavailability and insufficient data quality, and inadequate institutional monitoring and evaluation frameworks. This abstract explores these challenges and offers recommendations for overcoming them.

Strengthening evidence-based decision-making requires robust national policies and technical capabilities for evidence-based planning and results-based governance. Overcoming challenges in institutionalizing evaluation involves fostering an enabling environment where evaluation is valued, ensuring allocation of adequate resources, and building institutional capacities. Peer learning and collaboration are critical in this process, as countries can benefit from shared experiences and best innovative practices in developing and implementing NES.

Transparency and participation are key pillars of effective NES, as they enhance the credibility and utility of evaluations. Engaging stakeholders, including civil society and marginalized communities, ensures that diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more equitable and inclusive policies. Ensuring data availability, quality and accessibility is another critical aspect, necessitating the adoption of standardized data collection methods, management, robust quality control mechanisms, and policies that promote productive data sharing and use.

Promoting equity through disaggregated data is essential for inclusive policy development. By analyzing data across different population groups, policymakers can identify and address disparities, ensuring that development interventions reach those most in need. Harnessing technology for data collection, analysis, management and evaluation can significantly enhance the efficiency, accuracy, and timeliness of data, enabling more responsive and adaptive governance.

Further, Management Information Systems (MIS) and databases are pivotal in bolstering the NES, providing the necessary infrastructure and tools to build robust evaluation frameworks and ensure their effective utilization. The functional Monitoring and Evaluation MIS integrates data from various sources, ensuring centralized, consistent, and accurate information management. The database and MIS offers advanced analytical tools and customizable reporting capabilities, automating routine tasks and enabling real-time data access in supporting the NES. This process enhances stakeholder engagement through user-friendly interfaces and collaboration tools. Collectively, MIS and databases form the backbone of NES, fostering a culture of data-driven decision-making and continuous policy and program improvement.

Moreover, they support capacity building through capacity building, incorporate feedback mechanisms for ensuring policy integration, enhancing the relevance and impact of evaluations.

Nonetheless, a National Evaluation Plan (NEP) is also pivotal in strengthening the NES as it acts as a guide for conducting evaluations of projects, programs and policies for both donor and government driven initiatives.

In conclusion, building robust NES involves a multi-faceted approach that addresses institutional, technical, and participatory dimensions. By strengthening national capabilities, fostering peer learning, ensuring transparency and data quality, promoting equity, and leveraging technology, countries can develop effective NES that support evidence-based decision-making and inclusive development.