National Evaluation Capacities Conference 2024

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

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Title of the abstract	Developing a National M&E Policy: Uncharted Waters - A Trinidad and Tobago Case Study
Conference session	√ Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems □ Stream B. Inclusive National Evaluation Systems □ Stream C. Future Driven Systems and Approaches
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Preferred format:	□ Formal presentation (maximum 10 minutes) √ Participation in a panel discussion where the experience can be shared □ Participation in an interactive session where the example can be shared, without a formal presentation □ Other (please specify) _____
I will be applying for bursary support (note that there will be a separate application for bursary support, the present template is only to get an idea of the bursary requirement as you submit the abstract).	√ Yes □ No
Language	√English □ French □ Spanish □ Chinese

Abstract Text (500 words)

Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) is an oil-rich archipelagic state, spanning 5,131 square kilometers with an estimated population of 1.4 million people in the Southern Caribbean. T&T is recognized as a stable and financially secure Caribbean territory and also stands out as the region's leader in public sector management, particularly in the area of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).

The presentation will outline T&T's M&E Policy journey which started in 2009. The first major achievement was the publication of the country's and region's first National M&E Policy, which was Cabinet-approved and laid in Parliament in 2015. The 2015 Policy was positioned as an instrument for systems change and aimed to bring 'order to the disorder' by building on existing M&E assets and integrating them in a coherent, formal way. Accordingly, the 2015 Policy was **system-focused** and outlined T&T's first formal M&E System, using a whole-of-government approach. The 2015 Policy also gave guidance on how public sector organizations should setup and operate an M&E system, including appropriate M&E roles and responsibilities.

A different approach was taken towards developing a new Draft M&E Policy in 2024. Rather than positioning the policy as an instrument for broad systems change, the new policy focuses on supporting M&E practitioners across the public sector, that is, it became **user-focused**. Accordingly, the 2024 Draft Policy articulates an overarching philosophy which provides a framework for the practice of M&E, identifies key M&E terminology to foster a common language, a list of M&E tasks that should be done, a list of M&E tools that should be used, as well as the identification of M&E roles and responsibilities.

This presentation will explore the differences in approaches, between a system and user approach in the development of the national M&E policy, while exploring the rationale for the shift, which was primarily due to changes in T&T's institutional and cultural landscape. These changes included political changes (changes to the ruling party, Cabinet and ministry portfolios); diminished institutional capacities of key elements of the National M&E System (data governance and management, human resource capacities and M&E Unit organizational structures); the non-existence of a national M&E champion; shifts in funding priorities in Government; and the weakening of levels of commitment from senior officials. In maneuvering these changes, the presentation will also share on some of the missteps taken along the way in developing each M&E Policy including connecting the Policy to a single political administration.

Further, the presentation will also share several learnings that any country embarking on a similar journey should keep in mind, based on the T&T experience. Such lessons include the delinking of M&E advancements to any one (1) political administration; focusing on institutionalizing the practice M&E by building on the existing M&E assets/ starting where you can; committing Government to a policy review date, rather than an expiration date; understanding that many 'masters' may need to be satisfied to complete and accept the M&E Policy; and also understanding when a narrower approach to M&E systems change should be used.

Word Count – 497