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**“Responsive Evaluation: For Government, For Inclusions, For the Future”**

**Call for abstracts**

(May 2024)

# **BACKGROUND**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim for a better world by 2030 and seek to end poverty, fight inequality, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Evaluation can be a powerful tool for improving public accountability and learning, accelerating the implementation of the SDGs and positive development change globally.

Evaluation systems and capacity gaps at the national level, however, remain a major challenge inmany countries. To address this, the Independent Evaluation Office of UNDP ([UNDP IEO](http://web.undp.org/evaluation/)) has organized biennial [National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) Conferences](https://nec.undp.org/) since 2009 in partnership with various governments.

In 2020, UNDP IEO joined forces with the [World Bank IEG](https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/) and other partners to establish the [Global Evaluation Initiative](https://www.globalevaluationinitiative.org/) (GEI), bringing together different national evaluation capacity development initiatives under one umbrella, including the network of [Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR)](https://www.theclearinitiative.org/#:~:text=CLEAR%20is%20a%20global%20network%20dedicated%20to%20improving,locally%20and%20regionally%2C%20and%20share%20and%20inspire%20globally.) and training programmes such as [the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET)](https://ipdet.org/). Since 2022 the NEC conference has been organized in collaboration with the GEI.

NEC’s audiences include:

* ***Government officials from national and sub-national institutions*** directly and indirectly engaged with evaluation and public policy, including central planning and finance ministries, sectoral ministries, evaluation units, national statistical agencies, and supreme audit institutions.
* ***Civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector.***
* ***UNDP/ UN agencies, international financial institutions, other development partners and global evaluation communities*** engaged in supporting national governments with evaluation, governance, and the SDG agenda.

The [NEC conferences](https://nec.undp.org/publications/national-evaluation-capacities-conference-learning-and-accountability) will provide opportunities to:

* Share progress, lessons, innovations, experiences and perspectives in strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems.
* Enhance the skills of those commissioning, conducting, using, and advocating for evaluation.
* Foster existing and new partnerships to strengthen national evaluation systems, with an emphasis on South-South Cooperation.

# **NEC 2024**

The 2024 [National Evaluation Capacity (NEC) Conference](https://nec.undp.org/) is the eighth in the series of conferences. The theme of the 2024 NEC Conference is ***“Responsive Evaluation: For Government, For Inclusion, For the Future.”*** This theme underscores the importance of sharing progress and lessons learned in strengthening national evaluation systems, their role in achieving the SDGs and other development goals, and how new technologies and approaches in evaluation can facilitate the achievement of the SDGs.

The Conference will take place in Beijing, China, from 14th to 18th October 2024. The first three days (14th -16th October) will be dedicated to the main conference, followed by a two-day post-conference training workshop (17th & 18th October 2024).

**The Conference** will be designed to provide all participants with multiple spaces for engagement. A mix of plenary sessions and parallel strands on a range of topics will be organized, using a variety of formats including keynote speakers, paper presentations, and panel discussions, as well as innovative arrangements that facilitate more informal discussion and sharing of experiences between partners.

This is a ‘by invitation only’ conference. Conference participants are identified through UNDP country offices, regional bureaus, and partner organizations.

The registration will open in August 2024.

The main working language of the Conference will be English.

Simultaneous interpretation from English into Chinese, French, and Spanish will be available for all conference sessions.

# **CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

We are pleased to invite government officials and other conference participants engaged in evaluation, governance, and the implementation of the SDG agenda to submit abstracts.

**Submission procedure**

[To submit a proposal, please click here](https://nec.undp.org/pre_registration/3460/initiate).

**Submission is now open for proposed presentations or panel contributions until 28 June 2024.**The preferred language for submissions is English, but abstracts in Spanish or French will also be considered.

**Proposed topics**

Submissions are encouraged around the following three thematic streams of the 2024 NEC Conference:

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

• **Stream B:** Inclusive Evaluation Systems – Including citizens’ voice, alternative knowledge, and evaluating complexity.

• **Stream C:** Future-driven Systems and Approaches – Adapting technology, innovative approaches, synthesis, and knowledge. management.

Potential topics under each Stream are listed below as a reference. **Practical, real-life examples** of interest to fellow practitioners are particularly welcome. This could include innovation (an innovative nationally-led evaluation, new methods, ways of integrating the SDGs into an evaluation); examples of recommendations informing policy or procedure (an evaluation that led to policy change, experiences of institutionalizing evaluations and policy frameworks, a discussion between an evaluator and an evaluand about how an evaluation has been used, successful stakeholder engagement, or new institutional arrangements); or of challenges faced and lessons learned.

**Stream A - National evaluation systems:**

* **Building Robust National Evaluation Systems:** leaving no one behind.
* **Strengthening evidence-based decision making** at the country level: challenges and recommendations.
* **National policies and capabilities** for evidence-based planning and results-based governance. Overcoming challenges in institutionalizing evaluation.
* **Fostering Peer Learning and Collaboration to strengthen NES.**
* **Transparency and Participation:** Key Pillars of Effective National Evaluation Systems
* **Ensuring Data Quality and Accessibility:** Challenges and Solutions
* **Promoting Equity through Disaggregated Data:** Strategies for Inclusive Policy Development
* **Harnessing Technology for Data Collection and Evaluation**

**Stream B - Inclusive evaluation systems:**

* **Navigating Cultural and Contextual Diversity:** Tailoring Evaluation Systems to National Realities
* **Advancing Equity and Inclusion:** Strategies for Implementing Inclusive National Evaluation Systems
* **Beyond Numbers:** Capturing Impact with Inclusive Evaluation Frameworks
* **Inclusive Methodologies for National Evaluation Systems:** Bridging Gaps, Engaging Stakeholders and Empowering Communities
* **Building Inclusive Capacity:** Empowering Stakeholders for Effective Participation in Evaluation
* **Disaggregated Data for Inclusive Evaluation:** Addressing Disparities and Inequalities
* **Breaking Barriers:** Ensuring Accessibility in National Evaluation Processes
* **Equity Lens in Action:** Unveiling Systemic Inequalities through Inclusive Evaluations
* **Partnerships with civil society and the private sector** to bolster national evaluation capacities.

**Stream C - Future driven systems and approaches**:

* **Embracing technological change:** Strategies for Integrating New Technologies into National Evaluation Systems.
* **Innovative Approaches for Addressing Methodological Challenges** in Evaluation Practices.
* **From Complexity to Clarity:** Synthesizing Data in Evaluation Practices
* **Strategies for Enhancing Inclusivity** in National Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Amid Technological Transformation
* **Balancing Tradition with Innovation:** The Role of Ethical Guidelines and contextualization in Modern Evaluation Methodologies
* **Harnessing the Power of Synthesis Approaches:** Using and mapping existing evidence to meet the SDGs.
* **Adapting to Change:** Building Resilient National Evaluation Systems in a Rapidly Transforming World
* **AI-Powered Evaluation and Ethical Considerations:** Exploring Opportunities and Challenges for National Monitoring Systems.

**Selection process**

The submitted abstracts will be reviewed by using the following criteria:

1. Relevance: The proposed presentation should be aligned with the conference theme and one or more of the conference strands.
2. Clarity and quality:The abstract should clearly explain the example to be presented. Authors should prepare their abstracts with care, ensuring that the reader will understand the background of the issue(s), and the objectives and relevance of the proposed topic for presentation.
3. Specificity and concreteness: The abstract must present a topic that includes concrete and specific examples (a good practice, lesson learned and/or a challenge that was overcome, for example).
4. Innovation:The abstract must show an innovation or introduce a new topic or application in the field of interest.
5. Gender equality and disability rights: Speakers will be selected with diversity and inclusion in mind, to promote a broad range of perspectives.
6. Diversity: Efforts will be made to provide space to as many different countries and cultural viewpoints as possible.

The NEC Secretariat will reach out to the authors of the selected abstracts before **1 August 2024** with information of assigned sessions and presentation form**.**

The authors of selected abstracts will be invited to submit a short paper (3-4 pages) to be included in a publication of the Conference Proceedings.

For any questions about the abstracts, please contact the NEC Secretariat at ieo.nec@undp.org.

# Annex 1: Past conference publications:

* NEC Proceedings
  + **7th** [**NEC conference, 2022, Turin, Italy.**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fproceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217343208%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=pTxU37TgcODqP%2BnCR3GmlrgssB4QbldSx3T8CCCa1pg%3D&reserved=0)
    - **Resilient National Evaluation Systems for Sustainable Development**
  + **6th** [**NEC conference, 2019, Hurghada, Egypt**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2019-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217357477%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=KNPyOmus%2F%2Fioo1a1MLFsRCMpmdHsXijwD79RtQZWC48%3D&reserved=0)**:** 
    - **“Leaving No One Behind: Evaluation for 2030”**
  + **5th** [**NEC conference, 2017, Istanbul, Turkey**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2017-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217371053%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2Bo4dfmhgL5kPI3nG5GVsWL4iE4DUP6IP0tdfKwfjP2c%3D&reserved=0)**,** 
    - **“People, Planet and Progress in the SDG Era”**
  + **4th** [**NEC conference, 2015, Bangkok, Thailand**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2015-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217384510%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=5TVdlKzZQkvlILYzQTJUZLFKb52wHw3CPaSKYgQslrw%3D&reserved=0)**,** 
    - **“Blending Evaluation Principles with Development Practices to Change People’s Lives”**
  + **3rd** [**NEC conference, 2013, Sao Paulo, Brazil**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2013-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217398680%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=TILdPGb1JI1%2BRMx6sQOSezA8RV9Z5P1AHb%2FmdfI3DSc%3D&reserved=0)**,** 
    - **“Solutions Related To Challenges of Independence, Credibility and Use of Evaluation”**
  + **2nd** [**NEC conference, 2011, Johannesburg, South Africa**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2011-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217411724%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=tvfuknxa7JMNjY%2BY78Vzp4LK24678zEJvXQ4dxAVnoQ%3D&reserved=0)**,** 
    - **“Use of Evaluation in Decision Making for Public Policies and Programmes”**
  + **1st** [**NEC conference, 2009, Casablanca, Morocco**](https://eur03.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fnec.undp.org%2Fpublications%2Fnational-evaluation-capacities-conference-nec-2009-proceedings&data=05%7C02%7Crichard.jones%40undp.org%7Cb5231b6a15d4477d36bb08dc3151812c%7Cb3e5db5e2944483799f57488ace54319%7C0%7C0%7C638439477217425246%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=csV6SfLi%2FC9NZ%2BBfDeOIC9j6lkZLc0fT4Zfbmd3GQI8%3D&reserved=0)**,** 
    - **“Strengthening National Capacities for Public Policy evaluation, through South-South Cooperation.”**
* [NEC Information Centre](https://nec.undp.org/) (papers, presentations, [video](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLduAEjS6wFdKaUp4_ixTxcimIoYMBE7Wm) and photo gallery)

# Annex 2: Abstract submission template (to be uploaded to the submission portal)

**ABSTRACT SUBMISSION TEMPLATE**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Presenter’s full name (title, name, surname) | Ms Seirah Ngcobo |
| Nationality | South African |
| Gender | Female |
| Country of residence | South Africa |
| Institutional affiliation | Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Contact information including email and telephone | [Seirah.Ngcobo@dpme.gov.za](mailto:Seirah.Ngcobo@dpme.gov.za)  0027662533106 |
| Title of the abstract | South African NES Institutionalization Levers/ Enablers amidst a Volatile, Changing, Complex World |
| Conference session | □ Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems  □ Stream B. Inclusive National Evaluation Systems  X□ Stream C. Future Driven Systems and Approaches |
| Name(s), title(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of all other authors/contributors (if applicable) | Seirah Ngcobo. Deputy Director: Frontline Monitoring Support, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa |
| Preferred format: | X 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 need to apply for bursary support, if selected. | X Yes  □ No |
| Language to be used for presentation | X English □ French □ Spanish □ Chinese |

**Abstract Text (max. 500 words)**

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| --- |
| **INTRODUCTION**  National Evaluation Systems (NES) are not immune to the changing world. Enablers/Levers for institutionalization have been widely written about by many scholars yet there are knowledge gaps on facilitating their resilience to a changing, volatile and complex world. Enablers of institutionalization include political will, senior management buy-in, existence of evaluation policies, allocation of evaluation budgets and human resources.  This paper wishes to demonstrate how the institutionalization levers/enablers of the NES have performed in the different South African government administrations.  **METHODOLOGY**  Secondary data (reports)  Lived experience  **FINDINGS**  In the late 2000s, South Africa experienced service delivery protests and the government was pressured to demonstrate its impact. In 2009, a new administration that appreciated the monitoring and evaluation function as a vehicle to improve service delivery entered office. In terms of organisation, a Ministry and Department of Performance (later, Planning) M&E (DPME) were established in 2009 and 2010, respectively. This Department led the establishment of the National Evaluation System.    In 2011, the National Evaluation Policy Framework was passed giving a blueprint on how evaluations were to be conducted. Political will and appetite for evidence use from parliamentarians was available. Study tours with other countries were done for purposes of benchmarking.  Capacity development partnerships were forged with an aim of developing capacity for NES. NES had a budget of 10 million rands at inception and evaluations done were aligned to the NDP. 16 posts were created at DPME to implement the NES  **MILESTONES**  NES has made strides, namely the development of guidelines and templates, forging of strategic partnerships, development of evaluation courses, commissioning of a diagnostic study on supply versus demand of evaluators. DPME has launched guidelines intended at ensuring that the NES remains responsive and relevant to the changing, complex and volatile world. Such guidelines launched include the Equity and Climate evaluation guideline, Rapid Evaluation guideline, Virtual Evaluation guideline, Ethics Evaluation Guideline and the Gender Equity Evaluation Guidelines.  **CHALLENGES**  The NES is over a decade old now, gained traction and has had its fair share of challenges. Challenges are on how institutionalization levers/ enablers have performed or have changed over the years, impacting on a system that could have matured. The evaluation budget has declined drastically in the fiscal constrained environment. The 2024/2025 Financial Year, National Evaluation Plan, (NEP) has no budget and this calls for the NES to rethink its approach (without compromising its intention) in a changing world.  The NES has been evaluated and an improvement plan generated. DPME as an advocate of evidence use, one expected the recommendations to be implemented however implementation was hampered by DPME high staff turnover. Is NES institutionalization being tested? The NEPF was revised in 2019 , widening the evaluation scope to all government spheres although matching human capacity was not effected.  **CONCLUSION**  It is critical to ensure that the gains made over the years are sustained and are not lost. The changing world demands “adaptability” so that fundamentals of NES are kept afloat. This might mean revisiting the Evaluation function of DPME to be that of setting standards on evaluations and technical support provision instead of commissioning evaluations |