**Title:** **Enhancing National Evaluation Systems for Evidence-based Decision Making: Challenges and Strategic Recommendations**

**Abstract:** South Africa is at the forefront among African countries in strengthening its National Evaluation Systems (NES), continuously setting the pace on the continent. To ensure that its NES remains responsive and robust, the country has developed an Evaluation Technical Support Guidance Note (TSGN). This guide aims to create a framework through which the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME) offers evaluation technical support across all government spheres. In collaboration with Twende Mbele, the DPME is currently refining the NES by fine-tuning the TSGN to ensure it reflects current realities and addresses critical gaps in evidence-based decision-making at national, provincial, municipal, and state-owned enterprise levels.

This presentation delves into the comprehensive approach employed in the development of the TSGN, which includes extensive stakeholder engagement, participatory methodologies, and benchmarking against global best practices. We confront challenges such as inconsistent evaluation practices, limited evaluator capacities, and the need for alignment with international standards, which are pivotal in shaping the development of the guidance note. The TSGN development adopts the Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) model, which emphasizes three levels of capacity: individual, institutional, and enabling environment. This model provides a detailed framework for how capacity development is structured, thus informing the TSGN and characterizing the varied technical support to be rendered across South Africa’s evaluation ecosystem.

Recommendations will focus on adopting standardized procedures, enhancing evaluative capacities, and fostering a culture of accountability and continuous learning. The session will highlight innovative strategies implemented in the TSGN development process, such as a structured participatory approach that ensures inclusivity and stakeholder ownership, critical for sustainable system enhancement. This initiative not only aims to fortify South Africa's evaluation practices but also serves as a model for other countries striving to strengthen their national evaluation capacities in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Presenter 1:** Moses Mashingaidze

**Institutional Affiliation:** African Evaluation Association (AfrEA)

South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA)

(Consultant) Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

**Presenter 2:** Caroline Makuvire

**Institutional Affiliation:** Zimbabwe Office of the President and Cabinet