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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) | Professor, Ai Yue |
| Nationality | China |
| Gender | Female |
| Country of residence | China |
| Institutional affiliation | Shaanxi Normal University (Public university directly administered by the Ministry of Education) |
| Contact information including email and telephone | [yueai@163.com](mailto:yueai@163.com)  86-150-0296-0502 |
| Title of the abstract | Evaluating Early Childhood Development in China: The Role of Randomized Controlled Trials and Implementation Science |
| Conference session | □ Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems  □✓Stream B. Inclusive National Evaluation Systems  □ ✓Stream C. Future Driven Systems and Approaches |
| Name(s), title(s) and institutional affiliation(s) of all other authors/contributors (if applicable) | Yaojiang Shi, Professor, Shaanxi Normal University  Qiannan Song, PHD student, Shaanxi Normal University |
| 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 need to apply for bursary support, if selected. | □ ✓Yes (Negotiable)  □ No |
| Language to be used for presentation | ✓ English □ French □ Spanish ✓ Chinese |

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

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| --- |
| "End poverty" and “Quality Education” are the primary goals among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations. At the San Jose conference, leading economists highlighted that investing in early childhood development is a key strategy to address poverty and inequality. Recognized globally, early childhood is a vital time for human capital formation, yielding significant returns. This investment not only boosts individual human capital but also enhances societal welfare by promoting social equity, increasing tax revenue, reducing costs, and breaking the poverty cycle.  However, significant challenges remain worldwide. In low- and middle-income countries, 219 million (39%) children under five are at risk of not reaching their developmental potential, leading to a 19.8% decrease in adult income.  In response, at the end of 2013, the "Nurturing Future" team from Shaanxi Normal University, in collaboration with domestic early childhood development experts and drawing on international experience, developed a parent-child activity intervention program for rural children aged 6-36 months. **To rigorously evaluate this intervention, the team implemented a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT), considered the gold standard for establishing causality and eliminating endogeneity concerns.** To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, the team conducted a large-scale RCT involving baseline and follow-up surveys of over 5,000 children aged 5-24 months. The results confirmed the intervention's effectiveness.  **The project's evaluation findings have been instrumental in shaping policy dialogues and enhancing government support for early childhood development initiatives.** By providing evidence-based recommendations through policy briefs, the team has influenced policy decisions that support the scaling of effective practices.  Building on this success, the team developed a center-based intervention model to further support disadvantaged children. This model involves establishing early childhood development centers in low-income areas of China to provide interventions for disadvantaged children aged 0-3. However, while RCTs evaluate and validate intervention effectiveness, the center-based model faces challenges in sustained implementation, maintaining effectiveness, and balancing fairness and scalability.  **To tackle these challenges, the team applied implementation science methodologies to refine and adapt the center-based model. This involved continuous evaluation of the program's deployment, identifying bottlenecks, and developing strategies for improvement.** Ultimately, the team aims to summarize the promotion model for low- and middle-income countries and regions, developing a replicable scientific research and evaluation framework. This will foster the early development of disadvantaged infants and improve population quality, better addressing global demographic adjustments and aging societies.  Additionally, the project and evaluation have had a broader social impact on gender issues. Since many caregivers at the Early Childhood Development Centers are women and most childcare responsibilities fall on women, the project empowers female caregivers, boosting their confidence and social status. It also improves the mental health and parenting confidence of infant mothers, promoting gender equality finally.  In conclusion it has been proven that through continuous rigorous evaluation – including detailed Randomized Controlled Trials and implementation science - the "Nurturing Future" project has achieved significant progress in refining and scaling early childhood interventions, ensuring these interventions are effective and adaptable for broader application in China.  (496 words) |