ASIAN EVALUATION WEEK 2025

NAVIGATING CRISES: BUILDING ON SUCCESSES
1–4 September
Xi'an, People's Republic of China

10TH YEAR

**Plenary Session 5. Evaluation Headlines Live: Shaping strategy in fast times and fluid frontiers**

**4 September 2025, 11:00 am – 12:00 pm**

| **SESSION TAKE AWAY** |
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| **The panel discussed pressing issues shaping the world of evaluation focused on:** how evolving global dynamics are influencing the way evaluation teams ask questions, interpret findings, and remain relevant; how digital tools—from AI to dashboards—are changing the evaluation space, including the promises and pitfalls of tech-driven methods; and shared insights on what strong leadership looks like today: building trust, staying grounded, and guiding teams through unpredictable circumstances.<br><br>The discussion emphasized the need for agility in evaluations, distinguishing it from mere speed. Agility requires responsiveness, adaptability, and balanced short-term and long-term perspectives. The panel highlighted the importance of collaboration, noting challenges in joint evaluations but advocating for coordinated thematic evaluations at the country level. They stressed the role of technology, particularly AI, in improving efficiency and data sharing, while also acknowledging risks such as data privacy and algorithmic biases. The conversation concluded with a call for transformative action, leveraging technology, and fostering collaboration to enhance development impact and accountability. |
| **Moderator: Emmanuel Jimenez, ADB** |
| • While we are living in uncertain times, we should expect more—and do more. This moment presents an opportunity to be transformative, but only if we work together through meaningful collaboration; harness technology, including AI, responsibly; stay agile and responsive to evolving challenges. |
| **Indran Naidoo, IFAD** |
| • Current evaluation processes are slow and often result in reports that are hard to implement. While AI can help, it is not a complete solution. Maintaining credibility and meaningful engagement is important but so is producing work that is useful to a broad range of stakeholders.<br>• Indran highlighted that IFAD works in partnership with others, making it challenging to attribute outcomes to any single entity. Ultimately, the focus should be on both accountability and the ability to respond rapidly to emerging issues in a collaborative environment. |
| **José Efraín Deras, CABEI** |

**Session Flow**

- Evaluation programs must be flexible and agile to meet the expectations of decision-makers, drawing on institutional memory and evidence to enable rapid, effective responses.
- It is important for institutions to co-create value as part of a broader value chain, especially within multilateral development banks.
- In times of uncertainty, there is a need to move beyond incremental changes and pursue transformational solutions—such as in private sector development and green financing—by leveraging evidence to drive significant adaptation and impact.

**Megan Grace Kennedy-Chouane, OECD**

- Evaluators must be more selective and efficient, applying cost-benefit analysis to their work, questioning assumptions, and avoiding redundant efforts—especially in crisis contexts where demands are high. Second, evaluators should help institutions and countries respond to crises by paying attention to unintended effects and supporting long-term, transformational change. This requires moving beyond narrow accountability and fostering stronger partnerships, particularly with national systems in developing countries, as international aid resources become more limited.
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**Sabine Bernabè, WB**

- While efforts to improve evaluation practices have been ongoing for decades, real progress only came when leadership stepped in. A pivotal moment occurred when the presidents of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank agreed to pursue mutual reliance, recognizing the inefficiency of having separate teams appraise and evaluate the same project independently. Institutional change often hinges on top-level commitment. MDBs often evaluate similar themes—climate change, gender, infrastructure—yet rarely learn from each other's findings.

- Most evaluation functions do not focus heavily on project-level evaluations; these are typically handled through self-evaluation and validation processes. Instead, institutional evaluation work is more often thematic, sectoral, or country-level. Therefore, the limited joint work may be less about reluctance and more about misalignment with the actual focus of evaluation functions.

**Véronique Salze-Lozac'h, EBRD**

- True agility in evaluation is not just about acting quickly, but about being responsive and adaptable to the needs of the private sector and beneficiaries. Speed alone does not equate to agility if solutions are not tailored to specific issues. She stressed the importance of balancing rapid responses with the depth and thoroughness that comes from taking time to investigate and analyze what works. Maintaining this balance ensures that evaluations remain relevant to both immediate and long-term priorities, such as poverty reduction.

- The willingness to collaborate among institutions is an important step, and suggested that effective coordination does not need to be complicated or limited to joint evaluations. Instead, institutions can improve collaboration by sharing work programs and approaches early in their development, aligning indicators, and making findings more comparable. There are significant opportunities offered by technology and shared platforms for pooling evaluation data, while acknowledging the need to manage associated risks.

**Session Flow**

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| **Q&A SUMMARY** |
| **Q:** In your theory of change around collaboration and partnerships, have you considered not just the benefits to your organizations—such as efficiency and effectiveness—but also the benefits to the evaluands (those being evaluated) and the countries involved?<br><br>**A:** Harmonization should extend to the theory of change, ensuring alignment across projects, interventions, and country strategies. Joint efforts—such as shared country evaluations or harmonized indicators—can improve coherence and reduce the burden on countries.<br><br>**Q:** How do we move beyond theory and talk, and begin to understand our individual contributions and attributions within collaborative efforts?<br><br>**A:** The evaluation community needs to take its own medicine by practicing the collaboration it often recommends. They urged peers not to let limited resources become a barrier to working together. Collaboration is essential—especially in times of constraint. Working together enables faster learning, which is critical for timely action and accountability. The urgency of today's challenges demands that we act collectively and effectively. |
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| **SESSION COORDINATOR** |
| Rosel Isidro-Cajilig |