Innovating Evaluation: Dealing with operational challenges during the COVID-19 crisis
Opening remarks and moderator

During this session we will be using this site for participant interaction: pollev.com/iegnow. You will be prompted to start responding.
Panelists

Estelle Raimondo
Senior Evaluator, IEG

Sophia van der Bijl
Evaluation Specialist, USAID PPL/LER

Allison Haselkorn
Acting Evaluation Team Lead | Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, USAID PPL/LER

Sven Harten
Deputy Director, Head of Competence Centre for Evaluation Methodology, DEval
Agenda

- DEval
- USAID
- WBG-IEG
- Discussion (www.pollev.com/iegnow)
Who is in the virtual room with us today? How do you spend MOST of your time related to evaluation?
When poll is active, respond at PollEv.com/iegnow

Who is in the virtual room with us today? How do you spend MOST of your time related to evaluation?

- Evaluation manager and/or team member (directly conducting evaluations): 24%
- Evaluation commissioner (plan and/or procure evaluations): 3%
- Monitoring-Evaluation-Learning (MEL) and/or Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) practitioner: 24%
- User of evaluations - as a program manager, etc.: 10%
- Some combination of the above: 17%
- Other: 21%
Evaluation in times of Covid-19 and beyond

Sven Harten
Head of Competence Centre for Evaluation Methodologies / Deputy Director, German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval)
DEval – Some basic features

• Founded in November 2012, Bonn

• Evaluation and federal research institute

• Works at the interface between science, politics and implementing organizations, considering evaluation as a specific form of applied research

• Aims at providing scientifically robust evidence

• Pursues improvements at the strategic level with its evaluatory work
Fields of activity of DEval

- **ECD**
  Developing evaluation capacity in partner countries

- **Disseminating knowledge and networking**

- **Methods and standards**
  Refining evaluation methods and standards

- **Evaluations**
  Conducting strategically relevant evaluations (core business of the institute)

- **Data collection and analysis incl. case studies by own staff**

- **Creation of a multi-annual Evaluation Programme**

- **Preliminary clarification and evaluation design**

- **Reporting and dissemination**

- **Monitoring of implementation**
Effects of Covid on DEval’s activities

- **Organisational process**: Ensuring health safety and operability (home-office, IT, logistics etc.)

- **Evaluation processes**: Adaptation of the evaluation process, Travel suspension and challenges for conventional data collection methods, Shift to remote data collection methods (desk studies, secondary data, data triangulation)

- **Evaluation topics**: Covid-19 and its consequences as an evaluation topic → Covid Emergency Programme of German DC integrated in Deval’s Multi-annual Evaluation Programme

**Example: Evaluation in Iraq**
- Remote interviews via digital communication platforms (worked surprisingly well!) → complete data coverage and good data quality
- Intensive involvement of well briefed local consultants throughout the evaluation process (great benefit!)
What innovations have been developed or scaled up to mitigate the challenges by the pandemic?

DEval mitigated through – at least – three innovative approaches...

- **Text-mining** approaches in different evaluations, e.g. evaluation of German DC’s Human Rights Approach
- Use of **remote data collection** in case studies, e.g. virtual focus group discussions
- **Geo-spatial impact assessment** of irrigation interventions in Mali
- **Evidence gap map (EGM)** on climate change, blended finance and fragile contexts
- **Meta-analysis** on the role of access to credit in the uptake of autonomous adaptation
- **Systematic reviews** for assessing the effectiveness and impacts of adaptation measures in the Water, Agriculture and Coastal Protection sectors
- **Intervention heat map** of climate change adaptation
What might the ‘new normal’ look like?

**New thematic priorities**
Stronger focus on: resilience/vulnerability, health, crises, fragility and LLRD, climate change mitigation and adaptation, inequality

**Adapted evaluation designs and methods**
More data sharing (e.g. Community of Practice on Data in Germany)
More remote data collection methods (e.g. geodata)
More adaptive – scenario-based -evaluation designs „Greening evaluations“ (e.g. travel less)

**More Evaluation Capacity Development**
More systemic approach to ECD (incl. regional upscaling)
Stronger focus on country-led evaluations

**Increased demand for evidence-based decision making**
Public discourse on the Covid-crisis was strongly expert-driven. This also creates a momentum for more evidence-based decision making in DC.
Submit your questions to the panelists.

To submit questions to the panelists, go to: www.pollev.com/iegnow
If you wish, add your name and location.

We will begin collecting questions to address later in the session.
Overview: Evaluation at USAID

- Generally decentralized
  - Agency-wide evaluations and studies often run out of PPL/LER
- Most evaluations are external (commissioned/contracted by operating unit)
- Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning Innovations Program (MERLIN): 4 concepts; cooperative agreement mechanisms
PPL/LER is USAID’s leader in evaluation policy & practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LER Evaluation Team Functions</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Policy, Guidance, and Tools</strong></td>
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<td>Develop policy and guidance to support the planning, implementation, and use of high-quality evaluation across USAID</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Technical Assistance and Capacity Building</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver technical assistance and capacity building to support operating units in designing, implementing, and learning from evaluations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Exploration of Evaluation Methods and Approaches</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop, test, and adapt evaluation approaches that are responsive to USAID's current and future programming and learning needs</td>
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**Enabling Environment**

Strengthen the internal and external enabling environment for the planning, resourcing, and use of evaluations
1. How have evaluation functions adapted to the challenges of collecting and analyzing evaluative evidence in times of COVID-19?

- **Across USAID evaluations:**
  - Increased flexibility
  - Procurement
  - Design
  - Implementation
  - Increased contracting with local partners and individuals
  - Increased remote data collection

- **MERLIN mechanisms:**
  - Strategic Program to Analyze Complexity and Evaluate Systems (SPACES-MERL)
  - Developmental Evaluation Pilot Activity (DEPA-MERL)
  - Rapid Feedback (RF)
  - Expanding the Reach of Impact Evaluation (ERIE)
2. What innovations have been developed or scaled up to mitigate these challenges?

- **Across USAID evaluations:**
  - Remote monitoring and data collection
  - Collaboration
  - Teamwork
  - Data collection

- **MERLIN mechanisms:**
  - SPACES: remote deliverables
  - DEPA-MERL: remote collaboration
  - RF: virtual support; remote data collection
  - ERIE: remote data collection

Photo credit: Panos
3. What will the ‘new normal’ look like? In what ways will the pandemic have a lasting influence on evaluation design and implementation?

- Cost efficiency/lower cost
- Adaptive procurement and design
- Remote collaboration
- Remote data collection
- More local partnership
- More evaluations on the pandemic’s effects
- MERLIN: more remote everything
Thank you!
Adapting IEG evaluations under Covid-19

Reflecting on one year of dealing with “Unknown unknowns”

Estelle Raimondo, PhD
Senior Evaluator, Independent Evaluation Group
IEG within the World Bank Group Evaluation System

IEG
- Independent Validation
- Independent Evaluations
- ECD

Mandatory Self-evaluations

Board (CODE)

WBG Management

WBG Operations

Clients (Country/Private business)

Donor Partners (Bilateral/Trust fund)

General public and end-beneficiaries

Documented impacts and transparency

Demand-driven Self-evaluations (e.g., impact evaluations)
How did we set out to adapt?
Adapting what we do

• Putting our users’ needs at the forefront:
  • COVID Response – Library, Tools, Evaluation

• Being (even more) mindful of absorptive capacity

• Engaging in “double loop” learning
- Remote interviewing
- Valuing better local expertise
- Reshaping the “virtual reflexive team”
- “Observing from space”
Example: The “virtual reflexive evaluation team”
Example: Using ML in geospatial impact assessment
Maputo Municipal Development Program II (2009-17)

Black line: Road Supported by the Bank
Dotted line: Road not improved
Red Circle – 2km buffer from the roads

Source: Independent Evaluation Group; H. Yokoi, M. Pinglo, V. Vergara
• Improving the efficiency and quality of portfolio analysis
• More systematic data analysis in teams through shared tools (NVivo)
• Conducting rapid syntheses
Example: Portfolio identification using ML
Evaluation of the World Bank’s Support to Improving Child Undernutrition and Its Determinants

Source: Independent Evaluation Group; M. Vellez, J. Gold, S. Ramirez
Example: Combining ML and qualitative synthesis

Rapid Synthesis on Migration

**Question:** What lessons has IEG gathered on migration?

**Human review** reveals that there are 10 areas of interest that mapped to 41 evaluations.

**Brainstorm:** key words, type of document, number of years

**Run ML using KNOMAD key words, on full text of all project evaluations for 10 years producing 38 topics and 123 evaluations of interest**

**4 Themes with reinforcing storyline**

**Move to qualitative synthesis**

**Final in-depth review** of 15 project evaluations and 3 thematic evaluations

Source: Independent Evaluation Group; H. Anuj, S. Porter
- Accessing alternative (big) data
- Experimenting with social media data
Example: Web Scraping data with local ground-truthing

Impact Assessment of Neighborhood Improvement in Bathore, Albania

Web-Scraping Real-Estate Data:
3,000+ transaction data points were obtained for residential properties (price and property features).

Streetscape Analysis:
Mining high-resolution street level imagery

Source: Independent Evaluation Group; V. Ziulu
What will the new normal look like?

- Different ways of working together
- Embedding data science in evaluation practice
- Outcome Orientation, redefining the role of evaluation
- Evaluating better gLOCALLY
In one or two words, answer this question: As we emerge from COVID, I hope in evaluation we can do better at...
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re relevant
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