



**Highlighted experiences of the project “Success Stories from EvalYouth Chapters” -
EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean**

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List of acronyms.

AEA: American Evaluation Association.

ACEVAL: Academia Nacional de Evaluadores de México.

CIDE: Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas.

CLEAR: Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results.

DEval: Deutsches Evaluierungsinstitut der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit / German Institute for Development Evaluation.

EC: EY LAC's Executive Committee.

EES: European Evaluation Society.

EvalChile: Red Chilena de Evaluación.

EY LAC: EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean.

GEA: Global Evaluation Agenda.

IOCE: International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation.

ReLAC: Red de Seguimiento, Evaluación y Sistematización de América Latina y el Caribe.

VOPEs: Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation.

YEE: Young and Emerging Evaluators

I. Executive summary.

EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean (EY LAC) is an active group of Young and Emerging Evaluators that contributes to the development of evaluators' competencies under 35 years and / or less than five years of experience in evaluation.

This report narrates the context of its creation in November 2015, announces the main events where its volunteers have participated, as well as the experiences lived of the YEEs volunteers who have integrated the Executive Committee.

Based on the lessons learned by EY LAC, this narrative exercise is used to include recommendations for the successful consolidation of other EvalYouth's regional chapters.

II. Context of the project and methodology applied.

This report contains the highlighted experiences of the project “Success Stories from EvalYouth Chapters”, proposed by Task Force 1 “Increase the involvement of Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEE) in Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) governance, committees and activities”. The goals of this project are the following:

- Document in writing the experiences, lessons learned and challenges of the networks of young evaluators.
- Highlight the importance and experience of these networks in creating the enabling environment to strengthen the practice of evaluation, especially among emerging young evaluators.
- Stand out the experiences of these networks, their leadership paths within the regional and national VOPEs, as well as their interaction with them.

The highlighted experiences that this project focus on are about EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean (EY LAC), a chapter of young and emerging evaluators from EvalYouth network that has been active in the region since the beginning of 2016. The experiences told in this report are based on interviews applied to the co-chairs of the EY LAC’s Executive Committee, as well as on documentary evidence of work.

The input that fed this report was mainly qualitative documentary information, provided by the current and past Executive Committee of EY LAC. This information was crucial, because it has been created by all the volunteers involved in EY LAC since its inception. Thus, the content of this information was analyzed in detail, with the aim of extracting the most significant experiences to tell a story to the public. For the qualitative analysis, evaluators followed four steps process developed by Ryan & Bernard (2003) and Anrdt & Bigelow (2000). First: the recurrent themes and the statements presented in the data were identified. Second: the grouping categories were compared. Third: the agreed categories were used to organize the data. Fourth: the statements were placed in the agreed categories. This process increased the reliability of findings by ensuring concurrence on emerging themes and supporting quotes.

Besides the documentary information, four structured interviews were applied to current and past volunteers of the Executive Committee of EY LAC. For this task, both evaluators, Amani and Alberto interviewed separately Claudia Olavarría and Gerardo Sánchez, current co-chairs of EY LAC for the period of 2018-2020, as well as Antonella Guidoccio and Josette Arévalo, previous co-chairs during 2016-2018. The interviews consisted of 10 open-ended and 1 dichotomous question with an option to explain the response if it was affirmative. All the questions were oriented to systematically collect qualitative data of the organizational experience of EY LAC. Graph 1 shows the main words mentioned during the interviews.

III. Lessons learned from the experience of EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean.

Global context of evaluation networks.

At the international level exists the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) which represents a group of Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) on different levels. EvalPartners is one of the IOCE projects, and it is oriented to help strengthen the global community of evaluators. EvalPartners launched its Global Evaluation Agenda (GEA) 2016-2020 at the 2015 Global Evaluation Forum, celebrated in Kathmandu, Nepal.

The GEA is a long-term vision with the aim of shorten the gap between the potential help of using evidence of evaluation of public policies and its current acceptance by policy makers, key stakeholders, and public opinion. As part of the GEA announced in Kathmandu, Nepal, EvalYouth (EY) global was formally launched. EY was born to promote the inclusion of Young and Emerging Evaluators (YEE) in professional evaluations, as well as to promote that they become more competent, experienced and well-networked professionals (EvalPartners, 2016).

Once EY global was announced, at the same time a group of YEE volunteers decided to create a chapter of EY for the Latin America and the Caribbean region.

EY LAC on a nutshell.

EvalYouth Latin America and the Caribbean (EY LAC) is an active group of young and emerging evaluators that contributes to the development of evaluators' competencies under 35 years, and/or less than five years of experience in evaluation. This work is done through the promotion of employment and educational opportunities, presentation of panels in academic congresses, arrangement of webinars, among other initiatives. Initially EY LAC was imagined in the 2015 Global Evaluation Forum as a first regional chapter of EvalYouth global by a group of YEEs.

Regarding the EY LAC's internal structure, the Executive Committee (EC) is the governance body where decisions are taken by consensus or simple majority. The EC is composed by two co-chairs and three regional chairs elected biennial: North-Caribbean region, led by Emanuel Blanca from Costa Rica; Center region, led by Juan Pablo Castillo from Bolivia; and South region, led by Oxana Salazni from Argentina. Currently, EY LAC has 7 local chapters in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, and Paraguay; nowadays the ones in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua are in process of creation.

About the work of the past and current EY LAC's EC, it has been done by volunteers who honorifically give their time and ideas to comply with the organization goals. In short-term, the direction of EY LAC is guided by a Strategic Planning -- a tool formally designed by the current EC for the period between 2018 and 2020. This document is still under the final round of review from EvalYouth Global, EvalPartners, and partner organizations such as ReLAC and Foceval. It is expected that it will be implemented from 2019 to 2020.

One important fact to note about volunteers who lead or have led the Executive Committee of EY LAC is that in some cases they also participate inside a VOPE's governance body. This means that people who take decisions in the organization are also participating with either their voice or vote

on other evaluation network with a higher level of responsibility. Examples of this are Claudia Olavarría who participates as Vice-Coordinator of EvalChile (Red Chilena de Evaluación); also Gerardo Sánchez, who participates as vocal in ACEVAL (Academia Nacional de Evaluadores de México); Rodrigo Luna who participates as vocal in ReLAC (Red de Seguimiento, Evaluación y Sistematización de América Latina y el Caribe); and Emanuel Blanca, who participates as a member of RedEVALCR (Red Nacional de Evaluación y Seguimiento de Costa Rica). It should be noted that all the members of the current EC are in turn involved in some way with their local EvalYouth chapters.

Through interviewing the co-coordinators of the current and past EC, is important to highlight that social media is the main tool for implement the communication strategy of EY LAC, mainly through its account of Twitter (@evalyouth_lac) and Facebook (EvalYouthLAC). Besides these social media tools, a WhatsApp group for YEEs is managed by EY LAC, and it is important to note that in the interview, Gerardo Sánchez, current co-chair, mentioned that the WhatsApp group for communication and internal coordination has been successful:

“Our main more active form of communication is a WhatsApp chat, its active in the way we share proposals, TOR, calls for applications for course, for opportunities, for scholarships, it has been very active, of course it has peaks and downs depending on the activities of evaluators.”

Aside from the face-to-face meetup at relevant conferences, EY LAC Executive Committee is committed to internal communication strategies such as Whatsapp, in order to facilitate proper communication and participation mechanisms to young evaluators. Claudia Olavarría, current co-chair discussed the merits of WhatsApp for sharing relevant information of EY LAC:

“...WhatsApp, for example, where just is also shared more information about events and that kind of things. It is there, and from there good in person when there are encounters like those that occurred in ReLAC, or as when there is a call to propose papers and the call is made right through the networks and WhatsApp and all the means possible, and all young people from different countries begin to come together to propose panels...”

Josette Arévalo, former co-chair also shared the same merits of using WhatsApp as an internal communication strategy:

“...where just is also shared more information about events and that kind of things... When there is a call to propose papers and the call is made right through the networks and WhatsApp and all the means possible, and all young people from different countries start to come together to propose panels in, for example, the AfrEA conference, which is in Africa, or the AEA, or the one in Canada.”

Experiences of current and past EY LAC’s Executive Committee.

The lessons learned from the volunteers who participate on the current Executive Committee of EY LAC and the ones who participated on the past one, can be organized in two dimensions: one regarding the internal structure and portfolio of activities, and other regarding the interaction with other YEE networks, VOPEs and key organizations.

a) About the internal structure and portfolio of activities.

EY LAC has consolidated its governance structure with an added value of ideas proposed by YEEs volunteers of Latin American and the Caribbean. Both EC of EY LAC have tried to maintain the same structure of EY global, and be aligned with their three task forces. One example of added value practices of EY LAC to the governance structure are the working groups in which the volunteers of the EC are organized, as well as the multiple ways of participation offered to YEEs, which are the following¹:

1. Participant. YEE who wants to participate in the EY LAC's activities. These people are registered in a database.
2. Country leader. People are the focal point of EY LAC in their country and give support to the leader of an activity.
3. Leader of an activity. People are responsible of an activity approved by the EC in their country.
4. Mentor. Expert in evaluation who offers mentoring to YEEs remotely or in person.
5. Mentee. YEEs who participates in sessions of mentoring.
6. Advisor. Who supports or guides the EC.
7. Sponsor. Who gives in-kind or financial support to EY LAC.
8. Partner. Who makes joint activities with EY LAC or support them.

Some of the main achievements of EY LAC that volunteers of past and current EC perceived are to build a working group with common goals, as well as spread and motivate YEEs in the region to join EY LAC and make them stay tuned. Other achievement has been the creation of YEE's networks in Latin America and the Caribbean. If EY LAC wouldn't had been created, the local chapters barely would have been created.

In addition to this, the EY LAC work team has done efforts to achieve gender equality and geographic diversity, including in the EC, as well as in the integration of panels and presentations, a proportion as equitable as possible of YEEs men and women, belonging to countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico, to name a few.

About the EY LAC's portfolio of activities, the benefits that it represents is the interaction and communication between YEEs, as well as to know and support each other to find opportunities for their professional development. In addition, YEEs can find out what is happening in a community in which information can be shared remotely. Other important benefit of be part of EY LAC is that it acts as a link with other regional and global VOPEs through presence in virtual and face-to-face events.

¹ Although the roles of Leader of an activity and Sponsor have not been fully implemented.

Regarding the types of activities, one of the priorities of the current EY LAC's EC is to provide accompaniment to local chapters founded in every country of the region. Examples of this are the orientation and direct involvement in the activities carried out by the local chapters of Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, and Mexico. These one received support on their activities in the *Semana de la Evaluación en América Latina y el Caribe 2017 y 2018*, and follow up in the transition of a new working group. Besides this, it was provided accompaniment to the local chapters of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Paraguay on its creation, and about what is the EY initiative, its main projects available, and how to link the chapter to the local VOPE. Seminars and internships for YEEs were also provided as support of a cross national collaboration between the Ecuador and the Costa Rica chapters.

The creation of new allies and the inception of an international presence is a stronghold, that should be capitalized well into 2019 in order to build on the success and develop a greater presence of EvalYouth globally.

As for the future of EY LAC, according to the current co-chair, Gerardo Sánchez:

"It's a working process, and in progress. And we are optimistic that we will implement the activities that we projected in our plans next year because we have more allies, more partners, and we are more mature as I told you to implement and to focus on what matters. Instead of lot of activities and a lot of structures we want to create this more systematic way of working because that way we can monitor and evaluate at the end. We are evaluators at the end."

Areas for potential and future growth of EY LAC, as suggested by Antonella Guidoccio, former co-chair, include:

"A platform to create the local chapters, like the suggestions of structures, the lines of work. The support in terms of connecting them with the global chapters. Like bringing the global evaluation community into each country for the YEEs, and also the training opportunities..."

The activity of doing an exploratory diagnosis about the "Challenges and Professional Insertion of Young and Emerging Evaluators in Latin America" in the second semester of 2016 by Antonella Guidoccio, Claudia Olavarría, and Josette Arévalo, is considered a flagship experience of EY LAC because it has contributed to spotlight the problems that YEEs have. This diagnosis has promoted that more people be interested to investigate about YEEs.

Other flagship experience of EY LAC has been to become a communication channel to promote employment and educational opportunities, as well as other relevant information created by key organizations. The example of this are official social media of EY LAC where posts are shared publicly.

b) About the interaction with key organizations.

Part of the interaction between EY LAC with VOPEs, universities, and YEEs in general, occurs on face-to-face events. Some of the important events where one or more volunteers of EY LAC have participated since its inception to date are the following:

- November 2015, Kathmandu, Nepal. Intention of a group of YEEs to create EY LAC just after the presentation of EvalYouth global at the Global Evaluation Week.

Image 1. Global Evaluation Week. November 2015, Kathmandu, Nepal.



- January 2016, San Francisco, United States of America. Presentation of a poster in the American Evaluation Association's (AEA) Annual Conference 2016 about "Challenges and Professional Insertion of Young and Emerging Evaluators in Latin America". Antonella Guidoccio, Claudia Olavarría, and Josette Arévalo presented it.
- April 2016, Lima, Peru. Antonella Guidoccio, Rodrigo Luna, Alejandra Lucero and Pablo Benitez participated on ReLAC's meeting to create the New Strategic Plan from ReLAC and from EvalYouth LAC.

Image 2. Internal Executive Committee strategic planning meeting of EY LAC. April 2016, Lima, Peru.



- September 2016, Maaschtrit, Nederlands. Alejandra Lucero attended the 12th European Evaluation Society's (EES) Biennial Conference as representative of EvalYouth and the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation sharing the social media tools created to strengthen communication.
- April 2017, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic. Awards to Josette Arévalo for young global evaluator and her work at global and regional level; and to Antonella Guidoccio for regional evaluator and her work on EY LAC. Both were given by EvalPartners (2017) in the Third Global Evaluation Forum. Rodrigo Luna and Claudia Olavarría also participated in this event.

Image 4. Evaluators Global Evaluation Forum III. April 2017, Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic.



- May 2017, Vancouver, Canada. Exposition of a presentation about EY LAC in the Canadian Evaluation Society 2018 Congress. Gerardo Sánchez participated in this event.
- November 2017. Washington, United States of America. Presentation of a panel in the AEA's Annual Conference 2017 about EY LAC, considered Presidential Strand Presentation. Josette Arévalo participated, and Gerardo Sánchez and Evelyn Aguado presented the paper "Towards strengthening evaluation and capacity building in Mexico through young and emerging evaluators. Preliminary results of an exploratory study".
- December 2017, Guanajuato, Mexico. Presentation of panels and a poster about the experience of EY LAC, and the local chapters created in the Global Evaluation Conference; coordinated by Claudia Olavarría, Gerardo Sánchez, Josette Arévalo, and Valentina Terra; Alejandra Lucero, Daniela Dorantes, Gerardo Sánchez, Rodrigo Luna, Nataly Salas and other representatives of local chapters of EY LAC also participated. In this event EY LAC also participated with DEval, the CLEAR Center for Latin America and the Caribbean, CIDE and ReLAC as co-organizer of the 1st Graduate Thesis Prize on Monitoring and Evaluation in Latin America and the Caribbean 2017.

Image 3. Global Evaluation Conference. November 2017, Guanajuato, Mexico.



- September 2018, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Attendant at the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation. Alejandra Lucero and Rodrigo Luna participated in this event.
- October 2018, Thessaloniki, Greece. Presentation of the panel “Lessons learnt in including young and emerging evaluators for a resilient field. A cross regional exchange” by Gerardo Sánchez at the 13th EES’ Biennial Conference. This panel created a first dialogue between YEE’s networks from Europe (EES), the evaluation international organization IDEAS, and the African EY regional chapter.

In addition to these events, several ones have been organized by different local chapters, under the context of *Semana de la Evaluación en América Latina y el Caribe* since 2017. A relevant participation of EvalYouth LAC has been as a collaborator in the planning and closing events of the FOCEVAL program in 2016, 2017 and 2018. In these events the organization has been systematically involved in various activities carried out by the program in the region, which have been oriented to international cooperation for the strengthening of the evaluation, which includes YEEs.

Regarding the strategy to facilitate the participation of YEEs in Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), it depends on each country. The degree of interaction between the local chapter of EY LAC and the VOPE is different. For example, in Mexico the chapter is part of ACEVAL; in Costa Rica, the chapter was the base for creating the VOPE.

Besides of these experiences, it is important to mention some opportunities and challenges based on the interviews and the documentary information, which could be useful to improve the vision and mission of EY LAC in long term.

Challenges:

- Financial resources. There is no budget of incomes and expenses to pay for the work done by volunteers of EY LAC, or at least for the inputs that implies an event. Although this lack of own financial resources hinders the strengthening of the initiative, through the collaboration with VOPEs, universities, and intergovernmental organizations, it has been possible to operate free activities. However, these free activities could be more effective to achieve the EY LAC's Strategic Planning if they would receive enough financial resources. So, it is suggested that fundraising efforts be implemented in order to create a financial sustainability for EY LAC.
- Availability and motivation of volunteers. Those who participate in EY LAC also work in its own professional projects that demand from them concentration at different times during the year. As it was mentioned by volunteers of EC, build a working team has been one of the main achievements of the organization. In these terms, the management of workload and motivation of the team to results are crucial.
- Long term sustainability, and the projection of growth that will be available throughout the coming years ahead is a foreseeable challenge. EY LAC is primarily volunteer based. However, the formalization of the organization with a governance board, and strategic planning are all indicators of the sustainability of the organization and should be capitalized upon.
- As it stands, the EY LAC's Executive Committee is currently only able to meet during evaluation conferences and symposiums. However, it is suggested that an annual retreat be established, with the purpose for strengthening the governance of the board, create strategic planning, and finding areas for opportunities of growth should be implemented in order to achieve greater success for EvalYouth. Possible activities and workshops at a EC retreat could strengthen more the organization.
- Maintaining the current cooperation areas and promoting new ones with actors such as ReLAC, IOCE, FOCEVAL, CLEAR LAC, as well as national VOPEs is essential for achieving the Strategic Planning of the organization. A formal link with these organizations may involve a

mutual transfer of knowledge, human capabilities, financial resources or materials, to comply common agendas in the Latin American region.

Opportunities:

- The study “Challenges and Professional Insertion of Young and Emerging Evaluators in Latin America”, done by Antonella Guidoccio, Claudia Olavarría, and Josette Arévalo in the second semester of 2016, contains relevant information about this group. However, this study could be updated at least annually, and to be oriented to produce findings to be used for design activities that attend a specific need or problem which affects YEEs. Besides this, is crucial systematize and update the professional information of people YEEs who want to participate and be informed of the activities done by EY LAC.
- The current Strategic Planning has goals to be achieved, activities to be implemented, and indicators to be monitored and evaluated. It is important that when it will be approved it be published in the official social media of EY LAC, with the aim of inform YEEs about what guides the organization, what they can expect, and how they can contribute in its activities. The evidence of progress monitored by its indicators would be important to publish too, in order to put the organization to public scrutiny.
- Fundraising with affiliate partners, creating a donor base that can be tapped into to help sustain and motivate future YEEs is suggested.

IV. Key conclusions.

A general conclusion derived from the lessons learned from EY LAC is that attention to the challenges of the organization in the short term is decisive to consolidate even more, especially in the assurance of own or external financial support for the activities, as well as the formalization of the internal governance structure.

In the same way it happens with the opportunities detected. It is already known where EY LAC wants to go in the medium term, what activities it wants to achieve, and to which target population it is oriented. However, the use by the Executive Committee of the findings obtained through monitoring or evaluation of the Strategic Planning and the professional information of the YEEs regarding with their experience with EY LAC, may strengthen the organization.

V. Recommendations for other regional chapters.

Based on all these lessons learned, some of the recommendations for the other regional chapters of EY global to be successful are the following:

- Establish a consistent source of funding through sponsoring associations such as the United Nations Evaluation Group or EvalPartners to help sustain the EY LAC's initiatives;
- Establish formal governance rules for EY LAC, which define a transparent electoral process of the Executive Committee that allows the constant alternation of its volunteers, facilitating the leadership opportunity for generations of future YEEs. This implies, for example, designing Rules of Procedures or statutes for the organization;
- Continue using digital communication tools for the publication of EY LAC's own content or of colleagues' organizations content, prioritizing the interaction with YEEs. Examples of these tools are the Facebook, Twitter or Instagram pages; for internal communication a WhatsApp group or a Slack channel is suggested;
- Coordinate an annual meeting with EY LAC's regional and global chapters at a common event (i.e.: AEA Conference, CES, etc.), with the aim of discuss and take decisions about the organization activities.

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