Sample of gender-responsive National Evaluation Policy

Illustrative example of a generic National Evaluation Policy that incorporates gender equality and social equity

This example is meant to complement the guidance provided in Chapter 5 by providing an illustration of how to incorporate the eleven elements suggested to develop a gender-responsive NEP. The examples draws heavily on the draft NEP developed by the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association and the Key Elements for a National Evaluation Policy developed by the Parliamentarians Forum for Development Evaluation.

While this example illustrates how these elements can be incorporated, the country context and actual existing NEP may warrant different adaptations and considerations with an aim to ensure its relevance and feasibility for implementation.

For easy reference, the below text in bold highlights the gender-responsive and equity-focused elements.

National Evaluation Policy of the Country X

1.0 Rationale

1. The Government of Country X, in line with the country’s development policies, recognises that evaluation is an essential aspect of good governance to improve development effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability and informed decision making in support of achieving equitable and gender-responsive development results for the people of Country X.

2. The Government of Country X, through the development policies, has expressed the need to utilise the available resources effectively and efficiently to enable continuing improvements in the delivery of services to the citizens of the country. A more efficient and effective use of resources is a pre-requisite to address regional disparities and promote equitable and gender-responsive development to further improve the socio-economic welfare of the population and improve the currently high Gender Inequality Index (GII) value closely linked to unequal distribution of human development.

3. The Government of Country X has committed to improve gender equality through its national gender policy, ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and as a signatory to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

4. Country X currently has a functioning monitoring system largely focusing on financial and physical progress. However, systematic evaluations have not been carried out on a regular basis to assist policy-makers and related stakeholders leaving an evidence gap that needs to be addressed, including the lack of evidence on how national policies and programmes may impact women, men, girls and boys differently. The country hence requires strategic evaluation of interventions to ascertain the value for money as well as quality of delivery of
services and their contribution to the development outcomes/results for women, men, boys and girls.

5. The need to use well-designed and executed gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluations at strategic phases of development programmes within all levels of Government is required. The adoption of a National Evaluation Policy (hereinafter referred to as “NEP”) provides guidance and direction on the use of evaluation and its role in national development.

6. The adoption of the NEP and its implementation will create an enabling environment for evaluations to be used as a tool for results-based management. As such, the NEP will enable evaluation findings - complemented by monitoring - to strengthen national policies and strategies to achieve equitable and gender-responsive results.

2.0 Objectives of the National Evaluation Policy (NEP)

7. The term ‘evaluation’ in this document refers to the definition of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)1: “An evaluation is an assessment, as systematic and impartial as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area, institutional performance etc. It focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors as causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack thereof. It aims at determining the relevance, impact, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, and gender responsiveness2 of the interventions. An evaluation should provide evidence-based information that is credible, reliable and useful, enabling the timely incorporation of findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes”.

8. The NEP is intended to achieve the following objectives:
   a. Promote the understanding of principles of evaluation and create an evaluation culture in the country with special focus on the public sector to use evaluations in achieving equitable and gender-responsive development outcomes for women, men, boys and girls effectively, efficiently, and in a sustainable manner
   b. Contribute to evidence-based decision making for achievement of results through improved planning, budgeting, monitoring and managing public sector programmes and policies.
   c. Enable sharing and learning from evaluation findings to improve development planning, management and implementation
   d. Strengthen the evaluation function through introduction of techniques, systems, human resource development, inculcation of professionalism, setting of standards, and ethical guidelines for evaluation.
   e. Enhance and promote accountability, transparency, good governance, social equity and gender equality.

1 Available in English, Spanish, French, Russian, Arabic and Chinese at http://uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=21
2 http://uneval.org/papersandpubs/documentdetail.jsp?doc_id=980
3.0 Fundamental Principles of National Evaluation Policy

9. This NEP is based on the following fundamental principles:
   a. Evaluation is an integral part of all development processes.
   b. Evaluation is action-oriented pragmatic assessments and not mere academic research studies or fault-finding exercises.
   c. Evaluation should be independent, credible and utilisation focused
   d. Evaluation is recognised as an instrument for accountability, learning and good governance.
   e. Encourages joint evaluations with donors and other stakeholders for enhancing national ownership
   f. Evaluation should be equity-focused and gender-responsive
   g. Evaluation shall be conducted using appropriate designs that consider the relevant gender equality issues and methodologies that allow for women, men, girls and boys to participate in the process
   h. Findings on evaluations should be accessible to all stakeholders.
   i. Evaluation findings will link to policy formulation and strategy development.
   j. National and sub-national level execution authorities will ensure use of evaluation to enhance development effectiveness.

4.0 Operationalization

4.1 Institutional Responsibilities

10. A National Evaluation Steering Committee (NESC) with Secretary of the Ministry in charge of the National Mechanism\(^3\) as the Chair and Secretaries/Representatives of line Ministries including relevant Donor Agencies and professional organizations will be established and the Steering Committee will meet periodically to guide, facilitate and ensure the implementation of the National Evaluation Policy. It will provide central direction for evaluation and should:
   (a) act as the centre of excellence to provide leadership, guidance and support to the practice of evaluation; (b) promote the use of evaluation findings where appropriate in decision making, strategy and policy formulations; (c) set standards, ethics and best practices; and (d) review the evaluation capacity in the public sector and propose measures to relevant authorities to fill any gaps.

11. The National Mechanism\(^4\) to oversee, coordinate, and where necessary, commission, manage, conduct evaluations and disseminate findings and specific responsibilities include:
   • Implementation of the National Evaluation Policy;

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\(^3\) Options for oversight for the implementation of the Evaluation Policy can be vested with a Statutory Authority/Unit in the Presidential Secretariat/Unit in the Cabinet Secretariat/Unit in the Ministry of Finance and Planning) and is worded as “National Mechanism” in this draft.

\(^4\) Competent Authority with evaluation expertise and capacities
• Formulate and update standards, ethics, and guidelines on evaluation and promote practice of gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation;
• Coordinate the preparation of the Annual Evaluation Plan of the various entities and at the beginning of the year distribute the same to the Department of Project Management and Monitoring, Department of External Resources, Department of National Budget, Department of National Planning, and the Auditor General;
• Manage evaluations related to cross-sectoral interventions, including an evaluation of the national gender policy, and any other evaluation directed by the President;
• Promote joint evaluations by local and foreign evaluation professionals to encourage sharing and exchanging knowledge and skills on evaluation methodologies, techniques and practices;
• Bring to the notice of the Cabinet of Ministers, the important findings that arise from such evaluations;
• Make accessible to the Parliament and general public, evaluation findings through publications;
• Commit to strengthen in-country capacities in evaluation by establishing courses at Universities and other public and private training institutions registered with it, including on gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation;
• Promote policies that promote gender equality/gender balance among national evaluators.

12. At the Subject Ministry level, Secretary of the Ministry to:
• Prepare Annual Evaluation Plan taking into consideration the policies, programmes and projects implemented by the Ministry, and the statutory authorities under the Ministry;
• Make available to the National Mechanism the evaluation findings.

13. Provincial level activities will be coordinated by the Ministry in charge of the subject area of Provincial Councils through the Deputy Secretary – Planning of the respective Provinces to:
• Prepare Annual Evaluation Plan taking into consideration the policies, programmes and projects implemented by the respective Provincial Ministries;
• Make available to the National Mechanism the evaluation findings.

14. All evaluation missions on foreign funded projects and programmes should occur in close collaboration with the National Mechanism to facilitate central coordination of evaluation.

15. Depending on the status and relevance as well as importance of the policy/ programme or project to be evaluated, authorities such as the Department of Project Management and Monitoring and/or Department of National Planning under the Ministry of Finance and Planning and other relevant authorities will be co-opted for such evaluations.

4.2 Selection of Policies, Programmes and Projects for Evaluation

16. It is necessary to prioritize development programmes for evaluation for operational and financial reasons. The number of programmes or projects executed per Ministry, Department or Statutory Agency may be so numerous that it will be difficult to evaluate all of them.
Factors such as finances, time and human resources may be the limitations. Therefore, the policy envisages sharing the burden and responsibility for evaluation at different hierarchical levels based on the size of the project or programme to be evaluated taking into consideration the capacities of the entities and other resource constraints.

17. The National Mechanism, Ministries, Departments and Statutory Agencies will give due consideration to the following criteria in selecting evaluations:
   a. It is of paramount importance that policy relevance is given due consideration in selection of projects and programmes for evaluation. In this regard, the national development framework of the Government should serve as the basis for prioritisation and selection.
   b. National importance of projects and programmes, aspects of equity, gender equality and the scale of funding are important factors for consideration.
   c. The potential for providing evaluative evidence on cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and social equity, particularly where inequality is statistically pronounced.
   d. Innovative nature and replicability of projects or programmes on a national or regional scale.
   e. Projects of problem/challenging nature as well as those which provide learning opportunities.

4.3 Guidelines, Methodologies, Standards and Ethics

18. The National Mechanism, in collaboration with the national Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) will develop evaluation methodologies, guidelines, standards, ethics and practices on par with accepted international, regional and national standards.

19. Evaluability of interventions should be ensured at the planning stage itself, through logical framework and objectively verifiable indicators based on the Theory of Change for the intervention. Evaluations should examine the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and gender-responsiveness of policy or programme or project initiatives. Evaluation methodology should focus on the financial, economic, social, environmental, technical, policy, institutional and sustainability aspects as may be relevant. Cross-sectoral issues such as gender equality, social equity and the environment should be assessed in all evaluations. Due consideration should be given to the political and policy environment. The financial and economic cost benefit analysis to assess the value for money should be encouraged. Beneficiary assessment should form an integral part of evaluating programmes.

20. The conduct of evaluation will consider gender-related roles and relations and other social and economic issues that may restrict individuals from acting as informants and use appropriate ethical codes.

4.4 Dissemination of Evaluation Findings and Use
21. Each Institution that undertakes an evaluation should develop a dissemination strategy for sharing lessons internally and as well as externally and the evaluations shall be provided to the National Mechanism. This will enable evaluation findings to be synthesized and linked to an Evaluation Information System (EIS) of the National Mechanism to ensure integration of evaluation findings into policy, planning, budgeting and reform processes. The synthesis will specifically address important cross-sectoral issues such as gender equality and social equity.

22. Dissemination strategies for evaluation findings will be developed based on an assessment of the most effective way to ensure that evaluative knowledge is accessible to all citizens that outlines any barriers to access, especially for groups normally excluded by traditional means and identifies different formats to overcome these that are gender responsive.

23. The Minister in charge of the National Mechanism as the focal point of evaluation will bring to the notice of the Cabinet of Ministers, the important findings that arise from such evaluations.

24. Evaluation findings will be used to improve overall national progress towards equitable development and gender equality, including the revision of national policies and plans.

25. The project evaluation submission formats and related procedures will be suitably modified to reflect internalised evaluation findings into the planning, budgeting, public expenditure review, policy and strategy formulation processes. In this regard, a close collaboration will be established among evaluation, planning, budgeting, audit, finance, public expenditure and policy review functionaries of the Government.

4.5 Capacity Building and Partnerships

26. By end (year), it is envisaged that all major evaluations should have significant national ownership. The availability of adequately skilled competent human resources in evaluation is essential. Government recognises the need to build a professional cadre of evaluators and accords high priority for capacity building efforts, especially in conducting gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation. Universities, Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations (VOPEs) and public and private sector training institutions will be encouraged by the National Mechanism to run evaluation modules as part of their normal training programmes and postgraduate studies.

27. The National Mechanism jointly with the national Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluation (VOPE) will assist Ministries and Departments to build evaluation capacity, develop standards, methodologies and upgrade capacity of their staff. As part of the efforts to build local evaluation capacity, these institutions may outsource evaluation work. National Mechanism will encourage such collaboration and partnership with Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluations, especially those focusing on gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation, to introduce participatory evaluations in the public sector.
28. Both the NESC and the National Mechanism will include expertise in gender equality and gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation. All staff of the National Mechanism will receive training on gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation.

29. The National Mechanism will also engage with regional and international efforts to improve evaluation practice through the sharing and exchange of lessons learned, experiences, challenges in the implementation of approaches such as gender-responsive and equity-focused evaluation.

4.6 Financing Evaluation

30. It is necessary to provide sufficient financial resources for conducting evaluations of an acceptable quality and integration of gender equality and social equity at the outset of a programme or project. Ministries and Provincial Councils and wherever applicable, statutory agencies and Local Authorities will make necessary financial provisions in the Annual Budget Estimates for the commissioning and conduct of evaluations. In addition to the financial support under the Consolidated Fund of the Government, it is also necessary to have built-in-funds under Projects and Programmes on a lump sum basis in all Government agencies.