THE LOCAL IS INDIGENOUS: EVALINDIGENOUS ADVOCACY FOR INDIGENOUS EVALUATION – SHARING PERSPECTIVES FROM THE AFRICAN INDIGENOUS ETHICAL PROTOCOL FOR EVALUATIONS

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Evaluation in a Changing World
Talking to the Ancestors to welcome Visitors to a Holy Shrine
Presentation Outline

1. **Core Beliefs and Common Values**
   - What we mean by the Local is Indigenous

2. **African Indigenous Ethical Protocol for Evaluations**
   - Why we Advocate for Indigenous Evaluation


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INDIGENOUS IS LOCAL?
Local communities, cultures, and ecosystems have an inherent connection to the land they inhabit and a deep understanding of how to live sustainably within it.

Importance of recognising and respecting the traditional knowledge and practices of the Indigenous peoples who have lived on that land for generations.

Recognising that the wisdom of Indigenous peoples and their connection to the land can provide valuable insights and solutions for addressing current environmental and social challenges.

Prioritising the needs and perspectives of local communities and acknowledging the importance of their traditional knowledge and practices.
What we mean by the local is Indigenous - 2

• NATIVES OF A HABITAT: Indigenous refers to the original or native inhabitants of a region, who have lived there for generations and have a strong sense of cultural identity and attachment to their land.

• LONGEVITY OF STAY: People who have lived in a particular place for a long time have a unique and valuable perspective on the natural environment, and have developed knowledge and practices that are well-suited to the local conditions.

• SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE: By recognising and valuing the knowledge and practices of local communities, we can work towards building more sustainable and resilient systems that are better adapted to local conditions.
CORE CULTURAL BELIEFS AND VALUES
The Africa Indigenous Ways of Knowing and their Application to Indigenous Evaluation

- **ORAL TRADITION:** Through storytelling, songs, and other forms of oral communication, knowledge is passed down from one generation to the next, preserving cultural heritage and providing insights into traditional ways of life.

- **INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES:** Contain rich vocabularies that reflect the local environment, and can convey complex concepts and ideas that may be difficult to express in other languages.

- **TRADITIONAL ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE (TEK):** Developed through long-term observation and experience of the natural environment. Can include knowledge of plant and animal species, weather patterns, and land-use practices.

- **ANCESTRAL KNOWLEDGE AND SPIRITUALITY:** This include knowledge of family history, genealogy, and traditional practices, while spirituality can involve beliefs about the interconnectedness of all living things, and the importance of respect and reciprocity in human relationships.

- **COMMUNITY-BASED KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS:** Emphasises the importance of collective knowledge and decision-making – involves consensus-building processes, such as traditional councils or community meetings, which are used to make decisions that affect the community as a whole.

- **LOCAL COURTS:** Local courts can be an important source of indigenous knowledge in many communities. The local courts are responsible for helping to preserve traditional legal systems through resolving disputes and enforcing community norms and values, transmit cultural values, maintain social order, and protect indigenous rights.
The African Indigenous Core Values and Beliefs

- **UBUNTU**: Ubuntu is a core African value that emphasises the interconnectedness of all living things. It is often translated as "I am because we are," and represents a belief in the importance of community and social relationships.

- **ANCESTOR VENERATION**: Many African cultures believe in the importance of ancestors and the spiritual world. Ancestors are believed to play a role in shaping the lives of their descendants.

- **RESPECT FOR ELDERS**: Respect for elders is an important value in many African cultures. Elders are often seen as wise and knowledgeable, and their opinions and advice are highly valued.

- **COMMUNALISM**: Communalism is a core African value that emphasises the importance of the community over the individual. This can involve sharing resources, working together to solve problems, and valuing the collective good over personal gain.

- **ORAL TRADITION**: Oral tradition is an important aspect of many African cultures. It involves the passing down of stories, songs, and other forms of oral communication from one generation to the next, preserving cultural heritage and providing insights into traditional ways of life.

- **RESPECT FOR NATURE**: Many African cultures have a deep respect for the natural world, and believe in the importance of living in harmony with nature. This can involve traditional ecological knowledge, sustainable land-use practices, and a belief in the interconnectedness of all living things.
The African Proverbs on Relationality

1. "Two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper." – Malagasy Proverb

2. "When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion." – Ethiopian Proverb

3. "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together." – Kenyan Proverb

4. "A single bracelet does not jingle." – Congolese Proverb

5. "Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable." – Bondei Proverb (Tanzania)

6. “One finger alone cannot kill even a louse.” – Luo Proverb
INDIGENOUS EVALUATION ADVOCACY
Why do we have to advocate for Indigenous evaluation?

- **RECOGNIZING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND WAYS OF KNOWING**: Indigenous evaluation approaches recognize the unique and valuable knowledge and perspectives of Indigenous peoples, which are often overlooked or undervalued in Western evaluation frameworks.

- **CHALLENGING WESTERN EVALUATION FRAMEWORKS**: Western evaluation frameworks have historically been used to exercise power and control over Indigenous peoples, often without their consent.

- **ADDRESSING POWER IMBALANCES**: Indigenous evaluation approaches can help to shift the power dynamic in evaluation processes by ensuring that Indigenous peoples are actively engaged in the process and have control over how evaluation data is collected, analyzed, and used.
Why do we have to advocate for Indigenous evaluation?... Contd.

• **PROMOTING CULTURAL SAFETY AND SENSITIVITY:** Indigenous evaluation approaches prioritise cultural safety and sensitivity in evaluation processes, which is crucial for ensuring that Indigenous peoples feel comfortable sharing their perspectives and that their cultural practices and values are respected.

• **FOSTERING COMMUNITY-DRIVEN EVALUATION:** Indigenous evaluation approaches prioritise community-driven evaluation processes, which involve the active participation of community members in all aspects of the evaluation process.

• **RESPONSIVENESS TO COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES:** This can help to ensure that evaluation processes are relevant to the community’s needs and priorities, and that evaluation results are more likely to be used to inform community decision-making.
AFRICAN INDIGENOUS ETHICAL PROTOCOL
How the Indigenous African Ethical Protocol Promotes Culturally Responsive Evaluation

1. CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: Respect cultural norms, values, and traditions during data collection. Be aware of potentially sensitive or taboo topics and approach them with sensitivity. Establish rapport and build trust with participants by demonstrating cultural respect and humility.

2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Involve community members, leaders, or key informants in the data collection process. Seek their input and guidance to ensure that the methods and questions are culturally relevant and appropriate. Collaborate with local stakeholders to ensure the research aligns with community priorities and needs.

3. LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND CONTEXT: Incorporate local knowledge, experiences, and context into the data collection and analysis process. Consider the cultural meanings and interpretations of concepts, behaviours, and practices of the local communities. Use local examples and illustrations to enhance understanding and relevance.

4. RESEARCHER REFLEXIVITY: Reflect on your own cultural biases, assumptions, and perspectives throughout the research process. Recognise how your own cultural background may influence data collection and interpretation. Strive for cultural humility and openness to diverse perspectives.

5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS: Ensure that research activities respect ethical principles and guidelines. Obtain informed consent from participants and respect their rights to privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Consider the potential risks and benefits associated with data collection and analysis, particularly in sensitive cultural contexts.
ACHIEVEMENTS OF EVALINDIGENOUS NETWORK
What have we done as EvalIndigenous to advocate for Indigenous Evaluations?

1. DEVELOPING AND SHARING RESOURCES: EvalIndigenous has developed a range of resources to support the development and implementation of Indigenous evaluation approaches, including an African Ethical Protocol for Indigenous Evaluations, a database of Indigenous evaluation resources and practitioners, and a series of webinars and workshops.

2. BUILDING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING: The network has worked to raise awareness of Indigenous evaluation approaches and their importance in promoting equity, cultural safety, and community-driven evaluation. This includes presenting at conferences, publishing articles and blog posts, and engaging with stakeholders in the evaluation field, through Webinars, Workshops and Blogs.

3. SUPPORTING CAPACITY BUILDING: EvalIndigenous has supported capacity building efforts to build the skills and knowledge of Indigenous evaluators and allies. This includes offering training and mentorship opportunities, and supporting the development of evaluation networks and communities of practice. Building a Database of Indigenous Evaluators through the Atlas Project – Africa, Asia-Pacific and Caribbeans, Latin America.

4. PARTNERSHIPS ADVOCATING FOR INDIGENOUS EVALUATION: The network has established partnerships with international Foundations and organisations including philanthropic funding organisations advocating for indigenous evaluations. These include: Ford Foundation; Others in the pipeline are Conrad N. Hilton Foundation; Mastercard Foundation, etc.
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Thank You!
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