Evaluation of SDGs

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Evaluation is challenging and has always been

• Big questions
• Short timeframes
• Limited budgets
• Ethical imperatives
• Diverse users and stakeholders
• And now SDGs!
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Approved by the UN General Assembly in 2015 and underpin the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that officially came into force in Jan. 2016
SDGs

- Based on 5 universal and interlinked principles
  - People, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership
  - They define a path to end poverty, ensure prosperity and protect the planet and its inhabitants

- SDG7 – “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”

- As a key constituent of SDG7, energy efficiency and renewable energy contribute directly or indirectly to achieving all the other SDGs
The Importance of the SDG Evaluations

- SDGs are the major international development commitment for at least the next 15 years
- Essential to know if it works & the money is well spent
- Evaluation process is country driven and participatory
  - SDGs are “owned” by the countries and not by the UN and donor agencies
  - National governments are the key agencies responsible for the implementation of the evaluations of SDS in each country
- Focus is on how could development assistance be improved

** Special thanks to Michael Bamberger**
Challenges for SDG Evaluations #1

- The program is huge and complex with multiple actors, objectives and programs at all levels
- SDG evaluation design focuses on monitoring and less on evaluation
- Many people do not believe it is possible to evaluate the SDGs
- Most agencies focus on a particular sector
  - Intersectorality is very difficult to evaluate and for most agencies a low priority
  - Different kinds of organizations need to work together on an integrated evaluation
Challenges for SDG Evaluations #2

- Most agencies focus on results-based approaches with little attention to sustainability

- Difficult topics to evaluate:
  - Vulnerability
  - Exclusion
  - Gender analysis
Unique Opportunities for SDG Evaluation

- SDGs focus the world on broad questions about the effectiveness of development aid
  - What works? For whom?
  - Where? Why? How?
- Brings together many different kinds of organizations and talents
- Gives voice to vulnerable groups and grassroots organizations
- Unique access to world-wide platforms for the dissemination and utilization of evaluation findings
Concluding Remarks - 1

- SDGs open up a completely new world of evaluation and challenges
  - Asking new questions, and broader and longer term
  - Introducing a whole range of evaluation issues of complexity, emergence, identifying on who is being left out, looking at inter-sectoral linkages.
  - **Thinking beyond silos**; instead connecting and interrelating interventions, breaking down silos, examining integration, alignment, and coherence across sectoral specializations and across SDGs
  - Connecting the local with the global, and the global with the local
Concluding Remarks - 2

▪ Evaluators will need to focus more on process evaluation than on impact evaluation, at least initially

▪ Understand the process of SDG program development

▪ Measure different things at different stages in this development
  — Assess implementation
  — Assess short-term, proximal SDG outcomes
  — Later, assess longer-term distal SDG outcomes
Gender Example:
Evaluation approaches and methods

System thinking
Complexity evaluations
Theory based approaches
Feminist theory and research
Impact evaluations
Case studies
Systemic reviews
Participatory evaluations

Ref: Sniukaite, UN Women IEO
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