UNEG
United Nations Evaluation Group

UNEG Strategic Objective 3: Evaluation informs UN system-wide initiatives and emerging demands

CULTURE AND EVALUATION INTEREST GROUP

A Stocktake on Culturally Responsive Evaluations in and outside the UN System

Discussion Document

This report was facilitated by UNESCO's Evaluation Office.[1]

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and context

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With this Agenda, the leaders of the world committed to achieving sustainable development in a balanced and integrated manner, without leaving anyone behind. The Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] reflect growing global concerns about the future of the planet as signalled by the focus on sustainability and the need for social inclusion.

The ambitious goals presented in the SDGs while offering opportunities to give voice to a much broader range of groups, also present new challenges. From an evaluation perspective, the focus on social inclusion points to the need to pay closer attention to more holistic approaches that considers the socio-economic and socio-cultural contexts, both in programme design and implementation, and evaluation.

The Terms of Reference for this stocktake noted that 'the matter of culture has not been given much attention within the UN evaluation community.' While

most United Nations Evaluation Group [UNEG] members acknowledged the need for evaluations to be 'responsive to culture and cultural context, and some exemplary evaluations might exist, UNEG has never discussed the topic in much detail.' In particular, no explicit linkages have yet been established between UNEG's ongoing focus on human rights and gender equality in evaluation on the one hand and culture and cultural rights in evaluation on the other hand.

The Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an impetus for UNEG members to look at the linkages between culture and evaluation in a more systematic way to generate operationally relevant lessons for evaluation practice across the UN evaluation community.

UNEG's newly revised Norms and Standards for Evaluation [UNEG, 2016], which call for evaluations to be conducted with respect for the beliefs, manners and customs of the social and cultural environment, provide the backdrop for these explorations.

Purpose of the stocktake

The purpose of the stocktake is to prepare a report on the cultural responsiveness of evaluations in and outside the UN system with a focus on:

- Past efforts and lessons that can be learned about integrating a cultural perspective in evaluations conducted by UN Agencies (stocktaking)
- Identifying good evaluation practices outside the UN system (stocktaking); and
- Lessons that can be learned from academic literature on the topic.

The findings from the stocktake will act as a catalyst for UNEG members to collectively engage in this issue and learn from each other in the process.

SECTION 2: UNDERSTANDING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EVALUATION

All evaluations occur in contexts infused by culture; however, it is only in the last decade that the field of evaluation has started to make inroads into incorporating cultural context in its everyday practice (Hood, Hopson & Frierson, 2015; Kirkhart, 2005; Thompson-Robinson, Hopson & SenGupta, 2004). The *Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation* released by the American Evaluation Association (2011) and *newly revised UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation* (2016) highlight recent efforts that stress the significance of attending to cultural issues across all phases of an evaluation. This section presents an overview of the current discourse on Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE) along the following areas:

- What is culture?
- What is Culturally Responsive Evaluation?
- Why does CRE matter?

What is culture?

Culture is a complex and constantly evolving social construct. Although many definitions exist, commonalities across these definitions include the idea of culture representing shared norms, beliefs, values, norms and practices that are learned and passed on from one generation to another (American Evaluation Association 2011). In essence, culture makes us who we are. Culture shapes the behaviours and worldviews of its members and is consequently a central element in understanding individuals' motivations, attitudes and behaviours.

Race/ethnicity, religion, social class, language, disability, sexual orientation, age and gender are some of the most commonly listed dimensions of culture.

However, it is important not to <u>equate</u> culture with any fixed dimension (Pon, 2009; Sakamoto, 2007). For example, culture is not the same as ethnicity – the latter has more to do with one's ancestral affinities. Rather than adopt an absolute definition of culture, the focus should be on appreciating its complexity.

What is Culturally Responsive Evaluation?

Culturally Responsive Evaluation (CRE) builds & extends the principles of other evaluation approaches including responsive evaluation (Stake, 2003), democratic evaluation (House & Howe, 2000), and participatory evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore, 1998).

In the literature, evaluations that address issues relating to culture and cultural context are known by a wide variety of names. These include: culturally responsive, culturally competent, multicultural, and even cross-cultural evaluation (Chouinard & Cousins, 2009).

CREs are based on the notion that evaluation cannot be separated from the sociocultural contexts within which social programmes are implemented. Consequently, CRE honours the cultural context in which an evaluation takes place by bringing shared life experience and understanding to the evaluation tasks at hand (Ryan, Chandler & Samuels, 2007).

Take a few minutes to reflect on the following questions:

- How would a group of women from Islamic cultures respond to a male evaluator?
- How would we design focus groups in cultures with a strong history of hierarchical structures?

- How would indigenous groups respond to an evaluator who represents the dominant culture?
- What are the appropriate methods & cultural protocols around respectfully engaging with indigenous knowledge?
- How do we rethink the appropriateness of data collection methods when engaging with cultures with strong collectivist orientation?

Understanding and thoughtful consideration of such questions when designing and implementation evaluations lies at the heart of CRE.

Why does it matter?

The push to understand the role of culture in evaluation has been gaining some momentum over the years requiring both evaluators and those who commission evaluations to pay more attention to it.

> What has frustrated me in the ways multicultural programs have been evaluated is that the people who do the evaluation generally do not understand the nature of multicultural work… The evaluators and their evaluations often miss the point of what the program is about and use inappropriate stands on which to interpret the program on which to make value judgments[2]

Furthermore, there are long-standing issues about the importance of culture/cultures in relationship to groups that have been traditionally underrepresented in evaluations. Scholars have argued that both the recognition of and attention to culture are essential for improving social programmes and achieving desired outcomes (Hopson, 2009; Kirkhart, 2005).

These developments challenge the field of evaluation to consider how distinct strands of evaluation can be culturally grounded to meet the needs of an ever-changing society.

The review of the literature on CRE reveals that the importance of CRE can be viewed from the perspectives of integrity & validity, ethics, valuing indigenous knowledge(s) and understanding privilege and power.

Ensuring integrity & validity of evaluation results

Much of the discourse on CRE takes the position that project design, implementation and evaluation occur within a myriad of social, cultural and political contexts that must be recognised and considered. To be unresponsive to the cultural realities of the participant population or to ignore the influence of cultural complexities on behaviour can raise questions about the integrity of the evaluation findings. As noted in the *Public Statement on Cultural Competence in Evaluation* released by the American Evaluation Association (2011) 'valid inferences require shared understandings within and across cultural contexts and inaccurate or incomplete understandings of culture can threaten validity of the evaluation.'

These developments suggest that the role of culture and cultural competence in quality evaluation is now widely accepted requiring evaluation commissioners and practitioners to give this some thought. Culture shapes the ways in which evaluation questions are conceptualized, which in turn influence what data is collected, how the data will be collected and analysed, and how data are interpreted and shared with the wider community.

[2] Stockdill, S.H., Duhon-Sells, R.M., Olson, R.A., & Patton, M.Q. (1992). Voices in the design and evaluation of a multicultural education program: A developmental approach. *New Directions for evaluation*, 53, 17-33.

Ethical imperatives

In addition to validity, the literature on CRE also highlights the ethical imperatives surrounding CRE. Indigenous scholars in particular note that CRE represents an ethical commitment to fairness and equity. The AEA cautions that 'insufficient attention to culture in evaluation may compromise some group and individual self-determination, due process, and the fair and equitable treatment of all persons and interest' (AEA, 2011).

Effective and ethical use of evaluation requires respecting different worldviews[3]

Valuing indigenous knowledge(s)

From the perspective of indigenous evaluation scholars, CRE assumes significance as they have long argued that evaluations characterized by Western culture and ways of thinking overlook indigenous knowledge, threatening the cultural relevance and validity of evaluation results. They argue that indigenous people have the right to "evaluation practices that are 'of, for, by and with us'" (Kawakami, Aton, Cram, Lai, & Porima, 2008).

While the role of culture and cultural competence in evaluation is widely acknowledged, the issue of integrating indigenous knowledge in evaluation is still in its infancy and merits special attention.

Just like culturally relevant and responsive teaching and pedagogy helps teachers attend to the needs of ethnically and linguistically diverse learners in their classroom, culturally responsive evaluation practice can help evaluators to understand and respect different ways of knowing, collecting and interpreting data.

Privilege and power

Evaluators are uniquely placed to act as a bridge between policy makers, policy implementers and beneficiaries of programmes. They have the privilege of using their analytical power and the credibility of their profession to transform data into information and knowledge that can influence all types of decisions from programme design to policymaking.

Evaluators have the privilege of being the beholders of the data with the power to transform that data into information and knowledge which in turn can influence all types of decision-making.[4]

Inadequate attention to power and privilege means that evaluation may inadvertently contribute to perpetuating marginalisation (Kirkhart, 2014). CRE approaches provide a strong platform for evaluation and urge the evaluator to consider and inquire into notions of privilege and power in all phases of evaluation. Applying CRE approaches means evaluators are more likely to be vigilant about the power dynamics between various stakeholders and consider when and how these differences might affect the evaluation. Whose worldviews are being accorded importance in conversations about evaluation design? How are roles assigned within the evaluation? How are different stakeholder groups involved in framing the evaluation questions? Who benefits from the evaluation?

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[3] American Evaluation Association Statement on Cultural Competency in Evaluation: http://www.eval.org/ccstatement

[4] The importance of culture in evalaution: A practical guide for evalautors. The Colorado Trust (2007).

SECTION 3: INSIGHTS FROM THE STOCKTAKE OF EVALUATIONS CONDUCTED IN AND OUTSIDE THE UN SYSTEM

The primary purpose of the stocktake was to review past efforts of UN agencies and organizations outside the UN system in integrating a cultural perspective in their evaluations in order to identify lessons that can be learned for the future. With this in mind, a total of 30 UN and 20 non-UN evaluation reports [see appendix 1] were reviewed. The analysis brings together the knowledge gleaned from the literature on CRE, perspectives of indigenous evaluators and other evaluation practitioners' experiences to identify insights about current practice within and outside the UN.
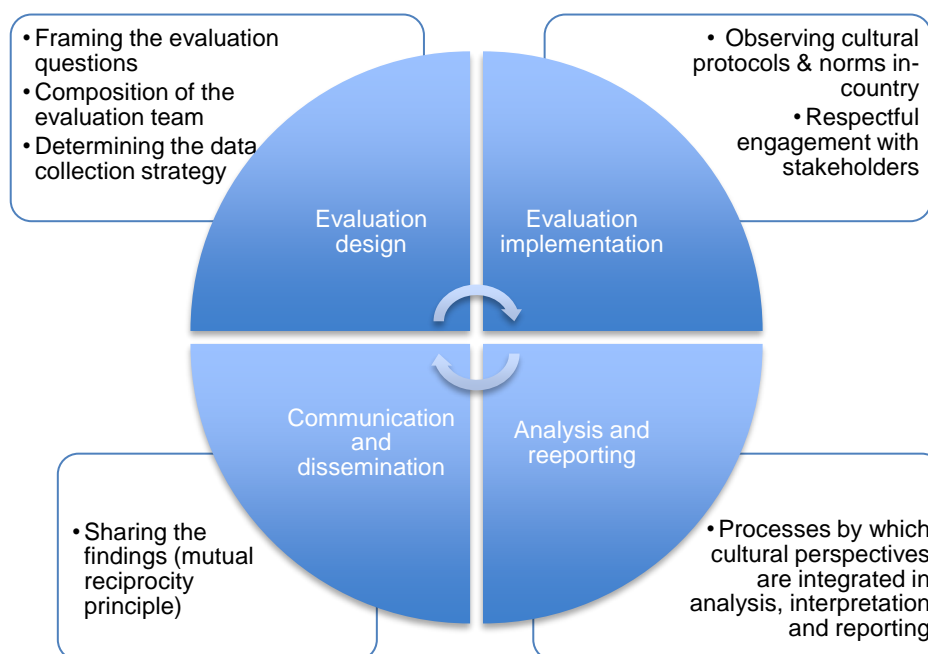
Approach

For the purpose of this stocktake, cultural responsiveness of evaluations has been examined based on their integration of a cultural perspective in four key stages of an evaluation [Figure 1]:

- Evaluation design
- Evaluation implementation
- Analysis and reporting
- Communication and dissemination.

Figure 1: A framework for analysing cultural responsiveness of evaluations

[Framework developed by the author for the purposes of this stocktake]

- Framing the evaluation questions
- Composition of the evaluation team
- Determining the data collection strategy

- Observing cultural protocols & norms in-country
- Respectful engagement with stakeholders

Evaluation design

Evaluation implementation

Communication and dissemination

Analysis and reeporting

- Sharing the findings (mutual reciprocity principle)

- Processes by which cultural perspectives are integrated in analysis, interpretation and reporting

Based on the literature review, a list of high-level questions was developed for each stage of the evaluation process, as outlined in Figure 1, to help assess the extent to which key principles and strategies of CRE were integrated within the evaluation. This is not an exhaustive list of questions; it was developed to guide the stocktake.

Design

To what extent are cultural perspectives integrated in the design of the evaluation?

- Whose voices and perspectives are reflected in the framing of the evaluation questions?

- Are the questions nuanced sufficiently to take account of the cultural context within which the intervention is implemented?

- Does the composition of the evaluation team reflect required cultural diversity?

- Do evaluator competencies take account of their cultural competence and experience?

- How does the proposed data collection method and/or strategy relate to the cultural context for the evaluation?

Implementation

Is the evaluation implemented in culturally appropriate ways?

- Are cultural protocols and norms observed when undertaking data collection and fieldwork in country?

- Do the evaluations discuss or present cultural challenges and/or difficulties during fieldwork & their impact on validity of the data?

- To what extent do the evaluations note the principles of engaging with local stakeholders & the strategies used to gain respect and trust of local stakeholders?

Analysis & reporting

- Do the evaluations describe the processes used to ensure sensitivity to, and understanding of, the cultural context in which the data are gathered?

- How is cultural knowledge and understanding integrated in the analysis and reporting of results?

- Do evaluations take into account participants' perspectives when defining success or failure of programmes?

- Who are the participants in the sense-making process?

- Do the evaluation reports meaningfully capture the views and perspectives of the participants?

Communication and dissemination of findings

- What are the different channels used for communicating the evaluation findings?

- What do the evaluation reports say about dissemination? What are the principles that guide the dissemination strategy?

- Are the results of the evaluation shared in an accessible way?

The findings from the studies were summarised and a descriptive analysis was undertaken to assist in identifying patterns, themes and atypical findings. The following section provides an overview of the insights that can be gained from the stocktake about current evaluation practice within and outside the UN.

Emerging Insights

Insight #1: A wide range of theoretical approaches being used

The stocktake revealed that a wide range of theoretical approaches are being used to focus the evaluative inquiry both within and outside the UN system. Approaches used include mixed-methods, case study research, participatory evaluation, summative evaluation, formative evaluation, implementation evaluation, real-time evaluation, Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change. This suggests a willingness and openness amongst evaluation commissioners to consider a range of theoretical approaches. In a majority of cases, the evaluation approach used was tailored to the evaluation focus outlined in the Terms of Reference and the inception phase was used to refine questions in line with the evaluation approach.

References to cultural dimensions or the cultural context [as evidenced in the questions above] were notably missing in most of the evaluations.

Illustrative example #1
An evaluation study using a participatory approach reported that data collection and analysis was compromised, as the evaluators did not take into account the fact that the beneficiaries did not speak English or had low literacy. There was no reflection as to how a culturally responsive approach may have mitigated these issues.

Even in instances where the evaluations used Participatory Evaluation methodologies, there was little consideration given to how aspects of culture might influence participants' conceptualisation of the programme, their experiences of the programme, the data collection strategy and/or evaluation results.

Insight #2: There was a strong focus on stakeholder engagement in all stages of the evaluation process

Engaging the participation of stakeholders invested in a programme serves as the foundation for an evaluation that potentially will produce credible and useful information.

The stocktake revealed that stakeholders were engaged in different stages of the evaluation. The term 'stakeholders' often referred to programme staff and/or influential people from participant communities who acted as proxies for participant voice.

In most cases, stakeholder engagement was driven by the need to understand the programmatic context and to ensure buy-in for the evaluation. Consequently, stakeholders included in various committees and/or advisory groups were drawn from a range of interest groups and non-government organisations.

There was limited evidence of attempts to access or harness the cultural intelligence and cultural knowledge of stakeholders either to lift the validity of the evaluation results [as making valid inferences requires shared understanding within and across cultures] or from an ethical perspective [ensuring fairness and equity for stakeholders].

Illustrative example #2
A multi-country joint evaluation study established a Country Committee on each site that included in-country NGOs and agency staff as stakeholders for the evaluation. The rationale for their inclusion was stated as 'their knowledge about the nutrition landscape in country'. There was no recognition or discussion about the stakeholders' knowledge of the country's cultural context and its potential impact on outcomes achieved by the programme.

In addition, while engagement with stakeholders was strong during the design and implementation phase, we found much less engagement of stakeholders in interpreting findings from the evaluation.

Insight #3: There are opportunities to expand diversity considerations in team compositions

Not all the evaluations provided detail on the composition of the evaluation team or their rationale for the creation of the teams. In instances where information on the evaluation team was provided, the analysis shows that the teams were put together primarily taking into account team members' evaluation expertise, their sectoral expertise [e.g. gender, climate/environmental expertise, economic analysis, human rights] and/or their academic training [e.g. economists, statisticians, sociologists, anthropologists].

In instances where local teams were deployed, their predominant role was to help with scheduling the fieldwork in the country and/or to assist with data collection, particularly in situations where there were language barriers and/or security considerations. Engagement of local teams in analysis was rare and evaluations identified time, cost and analytical capability as some of the reasons for their lack of engagement in analytical workshops.

These issues are well illustrated in an evaluation of a resilience sub-programme in Somalia. The evaluation identified significant issues with respect to data quality, and consequently the evaluation report raised questions about data validity and integrity. The main reasons outlined include:

- The composition of the national evaluation team was mainly Somali; however, the fieldwork was conducted in Somaliland, which is a self-declared independent State and has a bloody history with Somalia. As a result, the national

team experienced significant hostility/resistance during their in-country visit.
- Inability to train the national team & limited opportunities for field-testing data collection instruments.
- National team was unable to separate the female focus group from the male focus group. Reasons for this were not noted.
- Limited resources meant that only the field supervisor was able to attend the analytical workshop resulting in analytical gaps and the evaluation team noted some dissatisfaction with his/her contribution.

This experience suggests that an evaluation that is designed & implemented in culturally responsive ways requires a more thoughtful and strategic approach to assembling an evaluation team.

Failure to take such a view means the evaluation process is not satisfactory for both parties – lead evaluation teams feel local evaluation teams are not adding value and may therefore reconsider using them; local teams do not feel the evaluation teams value their cultural knowledge and insight.

Insight #4: Evidence of CRE practice in a few instances

While the majority of the evaluations included in this review show limited use of CRE approaches, there were exceptions and lessons can be learned from such examples. While these examples might not adhere to all of the principles & practices of CRE, they are a step in the right direction. Two examples follow below.

Example 1
A beneficiary-based evaluation of a programme in Guinea, West Africa, used participatory methodology. The evaluation was conducted by a social anthropologist and included a long period of intensive fieldwork to allow the evaluator to be fully immersed in the community in order to understand their lives and experiences.

While the high-level question was set out in the Terms of Reference, the evaluator sought to revise and review the issues explored in close consultation with the local staff and Refugee Committees. A Sierra-Leonean refugee was recruited as a research assistant and the anthropologist worked closely with this researcher at all stages of the evaluation process. The evaluator spent over six weeks in refugee-populated areas around Gueckedou in Guinea's forest region and met with refugees in their own homes thus providing greater insight into their lives and living conditions. The time spent in the camp allowed the evaluator to build trust as well as social and personal connections with beneficiaries. As a result, it was possible for the evaluation to record refugees' views on sensitive issues such as prostitution, ethnic conflict, and land and food security. The data collection methods were tailored to the context and developed iteratively. The analysis in the evaluation report was cognisant of the heterogeneity of the affected populations and disaggregated responses between urban refugees and refugees living in camps. Refugee Committee representatives were invited to participate in the analytical process. Refugees were also given an opportunity to share their views and perspectives with key stakeholders directly.

Example 2
A multi-agency, multi-donor, multi-country evaluation was commissioned to assess the quality and impact of peace building initiatives in engaging children and young people. The evaluation was designed to be participatory and children and young people were involved as evaluators in the local evaluation teams. The visual participation tools were developed to specifically enable high engagement and understanding from children and young people across the three countries. Evaluators acknowledged that the definition of children and young people differed across cultures and therefore attempts were made to find common ground in the design phase. Membership of the local evaluation team was carefully considered and care taken to ensure that diverse ethnic groups were included in each country context.

While there is no overt reference to CRE in these evaluation reports, understanding of culture and cultural context permeates the way in which the evaluation was designed, implemented and reported.

Insight #5: Strong evidence of gender responsive practice in evaluation

In both UN and non-UN evaluations, there is strong awareness & recognition of the need for gender responsive practice in all stages of the evaluation process. While this does not always translate into the implementation of the evaluation or analysis of its findings, the evaluations acknowledge this as a limitation in their work, and note the need for improved gender responsive practice – especially in terms of bringing in gender experts to strengthen their analysis.

Recognition of the value of gender responsive practice in evaluation shows an underlying consensus that there are nuances of gendered experiences that need special attention. For example, female experiences of the different programmes assessed will vary according to the societal, cultural, economic, historical and political institutions and norms of the culture they identify with. Including a gender expert & considering gender balance on the evaluation team allows female participants to feel safe in expressing their views and a deeper exploration of gender issues at all stages of the evaluation.

For instance, a UN evaluation report identified the aim of its evaluation as 'moving beyond treating gender as a head count issue' to an approach where 'gender was mainstreamed into all sections of the evaluation assessments'.

The same weight that is attached to the need for integrating gender responsive practice in the overall project development is not afforded to culturally responsive practice, across the board.

Using gender responsive practice as a reference point, there may be opportunities to accord the same level of methodological consideration to integrating culturally responsive practice.

Insight #6: Inadequate focus on cultural dimensions of the evaluation context

Across both UN and non-UN evaluations, there was significant emphasis given to understanding contexts for programmes evaluated. Context overviews covered national economic, socio-political and historical factors that have led to the makeup of current social landscapes. Contextualizing the backdrop to which the evaluation is taking place is of critical importance, given that it helps to set up an understanding of the economic, political and historical power structures at play that shape the nature of inequity and experience (e.g., who is the most vulnerable?).

> **Illustrative example #3**
> An evaluation of education programmes in Timor Leste assessed programme relevance against 'needs' of the Timor-Leste peoples. However, these needs were identified according to the national, sociopolitical context of the country. The needs analysis did not reflect the relationship between culture and education and its influence on outcomes.

While this is helpful, there is a noticeable gap in consideration of cultural dimensions in the context analysis. This creates a blind spot for evaluation practice, and shows a lack of prioritization of socio-cultural nuance, including values, norms and worldviews (forgone to economic, political and historical factors).

Including socio-cultural elements of a particular societal context will greatly aid a more holistic understanding of participants' experiences, and relationship to programmes evaluated.

Insight #7: Some scepticism about the quality of data gathered by local evaluation teams

In a number of evaluations, local evaluation teams were deliberately sought to assist with data collection, particularly in countries where English was not the main medium of communication. However, the data gathered by local evaluation teams were not fully reflected often described as limitations in the evaluation reports, and attributed to the lack of experience and skill of the local evaluation team in explaining the findings to the main evaluation team.

In reality, due to time and resources constraints, and sometimes security considerations, the local evaluation teams ended up working alone with no support from the lead evaluation team.

This is unsatisfactory for both teams. As observed in one of the evaluations 'time and resource constraints limited the evaluation from gathering all relevant information' despite acknowledging that the *evaluand* was a 'complex social intervention implemented in culturally sensitive environment'.

> **Illustrative example #4**
> An evaluation study reviewed in the stocktake noted that 'most interviews and workshops were conducted in Turkish and assisted by a translator… both these elements introduced a non-measurable degree of deviation that should be taken into account when considering the findings.'

If the creation of evaluation teams were driven by the explicit recognition of the

need to understand the sociocultural context in which the programmes or projects are based, it would significantly alter the lead evaluation team's perspectives of, and relationship to the local evaluation team and how they might value of their role and contribution.

The inclusion of local evaluation team members presents significant opportunities as it enriches the analysis by drawing on the local evaluation team members' 'shared lived' experience to provide more valid, contextually relevant insights. At the same time, it raises some challenges for the evaluation team to find ways of meaningfully accessing the local knowledge and wisdom of team in the analysis.

Insight #8: Limited information on communication and dissemination of evaluation findings

Dissemination or communication of the evaluation results to all stakeholders is an integral component of the evaluation process and its success. The evaluation reports reviewed in the stocktake provided limited information about their communication and dissemination strategies making it difficult to comment on the cultural appropriateness or indeed responsiveness of the evaluations. In the few instances where the evaluation reports provided some information about communication and/or dissemination, a range of strategies were used including workshops, presentations, case study vignettes and videos [in addition to conventional reports] to communicate findings to commissioners and stakeholder representatives.

CRE approach encourages evaluators to think about their obligations and responsibilities towards the participating communities and suggests a more principles-based approach to communication. It urges evaluators to build on principles of mutual reciprocity, honouring beneficiaries' participation, respecting and valuing their worldview and offering findings in an accessible way. This requires commissioners to go beyond translating the report into local languages.

An example of beneficiary involvement in dissemination is well illustrated in the following example. An evaluation study of peace clubs used participatory video (PV). Local youth were trained in storytelling and filmmaking, so they could make videos about their experiences in engaging in peace dialogue. These films, screened to the relevant NGO representatives, were presented as the evaluation findings. The mutual reciprocity and knowledge sharing in this evaluation was outstanding, as local trainees gained valuable skills and the process-facilitated dialogue between youth and empowered their engagement.

SECTION 4: LESSONS LEARNT FOR THE FUTURE

As UNEG members progress in their aspirations to conduct evaluations that adhere to the newly revised norms and standards for evaluation, it may be timely to reflect on some of the issues emerging from the review of the literature & the stocktake to provide guidance as to how UNEG agencies can better integrate key principles and tenets of CRE in their evaluation endeavours. **However,** it must be noted that if the design of the programme being evaluated is not culturally responsive, then the evaluation itself cannot be. Therefore fully committing to integrating CRE approaches in evaluation presents UNEG members with significant challenges.

CRE approaches span a continuum – from culturally competent evaluations to culturally responsive evaluations. As a start, UN agencies can begin by encouraging a strong explicit focus on the cultural context of the *evaluand* and having team members with shared living experiences as part of the evaluation team as appropriate. The main lever for influencing practice is the Terms of Reference developed when commissioning evaluations and UNEG members can indicate the level of emphasis they wish to place on cultural competency of evaluators for the evaluation in question.

Potential strategies to address CRE

The main condition for applying CRE is a receptive and willing commissioning agency and a skilled, competent and responsive evaluator.

For commissioners of evaluation, some strategies that could be considered include:

Evaluation Design & planning

- Openness and willingness to endorse flexible evaluation plans as opposed to well-structured, predetermined evaluation approaches. The Terms of Reference can actively encourage evaluators to consider different theoretical frameworks including CRE and consider the impact of the cultural context and setting in the analysis of the evaluation findings. If consideration of culture and inclusion of cultural context in the evaluation is not identified in the TOR, evaluators are unlikely to be attentive to considering CRE approaches.

- Further, as commissioners of the evaluation, members can demand & explicitly ask for cultural diversity in the team composition and encourage inclusion of cultural interpreters if appropriate. When seeking information relating to the skills and experience of evaluation team members, UNEG members need to go beyond technical expertise and seek out cultural experience and cultural competency for the evaluation team. A word of caution here – ethnic congruence among the evaluation team does not equate to cultural congruence or competence (Thomas, 2004).

- Challenge the evaluation community to think creatively about integrating the CRE approach in evaluation within existing time and budget considerations. All too often evaluators identify time and resource constraints as a barrier to integrating cultural perspectives in evaluation. Madison notes in her review that 'one of the main challenges in conducting evaluation across cultures is the investment in time; however, there is agreement

among the authors reviewed that the investment in time is worth the long-term yield.' However, in the current resource strapped environment, evaluators need to cut the cloth to fit the evaluation approach and reprioritize the main tasks; not just ask for another roll of cloth.

- Meaningful engagement with stakeholders – as evaluation commissioning agencies need to be mindful & thoughtful about the level of engagement that is being

sought when using CRE approaches. There are different ways of involving community members and intended beneficiaries in the process of making decisions about an evaluation. Wehipiehana (2013) in her keynote address on Indigenous Evaluation set out a framework of increasing control by Indigenous communities as illustrated below.
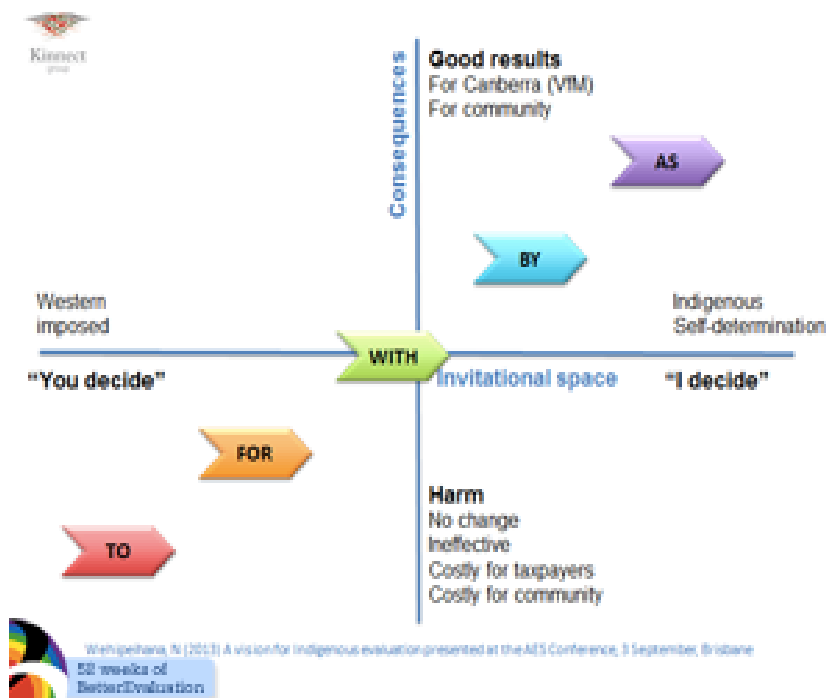
Wehipiehana provides further clarity as to what is involved at each level of engagement:

- Evaluation done **TO** communities involves collecting data from them without involving them in any way in the decisions about the evaluation or in using it, and to meet the objectives of other stakeholders.
- Evaluation done **FOR** communities is done with good intentions, to improve the situation for them, but with the evaluator making decisions about the evaluation without reference to their values about what is important or what constitutes credible evidence - Western world views prevail.
- Evaluation done **WITH** communities involves some community members in the process of evaluation, but non-Indigenous people are in control of the process.
- Evaluation done **BY** communities has Indigenous people in control of the process, but they are also accommodating Western values and notions of credible evidence.
- Evaluation **AS** community is based on community views on what is valued and what constitutes credible evidence. It does not exclude Western values or notions of credible evidence but only as far as is seen to be useful. There is no automatic or presumed right of participation by non-Indigenous people or approaches, only by invitation.

The framework provides a starting point for discussion and encourages commissioning agencies to think about the level of engagement they seek in an evaluation vis-à-vis the framework and helps evaluators reflect on their positioning of stakeholder engagement in the evaluation. Evaluators need to consider this when setting the questions.

Reflecting on your role as commissioners of evaluation,

- How and in what ways can UNEG members support the use of CRE in the design and planning of evaluations?
- What challenges and opportunities do they see in integrating the CRE framework including linkages between culture and gender and human rights in their evaluations?
- What are UNEG members' views about prioritising CRE as criteria in decision-making regarding the selection of evaluators?

Evaluation Implementation

Since CRE makes substantial use of qualitative evaluation techniques, skills and competencies of the evaluator assume significance. Collecting data directly from individuals through interviews, focus groups or observation methods and/or interpreting nonverbal behaviours requires the evaluator to be attuned to the cultural context in which the programme is situated.

As commissioners of evaluations UNEG agencies can seek information as to how evaluators propose to respond to cultural norms and protocols in countries where the fieldwork is being undertaken and how training and capacity issues will be dealt with for both, the local evaluation team as well as for the lead evaluation team [to strengthen their cultural competencies]. This may mean training data collectors and/or mentoring skilled local community members to gather culturally responsive evaluative data. For example, in some indigenous cultures the provision of food at meetings or the rules around how one greets and welcomes participants are seen as respect for their cultural identity and protocols and sets the tone for the engagement. Being attuned to the customs and traditions of a cultural group will allow all participants to

participate fully in the discussion.

Reflecting on your role as commissioners of evaluation,

- How can UNEG agencies advise, monitor and provide feedback on implementation of CRE in an evaluation?
- What challenges and opportunities do UNEG members see with regard to integrating CRE approach in the implementation of evaluation?

Analysis and reporting

Understanding the cultural context and the meaning of what has been collected is central to culturally responsive evaluation. This requires active engagement of a range of stakeholders including those who share a living experience with the participants to ensure that interpretation of data includes all its richness and subtlety. While much of the formal sense making takes place towards the later stages of the evaluation, expectations regarding the sense-making process needs to be seeded at the outset.

Reflecting on your role as commissioners of evaluation,

- What expectations do you set with regard to engagement from participant communities in peer reviewing the analysis?
- Is a cultural interpreter needed to capture nuances of meaning?

Dissemination of findings

Evaluation results need to be seen by the audiences as not only useful but also truthful and an authentic reflection of their worldviews. Patton (1997) states that 'evaluation should assure that the information from the evaluation output is received by the 'right people'. The notion of 'right people' is not restricted to the evaluation sponsor or programme staff but includes a wide range of individuals who have an interest in the programme.'

The dissemination and use of evaluation findings needs to consider cultural appropriateness of the end product and their accessibility. Dissemination should be thought of in the design and planning stage of an evaluation and consistent with the purpose of the evaluation. Most evaluation reports did not explicitly address the issue of communication and dissemination making it challenging for the stock take.

As commissioners of evaluation, it may be useful to consider,

- How can the issue of communication and dissemination of evaluation findings be best addressed within the UN environment?
- What commitments can and need to be made in this regard, particularly in the context of CRE?

In summary, culture matters and affects every evaluation. The nature and depth of impact of culture varies depending on the evaluation purpose, its objectives and the questions posed. While CRE approaches emphasize the centrality of culture in the practice of evaluation, there is limited understanding of culture including links between culture and gender and human rights in mainstream evaluation. UNEG agencies are uniquely placed to contribute to the much-needed transformation in evaluation practice in their pursuit of the ambitious SDG goals.

SECTION 5: WAY FORWARD FOR UNEG

This section will be developed during the consultation process with UNEG before, during and after the 2017 Annual General Meeting.

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Appendix 1: List of UN Agencies

The evaluation reports were randomly selected from the following database:

For UN Evaluations:
- UNEG Evaluation Report Database:
  http://www.unevaluation.org/evaluation/reports
- UN Women Gender Equality Evaluation Portal:
  http://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en
- UNDP Evaluation Resource Centre: http://erc.undp.org
- The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP):
  http://www.alnap.org/resources/results.aspx?type=22

For non-UN evaluations:
- The Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP):
  http://www.alnap.org/resources/results.aspx?type=22
- USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse:
  https://dec.usaid.gov/dec/content/AdvancedSearch.aspx?ctID=ODVhZjk4NWQtM2YyMi00YjRmLTkxNjktZTcxMjM2NDBmY2Uy
- OECD's DAC Evaluation Resource Centre: http://www.oecd.org/derec

Number	Agency and Year	Evaluation Report Title
1.	FAO (2015)	Evaluation of FAO Somalia Resilience Sub-programme (2013-2014)
2.	FAO/WFP (2014)	FAO/WFP Joint Evaluation of Food Security Cluster Coordination in Humanitarian Action: A Strategic Evaluation
3.	GEF/UNDP (2015)	Joint GEF-UNDP Evaluation Of the Small Grants Programme
4.	IOM (2014)	Evaluating IOM's Return and Reintegration Activities for Returnees and Other Displaced Populations
5.	MDG-F (2011)	MDG-F Participatory Evaluation In Bosnia And Herzegovina
6.	OCHA (2016)	Evaluation of OCHA response to the Syria crisis
7.	OCHA (2011)	Evaluation of OCHA Response to the Haiti Earthquake
8.	UNCDF/UNWOMEN/UNDP (2013)	Final Evaluation Gender Equitable Local Development
9.	UNDP (2015)	Final Evaluation Of the Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities Project
10.	UNDP (2011)	Mid- term Evaluation of Outcome 7: "Socio-economic recovery in the North and East" under the UNDP Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP) 2008-2012
11.	UNDP/UNIFEM (2008)	Evaluation of the Women Economic Empowerment Project in Niger Delta
12.	UNESCO (2016)	Evaluation of the UNESCO Associated Schools Project Network (ASPnet)

13.	UNESCO (2013)	Evaluation of UNESCO's Standard -setting Work of the Culture Sector: Part I – 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
14.	UNESCO (2010)	Evaluation of Strategic Programme Objective 7: "Enhancing research-policy linkages on social transformations"
15.	UNFPA/UNICEF (2013)	Joint Evaluation UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme On Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change
16.	UNGEI (2012)	Formative Evaluation of the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
17.	UNHCR (2010)	Changing the way UNHCR does business? An evaluation of the Age, Gender and Diversity Mainstreaming Strategy, 2004-2009
18.	UNHCR (2008)	Evaluation of UNHCR's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in situations of forced displacement
19.	UNHCR (2001)	A beneficiary-based evaluation of UNHCR's programme in Guinea, West Africa
20.	UNICEF (2015)	Case Study: Peace Clubs Participatory Video and Most Significant Change Evaluation
21.	UNICEF (2009)	Child Friendly Schools Programming Global Evaluation Report
22.	UNICEF (2010)	Evaluation Of The UNICEF Education Programme In Timor Leste
23.	UNIDO (2016)	Human security through inclusive socioeconomic development in Upper Egypt
24.	UN Women (2013)	Thematic Evaluation on the contribution of UN Women to increasing women's leadership and participation in peace and security and humanitarian response
25.	UN Joint: UNDP/ILO/UNESCO/UNWTO/ UNIDO (2013)	Final evaluation of "Mobilization Of The Dahshour World Heritage Site For Community Development"
26.	UN Joint: UNDP/UNESCO/ UNICEF/UNWTO (2011)	Evaluation of "Alliances for Culture Tourism in Eastern Anatolia"
27.	UN Joint: WHO/FAO/UNICEF/WHO, DFATD (2015)	Strategic Evaluation: Joint Evaluation of Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger and under-nutrition (REACH)
28.	WFP (2005)	Full Report of the 'Real Time' Evaluation of WFP's Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami Rome, September
29.	WHO/FAO/SDC (2006)	Evaluation Of The Adequacy, Appropriateness and Effectiveness Of Needs Assessments in The International Decision Making Process to Assist People Affected by the Tsunami
30.	World Bank (2013)	World Bank Administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund in Sudan: Final Evaluation Report

Appendix 2: List of non-UN agencies

Number	Agency and Year	Evaluation Report Title
1.	Action Against Hunger/DFTAD[5] (2014)	External Evaluation: Improving nutritional status through an integrated multi-sectoral approach in South and North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo
2.	Action Against Hunger (2009)	Participatory Evaluation of the 2008 Farmer Field School Programme Lira, Uganda
3.	CARE/Save the Children (2010)	An Independent Joint Evaluation of the Haiti Earthquake Humanitarian Response
4.	DANIDA (2010)	In search of protection and livelihoods: Socio-economic and environmental impacts of Dadaab refugee camps on host communities
5.	DFID (2015)	Cross Cutting Evaluation of DFID's Approach to Remote Management in Somalia and North-East Kenya
6.	ECDPM/ODI (2013)	Final Report of the External Evaluation of the Think Tank Initiative
7.	ECHO[6] (2008)	Evaluation of DIPECHO[7] Action Plans In Central America
8.	Global Partnership for Children and Youth in Peacebuilding (2015)	Evaluation of Child and Youth Participation in Peacebuilding
9.	ICRC/BRC (2016)	Final Evaluation of the Social and Economic Reintegration Pilot Program
10.	Netherlands Ministry of Development Cooperation[8] (2004)	Poverty, policies and perceptions in Tanzania: an evaluation of Dutch aid to two district rural development programmes
11.	Norwegian Refugee Council (2014)	Evaluation of NRC's Youth Education Pack (YEP) projects in Faryab, Herat, and Nangarhar
12.	Norwegian Refugee Council (2008)	Fostering Integrated Communities In Burundi: Addressing Challenges Relating to the Reintegration Of Burundian Refugees And Internally Displaced Persons: An evaluation of the Information, Counselling, Legal Assistance program in Burundi
13.	OXFAM (2012)	Oxfam: Engendering Change Program Mid-Term Learning Review
14.	SDC (2011)	Evaluation of SDC Humanitarian Aid: Emergency Relief
15.	USAID (2016)	DRG Learning, Evaluation, Research Activity: USAID/Paraguay Democracy and Governance Project

[5]Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada
[6] European Community Humanitarian Office
[7] Disaster Preparedness Programme of ECHO
[8] Report prepared by Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) within the Ministry

16.	USAID (2013)	Mid-Term Performance Evaluation of the USAID/West Africa Gambia-Senegal Sustainable Fisheries Program
17.	USAID (2014)	Impact Evaluation of USAID's Community-Based Crime and Violence Prevention Approach in Central America: Regional Report for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama
18.	USAID (2010)	USAID/Zambia Gender-Based Violence Programming Evaluation
19.	US Department of Justice (2008)	Final Report: Participatory Evaluation of the Lummi Nation's Community Mobilization Against Drugs Initiative/ Bureau of Justice Assistance's Indian Alcohol and Substance Abuse Demonstration Project
20.	Welthungerhilfe and Danish Refugee Council (2014)	Cash -Based Assistance Programmes for Internally Displaced Persons in the Kabul Informal Settlements: An Evaluation for WHH and DRC