



# Picturing the Evaluation Ecosystem:

**An executive summary of the Landscape Analysis on Equity-Oriented Evaluation, commissioned by Ford Foundation**

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# Introduction

**Evaluations play a powerful role in international cooperation. They are commissioned by funders of international cooperation efforts to determine the overall effectiveness of programs and, more specifically, to assess organizations that receive support for program implementation.**

On the latter, the focus of a large portion of international cooperation evaluations has been about ensuring accountability to donors with outsized emphasis on activity-monitoring. The power of international cooperation evaluations rests largely in their role in informing decisions about sustaining, increasing, or even eliminating funding. This becomes more significant when considering that evaluations have historical ties to the values and methods of natural and clinical scientific research, and have therefore privileged notions like objective truth and replicability (and as such, elevated certain methods, like experimental designs and randomized control trials), while diminishing the role of power and context. Moreover, as these values and methods have been largely generated in the Global North, the field of evaluators, not coincidentally, has been largely dominated by white, elite individuals who were educated in Global North institutions and, intentionally or not, bring their own cultural perspectives and biases to their work. So, while evaluation has been portrayed as technical, value-neutral, and especially objective, it - like all disciplines - is steeped in norms, implicit bias, and judgments. All of the above has, in many cases, meant that

evaluations have contributed to a lack of impact (at best) and a further entrenchment of deeply rooted inequality (at worst) by the very interventions meant to address these ills.

This summary is part of a larger landscape report<sup>1</sup> intended to contribute to a long standing and ever-growing body of research which argues that for international cooperation efforts to induce transformative and sustainable social outcomes, they and the evaluations that seek to understand their effectiveness must acknowledge and address historical and structural power imbalances embedded in both fields. Specifically, the report highlights a number of practices that donors, practitioners, academics, and advocates increasingly associate with helping to foster conversation and action related to centering equity in international cooperation evaluation.

## About the research

In July 2022, the Ford Foundation commissioned Global Change Center, Praxis UK, and Praxis Institute for Participatory Practice to lead a participatory landscape

analysis to advance 1) understanding of the equity-centered international cooperation evaluation landscape, and 2) identify gaps and opportunities, that if seized, would help increase demand for equity-centered evaluation among international cooperation funders. The researchers, in collaboration with six Global South partners: Institute for Global Dialogue (IDG), South Africa; Women for a Change (WFaC), Cameroon; Gender and Equity Network South Asia (GENSA); North-South Initiative (NSI), Malaysia; Latin America Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) Argentina, Latam; Fundacion SES, Argentina, Latam<sup>2</sup> (hereafter the research team or researchers), conducted a Southern-led assessment to hear from a variety of stakeholders working in international cooperation, paying particular attention to the often-overlooked perspectives and ideas of those from and based in the Global South, where the majority of international cooperation efforts are located. The findings in this paper were generated through a comprehensive literature review, an online survey of 47 experts<sup>3</sup>, and interviews and focus groups with 92 individuals from 84 organizations, among them 13 Global North funding organizations, 11 evaluation networks from across the globe and 58 consultancies, civil society organizations, social movements, academic institutions and government agencies in the Global South. Important for both the process and the outcome, the research team not only coordinated and facilitated the participation of people across continents during data collection, but also in the data analysis phase, with the aim of centering multiple voices and perspectives, debate, and mutual learning.

This report begins with an articulation of some of the key challenges in international cooperation evaluation that equity-centered

approaches seek to address. It then turns to an initial mapping of efforts that various actors in the Global North and Global South are taking to transform the inequitable status quo.

## Centering equity in evaluation

Before discussing how inequality is manifest in the international cooperation evaluation ecosystem, it is important to acknowledge that the international cooperation field itself is the result of power imbalances between the Global North and the Global South.<sup>4</sup> Development assistance, in the form of monetary loans, technical assistance, grants and other resources, flows from the Global North to the Global South. Moreover, aid terms and conditions are primarily, if not solely, controlled by Global North donor countries and/or multilateral institutions and banks where the Global North maintains outsized influence - the more recent rise in the geopolitical and economic power of China and other BRICS<sup>5</sup> nations notwithstanding. This dominance extends to setting norms and determining “gold standards” in international cooperation programming and investments, including what is valued and what counts as success.

By extension, in evaluations of international cooperation programs, what kinds of questions are asked, by whom, and using which methods has historically and predominantly been situated in and shaped by actors in the Global North. The role of evaluations in amplifying what works and what doesn’t relative to international cooperation, and helping to inform funding decisions must be seen within this historical and still present context of imbalances in power.

## Exclusion in the evaluation system

While there have been shifts underway, evaluation processes have continued to overlook and/or exclude the groups that international cooperation initiatives often aim to empower and include. This research confirmed structural exclusion in four key stages of decision-making in evaluation: policy, organization, methodology, and dissemination.

At the **policy** level, the research team found that policies are formulated using criteria that center Global North principles and standards, without sufficiently considering local contexts and power dynamics. An example that has often been cited including by participants in this study, is the near-universal application of the six OECD-DAC principles (relevance, effectiveness, impact, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability) to international cooperation evaluations. These principles reflect Global North-centric norms and views of development, epistemology, and evaluation, and prioritize impartiality and credibility over the subjective experiences of the communities affected by development policies.<sup>6</sup>

The research team noted that at the **organizational**, or operational level, exclusion occurs in the process of defining and disseminating evaluation Terms of Reference (ToRs), which is led by donor agencies, and through recruitment practices that favor Global North evaluators, consultancy firms, and academic institutions, who may be seen as more ‘objective’, skilled, or even more politically neutral than local<sup>7</sup> evaluators. While data from this research shows a relatively recent shift toward more professionals from the Global South in evaluation teams, this appears to be mostly limited to those who were born, raised, educated, and/or trained in the Global North and who are proficient in English. Moreover, complex procurement processes, restrictive legal and contractual requirements, and inflexible reporting guidelines pose additional barriers to Global South or local evaluators.



*[Donors] are concerned about being transparent and apolitical in evaluations, so they want experienced evaluators not connected to the country where the evaluation is being held. There are political complications to evaluation.”*

[Global North donor]

Exclusion also occurs through **methodological** decisions that reflect norms that continue to prioritize quantitative and linear approaches, at the expense of qualitative and participatory approaches that prioritize local knowledge and nuance.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, these decisions continue to be made in the Global North – by the commissioners of international cooperation evaluation and/or the Global North-based firms that lead the evaluations. Global South organizations and evaluators, when they participate, are often confined to the role of data collection. The researchers also heard from study participants that this lack of space for emerging (and especially non-elite) Global South evaluators is partly associated with an absence of more equity-focused methodologies such as action-learning and creative, indigenous<sup>9</sup>, and locally relevant ways of evaluating social change.

According to research participants, **dissemination** decisions can reinforce exclusionary power dynamics through limited use of findings, lack of open access to data, and technical language that is rarely understood outside of the evaluation community. Further, accountability to funders is often the top priority, which determines the audience, and drives what information is shared, and with whom.

Ultimately, this structural exclusion disproportionately impacts Global South evaluators, locals, and communities, as well as evaluators and implementing partners representing diverse ideologies.

## Structural exclusion in the evaluation system

### Policy

- Global North standards
- Cutting international cooperation funds
- Selection of evaluators
- Centralization of power in Global North

### Organizational

- Definition and dissemination of Terms of References
- Recruitment practices
- Purpose of evaluation

- Quantitative and linear approaches
- Methods not aligned with context

### Methodological

- Upward accountability
- Lack of access to data
- Dissemination only in Global North language.

### Dissemination

## Equity-centered evaluation

Advocates, especially from Global South social movements and South-South cooperation efforts, have long identified and pushed against the inequalities embedded within international cooperation and its evaluation, including the structural barriers detailed above. Recently, global events like COVID have laid bare the deepening inequality around the world and have contributed to a palpable resurgence in calls to address power imbalances in these fields, and indeed in all facets of life.

Moreover, participants in this research affirmed some key and well-documented components and frames of international cooperation evaluation that the researchers believe can be considered as a coalescing of equity-oriented evaluation. These components include meaningful and substantial participation of the communities, organizations, and individuals who are most proximate to, involved in, and implicated by international cooperation interventions as well as the primacy of local knowledge, local stakeholders, and understanding of power and context. Importantly, study participants described equity-centered evaluation as that which moves beyond participation – to enable shifts in power relationships between the Global North and the

Global South, including moving evaluation decisions about scope, design, methodology, and dissemination closer to primary stakeholders, including communities, implementing partners, and local evaluators.

## Early signs of progress

There is evidence of progress. For example, and as noted above, the researchers found evidence of more Global South evaluators and consulting firms in a variety of evaluation roles. Increased gender diversity among positions of leadership in evaluation teams was observed, alongside reports from participants of an increase in numbers of “feminist” and “transformative” evaluators forming durable partnerships with more equity-oriented philanthropic donors. There also appears to be a growing awareness among some in the donor community of the need for intersectional and power-aware context analysis. And there are ever-strengthening calls throughout the evaluation ecosystem problematizing the supremacy of OECD-DAC standards and donor-imposed methodologies, and advocating for culturally relevant evaluations, integration of indigenous ways of knowledge creation, and moves toward multiple understandings of what constitutes development.

## Representation matters. Voices matter.

When it comes to seeking out “local” expertise, the researchers heard a need to be more precise about what is meant by “representative” expertise to avoid misrepresentation or tokenism. Interviewees expressed concern that it is not enough to simply hire someone from the same country or region and assume that they automatically possess the local knowledge needed. Instead, participants noted that weight should be given to factors such as language, culture, and experience when determining who is truly representative of a particular community or region. This entails giving people who embrace multiple theoretical, political, and cultural frameworks a voice and a role in evaluating international cooperation programs. Participants also emphasized that it is crucial to represent alternative ideologies such as feminism, anti-Black racism, decolonization, or anti-capitalism, and engage evaluators who subscribe to these alternative ideologies and actively challenge the mainstream.



# Emerging approaches

**While recognizing the sheer enormity of change required to center equity in international cooperation programming and evaluation, the research team consulted third party resources as well as study participants to get a sense of change efforts that are underway.**

Presented on the following pages are just a few illustrations of steps that have begun to be taken by diverse Global North and Global South actors in the evaluation ecosystem who recognize the complex nature of development work while continuing to push to change the status quo. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Indeed, the research team acknowledges that these are but a small subset of the many initiatives and approaches being implemented across the world. Rather, the examples provide a glimpse of the breadth of what is being tried

across various contexts and actors and note the real opportunities and obstacles that each face.

This section begins by sharing some examples of locally led evaluation. This is followed by observations of a few of the core components of equity-centered evaluation – feedback and collective learning; and donor reflection and accountability. The section concludes with a discussion on the importance of capacity building and training to sustain and grow equity-centered evaluation methods in the future.

## Promoting local power through locally led evaluation

Localization, a recent incarnation of efforts to prioritize the perspectives of those impacted by international cooperation programs, has gained impetus since the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) and the establishment of the “Grand Bargain”, an agreement between major donors to “localize” the humanitarian agenda.<sup>10</sup> Bilateral and multilateral institutions supporting the Grand Bargain now face an urgent call to operationalize their commitments by accounting for their efforts and promoting local power; the United States

Agency for International Development (USAID) for example, has committed that fifty percent of programming and evaluation will be locally led by 2030.<sup>11</sup>

The research identified several relatively recent examples of locally led programming and evaluation where attempts have been made to shift power to local actors, including in planning, design, identification of measures of success, and ensuring values alignment,

among others. Study participants often associated these practices of locally-led with power-aware, participatory, and decolonizing evaluation approaches.<sup>12</sup> They found that these approaches valued and incorporated various viewpoints but placed particular emphasis on the perspectives of those most affected by the issue or program being studied. The researchers also heard that many organizations in the Global South are testing

different types of localized indicators to measure their impact and social change power. Moreover, the researchers heard that locally led evaluation is supported by donors who are striving to enhance a planning and evaluation practice that is more flexible and adapted to the emerging demands on the ground.

## Examples of locally led initiatives

The following are just some examples that describe a variety of locally led ways in which Global South and Global North organizations and funders have developed indicators, identified measures of success, designed and implemented evaluations, and assessed and built capacity.

### Global South Examples

- [Fondo de Mujeres del Sur](#), [Brazil Human Rights Fund](#), and [Baoba Fund](#) promote hybrid and co-leadership models for strategic planning and evaluation guidance, with social leaders in pivotal roles.
- [Red de Educacion Popular](#) (REPEM LAC) developed “living well” indicators in alignment with feminist and popular education values, in dialogue with women across Latin America.
- The [Buen Vivir paradigm](#) recognizes the rights of Mother Nature and diverse social groups in development.
- [Consejo de Educacion Popular de American Latina y el Caribe](#) (CEAAL) created a participatory diploma for capacity-building processes inspired by Paulo Freire's pedagogy.
- [Red Alforja](#), [GRADE](#), and others expand the use and knowledge of participatory and critical action-research, despite not being utilized by most donors.
- [Slum Dwellers International](#) develops South-to-South capacities and knowledge sharing among associations at multiple levels.
- [SAHAJ](#) takes a stand and stops collaboration if evaluators are not aligned with org values.
- [FunsalProdes](#) have pushed against donors' evaluative top-down requirements.

### Hybrid and Global North examples

- The [United Nation's “leave no one behind” \(LNOB\)](#) framework (detailed on p.8).
- [UNICEF in Bhutan](#) has set up a Youth Steering Committee to provide continuous feedback to the agency as well as helping to improve local work according to the diverse realities of the youth in the country.
- [Mama Cash](#) funds and supports feminist collective action globally, connecting and mobilizing resources for feminist initiatives and groups in partnership with other organizations
- SIDA has [commissioned a study](#) to assess their successes and failures in the implementation of the Grand Bargain localization agenda.
- The FCDO has shown [commitment but limited success](#) in implementing the localization agenda.
- [USAID](#) has circulated a draft guide for its implementing partners on collecting feedback from beneficiaries of development programs.
- There is noticeable political will to support locally-led “[UN's Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustainable Peace](#)”



## Challenges

Proper funding and resources are crucial for successful locally led evaluation efforts, but recent studies show that agencies are failing to allocate financial resources to local actors, despite increasing momentum and awareness since the Grand Bargain. Only 6% of the USAID budget is allocated directly to local organizations, and funding for local partners has decreased since 2021, limiting locally led investments and evaluation efforts.<sup>13</sup>

There is also a notable tension in the ecosystem, where critics of localization have noted that locally-led evaluations have been co-opted by Global North organizations who don't sufficiently consider power dynamics, or historical context, including colonization. In this frame, localization is seen as continuing to be donor-centered. To that end, the researchers heard from some study participants that whilst the commitment of Northern actors to locally led evaluation is a step away from the inequitable status quo, what is required for lasting change is evaluation and empowerment led by Southern voices and grounded in emancipatory practices, rather than relying solely on the good will of Global North donors and umbrella NGOs who are headquartered predominantly in the Global North, with satellite offices in the Global South.

## Opportunities for impact

Findings from this research suggest that adapting to local contexts and using community driven approaches should form the foundation of any promotion of local power. This can be done through the incorporation of non-western values, and the inclusion of indigenous frameworks, methods, tools, and local values in evaluation programs. Donors should provide long-term, flexible funding to ensure more in-depth

evaluation processes that capture grassroots voices, invest in long-term learning partners, create local and national mechanisms for co-monitoring donor strategy with local stakeholders, and work with activists and social leaders to promote grounded learning and diverse alliances.

### Global North-led Journey of Change

## Leave No One Behind

The [United Nation's "leave no one behind" \(LNOB\)](#) framework is an explicit acknowledgement of the need to combat discrimination and inequity in order to successfully achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. LNOB's principles and practices have generated various guidance for UN programming to center equity. However, a 2022 evaluation indicates that the LNOB is not yet fully integrated, lacking analytical categories necessary to understand who is left behind and why. The evaluation recommends that to make progress moving forward, there needs to be a focus on changes in mindset, deep-immersive training on intersectionality (recognizing that considering the perspectives of those furthest behind requires a systems-thinking approach), increased collaboration and partnership, and more staff diversity and training in order for better integration, implementation, and ultimately results. The evaluation also points out several lessons that are relevant for promoting equity in the evaluation ecosystem, such as understanding and challenging unfair power dynamics and the need for flexible evaluation practices.

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## Hybrid Journey of Change

# Made in Africa Evaluation Approach

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Initially conceived in a convening by the African Evaluation Association (Afrea) to challenge the “epistemic violence” perceived in mainstream evaluation, the [Made in Africa](#) approach embraces culturally responsive evaluation, multicultural validity, decolonizing, and indigenous methodologies, and considers culture in every part of evaluation frameworks. At its core is a belief that evaluation often overlooks the intricate contextual issues shaped by societal cultures, traditions, and priority needs of people in the Global South. The framework promotes a social justice approach to project design and evaluation, identifying and developing a uniquely African approach to evaluation. It emphasizes the importance of closeness to context, culture, and history while embracing beliefs and subjectivity in research. Moreover, Made in Africa espouses that the social location of the evaluator matters, and evaluators play a role in furthering social change and social justice. Avoiding ethnocentrism means embracing multiple cultural perspectives, and culture is central to the evaluation process because of the profound way in which it shapes worldview, values, and norms. Made in Africa recognizes that culturally and ethnically diverse communities have contributions to make in redefining the evaluation field. Made in Africa has inspired “Made In...” approaches in other regions, including most recently, Latin America.

## Hybrid Journey of Change

# The #ShiftThePower Manifesto for Change

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The [#ShiftThePower Manifesto for Change](#) (2019) was co-drafted by a group of community development activists and practitioners from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the UK convened by the Global Fund for Community Foundations in a 2019 conference on people-led development. The manifesto emphasizes moving away from a system that is preoccupied with quick solutions and the transfer of funds towards a creative approach that unlocks the inherent power of communities to determine their own development course. Instead of using terms like “beneficiaries” and “recipients,” the manifesto promotes a community organizing and movement building approach that emphasizes relevance, rootedness, and constituency. Additionally, the manifesto calls for external funding to recognize, respect, and build on local resources and assets, expanding the horizons beyond money as the central driver of change and placing greater value on other kinds of infinite non-financial assets and resources, such as knowledge, trust, and networks. Finally, the manifesto urges changes in the language that is used to enable new ways of working and thinking and to challenge the dominance of English.

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## Feedback and collective learning

Another group of activities that participants pointed to as part of good equity-centered evaluation practice, and one particularly valuable for addressing the structural challenges embedded in dissemination, is feedback and collective learning. By bringing together practitioners, scholars, and policymakers to discuss emerging themes, innovative methodologies, and best practices in the field, collective learning in any number of formats - including in-person as well as on-line - offers a place for information exchange, networking, and collaboration. Central to this cross-fertilization of ideas is shifting the direction of information flow and feedback – that is, from North-South to South-North as well as South-South. Moreover, feedback was identified as critical for learning. For example, participants cited UNDP’s invitation to [Southern Voice](#) to peer-review its evaluations for the formative LNOB effort, whereby Southern actors, with expertise in participatory consultative processes provided critical feedback to donors in order to improve their equity-oriented evaluation efforts.

### Challenges

The researchers noted that collective learning is often perceived as good to have, but not must have. This lack of prioritization has translated into a lack of funding for such activities. Additionally, opportunities to document ways of working and methodologies in different languages are seldom offered, making knowledge sharing difficult. Cross-regional and cross-organizational collaborations are complex and expensive, requiring translation, facilitation, and documentation that is often not included in budgeting processes.

### Opportunities for impact

The research has highlighted the emergence of several efforts that have facilitated South-South and South-North collaboration. Sharing knowledge has resulted in enhanced capacity, stronger relationships, and trust among actors, with the possibility of challenging historically dominant North-South information flows as well as OECD-DAC-sponsored standards and principles that have traditionally guided mainstream evaluation policies and practices.

#### Global South-led Journey of Change

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### The South-South Agenda

Crafted by 135 countries from the Global South in dialogue with all UN General Assembly members, under the umbrella of the G77 and China, the South-South agenda promotes joint policy action in the United Nations and other multilateral policy dialogues. This includes working with the Non-Aligned Movement, fostering sovereign knowledge creation through Southern networks of think tanks, and addressing diverse issues such as trade, economic and social development, peace and security, technology development, and education. South-South Cooperation is gaining momentum, as Global South actors reject imposed ways of working defined in the North, promoting mutuality and horizontal interaction using demand-driven models of cooperation, to influence project design, resource allocation, and evaluation methods. A recent study<sup>14</sup> on the South-South agenda emphasises its underlying equitable principles of working by consensus, trust, and flexibility.

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# Knowledge sharing and training in equity-centered approaches

Knowledge sharing and training is a critical means of education for new and experienced evaluators. As such, it can be a vehicle through which to promote diverse and tested practices and explore new trends. And it can be a means through which a discipline, in this case evaluation, may be refined and rejuvenated. In the case of international cooperation evaluation, knowledge sharing and training are essential in shaping new cadres of evaluators on methods and approaches that acknowledge power context and embrace complexity.

Participants in the landscape cited various actors in the evaluation ecosystem that build and strengthen evaluation capacity. Some are national, regional, or cross-regional evaluation associations<sup>15</sup> with explicit missions to “advance the field of evaluation,” including through professional development and training programs. Others are entities borne out of, and/or are closely associated with various multilateral institutions, including the UN, World Bank, or bilateral agencies like USAID.<sup>16</sup> And still others are embedded in academia. Last but not least are for-profit consultancies.

## Challenges

Despite the numerous actors involved in evaluation capacity building, power (e.g., resourcing and influence) is concentrated primarily among Global North entities. Moreover, and while this is shifting, dominant and well-resourced evaluation capacity-building efforts continue to prioritize traditional Northern evaluation approaches that do not center equity as a core pillar. Research participants noted the relative dearth of capacity-building programs that

focus on locally led evaluation, context, and culturally responsive evaluation or embracing other emancipatory approaches such as Participatory Action-Research networks, feminist evaluation, or South-South and Indigenous perspectives on knowledge creation. When these approaches are included in capacity building and training, they are often seen as “add-ons”, rather than part of the curricula. This is worrisome as some international cooperation programs aim to integrate their curricula into government, academia, and evaluation circles based in the Global South, thus replicating these inequities.

## Opportunities for impact

According to the research findings, there is a need to enhance the evaluative, reflective, and critical thinking of development professionals who engage in international cooperation evaluation. In addition, it is essential to develop and integrate new frameworks and approaches that incorporate values of equity and inclusivity and engage in meaningful dialogue with partners in the Global South.

Institutions like the ones noted above, have an opportunity to build on promising efforts<sup>17</sup> to strengthen the capacities of all relevant actors involved in the international cooperation evaluation process, using languages and spaces that are proximate to local actors and approaches that grow their confidence and reflexive practice. It should also include in-depth teachings on understanding the power and colonial relationship between the North and the South, as well as analyzing the relational social, geopolitical, and economic dynamics.

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# Promoting donor reflection and accountability

The research team noted a close association of equity-centered efforts with increased donor reflection and accountability. Examples from specific fields show the potential for different approaches to promote donor reflection and accountability, particularly around deeply embedded structural inequities created by Northern and richer countries. A recent promising example is seen in the climate justice space, where advocates have successfully called on the Global North to acknowledge power imbalances and take responsibility for past and present contributions to climate change.

The researchers note that this movement towards reparations is creating space for Global North academics, activists, and policymakers to explore post-development, dependency theories, and other critical narratives. These frameworks challenge the linear, extractive, and output-oriented growth paradigms that continue to undergird today's mainstream international cooperation agenda.

Furthermore, the researchers noted a rise in progressive, indigenous and feminist donors' networks dedicated to self-reflection, deepening their own knowledge, and promoting emancipatory philanthropic practices. They are also leading communication strategies and nurturing spaces for learning and training oriented towards expanding the application of principles aligned with liberation theories, feminism, and racial justice.

## Opportunities for impact

Findings of this research suggest there is a need for Southern and Northern-led advocacy efforts that hold donors accountable for their actions, particularly around greater accountability and transparency in donor funding and decision-making processes that promote local power. This can be supported by joint scrutiny of donor actions by Global South-led networks and advocacy for local power through policy briefs, position papers, and joint statements.

## Hybrid Journey of Change

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### Engaged International Donors

The “Network of Engaged International Donors” (NEID), an umbrella organization of donors, has been actively involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within their organization. To begin their journey towards greater equity and inclusion, NEID spoke with over 40 individuals who were involved in similar work across the world and within the United States. This allowed them to determine how they might best contribute to these important issues. Based on this feedback, they integrated critiques of global philanthropy into their programs and committed to showcasing diverse perspectives in all their initiatives, particularly those of individuals who are most closely impacted by the issues they seek to address.

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## Conclusions / Closing

The researchers began with a note that this summary (and its longer counterpart) would only scratch the surface relative to understanding the landscape of international cooperation evaluation. This summary concludes with a similar sentiment – the research pointed to a wide range of efforts that illustrate the multiple ways various types of actors across the evaluation ecosystem are grappling with inequality in the world, AND inequality within the fields of international cooperation and international cooperation evaluation. It is heartening to see these shifts both in conversation as well as practice as it is evident that more and more actors are leveraging their influence and trying to change how evaluation is done. At the same time, research participants from the Global South and Global North noted that for the most part, these efforts to create change are happening in piecemeal fashion, among a small proportion of donors, rather than in the systemic way that would be required for

long-lasting change. While recognizing from the beginning the difficulty in trying to tackle a topic this large, the aim of this summary was to provide a snapshot in the hopes of capturing an exciting moment in time during which there are heightened calls for action from and among Global South actors together with Global North allies. As this summary has shown, there is much to be done.

And still, the hope is that no matter where you sit in the ecosystem - whether closer to international cooperation programming or evaluation; whether you represent donors, programs, evaluation, or academia; whether you're focused on global, regional, national, local level efforts; and whether you identify with Global North or Global South, or any combination of the above – you will see opportunities to engage and continue efforts to promote equity in international cooperation and international cooperation evaluation.

# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For full report, please reach out to Cecilia Milesi [cecilia@ceciliamilesi.com](mailto:cecilia@ceciliamilesi.com)

<sup>2</sup> Those involved in this research were: **Praxis - UK, Praxis – Institute for Participatory Practices** Pradeep Narayanan, Sowmyaa B, Tarini S; **Global Change Center**, Cecilia Milesi, Erika Lopez Franco, Dyams Sanon, Caio Maia, Tshidi Moilwa (Independent Research Assistant); **FLACSO (Latin America School of Social Sciences)**, Maria Belén Herrero, Juliana Peixoto Batista, Rocio Ceballos, Sarah Wendt; **SES Foundation (Latin America)**, Marcela Browne, Gabriela Nahabedian; **Women for a Change (Africa)**, Zoneziwoh Mbongulo-Wondieh, Nancy Makeoh, Sandra enih; **Institute for Global Dialogue (Africa)**, Philani Mthembu, Ashraf Patel; **North South Initiative (Asia)**, Adrian Pereira, Manishankar Prasad, Anne Beatrice; **Gender and Equity Network South Asia** **GENSA (Asia)**, Sonal Zaveri, Shweta Anand, Neha Dhingra; Asmita Naik; and **translators** Andrea Atorino and Arana Angeles.

<sup>3</sup> The survey had 42 respondents from the Global South, four from the Global North and one “other”.

<sup>4</sup> See page 172-174 of the World Inequality Report, 2022, available at [https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2021/12/WorldInequalityReport2022\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](https://wir2022.wid.world/www-site/uploads/2021/12/WorldInequalityReport2022_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> BRICS is an acronym that represents a group of five major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, who have formed a cooperative association to enhance their economic cooperation and influence on the global stage.

<sup>6</sup> The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) is a key player in shaping global development policy and is the largest funder of global research and evaluations. Ironically, while OECD-DAC principles focus on participation and inclusion, there seems to be limited space for the participation of recipient countries in evolving and finalizing these principles.

<sup>7</sup> “Local” in this summary report means something that is connected to the Global South or, more specifically, closer to the location(s) where international cooperation interventions take place.

<sup>8</sup> Local evaluators said they also face difficult situations such as censorship and harassment when challenging imposed standards and methodologies.

<sup>9</sup> EvalIndigenous began in November 2015 as a global task force network of EvalPartners. Read more at <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/cjpe/article/view/68914>

<sup>10</sup> The Grand Bargain website: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/content/grand-bargain-hosted-iasc>

<sup>11</sup> See: <https://www.usaid.gov/localization>

<sup>12</sup> A power-aware lens seeks to mitigate the effects of power imbalances, promote equity and inclusivity, and ensure that the evaluation process is fair and meaningful for all stakeholders involved. Participatory approaches empower marginalized groups and prioritize their voices in program design, implementation, evaluation, and adaptation through close collaboration with communities. Decolonization recognizes historical exploitation of Global South countries and peoples and aims to dismantle colonial-era and neo-colonial ideologies of Western thought and approaches. It also takes into consideration structural and systemic conditions such as climate change, depleted resources, and economic imbalances.

<sup>13</sup> See: <https://www.devex.com/news/us-congress-grills-usaid-chief-on-localization-ukraine-food-crisis-103200> and <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/usaid-localization-numbers>

<sup>14</sup> See the study here: <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2022-12/UNDP-Seoul-Assessing-Development-Effectiveness-for-SSC-2022.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Association Marocaine de l’Evaluation (AME), European Evaluation Society (EES), The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), Community of Evaluators in South Asia, and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs), IOCE (International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation), EvalPartners, EvalYouth Global Mentoring Program.

<sup>16</sup> And other actors such as World Bank Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI), UNEG (United Nations Evaluation Group), International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET).

<sup>17</sup> Such as [Glocal](#).