
External Evaluation of the Global Evaluation Initiative

May 2025



global
evaluation
initiative

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We would equally like to thank the reference group for feedback throughout the evaluation process.

As evaluation team we take full responsibility for the report. The findings are based on an impartial analysis of the data collected. As with all evaluations, this evaluation doesn't capture all aspects and all perceptions of GEI. It is limited by the issues and evaluation questions presented in the Terms of Reference and the data sources available during the evaluation process. The recommendations are derived from the findings and analyses.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in humanitarian action
CLEAR	Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results
DEval	German Institute for Development Evaluation
ECD	Evaluation Capacity Development
ECG	Evaluation Cooperation Group of the International Finance Institutions
ENAP	L'École Nationale d'Administration Publique
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GEI	Global Evaluation Initiative
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (WBG)
IDA	International Development Association (WBG)
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
IEG	Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank Group
IEO	Independent Evaluation Office of the UNDP
INCE	National Evaluation Capacity Index
IDI	INTOSAI Development Initiative
IPDET	International Program for Development Evaluation Training
PIFED	Programme International Formation en Évaluation du Développement
MESA	Monitoring and Evaluation System Analysis
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NEC	National Evaluation Capacities Conference
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TA	Technical Assistance
ToA	Theory of Action
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VOPE	Voluntary Organization for Professional Organization
WBG	World Bank Group

Executive summary

This report presents the external evaluation of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI). The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievements of GEI, to identify likely outcomes, to get an understanding of what has worked and what has not worked related to the Theory of Actions (ToA) and the Theory of Change (ToC), and to explore the possibilities for strengthening GEI.

Findings

The evaluation responds to the evaluation questions outlined in the ToR for the exercise. As there is considerable overlap between the detailed answers to the evaluation questions, we choose to concentrate the presentation on the ten main findings of the evaluation.

Finding 1: GEI global objectives are relevant for a majority of the partners

GEI has played a key role in raising Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) awareness globally and pushing to the fore the importance of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems globally and within partner organizations. The system approach at the country level and the focus on capabilities and building long-term partnerships based on shared diagnostics is believed to be the best approach in addressing capacity development. The gathering and sharing of knowledge on ECD issues through the different GEI channels is of high quality and high relevance. GEI is recognized as a brand at the global level and brings credibility to the initiatives within the network.

Finding 2: GEI contributed to refocusing the CLEAR centers' strategy towards a more relevant approach for strengthening national M&E system capacities

All CLEAR centers experienced a significant shift after 2021, from conducting a range of ECD activities primarily in their host country to a more focused strategy directed at strengthening M&E systems at the country level even in less developed countries. Being part of GEI brought more global visibility and legitimacy to the centers, especially when new centers opened or when providing support to new countries. Although GEI funding enables the CLEAR centers to recruit staff and conduct new activities, grant management is very time-consuming and challenging.

Finding 3: Substantial outcomes are identified at the country level

Strengthening M&E capacities at the national level is a complex, nonlinear process, often challenged by political turnover or shifting priorities. Despite these challenges, the CLEAR centers have achieved significant outcomes through their activities. These outcomes constitute different components attesting to the effectiveness of the CLEAR centers. The outcomes can be evaluated based on their influence on policies at national and subnational levels. Other outcomes include improvement of skills of a diversity of stakeholders, more interest in evaluation in society (increase of participation to evaluation events, or engagement on social media) and more recognition of the expertise of CLEAR centers (see diagram p 23).

Finding 4: GEI is not sufficiently focused on its comparative advantage

GEI's ToC and ToA are perceived as ideal and ambitious. For instance, assuming that the GEI will contribute largely to the use of evidence by governments in developing countries or that the GEI brand will enhance its convening power, attract new partners, and achieve economies of scale in ECD are both optimistic beliefs. Pooling of resources has so far been limited, and donor support has decreased rather than increased. The ToC implies that partners coordinate their ECD

activities through a shared work program to leverage synergies. This has only happened to a limited degree. Some partners have been reluctant to collaborate with GEI for fear of losing the visibility. Reducing fragmentation has primarily been achieved between some of the GEI initiatives and in some countries, even though the silo orientation within the GEI Network and among global M&E actors still seems to remain to some degree. The associate and core partners don't seem to see or understand the level of interaction between the implementing partners and GEI. Some think GEI lacks sufficient integration with broader governance capacity development efforts and other global initiatives.

Finding 5: IPDET is relevant at the individual level, but the evidence of its broader impact is limited

IPDET is a globally recognized, high-quality program that contributes significantly to the international evaluation community. There is strong evidence that IPDET contributes to enhancing the capacity of participants to conduct evaluations. There is no doubt that the social aspects of IPDET are highly appreciated. IPDET supports individual evaluation capacity development by providing participants with both knowledge acquisition and networking opportunities. Many participants feel that the training, though valuable, does not always align with the realities of their home institutions, making it challenging to implement the acquired knowledge effectively.

Finding 6: The alignment between IPDET's supply and demand in the Global South is limited

IPDET participants engage in regional and international evaluation networks, though most had established these connections prior to the program. The program seems to encourage engagement in participants' home countries, particularly through VOPEs, where they contribute to the development of local evaluation capacity. However, one key finding is the perceived imbalance between the supply and demand for M&E initiatives. The program places strong emphasis on training, capacity building, networking, and increasing the number of skilled evaluators. There is less focus on creating demand for M&E by advocating its importance among international donors, governments, and institutions.

Finding 7: Limited but positive views on BetterEvaluation and NEC

BetterEvaluation is valued as a very good source of knowledge for those using it. The quality and usefulness of NEC has increased from Turin NEC 2022 to Beijing NEC 2024. The visibility of GEI was much stronger at the Beijing NEC conference than at the Turin NEC conference.

Finding 8: Mixed views on GEI's communication

GEI's communication approach has evolved in parallel with the program itself. Many of the partners consider the raised awareness of M&E capacity development globally as one of GEI's main achievements. However, partners' overall assessment of the communication strategy's effectiveness is mixed, especially regarding communication between GEI and its partners. Several of the partners in all groups criticize GEI communications for focusing too much on branding and not enough on supporting ECD program delivery and implementation.

Finding 9: Governance is perceived as lacking transparency and cooperation

The approval process for trust fund grants is determined in accordance with separate processes for trust fund proposals and legal agreements with donors. The implementing partners perceive this as both an advantage and a disadvantage. The advantage is the professionalism of WBG in managing trust funds. The disadvantages are the lengthy processes and the many restrictions. Given the small size of the GEI grants, this is perceived as too bureaucratic and inflexible.

Decision-making is perceived as too top-down from IEG. Several partners point out that transparency is missing. Some of the core and associate partners have raised the idea of establishing a board that includes representatives from the Global South as an alternative governance mechanism.

Finding 10: GEI implementing partners do not constitute a coherent network

The assessment of the coherence and interaction between the business lines varies among the implementing partners. While some have a clear overview of the various initiatives and experience in engaging across them, others have limited awareness of what their counterparts are doing. Most implementing partners express disappointment over the limited opportunities for interaction and call for more cross-collaborative activities facilitated by the Global Team. Most partners perceive the Global Team to be of high quality. Many value relationship skills and appreciate the support provided by the members. However, several questions whether the Global Team focuses too much on communication, branding and funding, and not sufficiently on technical aspects of M&E.

Conclusions

Overall, GEI has made important strides in developing M&E capacity and raising awareness on evaluation. GEI has established itself as a catalyst for bridging ECD interventions and gathering key stakeholders. It has become a convincing knowledge hub on ECD issues and experiences, and in implementing M&E capacity development at regional and country levels. GEI has achieved several concrete outputs, outcomes, and progress towards its intended outcomes. GEI's efforts to coordinate national and international stakeholders and reduce fragmentation in M&E capacity development have had mixed results. GEI's ToC and ToA are idealistic and ambitious. Given the available resources, GEI is stretched too thin and has led to a disconnect between the ToA and ToC and the practical implementation of GEI's initiatives. The governance structure and associated mechanisms of GEI have both strengths and weaknesses in enabling GEI to achieve its outcomes. Enhancing transparency, inclusiveness, and flexibility in decision-making processes, as well as better communication with all partners, could strengthen GEI's ability to achieve its intended outcomes. The articulation and linkage of the different initiatives and activities vary significantly among the implementing partners. GEI's comparative advantage is the country level work. By focusing even more on this, GEI can better leverage its strengths and resources to achieve sustainable results.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase the focus on GEI's niche and comparative advantage

(This recommendation relates to findings 2, 3 and 7)

GEI's development objective is – as stated in the MDTF concept document – to improve M&E frameworks, capacity, and use in supported developing countries to foster evidence-informed policy making. GEI expects to be a catalyzer, bringing together key actors and experts in the evaluation field to help governments in developing countries place evidence at the heart of decision-making. The recommendation is to place greater focus on this development objective.

GEI has, through its five years of operations, clearly shown its value in developing M&E capacity to improve evidence-based decision-making and service delivery. While there are several global evaluation networks, GEI is the only initiative that can document success in developing M&E capacity at country level in different regions. No doubt the uncertainties in the current global context show the acute need for better use of M&E targeted to the local context in more countries.

This is GEI's niche and comparative advantage and is where GEI can make a difference. All core, associate and implementing partners share this objective. At the same time, most of the core and associate partners feel that the main objective has not sufficient attention within GEI.

A stronger focus on this could mean closer interaction with key country and regional actors also outside the GEI initiative, such as regional IFI's, WBG and UNDP country offices, other multilateral organizations, regional VOPEs, and Parliamentarians.

A possibility to consider is to create new publication products to share the country and regional insights, knowledge and experiences. For example, this could include an annual or bi-annual regional report on the status of M&E capacity, or an annual report comparing regional and sub-regional approaches and experiences in developing M&E systems. This could be a useful and well-received product by everyone interested in M&E initiatives, helping to enhance understanding that the approach to M&E capacity development varies across regions and should be tailored accordingly. As stated in the CLEAR-AA book *Equitable Evaluation: "The Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) approach has emerged and challenged Euro-American evaluation frameworks that largely dominate the assessment of development interventions in Africa."*

An implication of this recommendation is to carefully consider how the different initiatives in the GEI Network can best support the main objective. IPDET, NEC, BetterEvaluation and gLOCAL are currently open for participants and users in general, not only from target countries. A question to consider is whether these initiatives be more targeted, focusing specifically on individuals from the institutions with which the CLEAR centers are working. In this context, the purpose of GEI pilot training for participants in WBG PIU's should be clarified.¹ IPDET post training mentoring could also be strengthened at country level, sharing IPDET participants list from targeted countries with CLEAR centers of their region, to enable them to structure a regional alumni network.

The evaluation indicates that GEI has not realized the full potential of the BetterEvaluation platform. While those who use it regularly are happy, many others do not use it. The number of regular users seems to have stagnated. Some point out difficulties in finding the best resources. One solution could be to give more visibility to the CLEAR centers on the platform. This could be by a specific section on the website that would gather all CLEAR center publications, for example.

The evaluation shows that the attempts to increase coordination and reduce fragmentation of global M&E capacity development initiatives have had limited success. The recommendation implies to reduce the attention on this.

This recommendation also implies that the ToC and ToA should be amended to be more realistic based on the experiences gained in the first phase.

Recommendation 2: Rethink the best approach to evaluation training

(This recommendation relates to findings 5 and 6)

The recommendation is to transform IPDET into a "center of excellence"² for M&E training, focused on developing high-quality training modules and resources for the CLEAR centers to use in their

¹ "GEI's pilot training in collaboration with the World bank is a great entry point, and not a mission creep as considered above."

² A center of excellence can be described as an organizational environment that strive for, and succeed in, developing high standards of conduct in a field of research, innovation, or learning. See Tomas Hellström, Centres of Excellence and Capacity Building: from Strategy to Impact, *Science and Public Policy*, Volume 45, Issue 4, August 2018, Pages 543–552.

region- and country-specific training. This could also include offering training courses (both in-person in Bern and virtually) to development agencies, civil society organizations, and others, with all costs covered by the participants.

IPDET has been operational for decades and is an established brand, offering a widely recognized international training course. One result of strengthening the role and work of the CLEAR centers is an increase in customized training activities at regional and country levels. An important question to consider moving forward is how IPDET can be developed to support training at both regional and country levels. There are few strong arguments for continuing the traditional IPDET approach of delivering the core course in Bern within a more focused GEI initiative. The current revision of the IPDET program is therefore moving in the right direction.

IPDET should also capitalize on its position to enhance its offerings. It could leverage its partnerships within GEI, as well as with other collaborators, to provide a more diverse range of high-level content through online platforms and make better use of its alumni network for post-training engagement.

This would entail further development of the current plan to offer two new regional training programs, one in Kenya targeting M&E professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in Morocco, to cater to the Middle East, North Africa, and West Africa. It would be an opportunity to build on IPDET's extensive alumni network by involving more local trainers and delivering more tailored training programs.

Recommendation 3: Develop a sustainable business model for GEI

(This recommendation relates to findings 1 and 4)

The recommendation is to update the GEI business model on the basis of the experiences during the first phase of operation and in light of the trends in bilateral donor funding.

The update of the business model should be done on the basis of experience in the first phase of operation. The possibilities for attracting non-traditional donors (e.g., China and Saudi Arabia) and getting funding from foundations should be explored. One could also consider if the trust fund model is the best model for GEI moving forward³.

According to a recent report from OECD⁴ Official Development Assistance (ODA) from DAC member countries in 2024 declined for the first time in five years, falling by 7.1% in real terms compared to 2023. The decrease in net ODA from DAC member countries was driven by a fall in contributions to the core budgets of multilateral organizations, as well as declines of in-donor refugee costs, humanitarian aid, and aid for Ukraine. Simulations of ODA developed by the OECD, based on a recent survey of DAC members, show that ODA is estimated to drop between 9% and 17% from 2024 to 2025

Maintaining the MDTF as the main source of GEI's funding is likely unsustainable. Already, one major bilateral donor (Sweden) has withdrawn its commitment to contribute. Other traditional OECD donor countries are either not participating or are—as conveyed in the interviews—considering reducing their contributions.

³ For instance, the capacity development organization for supreme audit organizations (the Intosai Development Initiative) is organized as a foundation. GEI's comment is that this is not a relevant model to look at.

⁴ <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/official-development-assistance-oda.html>

In applying the funds, a concern is that the grants provided to the CLEAR centers so far, are only for one year at the time. This makes it difficult to retain staff and thus weakens the credibility and influence of the centers. Consequently, multi-year grants should be provided.

Other suggestions regarding applying the MDTF funds are to prioritize funding of initiatives that cannot easily be funded by others, to make the cost of the various initiatives more visible, and to clarify the mechanisms through which other actors can engage directly with implementing partners.

Recommendation 4: Revise the governance setup

(This recommendation relates to finding 9 and 10)

The recommendation is to revise the governance of GEI to increase participation of stakeholders, also at country level and increase transparency in decision-making.

The evaluation reveals that the current setup is not working optimally. The feedback in interviews shows that the Partnership Council is not seen as a credible decision-making forum. Several partners find the lack of formal representation from the target groups a weakness in the setup. This could pave the way for a global board at the top, with representatives from other actors at country and regional levels. Additionally, the future of the Advisory Board should be reconsidered, as the Global Team has indicated that it has not been successful thus far. More generally, new ways to prepare and moderate meetings could be explored in order to foster engagement and ownership in the decision-making process. Moreover, implementation partners should have a space to jointly discuss GEI overall strategy and their contributions to this strategy on from their specific regional or sectoral expertise.

It may be worth looking into some experiences of other international organizations. For example, has UN WIDER⁵ been mentioned as a good example of a democratic setup. UN WIDER's mandate is to undertake research and policy analysis, to provide a forum for knowledge sharing, discussion and debate, and to offer capacity development and training for researchers and decision-makers in economics and social development. UN WIDER is led by an international board of academics. Another example is the INTOSAI Development Initiative – an initiative to enhance the capacity of Supreme Audit Institutions in developing countries and has a non-executive board as its principal strategic body.

Recommendation 5: Consider the role and composition of the Global Team

(This finding relates to findings 8 and 9)

The recommendation is to consider the role and composition of the Global Team and the involvement of IEG, IEO and others in providing support in M&E capacity development.

The support from the Global Team is highly appreciated by the implementing partners. The members of the Global Team play different roles. Some are primarily experts on how to meet the formal requirements from the WBG for receiving grants. Others are professionals in handling different forms of communication and some in building relationships. This combination of expertise and roles seems to have been effective during the initial phase of GEI. Until now, the role of the Global Team has not been clearly defined in the theory of change of GEI. Its intended

⁵ United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research

contributions to the GEI network of implementation partners should be clarified in line with the new priorities that will be defined.

A shift in focus or in priorities may require a different skillset within the Global Team as well as improved access to support from the “back offices” in IEG, IEO and other places. The evaluation highlights a need for greater access to deeper knowledge and expertise in M&E systems development.

Introduction and background

1. Introduction

This report presents the external evaluation of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI). The evaluation was commissioned by IEG with the intention to provide insights and recommendations to the Partnership Council, the Global Team and GEI management to inform strategic planning for GEI and ensure that the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) continues to fund effective activities that support the development of M&E systems and capabilities in target countries.

GEI was launched in November 2020 by the Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) and supported by an MDTF.

2. Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the achievements of GEI, to identify likely outcomes, to get an understanding of what has worked and what has not worked related to the ToA and the ToC, and to explore the possibilities for strengthening GEI. The evaluation focused on partner collaboration at both global and country levels, GEI's efforts to address fragmentation among evaluation capacity initiatives, and the added value it provides to implementing partners.

The scope of the evaluation is the work of the GEI from inception to date. The main issues for the evaluation are⁶:

- 1) The evolution of GEI and the relevance of the initial Theory of Change (ToC) and Theory of Action (ToA).
- 2) The delivery of outputs and outcomes—both globally and in countries where GEI is active—among its target audiences, such as evaluators and evaluation practitioners.
- 3) The added value of GEI, including addressing fragmentation.
- 4) The governance and management of GEI, including collaboration with and between partners.
- 5) The future of the GEI.

3. Description of GEI

GEI is a global network of organizations and experts supporting developing country governments in strengthening their monitoring, evaluation, and use of evidence. GEI operates through several business lines, including developing a culture of evidence-based decision-making, strengthening a cadre of evaluators and M&E specialists, generating and sharing knowledge, and managing governance and program activities. The initiative is managed by a Global Team based in Brussels, Belgium, with a satellite office at IEG in Washington, D.C.

GEI is centered on the vision that better evidence contributes to better policies, and ultimately to better lives. GEI expects to be a catalyzer, bringing together key actors and experts in the evaluation field to help governments in developing countries place evidence at the heart of

⁶ Ref. Terms of Reference, September 6, 2024.

decision-making. GEI aims to play a pivotal role in generating M&E knowledge and promoting its dissemination both globally and locally.⁷

GEI's ToC and ToA⁸ articulate their commitment to improving lives by supporting the development of more relevant and effective policies, fostering enabling environments, enhancing organizational systems and processes, and strengthening M&E capacities. The ToC implies that GEI aims to contribute to better lives through more relevant and effective policies, better supply and demand of M&E evidence, enhanced enabling environments, improved organizational systems and processes and strengthened M&E capacities. GEI aims to achieve this through diagnostics, technical assistance (TA) and advisory work, training and professional development, and knowledge generation and sharing. The ToA implies that GEI, through partnerships and pooling of resources, will lead to economies of scale, enhanced quality, increased strategic orientation and reduced cost (efficiency).

The main expected outcomes include⁹:

- Greater recognition and appreciation by governments and other stakeholders in developing countries of the role of M&E in evidence-informed decision-making and increased willingness to use evaluative evidence for decision-making and adaptive management in policies and programs.
- Better capacity of governments and other stakeholders in developing countries to conduct evaluations (tailored to national needs and priorities) and manage and use M&E frameworks to develop more relevant and effective policies and programs.
- Better evidence resulting from M&E frameworks and quality evaluations to be made publicly available.
- Improved access to evaluative evidence for civil society and citizens in developing countries, enabling more meaningful and effective engagement in public policy processes.

A key contextual factor for understanding the implementation of GEI's first phase—examined in this evaluation—is the global COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged shortly after GEI was launched in early 2020. This put major restrictions on international travel and face-to-face meetings resulting in a slowdown of the initial momentum.

Another contextual factor is that the actual donor contributions to MDTF (as of end of January 2025) was about 15% less than the amount initially committed in 2020 (USD 21,2 million committed, USD 18,1 million contributed). This has created a financial constraint on GEI and made it difficult to implement all the initial plans.

⁷ Ref. The 2020 trust fund proposal (A proposed hybrid multi-donor trust fund in the amount of US\$21.2M for The Global Evaluation Initiative, November 4, 2020).

⁸ See annexes 8 and 9.

⁹ According to the GEI MDTF concept note, November 4, 2020

Evaluation approach and methodology

1. Evaluation approach

To address the evaluation questions, the evaluation team employed two complementary approaches:

- The first approach involved a theory-based analysis of GEI's theory of change at both regional and country levels.
- The second approach was based on an iterative and triangulation process to identify the main findings on governance issues or global considerations about GEI. This entails consolidating hypotheses through a diversity of sources of opinions (different stakeholders) or sources of information (documentary analysis).

Both approaches mobilized Outcome Harvesting and investigated GEI's specific contributions. The Outcome Harvesting investigation was systematically integrated into data collection and analysis, focusing on identifying outcome stories from activities carried out by implementation partners. These stories were then categorized to identify patterns in successful configurations, as well as the factors that facilitated or hindered these outcomes.

In parallel, investigations examined the main contribution claims made by GEI implementation partners regarding these outcomes and, where possible, validated them through triangulation of perspectives and supporting documentation.

2. Methodology and data sources

The evaluation employed multidata collection methods both qualitative and quantitative including document reviews of available data from the GEI&US system, key informant interviews (virtual and in-person), focus group discussions, and a survey. After a cross analysis of the data collected, the ET summarizes key findings and conclusions.

a. Primary data collection tools

A diverse set of data collection tools was employed to capture the opinions and feedback of a broad range of legitimate stakeholders in GEI activities¹⁰:

- Interviews with associate partners (11 organizations out of 11)
- Interviews with core partners (12 organizations out of 12)
- Interviews with all implementing partners (17 persons)
- Interviews with members of the Global Team (7 persons)
- Interviews with selected representatives of IEG, WBG, IOE and UNDP (9 persons)

An exhaustive investigation of actions conducted by the CLEAR centers was conducted with the following stakeholders:

- Interviews with each CLEAR center directors
- Virtual Focus groups with each of the CLEAR centers' staff members (44 persons)
- Interviews with CLEAR center host institutions

¹⁰ See the annexes for detailed information

- On-site visit to CLEAR Anglophone Africa, including all the above interviews and additional interviews with two partner countries

Using a structured questionnaire with closed-end questions IPDET activities and outcomes were investigated through a dedicated online survey sent to all participants from 2021 to date:

- The survey was open from December 10 to January 16 and was distributed to approximately 722 unique former participants, using contact information provided by IPDET. 331 unique individuals opened the survey links, and 197 answered, that is a participation rate of 59.5 % (answers/views) and response rate of 27.3% (of everyone that received the survey). From the collected answers, 29 were not fully completed and were thus removed from the sample. In the end, our sample consists of 162 individual responses: 22.4% of the total population, 49% participation rate.
- The survey successfully reached a diverse range of participants on the IPDET program. Respondents mostly come from Asia (28%), Africa (22%) and Europe (20%). To a lesser extent, 13% of respondents come from Latin America and 8% from the Middle East. This distribution of respondents is relatively close to the real distribution in the population, apart from a small underrepresentation of Europe (-8%) and North America (-4%) and a sur-representation of Asia (+5%) and Latin America (+6%)¹¹.
- Most survey respondents are female (66.7%), in line with the strong emphasis to foster female participation at IPDET (59% prior to 2020 and up to 70% in 2024).
- The survey exhibits a slight bias, as participants from more recent years are overrepresented in our sample. This is most likely due to a stronger engagement with the IPDET network immediately after participation, which may gradually decline over time.

b. Secondary data collection tools

To complement these ad hoc investigations, the evaluation team conducted an extensive documentary analysis provided by the GEI Global Team or implementing partners (see list in annex 2)

A literature review on evaluation capacity building and the institutionalization of M&E systems has also been conducted to question some aspects of the theory of change as well as to identify relevant conceptual structures to analyze outcomes. (See annex 5.)

3. Limitations

This evaluation methodology had to answer questions on a limited budget and under time constraints. Moreover, the wide scope of GEI's activities limits the ability to conduct a comprehensive investigation across all intervention sites.

The evaluation team wishes to alert the reader to the potential bias and limitation of the method and tools deployed as well as the strategies developed to control these biases as much as possible.

- **In the absence of a baseline, a large part of the data analysis relies on the collected opinion of stakeholders**
 - Possible bias:

¹¹ In the IPDET database: 23% Africa, 24 % Asia, 29% Europe, 8% Latin America, 7% Middle East, 8% North America, 1% Oceania.

- Subject to unintentional reinterpretation of past events through the lens of the present, memory lapses, or distortions arising from differing perceptions.
 - May involve the deliberate withholding of information or the selective emphasis of certain aspects to support the stakeholder's position.
 - Strategy of the evaluation team:
 - Diversify stakeholders and cross analyze their opinions.
 - Ask for precise examples to support arguments.
 - Triangulate with other sources when possible (documents or data).
- **Low survey answer rate**
 - Possible bias:
 - Only the most radical points of view are expressed: either very enthusiastic participants or highly disappointed participants.
 - Data collected is not representative of the overall population.
 - Strategy of the evaluation team:
 - The survey presents a low response rate (22.4%). However, we successfully gathered responses from a diverse range of participants, both geographically and across various organizations. This diversity helps reduce potential bias and enhances the findings, despite the limited response rate. Overall, if answers slightly differ, depending on the characteristics of the respondents, the differences were not statistically significant.
 - The broad findings from the survey were also shared and discussed with a range of implementation partners to challenge them.
- **Focus rather on success stories than on failure due to Outcome Harvesting approach**
 - Possible bias:
 - Actors only mention successes and achievements.
 - Strategy of the evaluation team:
 - Actors were also interviewed on the main challenges they encounter in generating outcomes.
 - Actors were also directly questioned on other interventions identified in the documentary analysis but not directly mentioned by them.
- **Impossibility to verify contribution claims in the field other than by interview**
 - Possible bias:
 - Conducting a Contribution Analysis was not possible given the means of the evaluation team and the scope of the study.
 - Actors tend to claim outcomes as a result of their contribution without taking into consideration other interventions conducted by other actors.
 - Strategy of the evaluation team:
 - Challenge interviewees to account specifically for their contribution and ask about their knowledge of other ongoing ECD initiatives likely to contribute to the same outcome.
 - Interview country officials to gather their perspectives on the contributions of GEI's implementing partners.

Findings

The evaluation responds to the overall purpose of assessing the achievements of GEI and to the evaluation questions outlined in the ToR for the exercise. As there is considerable overlap between the detailed answers to the evaluation questions, we choose in this chapter of the report to concentrate the presentation on the ten main findings of the evaluation, while the answers to each evaluation question is presented in annex 6. The ten findings emerge from the analysis of the data from the different sources and form the basis for the five recommendations to follow in the next chapter. Additional details of the data are presented in other annexes to the report.

Finding 1: GEI global objectives are relevant for a majority of the partners

GEI is aligned with partners' priorities

The findings demonstrate the relevance of GEI. All interviewees support the objective of building evaluation capacity and consider GEI to have big potential. Most of the core and associate partners share the view that GEI has been important in raising awareness of ECD at the international level and in pushing to the fore the importance of strengthening M&E systems globally and within partner organizations. Other positive achievements mentioned by some of the partners are M&E capacity development at both regional and country levels and the facilitation of interaction between initiatives. GEI is aligned with the capacity development strategies of WBG, UNDP and other core partners alike. For its implementing partners, GEI provides access to a global network of support, experience, and knowledge—far broader than what was available to them prior to GEI's establishment.

The approach at the country level is supported

The system approach at the country level is broadly supported. The focus on capabilities and building long-term partnerships based on shared diagnostics is believed to be the best approach in addressing capacity development for two main reasons.

First, the approach is in line with the best practices described in the broad literature on evaluation capacity building and institutionalization of evaluation. This literature identifies three sub-systems in which evaluation is embedded and contributes to institutionalization: the political system, the social system and the system of professional evaluators¹². The political system deals with institutional structures and processes, the social system with societal dissemination and acceptance of evaluation in civil society, and the system of professionalization of evaluations with academic training, journals and professional networks. To a large degree, GEI reflects a similar understanding.

Secondly, the country diagnostic tool (The Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Analysis - MESA) is supported by all. On using the tool, the CLEAR centers have a pragmatic approach and adapt it to the stakeholders' ambitions and availability. Nevertheless, some of the core and associate partners perceive MESA to be too comprehensive with too much work required to be complete.

¹² See Stockmann, Reinhard, Wolfgang Meyer, et Lena Taube, éd. 2020. *The Institutionalisation of Evaluation in Europe*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.

The view is that a leaner version would be more attractive for countries to apply. The National Evaluation Capacity Index (INCE)¹³ tool, developed by DEval, and used in Latin America is also seen as a useful diagnostic tool.

Positive assessment of knowledge management

Almost all the interviewees find the gathering and sharing of knowledge on ECD issues through the different GEI channels to be of high quality and relevance. These include BetterEvaluation, working papers, reports and communication through social media. The CLEAR centers have contributed to knowledge production through reports, articles and academic literature.

GEI’s connection with IEG and IEO brings credibility

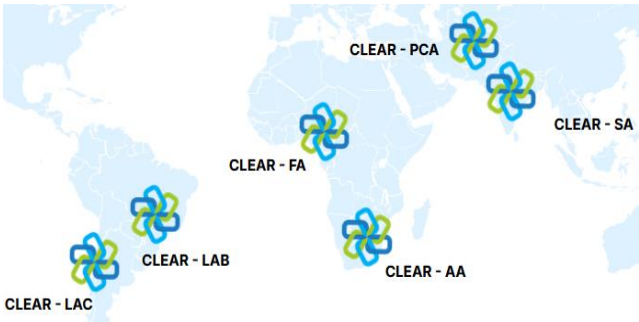
GEI is recognized as a brand at the global level and brings credibility to the initiatives within the network. For implementing partners, GEI offers connections to a global network they can access for support, experience, and knowledge, much larger than they had before GEI was established. This global recognition has helped unify efforts and reduce duplication of initiatives. The strong link with IEG/WBG and IEO/UNDP is considered an advantage for some of the core partners, enhancing the credibility of the initiative.

“GEI – with its strong credibility – is very useful to inspire and raise awareness on ECD internally in our own organization.” (core partner)

Finding 2: GEI contributed to refocusing the CLEAR centers’ strategy toward a more relevant approach for strengthening national M&E system capacities

Many of the CLEAR centers were active for a decade prior to GEI (CLEAR-SA/CLEAR-LAC/CLEAR-FA/CLEAR-AA). This investigation focuses on GEI’s contributions to the activities of the CLEAR centers since 2021.

CLEAR-PCA was created in 2021 and CLEAR-LAC changed location from Mexico to Chile in 2024.



¹³The National Evaluation Capacity Index (INCE) is a tool to carry out a collaborative diagnostic that assesses evaluation capacities and practices in the field of public policies, programs and services.

Main contributions of GEI to the strategies and activities of the CLEAR centers

- **Provides fundings for new activities and sets priorities**

Since 2021, all CLEAR centers have undergone a significant shift—from delivering a broad range of ECD activities primarily within their host countries to adopting a more focused strategy aimed at strengthening national monitoring and evaluation systems, including in less mature contexts.

“We are less a consulting firm and more a public good player. We are less focused on project and conduct more work on ecosystems.”

(deputy director of a CLEAR center)

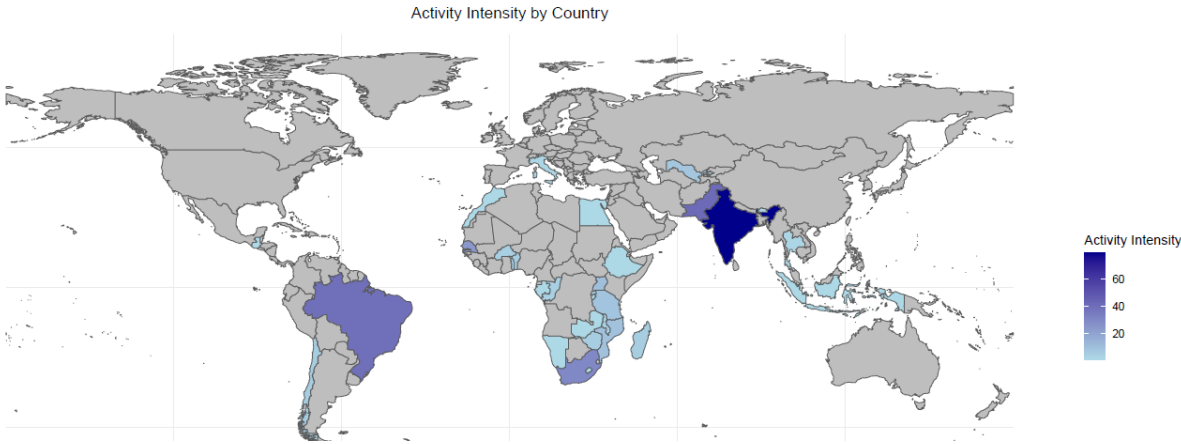
Such activities are rarely funded by national actors or international organizations, making GEI one of the few available funding sources. This added value is particularly significant in regions such as South Asia and Latin America.

“The strategy is to go beyond individual capacity building and to have a more systematic approach in the country. And that provides us with comparative advantages in capacity building since we are the first to talk about that and offer that.” (staff of a CLEAR center)

The main strategic shifts were twofold: first on the new localization of interventions, second on activities structured along the four GEI business lines.

With GEI, the CLEAR centers expanded their areas of intervention beyond their host country. Although host countries are still the main recipient of their activities, they now conduct interventions in other countries identified jointly with the GEI Global Team.

Figure 1 - Map of the activities reported in the GEI report database (GEI&US) 2024 database for CLEAR centers



Criteria to strategically pick these countries differ across CLEAR centers but are often a mix between donor priorities, country stability, emerging demand for M&E, existence of a department or organization dedicated to M&E (even if not active), or previous connections through other partners or host institutions. Although the CLEAR centers have a mission to foster countries’ interest in M&E (see finding 3) they are mostly willing to act on “demand” from country officials and not push their agenda to develop country-owned approaches.

- **Increase of knowledge sharing at the global level**

The GEI Global Team is perceived as a “headquarters” that organizes cooperation between the CLEAR centers and provides strategic support for challenging new activities. Progress toward

greater collaboration among the CLEAR centers began with the joint development of the MESA diagnostic tool, which was recognized as a foundational step in the capitalization of best practices and knowledge. More collaboration followed on specific themes such as communication, climate change or the new GEI&US reporting system. This gave way to bilateral cooperation between CLEAR centers in the same regions (for instance, CLEAR-AA and CLEAR-FA could work jointly with the same countries, e.g., Benin) but also between “old” and “new” CLEAR centers. They can also combine forces on specific interventions such as CLEAR-LAB and CLEAR-SA’s joint support in evaluating Indonesia’s Just Transition project. CLEAR-PCA has mentioned benefiting from multiple instances of mentorship from more experienced CLEAR centers whenever they encounter challenges. Part of these mentoring activities are also experienced at an individual level among staff members, e.g., the consolidation of an informal network of “strong women conducting evaluation”.

“This is one of the best teams I have worked with [all CLEAR centers]. We work in a synergized manner; we are on the same page. They are always available. When designing our training on climate we knew that CLEAR-LAC specialized in this, and they supported us for our training and even taught online. For gender training we reached out to different centers, and they helped us.”

Peak periods of collaboration often occur during preparations for NEC conferences, which are viewed as key opportunities to showcase their work. In this context, CLEAR centers collaborate to consolidate common practices for joint panels or to bring together representatives from different regions to discuss shared challenges. This year, these collaborations resulted in a joint contract between CLEAR centers to train staff of the International Fund for Agricultural Development around the world with a common curriculum.

“GEI is the glue that keeps the CLEAR centers together. GEI reinforces the fact that we need a country program and some kind of roadmap. We are independent but we have a guideline to operate.”

(Staff member)

In addition to coordinating collaboration efforts, the GEI Global Team also contributes to knowledge capitalization and sharing with the CLEAR centers—either by providing direct advisory support (as in Bhutan) or funding specialist consultants to complement CLEAR expertise when needed.

- **Increase visibility**

Being part of GEI brought more global visibility and legitimacy to the CLEAR centers, specifically when they were new centers or provided support to new countries. Being part of a larger entity and hosted by the WBG facilitated their access to high-level officials at the country level and opened doors to make initial contacts. This also helped foster visibility among other international organizations. Since 2021, most CLEAR centers experienced an increase in partnerships and funding from other international organizations, such as UNICEF (CLEAR-AA), UNDP (Bhutan/Pakistan), WFP (CLEAR-AA), Gates Foundation (CLEAR-SA) or some regional banks.

Visibility of CLEAR activities was also increased thanks to the GEI Global Team’s marketing and communication activities (websites, social networking activities) as well as coordination with other implementation partners. For instance, this was achieved by inviting CLEAR staff to conduct a training module at IPDET and by facilitating access to BetterEvaluation publications. The

incentive on knowledge production also led to more systematic publications from CLEAR centers increasing their recognition in the academic arena.

Main challenges to sustainable activities and room for improvement

- **Manage grant and contract uncertainty**

Although GEI funding enables CLEAR centers to recruit staff and conduct new activities, grant management is still very time-consuming and challenging for CLEAR staff. Some CLEAR centers deplore the human resources they must allocate to financial reporting or the restrictions they face when subcontracting for specific events or activities, e.g., traveling. More importantly, the main challenge lies in specific periods—sometimes lasting up to eight months—during which they have not yet received grant funding but are still required to carry out activities and cover salaries¹⁴. Host institutions often bring financial help during these periods of transition. Also, the uncertainty about grant reconduction leads to a reliance on short-term contracting and, thus, a difficulty in attracting and maintaining quality staff. This uncertainty about funding is seen as disconnected from the new strategy they have to implement.

“We must commit to long-term strategy but don’t have the resources to say what we will have in the future; it is short term funding. Sometimes we need to conduct more activities to have more impact, but we don’t have the resources”.

Some CLEAR centers partially manage this uncertainty by securing alternative funding for specific projects—such as publications, regional initiatives, large training programs, or evaluation activities.

- **Insufficient visibility to regional or international organizations working in countries of intervention**

Although GEI increased their visibility and access to partnerships, the CLEAR centers have limited interaction with regional or international organizations. Despite efforts being made by the Global Team to facilitate meetings with WBG and UNDP country offices all the CLEAR centers report limited or no interaction with these offices located in their countries of intervention. They also miss connections with regional actors, or entities, of international organizations that could contribute to their strategy or funding. All the CLEAR centers regret their limited access at a global level to GEI core or associate partners or other implementing partners to increase the visibility of their actions.

Finding 3: Substantial outcomes are identified at the country level

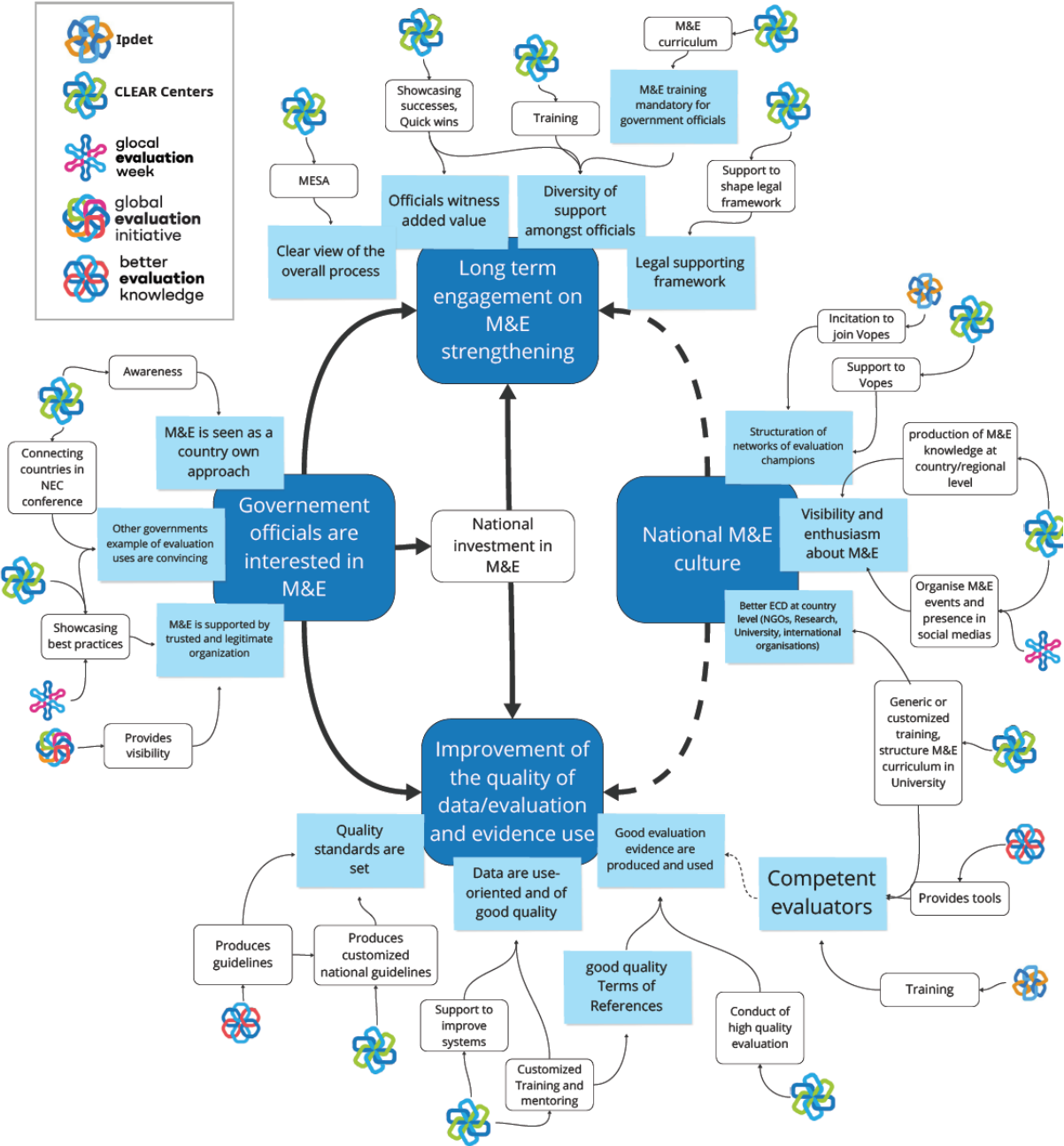
Strengthening M&E capacities at the national level is a nonlinear process subject to many risks linked to political turnover or shifts in political priorities. Nevertheless, substantial outcomes have been achieved through the activities of the CLEAR centers. This evaluation systematically collected outcomes stories from all the CLEAR centers. The following analysis organizes these findings in short theories of change accounting for the specific contributions and mechanisms leading to these types of outcomes. These strategies exemplify how the CLEAR centers mobilize jointly across GEI business lines to enhance their impact at the country level.

¹⁴ The problems are apparently caused by the specific rules in WBG related to grants

This review identified five global outcomes of CLEAR center activities. These outcomes represent various elements that demonstrate the effectiveness of the CLEAR centers at different stages of their interventions, while also serving as key components of a functioning and sustainable M&E system.

The following diagram (Figure 2) provides a synthetic representation of the diversity of possible contributions of CLEAR centers at country level as well as their complementarities with other implementation partners.

Figure 2: Synthetic representation of GEI implementation partners possible contributions at country level (production of the evaluation team)



Interest in monitoring and evaluation

One of the initial outcomes of CLEAR center activities is that new country officials or administrations develop an interest in M&E and become willing to engage in the process. These outcomes can be assessed by the number of direct new solicitations the CLEAR centers receive, or the participation of high-level officials in M&E networking events. Such outcomes are key for the CLEAR centers, as they wish to work mainly on demand. Many success stories mentioned such outcomes specifically when these countries had low capacity and little M&E experience.

“We try to help the country reflect on what they need”

(CLEAR center director)

To reach such outcomes the CLEAR centers deploy two main strategies:

- **Initial training of key champions through general awareness-raising activities:** Through their own investigations, or via previous contact by their host institution or international partners, the CLEAR centers identify potential champions within the respective administration who is interested in M&E and offer them training. These champions then constitute entry points to get other high-level officials involved and start activities within a country.

“The entry points are difficult to find to enter the system. Either we start from the top and reach down to other sub-levels or we start from subnational entities.”

- **Inviting country officials to the NEC conference and organizing peer-to-peer discussions:** Another common strategy is to foster interest by connecting targeted countries with other more experienced countries who are already engaged in with a CLEAR center. Country officials are more easily convinced when their counterparts show them the country-led M&E approach and how they can put it to good use. These connections generally happened during NEC conferences and can lead to direct engagement, such as in the cases of Uzbekistan and Somalia.

Building lasting trust

Although building trust may be viewed as a means rather than an outcome, establishing trusting relationships in these contexts is a significant and challenging step—frequently cited by most CLEAR centers as a key achievement of their interventions. These outcomes can be assessed by the frequency with which the CLEAR centers are approached by a diverse range of country officials, as well as by their privileged access to data for conducting diagnostics and providing support.

To reach such outcomes the CLEAR centers deploy two main strategies:

- **Capitalize on existing relationships or reputation:** The CLEAR center can sometimes benefit from the reputation of their host institutions or from the visibility of the CLEAR center itself. “Old” CLEAR centers have many success stories from their work with other countries and have demonstrated both their relevance and expertise. Also, their host institution (university or research center, such as J-PAL South Asia) is already recognized in the region and trusted by key national officials. Finally, the CLEAR center can also have privileged access to county officials to conduct activities thanks to other international

actors such as UNICEF or UNDP and build upon their existing relationship when working in partnership with them.

- **Conduct a step-by-step approach focusing on “quick wins”:** When trust has yet to be established, all CLEAR centers share the common strategy of adopting a small steps approach to capitalize on rapid achievement and show the relevance of their approach. They often alternate with short customized training for a department, with workshops and technical mentoring on specific monitoring activities leading to rapid results and use. Building on these first successes, they are then called upon for more ambitious activities by other national actors.

“We do our homework, we try to understand dynamics, we come up with some hypothesis on what they could need and our strategic way of action. We try to be very opportunistic, when we see an opening, we offer services or quick support to review data system. And we adapt depending of the needs. It’s an iterative process; we are happy to pivot as well with them and to make it work one way and another. We work in a middle way between our goals and their specific needs.”

Maintain long-term commitment

One of the most challenging outcomes for the CLEAR centers is to maintain the long-term commitment of country officials to strengthen their M&E systems. Such commitment can be attested by the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (e.g., the planning commission in Pakistan), structuring M&E policies and legislation (e.g., Uzbekistan), institutionalizing systematic M&E approaches for national development plans, systematic and streamlined M&E training of public servants or continuous demand of support for more advanced M&E activities.

To reach such outcomes CLEAR centers deploy five strategies:

- **Setting a mid-term to long-term agenda with the MESA diagnostic tools.** The diagnostic co-constructed between CLEAR centers and country officials provides clear perspectives on the different components of the M&E national system to be strengthened.
- **Contribute to structuring an institutional enabling environment:** While not sufficient on its own, a cornerstone of M&E institutionalization is the establishment of a legal framework or a dedicated institutional unit for M&E. The CLEAR centers often offer support to structure such institutions to find common ground between specific national contexts and quality standards (e.g., Côte d'Ivoire's decrees of application and the national evaluation plan in Tanzania).
- **Set a common culture of M&E across the national administration:** The CLEAR centers can help develop national guidelines in how to conduct evaluations (e.g., CLEAR-LAB and the rapid evaluation manual in Brazil). They can also contribute to the creation of specific M&E modules integrated into national schools for administrative staff. This training then becomes mandatory for each new civil servant—or is made available for the continued education of more experienced staff. This can be achieved at the national level (e.g., India) or at the subnational level (e.g., Pakistan).
- **Promote the exchange of M&E success stories within and across countries to encourage peer learning and emulation:** Engagement can be also fostered through the visibility and acknowledgment of successes. The CLEAR centers are attentive to showcasing each achievement within or across countries to give them visibility. For example, in 2024, CLEAR-FA launched a platform—to share progress on the institutionalization of M&E in Francophone Africa and CLEAR AA created the African

Evaluation Studies Database¹⁵. Other examples include CLEAR centers publishing successful country initiatives or sharing cases of evidence use.

“In Brazil we started a process that start with short diagnostic, then training followed by mentorship to internalize M&E practices, with monthly meeting with the staff of the targeted department. This was a successful model and it went viral. We started at the national level, then at subnational level and now we are expanding to other countries.”

- **Diversify allies and champions at the national level:** A common strategy shared by the CLEAR centers is to widen their network within a country to include different levels of government and of sectoral departments. These different entry points can be identified during the diagnostic phase and explored when the opportunity arises. The CLEAR-SA Center operates at both the National and the Sub-National levels simultaneously. The Center’s work at the National level focuses on establishing policies and frameworks that create a favorable national environment for M&E in India while the Center’s work at the State level focuses on ensuring that the sub-national governments have adequate capacity to utilize and adapt the policies established nationally.

Improve monitoring and evaluation tools and use of evidence

The outcomes of the CLEAR centers can also be assessed through the M&E products they help develop at both the national and subnational levels. These products serve as building blocks for the institutionalization of routine M&E practices and offer concrete examples of evidence being used to inform policy decisions. These tools can be both traditional and innovative and can contribute to the enrichment of the global evaluation toolbox. Examples of these products include:

- **Support for cataloging, structuring, and operationalizing specific administrative datasets:** CLEAR-SA supported the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab in developing their respective sub-national/state’s data policies aimed at promoting data governance in program management.
- **Create or theorize new tools:** Outcome-based budget (tailored to the Indian context), equal evaluation (CLEAR-AA), executive evaluation (CLEAR-LAB).
- **Conduct evaluation or impact evaluation to provide a strong basis for evidence use:** A summary of evaluation evidence from a school meal program evaluation (Malawi), impact evaluation technical education program in Brazil (CLEAR-LAB), rapid evaluation of Mozambique's Water Policy (CLEAR-LAB), evaluation in Burkina Faso (CLEAR-FA), sectoral meta-syntheses on a sample of 26 evaluations in Madagascar (CLEAR-FA).

Fostering a national M&E culture beyond government

The CLEAR centers also target a wider audience to strengthen ECD at both the regional and national levels. The main individual-level outcomes of these activities include the diversity of people trained, participation in evaluation events, engagement with evaluation content on social media, and access to CLEAR center publications. At the organizational level, such outcomes can be assessed by organizations (outside the government) funding M&E training for their staff, strengthening of national VOPE associations, and a growing interest of universities to develop master degrees in evaluation.

¹⁵ <https://twendembele.org/african-evaluation-studies-database/> ; <https://www.CLEARfa.org/observatoire/a-propos>

To reach such outcomes, the CLEAR centers deploy four strategies:

- **Organize large-scale training programs at national or regional levels:** These programs can be delivered online or on-site and may be open to all participants or tailored for specific organizations, such as NGOs or international institutions, such as ADB or IDB.
- **Generate enthusiasm about M&E:** By organizing gLOCAL events or evaluation weeks and promoting year-round evaluation activities through social media.
- **Systematically support the development of academic curricula in M&E, particularly when the host institution is a university, and in collaboration with other universities as well:** (master degree in evaluation at Cesag, Senegal, master degrees in Tanzania/Malawi).
- **Support the growth of formal evaluation networks or regional associations through funding and strategic advisory services:** (CLEAR-FA supported VOPE in Congo and Senegal as well as the African Evaluation Association, the Francophone Network for Evaluation, and African Parliamentarians' Network on Development Evaluation).

Finding 4: GEI is not sufficiently focused on its comparative advantage

Disconnect between ambitions and resources

GEI's ToC and ToA are widely viewed as idealistic and ambitious. For example, the ToC appears to assume that governments in developing countries routinely use evaluative evidence for planning, policy design, and adaptive management of services. A United Nations study of national evaluation capacity development and the evolution of national evaluation systems¹⁶ finds that, currently, evaluations are mostly commissioned by development partners, with a limited number of evaluations produced by governments. This limits ownership and use of results and reduces opportunities for government officials to participate actively in evaluations. Even in developed countries, this is an optimistic assumption.

The ToA assumes that by pooling resources from partners, the GEI brand will enhance its convening power, attract new partners, and achieve economies of scale in ECD. This is an optimistic belief. So far, resource pooling has been limited, and donor support has declined rather than grown.

The current approach falls short of the expectations GEI has created among core and associate partners through the MDTF setup and MoU signed with associate partners. GEI is currently viewed as being '*stretched too thin*' in terms of the number of focus countries and the range of issues it is engaged in. Interviewees ask if this is the best way forward or if GEI should take a more realistic and workable approach. There seems to be tension between partners' requests (which tend to result in GEI doing many different things in many different places) and strategic coherence (focusing efforts on fewer places to increase depth, duration and scope of engagement). One of the biggest tensions is between the rhetoric of supporting local evaluation capacity and the predominant reliance on international consultants to evaluate donors' own development activities.

¹⁶ UNEG 2022. United Nations contributions to national evaluation capacity development and the evolution of national evaluation systems. An overview of implementation of General Assembly Resolution 69/237.

The expectations of GEI reflect the partners' understanding of the purpose of the partnership. Some (like the associate partners) see GEI as a collaboration among partners with shared interests to achieve common goals that would not be attainable independently. These partners experience less than desired interaction with and follow up from the Global Team, partly due to insufficient resources and capacity. Some expect GEI to provide funding for their activities.

“We have not found a way of leveraging with GEI. The interaction is limited. We don't have specific funds for ECD.” (Associate Partner)

This creates disappointment and dissatisfaction. The initial contact with GEI (through the MoUs and the meeting of the Implementing Committee in 2022) created high expectations. Follow-up has been less than expected. With some associate partners there has been no engagement at all. Some feel disconnected from GEI.

Other partners (like the core partners) expect GEI to deliver results according to the stated and perceived objectives. These partners expect reports on tangible outcomes in line with the ToC and ToA as arguments for continued support. Several of these partners expect more than they get at present. They receive reports on activities and other outputs, but expect reporting on outcomes, however without a clear understanding of what they mean by outcomes.

Too fragmented

GEI's efforts to coordinate national and international stakeholders and reduce fragmentation in M&E capacity development are widely seen as unrealistic, both globally and in many of the countries where GEI is active. The ToC implies that partners coordinate their ECD activities through a shared work program to leverage synergies. This has only happened to a limited degree. Some partners have been reluctant to collaborate with GEI for fear of losing visibility of their own brand. Progress in reducing fragmentation has primarily occurred among certain GEI initiatives and in specific countries, although a siloed approach within the GEI Network and among global M&E actors still appears to persist to some extent.

Some question the relevance of maintaining the objective of reducing fragmentation as such. The argument is that there are a lot of good ECD activities outside GEI, also funded and managed by several of GEI's core and associate partners. GEI has an important role to play as the main knowledge repository on strengthening M&E systems in the South and building evaluation capacities but should not try to coordinate implementation initiatives. Some associate partners would like to see GEI focus more clearly on its niche and comparative advantage. Other associate partners would like GEI to follow up more closely in line with their expectations.

Different perspectives on the added value of GEI

Most implementing partners have, as mentioned above, high opinion of belonging to a wide network. They find that being part of GEI offers broad opportunities for interacting with other parts of the network.

Even the CLEAR centers, that interacted with each other before GEI, express satisfaction with the increased interaction with the other CLEAR centers and other implementing partners. Knowledge exchange is widely developed within the GEI Network and the GEI Global Team, as well as access to more experience and a broader network of expertise and knowledge than before GEI was established. An exception to this view is one implementing partner that found it difficult to connect with the broader GEI Network due to different reasons, including a perception of limited coordination and communication with the Global Team. According to GEI, all implementing

partners have been regularly invited to participate in communication and other meetings and received and had equal access to information and documents.

The associate and core partners have different perceptions. They don't seem to see or understand the level of interaction between the implementing partners and GEI. Core partners report that the administrative time and effort required to support initiatives within the GEI Network have decreased compared to the period before GEI. It is convenient to manage the relationship of one recipient for ECD support, rather than several – especially for small core partners.

Some partners think GEI is not sufficiently connected to other governance capacity development and global initiatives.

“One of the big challenges is that GEI is disconnected from other important global processes like the SDGs and Financing for Development. GEI needs to be closer to the global discussions.” (Core Partner)

Apart from this and acknowledging that the GEI brand is widely recognized, most of the associate and core partners raise issues about the added value of GEI. A view shared by several is that GEI is still not more than the sum of the initiatives within the GEI Network. The expectation is that partners would benefit from a shared work program and an efficient division of labor and strategic collaboration to leverage synergies.¹⁷ However, what they expect as proof of the added value seems to vary. Some express an expectation to see evidence of GEI's added value in practice at the country level. Most bilateral partners are eager to see documentation demonstrating the synergy between the various ECD initiatives. These partners expect tangible and clear results. The argument is that they need to document the results of their investments in relation to their own development policy objectives for evaluation capacity development. They need to document results to continue investing in GEI as a global public good, especially in a context where aid budgets are being reduced.

An unintended negative consequence of GEI's establishment is that EvalPartners¹⁸ has experienced a reduction in funding for its network activities since funding began being channeled through GEI. Even though donors intended to maintain funding for EvalPartners through GEI, no funds have, according to information provided by EvalPartners, been allocated to EvalPartners by GEI or any other donor since 2020. Another negative effect, according to some respondents, is that transaction costs have increased rather than decreased for the delivery of the ECD activities through the GEI Network.

This view is not shared by the Global Team. The Global Team argues that from GEI's inception in 2020 through January 2025, Secretariat costs to the GEI TF (staff time, organization of Partnership Council meetings and implementation partner meetings, global projects, such as BetterEvaluation, and GEI's MIS system) account for only 26.8% of total GEI disbursements from the trust fund. The remaining 73.2% was allocated to finance country work programs. According to the Global Team, the share of the trust fund allocated to program management and global activities compares favorably with benchmarks from other global programs of similar size. *“Generally, when project management costs fall between 25-30% for a global partnership program of GEI's size (medium to small), it is considered cost efficient.”*

¹⁷ Ref. ToA see annex 9

¹⁸ EvalPartners is composed of the five networks EvalSDGs, EvalGender+, EvalYouth, EvalIndigenous, and Global Forum for Parliamentarians Network.

Different views regarding the target groups for ECD

GEI's general definition of what M&E capacity development entails is widely supported. However, questions are being raised about who the target groups for GEI should be. This relates specifically to the ongoing and planned initiative to train WBG project implementation units (PIUs). This is, however, not funded by the MDTF.

The view is that ECD should not aim to increase recipients' accountability to development agencies. Instead, it should focus on strengthening countries' own M&E capacity to support evidence-based decision-making and improve service delivery.

Finding 5: IPDET is relevant at an individual level, but the evidence of its broader impact is limited

IPDET is a high-quality program, internationally recognized for its contributions to the global evaluation community

Interviewees emphasized the strong organizational support of the IPDET team, which makes trainers and participants eager to return. They highlighted the efficiency of assistants and logistics as key strengths. The quality of the experience is essential and depends on specialized expertise, which entails costs—making the investment in services both necessary and justified.

There is strong evidence that IPDET enhances participants' capacity to conduct evaluations, and the program's social aspects are highly appreciated.

Moreover, a key element is the sense of belonging to a global M&E community. Many respondents emphasized that IPDET helps establish a global standard for evaluation practices. This is done in

“The main added value of my participation in the IPDET program was the opportunity to hear diverse perspectives from various actors involved in monitoring and evaluation. This enriched my understanding of the field by exposing me to a broad range of experiences, approaches, and insights.” (Asia, Researcher)

two ways. First, by bringing participants from various regions and organizations together in person for a two-week program. Participants share a highly positive assessment of this setting to learn and share experiences of M&E from various perspectives. Secondly, IPDET training is highly valued as an international standard for M&E and as an opportunity to explore innovative approaches and emerging issues through specialized workshops.

“For me, it was a great opportunity to meet the evaluation community from all over the world. I gained new skills and knowledge regarding monitoring and evaluation from the best professors on this field.” (Georgia, NGO)

Most participants participate in the program through a scholarship (63.2%)¹⁹ or are financed by an employer (28.2%). However, the scholarships provided by IPDET, including the one offered by GEI, do not include travel costs, which remain high for participants from these countries and limit their ability to participate. Most respondents finance the travel expenses to participate in IPDET by

¹⁹ This includes all scholarships. Each year, GEI allocates a set number of scholarships (approximately 80) in alignment with its target groups and country priorities, aiming to support developing countries with a particular need for ECD. In addition, other international organizations, such as UNDP, as well as national governments, may provide funding for additional scholarships.

themselves (68.2%) and around a third through their employer (31.8%). In this sense, the scholarships provided by GEI are essential to reach evaluators from South by focusing on target groups and country prioritization in line with GEI's objectives to support developing countries where there is a particular need for ECD.

"I would like to thank you so much for the scholarship, it really helped me to develop my skills and my network. That helps me in my work in the Middel East and North Africa region." (Egypt, NGO)

IPDET contributes to the development of evaluation capacity at the individual level allowing evaluators to acquire knowledge and networking opportunities

IPDET participants expressed a highly positive assessment of the program's quality²⁰. They assess the program's main benefit to be the acquisition of new knowledge and methods to conduct evaluations (89.5%) and the networking opportunities to foster career development within or outside their organization. Overall, 87.7% of respondents agreed that their participation had a positive impact on their personal development, which many participants find valuable for their career development. The respondents described it as a "lifetime" experience, allowing them to connect with like-minded professionals, fostering a strong sense of belonging to the international evaluation community.

"The IPDET program provided me with invaluable opportunities to expand my professional network, gain a global perspective in M&E), and access a community that consistently shares updates about international conferences, field advancements, and job or consultancy opportunities. It significantly enhanced my knowledge and skills, which I have successfully applied in my work, improving both my expertise and my professional earnings. Additionally, as a direct result of participating in the program, I secured several freelance consultancy projects in the field, further contributing to my career growth and development." (Azerbaijan, Private Sector)

While the quality of the training and instructors is not in question, many respondents indicated that a more appropriate approach would be beneficial. IPDET attracts a diverse group of participants with varying levels of M&E experience, approximately half have less than five years of experience, and the other half five years or more, according to IPDET annual reports. However, interviews with IPDET trainers indicate that participants often fall into three distinct groups: the majority have already conducted several evaluations and seek to deepen their expertise; a smaller group are familiar with M&E concepts but lack hands-on experience; and a third group who feel lost and overwhelmed by the intensity of the program and the specialized training content. This challenge is further compounded by the large amphitheater-style classroom setting, which may limit opportunities for tailored instruction or peer interaction. This is supported by respondents to the survey.

"I found evaluation knowledge and experience of participants quite varied. It's better (a) to have less participants in one course, say 8 persons at most, and (b) possibly work with similar level experience in group work." (Philippines, International Organization)

²⁰ Among the survey respondents, we did not observe any significant variation between participants based on their region of work or professional position. To assess IPDET's contribution to the overall Theory of Action (ToA) of the GEI, the analysis primarily focuses on feedback from participants from the Global South.

Building a network with participants from their country or at regional and global levels is also an essential added value of the program. More than half of the respondents (57.4%) declared they have remained in touch with other former participants, and the main reasons reported are the exchange of best practices (65.5%), building an evaluation community (59.7%) and sharing potential job opportunities (56.8%).

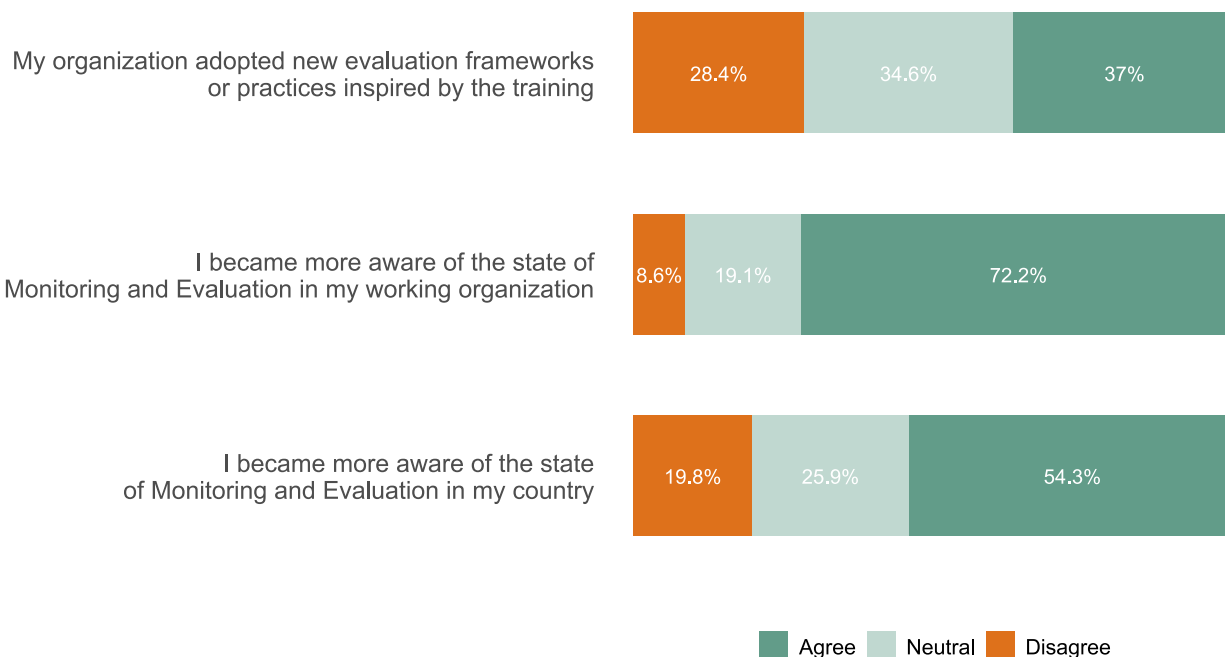
“IPDET was a truly rewarding experience. It provided me with valuable new knowledge in the field of evaluation and the chance to connect with incredible professionals. Since attending, I’ve participated in several international events where I reunited with fellow IPDET alumni—it felt like reconnecting with old friends. These interactions have allowed us to catch up, share insights, and support one another. For me, the most significant takeaway from IPDET is the invaluable network it helps you build.” (Ecuador, Government)

“The program increased my awareness on available learning and development programs on evaluation and the professional practice of evaluation at the international level.” (Philippine, Government)

However, this network-building does not appear to be driven by official efforts of the IPDET Global Community Building Strategy²¹. While respondents showed interest in the IPDET LinkedIn page (used by 50.6% of participants) and the IPDET newsletter (34%), the tools developed by the IPDET team are less frequently used after the program—only 22.8% use the Alumni Listserv and 14.8% use the COSMOS Discord server. In contrast, a dedicated WhatsApp group—whether officially created by the cohort or informally set up by participants—emerges as a key tool for staying connected with fellow alumni beyond the program, with 38.9% of respondents using it.

Finally, as shown in figure 1, most respondents agreed that taking part in IPDET increases their knowledge of the state of M&E at organizational (72.2%) and national levels (54.3%), but just more than a third (37%) agreed that their organization adopted a new evaluation framework or practices as a result of the training.

²¹ Since 2022, IPDET has fostered a global evaluation community through events (kick-off, closing, and social events) and technical tools in part of its Community Building Strategy. This strategy encompasses the main social media page (LinkedIn, Instagram and X), as well as a Newsletter with more than 4000 subscribers, a Listserv mailing list for alumni, an eLearning platform to support the delivery of the program and a Discord Server, the IPDET Community Server – Memorable Online Society (CoSMOS).



Total unique respondents: 162.

Figure 3 - After your latest IPDET participation, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

While the survey shows that the program has benefited individuals significantly, the effects of participation are more mixed at the organizational level and seem to largely depend on the context within their home organization.

Effect on organizational and country levels

After returning to their home countries, there is evidence of knowledge transfer within their organizations. Almost all the respondents declared that they shared the knowledge acquired within their organization (89.9%) but mostly in informal discussions (83.6%) and in sharing the training materials (58.2%). Only a third (36.6%) of them conducted training or workshops within their organization.

“Challenges having the time to apply the new approaches learned - gender responsive and culturally and contextually responsive evaluation - in the context of my work.” (South Africa, NGO)

The inclusion of diverse experiences and varying levels of M&E knowledge was insufficient. Respondents noted that course content was sometimes either too basic or too advanced, depending on their prior experience, which limited its overall effectiveness.

“In our organization we are yet to develop the monitoring, evaluation and learning mindsets. As for now, we are just starting, thus I had challenges with colleagues understanding the need for it and budget accordingly.” (Government, Moldova)

“My organization is slow to adapt to innovation or new ideas.” (Government, South Africa)

Many participants feel that the training, though valuable, does not always align with the realities of their home institutions, making it challenging to implement the acquired knowledge effectively. In this sense, more than a third of the respondents (32.1%) declared that they have encountered obstacles in applying their knowledge in their activities, and this reporting is even stronger in the

private sector (49%). This is mostly due to insufficient resources (42.3%), lack of opportunity (34.6%) and a mismatch between the relevance of the content of the program and the M&E needs of their organization (25%).

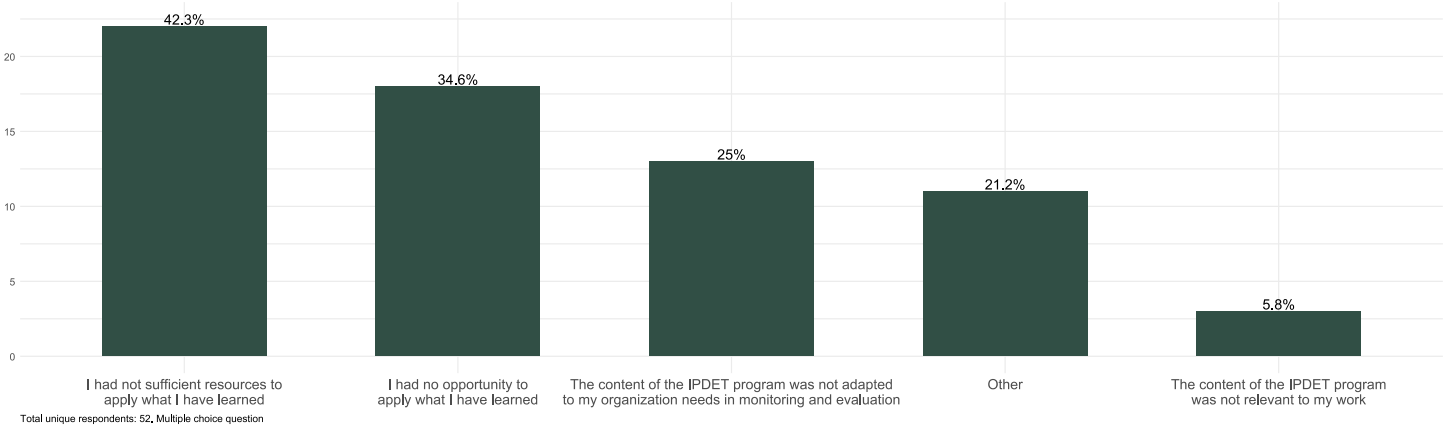


Figure 4 - Which obstacles have you encountered in applying what you learned?

Finding 6: The alignment between IPDET’s supply and demand²² in the Global South is limited

IPDET participants engage in regional and international M&E networks, though most had established these connections prior to the program

The program does seem to encourage engagement in participants’ home countries, particularly through VOPEs, where they contribute to the development of local evaluation capacity. Building evaluation systems and capacity country-wide is a long and time-consuming endeavor that entails working on many system components. Although IPDET participation appears to enhance individual skills, only a few success stories were collected from the Global South.

Most respondents who engaged in evaluation communities and networks after participating in IPDET had already done so beforehand; for fewer than 15%, it was a new experience. The most cited networks are national VOPEs (26 different VOPES cited) and regional VOPES (Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (8), African Evaluation Association (8) and European Evaluation Society (5)), international networks (International Evaluation Academy (4), EvalYouth (4), IDEAS (3), EvalPartners (2)).

“IPDET’s scholarship has been valuable contribution to building evaluation capacity and system in Mongolia. At the Mongolian Evaluation Association, we translated IPDET’s seven core modules into Mongolian with permission of IPDET and used this as a training resource for our members and Young and Emerging Evaluators.” (Mongolia, Private sector).

“The greatest value I gained from the program was acquiring solid knowledge in evaluation, which has enabled me to deliver national-level training sessions on the subject. To date, I

²² In the context of Evaluation Capacity Building (ECB), the supply-side refers to the availability and provision of evaluation-related resources (trainings, tools, fundings, etc.) and the demand refers to the desire, motivation, or requirement to use evaluation within organization.

have trained more than 15 civil society organizations across the country, contributing to making evaluation a more consistent and integral practice nationwide.” (Guatemala, NGO).

VOPEs are most commonly identified as the primary resource centers in respondents’ local areas, followed by the CLEAR centers and international organizations such as UNDP, UNICEF, WBG and regional development banks.

Perceived mismatch between the supply of and demand for M&E initiatives

One key finding is the perceived mismatch between the supply and demand for M&E initiatives. The IPDET program places a strong emphasis on the supply of evaluation expertise and networking among evaluators. However, there is less focus on creating demand for M&E by advocating its importance among international donors, governments, and institutions. As a result, respondents indicated that they had limited opportunities to apply what they had learned, as it often did not align with the expectations of donors and evaluation commissioners. “I attended a workshop in culturally responsive evaluation. Even though it is a trending topic, not a single agency has asked me or let me include this in an evaluation consultancy.” (Ecuador, Government).

“As I mostly work as an independent consultant, I am trying to include the various components of an evaluation design in my proposals, but there is little interest in such detailed evaluations amongst commissioners. Same happens when I am working with others on evaluation studies, they do not understand the importance of being strong in the methods. So, despite planning for a lot, not everything gets implemented. Also, I need to practice the theory a lot to use it successfully.” (South Africa, NGO)

Some participants feel that the content is too theoretical and lacks a strong connection to real-world contexts, making it difficult to apply in practice. In the Global South, innovative and methodologically robust evaluations are commissioned less frequently. There is a clear need to adjust both the program structure and workshop content to better align with the realities and needs of the evaluation field. A more comprehensive approach is required, one that takes into account both the supply and demand for evaluations to strengthen the overall evaluation ecosystem.

“The IPDET program is an invaluable platform for professionals in monitoring and evaluation, offering a robust curriculum, expert-led training, and opportunities for global networking. One suggestion I have is to consider integrating more region-specific case studies and practical applications, which could help participants contextualize their learning more effectively.” (Asia, Government).

“IPDET network - needs to create opportunities for young and mid-level professionals to collaborate with senior evaluators. There needs to be a focus between North - South collaboration and South -South partnerships.” (India, NGO).

“The course I have done was on causal theory methods. This is still a new approach in M&E in many development organizations. The implementation of it does not only require a shift in paradigm within my own organization but also with the donors and funder. Only 3 years after I have taken the course, we are starting to make some changes ... Funders should be a key target group- and they should be encouraged to provide capacity building to their recipients of large funds.” (NGO)

Following this, there is some evidence to support the development of IPDET in the new format delivered at the regional level, to reduce the cost for participants from the South and deliver more context-driven training and possibly develop capacity at the regional level. It would then be necessary to rethink capacity building in the Global South with a view to making it more demand-driven. Specifically, this requires a more integrated approach within organizations and at the regional level, along with greater synergy between ECD structures, such as the CLEAR centers.

Developing regional M&E training: The TAQYEEM program

Prior to GEI, IEG/WBG collaborated with L'École nationale d'administration publique (ENAP) to develop and implement a regional adaptation of (Programme International de Formation en Évaluation du Développement) for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. As part of this effort, IEG contributed to the creation of an evaluation lexicon in Arabic, launched a dedicated website, and identified Arabic-speaking trainers.



Since the launch of GEI in 2020 TAQYEEM has expanded through partnerships with organizations such as the Islamic Development Bank, establishing itself as a leading training program in the region. This is particularly significant given the scarcity of M&E master's programs in MENA. Currently, TAQYEEM operates in two-thirds of Arabic-speaking countries, with a strong presence in the Maghreb, Egypt, and the Gulf region. Over 11 cohorts, 311 participants have obtained certification. Though still a relatively young initiative, TAQYEEM is rapidly gaining credibility and broadening its impact across the region.

Finding 7: Limited but positive views on BetterEvaluation and NEC

BetterEvaluation is valued as an excellent knowledge source by those using it (a total of 6,702 subscribers by the end of 2024 and 14,000 followers on Twitter). Associate thematic partners (like ALNAP and GEF) find BetterEvaluation a good platform for sharing knowledge on particular issues. They assess the collaboration with BetterEvaluation positively. Some potential users would like to see more of the material published in other languages than English

The National Evaluation Capacities Conference (NEC) is a UNDP conference that GEI has helped organize for the past two editions (NEC Turin 2022 and NEC Beijing 2024). NEC is among the few international evaluation conferences targeting government officials, and not only evaluators. A limited number of interviewees have participated in NEC conferences. Among those who have participated, the views are positive. NEC is considered pivotal for strengthening the South-South connections. Government representatives from many countries with similar challenges meet and get a chance to exchange experiences and network.

The perception is that the quality and usefulness of NEC has increased from the Turin NEC 2022 to the Beijing NEC 2024. Additionally, the visibility of GEI was significantly greater at the Beijing NEC conference compared to the one in Turin.

Finding 8: Mixed views on GEI's communication

Mixed views on GEI's communication

GEI's communication has evolved over the years, as documented in the various versions of its communication strategy (2020-22, 2023-24, and 2024-25). The communication approach has evolved in line with the program's development and in response to requests from the Partnership Council.

During the initial phase of establishing GEI's foundational elements, the communication strategy prioritized engagement with GEI partners—including core, implementing, associate, and country partners. In this phase, a key challenge was to develop and align the new GEI brand across its global network. The objectives for engaging core partners were to keep them informed and aligned with GEI's work, encourage integration of their country-level activities with GEI, and respond to donor interests—while avoiding the perception of GEI as a donor-driven initiative. The objectives toward the associate partners were to ensure that they are happy to be associated with GEI, to reassure them that their inputs were valued, and to establish a minimum level of coordination and knowledge sharing with all of them. GEI's integrated communication strategy and work plan aimed to align all communication efforts with the initiative's mission. In retrospect, several associate partners expressed disappointment with their level of engagement with GEI. Some noted that the 2022 meeting of the Implementing Committee raised expectations that have yet to be met.

The next phase of the communication strategy marked a significant transformation in GEI's approach to communications and knowledge management. The aim was to position GEI as a thought leader in M&E systems, and as a primary source of information for practitioners and developing countries seeking to build or strengthen their M&E systems. Therefore, the objectives were to raise awareness of GEI's work, building brand recognition worldwide, within and outside the M&E field, to keep partners, donors, and recipient countries interested in engaging with GEI and to support knowledge dissemination. This resulted in a more systematic and increased use of newsletters, blogs, webinars, websites and social media (largely LinkedIn, Twitter/X and Facebook). For instance, the number of subscribers to the GEI newsletter, launched in December 2021, increased to more than 11,000 by the end of 2024. As noted above, one indication of the strategy's success is that many partners view the increased global awareness of M&E capacity development as one of GEI's key achievements.

The goal of the updated communication strategy (February 2024) was to establish the organization as a leading global knowledge hub for national M&E systems and capacity building, driving innovation, learning, and transformation in evidence-based decision-making. None of the partners mentioned this in the interviewees.

The GEI Communication Network has met online 12 times since December 2022 and brings together the communication focal points of the Global Team and the implementing partners (such as the CLEARs, ENAP, and IPDET). The aim is to coordinate communication products, messaging and leading events. According to the Global Team, this has resulted in increased consistency and quality of the messaging that has helped GEI positioning and visibility, increased support while organizing global events, and the willingness to adopt a more unified brand identity. It is argued that the improved consistency of GEI's messaging is evident when comparing the quality and content of articles produced in the early years in the initiative with those published over the past two years.

The evaluation of the communication strategy is mixed, especially regarding the communication between GEI and its partners. Most associate and core partners find that communication from

GEI has not been as good as expected. The expectations from the associate partners come from the MoUs they signed and the 2022 meeting of the Implementing Committee. Several partners across all groups criticize GEI communications for focusing too much on branding over supporting the delivery and implementation of the ECD program. They also express the need for more communication channels to be available in different languages other than English to reach their audiences.

Finding 9: Governance is perceived as lacking transparency and cooperation

The largest part of the GEI MDTF is deployed to implementing partners through the use of (Recipient-Executed Trust Fund) RETF grants. RETFs are funded by contributions from donor countries, organizations, or other entities. These contributions are pooled into trust funds managed by WB, which then allocates the funds to specific projects or programs. It is managed within the operational policies and procedures that govern IBRD and IDA financing. The approval process for trust fund grants is governed by distinct procedures for trust fund proposals and legal agreements with donors. Implementing partners view this as both a benefit and a drawback. The benefit lies in the professionalism of WBG in managing trust funds, while the drawbacks include the lengthy processes and numerous restrictions. Due to the relatively small size of the GEI grants, this is seen as overly bureaucratic and inflexible.

GEI has apparently no authority on changing these processes. However, according to the Global Team, some simplifications have been implemented (e.g., the use of amendment letters to replenish grants as opposed to much more complex grant restructuring processes, and the use of a single Environmental and Social Framework specialist to advise on all grants as opposed to having eight different regional specialists). The core approval process cannot be changed by GEI.

Most partners express concerns about limited involvement and transparency in strategy processes and decision-making processes. There is a prevailing perception that GEI offers little clarity regarding how funds are allocated.

Some core and associate partners believe this is due to GEI primarily being focused on IEG's ECD work: *"GEI is closely tied and managed by IEG. It is not independent, and not global. The governance of GEI is not aligned with the vision."*

Decision-making is seen as overly top-down from IEG. Several point out that transparency is missing, some even feel patronized by IEG, while some find Partnership Council meetings are like *"running into a wall – they hear us, but that's all"*. Some decisions are seen as ad hoc without a clear strategy or plan. One example is the decision to reform IPDET. The implementing partners feel they were merely informed of the decision rather than being consulted. The restrictions on the use of the GEI grants have also been an issue of tension. IPDET global outreach activities, designed prior to the establishment of GEI, were found to not align with GEI's objectives and therefore were deemed ineligible for grant funding. IPDET management disagreed with this perspective. Some implementing partners with long-standing expertise in ECD prior to GEI expressed concern that the governance structure does not recognize their experience or provide opportunities to contribute to the global strategy.

Donor partners with previous trust-fund experience with the WBG find that GEI is less transparent and involves donors to a lesser degree than what they are used to. They are concerned about what they find to be a limited involvement in the decisions about fund allocation:

“GEI functions differently from other trust funds. Partners in other trust funds often take part in reviewing funding proposals and thus get an in-depth understanding of the operations. This is not the case in GEI. We feel we are not really included, not really on board. We don’t get detailed information on the allocations and have been informed that this information is not being disclosed.”

The Global Team argues that the allocation rationale and amounts per implementing partner were disclosed and agreed upon with the Partnership Council at GEI’s inception. In addition, the Partnership Council has been informed every six months about the implementation of all grants, including financial reporting.

This perception may be more about the flow of information and the nature of interactions within the Partnership Council, rather than a true lack of information being provided.

The Partnership Council is described as the highest-level governance forum. The proposal to create tiers within the Council, giving larger donors a stronger role than smaller donors, has received little support from the latter.

Some of the core and associate partners have raised the idea of establishing a board that includes representatives from the Global South as an alternative governance mechanism. The Global Team’s reluctance to establish a board may relate to the limited success with the GEI Advisory Board. This Board consists of a group of international evaluation experts and has only met once. The Global Team’s assessment is that unless people have ‘skin in the game’, a generic board is ineffective.

Finding 10: GEI implementing partners do not constitute a coherent network

The assessment of the coherence and interaction between the business lines varies widely among the implementing partners. A few have a good overview of the different initiatives and have experience of interacting across them, while others have little knowledge of what others are doing.

While gLOCAL is widely recognized, IPDET, NEC and BetterEvaluation are less familiar to some. There is a clear need for more information about these initiatives, as well as opportunities for mutual support through interaction and collaboration. Notably, interviews suggest that several of the GEI’s partners are underutilizing BetterEvaluation as a resource.

Most implementing partners express regret over the lack of opportunities to contact one another and call for more initiatives to facilitate collaboration or cross-activities, organized by the Global Team.

The role of UNDP in the structure is unclear. IEO was one of the two founders of GEI and is now formally co-chairing the Partnership Council. In the first two years of operations, IEO had a full-time evaluation expert in the Global Team in Brussels. Now, IEO has a staff in its New York office interacting with GEI, and no physical presence in Brussels. IEO is responsible for the NEC conferences but, apparently, plays no role in any of the other initiatives within the GEI Network.

The Global Team

Most partners perceive the Global Team to be of high quality. Many value the relationship skills and appreciate the support provided. However, several questions whether the Global Team focuses too much on communication, branding and funding, and not sufficiently on technical

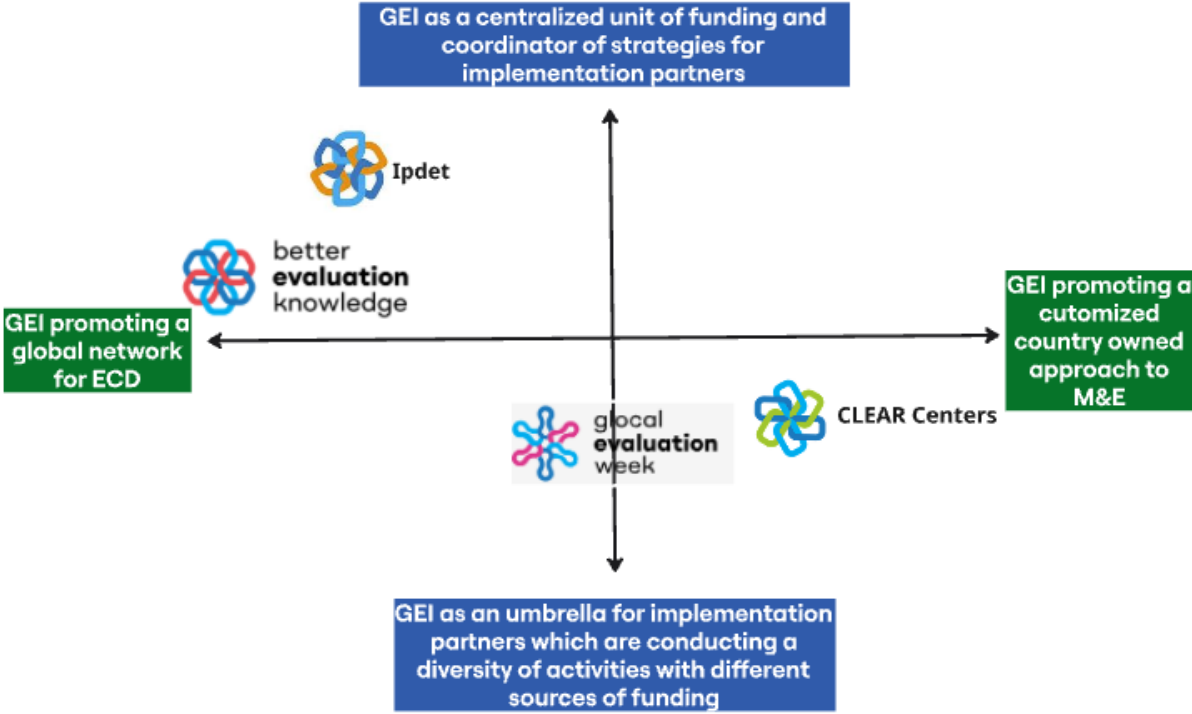
aspects of M&E. The perception is that more expertise on M&E systems development is needed. One of the core partners had the following assessment:

“The Global Team has too much attention on maintaining contact with donors, on fundraising and on communication. Should do more to leverage the expertise of the team members and of the technical expertise in IEG and UNDP.”

The figure below (figure 5) illustrates our analysis of the challenges GEI is facing. The horizontal line shows the centralization – decentralization control dimension and the vertical line the global versus local dimension.

GEI current vision is very wide and covers a diversity of orientation and priorities. In terms of scales, it wishes to address both the international level with promoting a Global network around ECD as well as the country level intervention with a specific customized country owned approach to M&E. In terms of level of centralization, it is also stretched between the role of a centralized unit managing the MDTF and coordinating strategies of implementing partners but also a less centralized unit as a common umbrella for implementation partners which can adapt and define their own strategies and seek other sources of funding.

Figure 5: Positioning of GEI implementation partners on the matrix of scales and centralization (production of the evaluation team)



Conclusions

Overall, GEI has made important strides in developing M&E capacity and raising awareness on evaluation. GEI has established itself as a catalyst for bridging ECD interventions and gathering key stakeholders. It has become a convincing knowledge hub on ECD issues and experiences, and in implementing M&E capacity development at regional and country levels. GEI has achieved several concrete outputs, outcomes, and progress towards its intended outcomes.

GEI's delivery model is designed to align with its intended outcomes by focusing on a system approach at the country level, using comprehensive diagnostic tools, managing knowledge effectively, and fostering coordination and collaboration among stakeholders. This approach is in line with best practices described in the literature on evaluation capacity building and institutionalization of evaluation. It involves focusing on capabilities and building long-term partnerships based on shared diagnostics and ownership by country officials. The CLEAR centers have shown positive results in building M&E capacity, in developing evaluation policies and guidelines and strengthening the capacity of key drivers of M&E.

GEI's efforts to coordinate national and international stakeholders and reduce fragmentation in M&E capacity development have had mixed results. GEI's Theory of Change (ToC) and Theory of Action (ToA) are idealistic and ambitious. For example, the ToC appears to assume that governments in developing countries routinely use evaluative evidence for planning, policy design, and adaptive management of services. Studies show that this is not the case. The ToA assumes that by pooling resources from partners, the GEI brand will enhance its convening power, attract new partners, and achieve economies of scale in ECD. This is an optimistic belief. So far, resource pooling has been limited, and donor support has declined rather than grown. Partners expect reports on tangible outcomes in line with the ToC and ToA. Given the available resources, GEI is stretched too thin in terms of the number of focus countries, issues, and expectations. This

has led to a disconnect between the ambitions set out in the ToA and ToC and the practical implementation of GEI's initiatives. Both theories show direct linear process, whereas capacities building at a global and country levels is a complex nonlinear process that builds up upon a diversity of components.

The governance structure and associated mechanisms of GEI have both strengths and weaknesses in enabling GEI to achieve its outcomes. While the governance structure and associated mechanisms of GEI have enabled some progress towards achieving its outcomes, there are significant areas for improvement. Enhancing transparency, inclusiveness, and flexibility in decision-making processes, as well as better communication with all partners, could strengthen GEI's ability to achieve its intended outcomes. Some partners suggest creating a global board or advisory body that includes country-level participants from the South to improve governance.

While there are positive aspects of interaction and collaboration within the GEI network, there is room for improvement in ensuring that all initiatives and activities are well-articulated and linked to each other to maximize their impact. The articulation and linkage of the different initiatives and activities vary significantly among the implementing partners. GEI's comparative advantage is the country level work. By focusing even more on this, GEI can better leverage its strengths and resources to achieve sustainable results.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Increase the focus on GEI's niche and comparative advantage

(This recommendation relates to findings 2, 3 and 7)

GEI's development objective is – as stated in the MDTF concept document – to improve M&E frameworks, capacity, and use in supported developing countries to foster evidence-informed policy making. GEI expects to be a catalyzer, bringing together key actors and experts in the evaluation field to help governments in developing countries place evidence at the heart of decision-making. The recommendation is to place greater focus on this development objective.

GEI has, through its five years of operations, clearly shown its value in developing M&E capacity to improve evidence-based decision-making and service delivery. While there are several global evaluation networks, GEI is the only initiative that can document success in developing M&E capacity at country level in different regions. No doubt the uncertainties in the current global context show the acute need for better use of M&E targeted to the local context in more countries. This is GEI's niche and comparative advantage and is where GEI can make a difference. All core, associate and implementing partners share this objective. At the same time, most of the core and associate partners feel that the main objective has not sufficient attention within GEI.

A stronger focus on this could mean closer interaction with key country and regional actors also outside the GEI initiative, such as regional IFI's, WBG and UNDP country offices, other multilateral organizations, regional VOPEs, and Parliamentarians.

A possibility to consider is to create new publication products to share the country and regional insights, knowledge and experiences. For example, this could include an annual or bi-annual regional report on the status of M&E capacity, or an annual report comparing regional and sub-regional approaches and experiences in developing M&E systems. This could be a useful and well-received product by everyone interested in M&E initiatives, helping to enhance understanding that the approach to M&E capacity development varies across regions and should be tailored accordingly. As stated in the CLEAR-AA book *Equitable Evaluation: "The Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) approach has emerged and challenged Euro-American evaluation frameworks that largely dominate the assessment of development interventions in Africa."*

An implication of this recommendation is to carefully consider how the different initiatives in the GEI Network can best support the main objective. IPDET, NEC, BetterEvaluation and gLOCAL are currently open for participants and users in general, not only from target countries. A question to consider is whether these initiatives be more targeted, focusing specifically on individuals from the institutions with which the CLEAR centers are working. In this context, the purpose of GEI pilot training for participants in WBG PIU's should be clarified. IPDET post training mentoring could also be strengthened at country level, sharing IPDET participants list from targeted countries with CLEAR centers of their region, to enable them to structure a regional alumni network.

The evaluation indicates that GEI has not realized the full potential of the BetterEvaluation platform. While those who use it regularly are happy, many others do not use it. The number of regular users seems to have stagnated. Some point out difficulties in finding the best resources. One solution could be to give more visibility to the CLEAR centers on the platform. This could be by a specific section on the website that would gather all CLEAR center publications, for example.

The evaluation shows that the attempts to increase coordination and reduce fragmentation of global M&E capacity development initiatives have had limited success. The recommendation implies to reduce the attention on this.

This recommendation also implies that the ToC and ToA should be amended to be more realistic based on the experiences gained in the first phase.

Recommendation 2: Rethink the best approach to evaluation training

(This recommendation relates to findings 5 and 6)

The recommendation is to transform IPDET into a “center of excellence”²³ for M&E training, focused on developing high-quality training modules and resources for the CLEAR centers to use in their region- and country-specific training. This could also include offering training courses (both in-person in Bern and virtually) to development agencies, civil society organizations, and others, with all costs covered by the participants.

IPDET has been operational for decades and is an established brand, offering a widely recognized international training course. One result of strengthening the role and work of the CLEAR centers is an increase in customized training activities at regional and country levels. An important question to consider moving forward is how IPDET can be developed to support training at both regional and country levels. There are few strong arguments for continuing the traditional IPDET approach of delivering the core course in Bern within a more focused GEI initiative. The current revision of the IPDET program is therefore moving in the right direction.

IPDET should also capitalize on its position to enhance its offerings. It could leverage its partnerships within GEI, as well as with other collaborators, to provide a more diverse range of high-level content through online platforms and make better use of its alumni network for post-training engagement.

This would entail further development of the current plan to offer two new regional training programs, one in Kenya targeting M&E professionals in Sub-Saharan Africa and one in Morocco, to cater to the Middle East, North Africa, and West Africa. It would be an opportunity to build on IPDET’s extensive alumni network by involving more local trainers and delivering more tailored training programs.

Recommendation 3: Develop a sustainable business model for GEI

(This recommendation relates to findings 1 and 4)

The recommendation is to update the GEI business model on the basis of the experiences during the first phase of operation and in light of the trends in bilateral donor funding.

The update of the business model should be done on the basis of experience in the first phase of operation. The possibilities for attracting non-traditional donors (e.g., China and Saudi Arabia) and

²³ A center of excellence can be described as an organizational environment that strive for, and succeed in, developing high standards of conduct in a field of research, innovation, or learning. See Tomas Hellström, Centres of Excellence and Capacity Building: from Strategy to Impact, *Science and Public Policy*, Volume 45, Issue 4, August 2018, Pages 543–552.

getting funding from foundations should be explored. One could also consider if the trust fund model is the best model for GEI moving forward²⁴.

According to a recent report from OECD²⁵ Official Development Assistance (ODA) from DAC member countries in 2024 declined for the first time in five years, falling by 7.1% in real terms compared to 2023. The decrease in net ODA from DAC member countries was driven by a fall in contributions to the core budgets of multilateral organizations, as well as declines of in-donor refugee costs, humanitarian aid, and aid for Ukraine. Simulations of ODA developed by the OECD, based on a recent survey of DAC members, show that ODA is estimated to drop between 9% and 17% from 2024 to 2025

Maintaining the MDTF as the main source of GEI's funding is likely unsustainable. Already, one major bilateral donor (Sweden) has withdrawn its commitment to contribute. Other traditional OECD donor countries are either not participating or are—as conveyed in the interviews—considering reducing their contributions.

In applying the funds, a concern is that the grants provided to the CLEAR centers so far, are only for one year at the time. This makes it difficult to retain staff and thus weakens the credibility and influence of the centers. Consequently, multi-year grants should be provided.

Other suggestions regarding applying the MDTF funds are to prioritize funding of initiatives that cannot easily be funded by others, to make the cost of the various initiatives more visible, and to clarify the mechanisms through which other actors can engage directly with implementing partners.

Recommendation 4: Revise the governance setup

(This recommendation relates to finding 9 and 10)

The recommendation is to revise the governance of GEI to increase participation of stakeholders, also at country level and increase transparency in decision-making.

The evaluation reveals that the current setup is not working optimally. The feedback in interviews shows that the Partnership Council is not seen as a credible decision-making forum. Several partners find the lack of formal representation from the target groups a weakness in the setup. This could pave the way for a global board at the top, with representatives from other actors at country and regional levels. Additionally, the future of the Advisory Board should be reconsidered, as the Global Team has indicated that it has not been successful thus far. More generally, new ways to prepare and moderate meetings could be explored in order to foster engagement and ownership in the decision-making process. Moreover, implementation partners should have a space to jointly discuss GEI overall strategy and their contributions to this strategy on from their specific regional or sectoral expertise.

It may be worth looking into some experiences of other international organizations. For example, UN WIDER²⁶ has been mentioned as a good example of a democratic setup. UN WIDER's mandate is to undertake research and policy analysis, to provide a forum for knowledge sharing, discussion

²⁴ For instance, the capacity development organization for supreme audit organizations (the Intosai Development Initiative) is organized as a foundation. GEI's comment is that this is not a relevant model to look at.

²⁵ <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/official-development-assistance-oda.html>

²⁶ United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research

and debate, and to offer capacity development and training for researchers and decision-makers in economics and social development. UN WIDER is led by an international board of academics. Another example is the INTOSAI Development Initiative – an initiative to enhance the capacity of Supreme Audit Institutions in developing countries and has a non-executive board as its principal strategic body.

Recommendation 5: Consider the role and composition of the Global Team

(This finding relates to findings 8 and 9)

The recommendation is to consider the role and composition of the Global Team and the involvement of IEG, IEO and others in providing support in M&E capacity development.

The support from the Global Team is highly appreciated by the implementing partners. The members of the Global Team play different roles. Some are primarily experts on how to meet the formal requirements from the WBG for receiving grants. Others are professionals in handling different forms of communication and some in building relationships. This combination of expertise and roles seems to have been effective during the initial phase of GEI. Until now, the role of the Global Team has not been clearly defined in the theory of change of GEI. Its intended contributions to the GEI network of implementation partners should be clarified in line with the new priorities that will be defined.

A shift in focus or in priorities may require a different skillset within the Global Team as well as improved access to support from the “back offices” in IEG, IEO and other places. The evaluation highlights a need for greater access to deeper knowledge and expertise in M&E systems development.

Annexes

1. Terms of Reference – Evaluation of the Global Evaluation Initiative
2. List of interviewees
3. List of documents reviewed
4. IPDET survey
5. Synthesis of the literature review
6. Summary of responses to the evaluation questions
7. Financial data
8. GEI Theory of Change
9. GEI Theory of Action
10. Organization of the evaluation

The annexes are published in a separate report