

Management Response to the GEI External Evaluation

Overall response

Management of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) thanks the external evaluation team, led by Per Øyvind Bastøe, including evaluation team members Agathe Devaux-Spatarakis, Serge Eric Yakeu Djiam, and Matthieu Sarnin for conducting the external evaluation of GEI. Undertaken during the fourth year of implementation of GEI's first five-year phase, the external evaluation assessed GEI's achievements, identified likely outcomes, examined what worked well and what did not relative to the theory of action and the theory of change, and explored opportunities to strengthen GEI going forward. GEI management also thanks the team for completing the work under a tight timeline and for their engagement and collaboration with the GEI team to deliver findings that informed the strategic planning process for GEI's second phase (FY26–30).

GEI management acknowledges the evaluation team's decision to focus most of the report on key findings and recommendations rather than on the formal evaluation questions, which are addressed briefly in an annex. While this approach means the questions are not addressed in full, GEI management appreciates the evaluation team's pragmatic orientation and its efforts to highlight the most salient points to inform GEI's strategic planning of its next phase. This response first addresses key themes highlighted in the evaluation findings and then responds to the recommendations one by one.

Mission, systems approach, and impact (findings 1-3)

The external evaluation team's affirmation of GEI's mission, objectives, systems approach at the country level, and the substantial outcomes achieved in strengthening national monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems is welcomed by GEI management. The evaluation highlights GEI's key role in raising global awareness of evaluation capacity development (ECD), including the importance of a systems approach that builds long-term partnerships with country governments and supports country-owned M&E capacity development. It also recognizes the value added by GEI, including the enhanced credibility it confers on its implementing partners as well as the strategic reorientation of the Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEARs) from conducting ECD activities in their host countries to a more targeted focus on strengthening national M&E systems across their respective regions.

While acknowledging these achievements, management also recognizes the challenges identified by the evaluation, particularly regarding grant predictability and the need for stronger connections between the CLEAR centers and development actors operating in their region. GEI's strategy for the next phase addresses these challenges through an updated delivery model based on multi-year, country-level engagements and expanding strategic partnerships within and beyond the World Bank Group.

Strategic focus and comparative advantage (finding 4)

GEI management acknowledges the evaluation's finding that some aspects of the ToC and the ToA may have been overly ambitious, creating expectations among some partners that could not be fully met. For example, it may have been unrealistic for GEI to defragment ECD efforts globally by pooling donor resources in the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) and coordinating ECD activities through a shared work program. This outcome reflects, in part, the limited funding that prevented GEI from supporting ECD activities of its associate partners, as well as concerns among some partners that collaboration with GEI might diminish their visibility. GEI's strategy for its second phase directly addresses these findings by focusing the programmatic scope on key areas where GEI has a comparative advantage and updating GEI's approach and selection criteria for country-level engagements.

Training approach (findings 5-6)

GEI management acknowledges the evaluation's findings on training. While the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) is recognized as a high-quality program that effectively builds individual capacity, the evaluation found limited evidence of broader organizational or systemic impact. Management notes that training individuals alone is typically not expected to produce organizational or systems change without complementary interventions such as appropriate incentives, enabling institutional environments, and targeted follow-up support. Even in GEI's ToC for the first phase, training was positioned as one component among multiple interventions contributing to M&E systems strengthening, not as a standalone solution.

That said, management agrees there is room for improvement to ensure training is delivered as part of an integrated package of support linked to GEI's country-level engagements—an issue that GEI had already identified and begun to address before the external evaluation. GEI's strategy for the next phase revises the training approach to a network-wide strategy that integrates the offerings of IPDET, ENAP and the CLEAR centers into a unified approach with defined quality standards, modern pedagogy and regionally and locally tailored delivery. This strategy will link learning directly to country M&E systems strengthening and governance agendas, ensuring that the same units and individuals engaged in M&E systems

strengthening activities also have access to training tailored to their needs. Some changes in the IPDET model, such as the piloting of regional trainings in Kenya and Morocco, are already in progress; others, such as the development of the network-wide training strategy, are planned to be initiated in the second half of FY26.

Knowledge platforms and communications (findings 7-8)

The evaluation assessed GEI's knowledge platforms positively, recognizing the value of BetterEvaluation as an excellent resource by those using it and noting improvement in the quality and usefulness of the National Evaluation Capacities (NEC) conferences. However, the evaluation also noted that BetterEvaluation's potential is not fully realized, with usage having stagnated. GEI's strategy for the next phase includes revamping BetterEvaluation into an AI-enabled, user-friendly knowledge hub and sustaining both NEC and Glocal Evaluation Week as global convening platforms for knowledge sharing and dissemination.

Drawing on the evaluation findings, GEI management acknowledges mixed results related to communication. The evaluation attributes GEI's success in raising awareness of M&E capacity development in part to its communications approach; however, some partners felt that communications focused too much on branding and not enough on program delivery and implementation. These findings are consistent with the sequencing of GEI's communications priorities noted in the report: GEI initially focused on engaging partners, followed by elevating the profile of GEI in the field through awareness and brand recognition. With the launch of the new communications strategy in February 2024, the emphasis shifted to positioning GEI as a global knowledge hub for national M&E systems and capacity building. Management is committed to ensuring that communication efforts support rather than overshadow program delivery, with clearer alignment between communications activities and M&E systems strengthening objectives.

Governance structure and transparency (finding 9)

GEI management acknowledges the concerns expressed about partners' perceived limited involvement and transparency in decision-making—particularly regarding grant allocations, participation in strategy formulation, reporting modalities to the Partnership Council, and the desire for governance mechanisms with greater representation from the Global South. Management agrees that some of these concerns may stem more from perception than from substance—for example, grant amounts to implementing partners have consistently been agreed in the context of Partnership Council meetings.

Regardless of their source, GEI management recognizes these are valid issues that warrant follow-up action. The report's governance-related recommendations include two primarily logistical improvements—such as updating how meetings are planned and moderated,

ensuring that implementing partners have an opportunity to discuss GEI’s strategy—as well as a call to increase representation from the Global South in the GEI’s governance model. GEI management is open to considering changes in each of these areas, within the scope of the existing legal agreements, and looks forward to working with Partnership Council members and implementing partners to identify solutions in FY26. The new GEI Strategy proposes the establishment of an ECD Recipients Consultation Group.

Network coherence and the Global Team (finding 10)

Based on the evaluation findings, GEI management acknowledges that most partners perceive the Global Team as highly skilled and value their skills and support. GEI management appreciates the desire some implementing partners have expressed for the Global Team to foster stronger collaboration within the network and greater coherence between programmatic areas—including country advisory services and diagnostics, training and professional development, and knowledge and communication. Recognizing that internal collaboration, communication, and cohesion are critical to GEI’s success, management is putting in place measures to strengthen these areas. GEI’s strategy for the next phase addresses network coherence through its delivery model, which emphasizes leveraging partners’ diverse expertise through coordinated delivery and joint knowledge production. The strategy explicitly defines key Global Team functions, including network coordination as a core responsibility.

Responses to recommendations

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

GEI management agrees with this recommendation. The new strategy for GEI’s second phase (GEI 2.0) from FY2026-30 explicitly defines GEI’s distinctive niche (i.e., serving as a “bridge between direct country-level engagement and a networked approach at regional and global levels”) and four key focus areas that leverage GEI’s comparative advantages. Starting in FY26, GEI’s work program will be structured around these focus areas; activities that do not advance these areas will be wound down. Potential new activities will be assessed based on their alignment with these areas and the GEI 2.0 strategy.

Recommendation 2: Rethink the best approach to evaluation training

GEI management agrees with this recommendation. Progress is already underway to re-envision the IPDET model as an integral part of a network-wide training strategy. GEI will integrate the training offerings of IPDET, ENAP, and the CLEAR centers into a unified, network-wide training strategy with defined quality standards, modern pedagogy, and regionally and locally tailored delivery. The overall direction is highly aligned with the evaluation team’s intention to transform IPDET into a “center of excellence”, albeit using the

framing and model of a “network of excellence” (as expressed in the GEI 2.0 strategy), which GEI management believes better captures the distributed expertise across the GEI Network.

Recommendation 3: Develop a sustainable business model for GEI

GEI management agrees with this recommendation. Strengthening GEI’s business model and financial sustainability—while maintaining the aspirations of GEI’s mission—is a strategic priority for GEI’s next phase. The GEI 2.0 strategy targets three main types of funding: MDTF core funding, project-based funding from a variety of institutions, and World Bank Group operational budgets. GEI will work to secure continuation of contributions from existing financing partners and expand the donor base, while clarifying mechanisms through which other funders can engage directly with implementing partners. GEI management aims to improve funding predictability and stability for implementing partners and to provide organizational development support to equip them to transition to a hybrid funding model while maintaining alignment with the GEI mission.

Recommendation 4: Revise the governance setup

GEI management agrees that improvements are needed in the governance setup to increase stakeholder participation and transparency in decision-making. The evaluation report offers specific suggestions that management will implement, including: revising how Partnership Council meetings are planned and moderated to foster greater engagement; enhancing the Implementation Committee and other network coordination mechanisms to provide implementing partners more meaningful opportunities to shape GEI’s strategic direction; and establishing a consultation mechanism (described in the GEI 2.0 strategy) to provide structured opportunities for recipient countries to share experiences, provide feedback on GEI’s support, and shape the initiative’s direction.

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

GEI management agrees. In line with this recommendation, the strategy for GEI’s next phase defines the key functions of the Global Team required to successfully implement the new strategy. During FY26, management will review Global Team staffing against the defined functions and strategic priorities, with particular attention to strengthening technical capacity in M&E systems development and partnership management.