



Report

**GEI MENA National
Monitoring and
Evaluation Systems Workshop**

ENHANCING PUBLIC POLICY
RESULTS AND IMPACT

May 17-18, 2022
Amman, Jordan

Executive Summary

In May 2022, the Global Evaluation Initiative and the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) co-organized a two-day Monitoring and Evaluation workshop in the MENA region. In attendance there were government officials, academics, and civil society representatives from 12 countries, with two additional countries represented virtually.

The purpose of this workshop was to understand the regional Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) landscape and needs to inform a potential regional strategy which GEI could support, in concert with local partners.

During the two days, through presentations, group activities, and discussion sessions, participants explored key ECD themes and identified challenges and solutions for strengthening the culture of evidence-based decision making in the MENA region.

Participants agreed that the main challenges for enhancing the region's M&E culture were:

- Lack of consistent language and terminology,
- underdeveloped local capacity,
- limited financial resources,
- lack of political will, and
- varied governance structures, requiring tailored solutions.

Based on these discussions, participants agreed that the GEI should engage with regional stakeholders, emphasizing governments and local organizations, to better understand the local context and cofacilitate solutions that cater to MENA countries' specific needs.

This report presents a summary of discussions during the workshop.



Introduction

The Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) is a global coalition of organizations and experts working together to support the strengthening of monitoring, evaluation, and the use of evidence in developing countries. GEI and its partners are active in 24 countries in several regions around the world and is eager to expand and continue working in new regions to work with governments and other stakeholders to build National M&E Systems (NMES).

To enable possible partnerships in Middle East and North Africa (MENA), GEI organized a Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop in Amman, Jordan from May 16-18, 2022 (See Annex A for Agenda). A total of 25 participants from 12 MENA countries representing government and civil society, as well as donors and partners (see list of participants – Annex B) attended the workshop.

Day 1

The first day of the workshop included an overview of key concepts around both M&E and results-based management as well as a presentation on Mexico's experience institutionalizing MEAL as a national policy. On Day 1 participants were assigned working groups and were asked to examine a simplified version of a Monitoring and Evaluation Situation Analysis (MESA) for a fictitious country. After examining the 'mini-MESA' in detail, participants identified strengths and priorities for improvement in the fictitious country's NMES. Throughout the day, the discussions allowed us to better understand what issues related to M&E are priorities for the region, giving GEI an initial sense of what is needed and how it can support the region.

During the introductory session, *Speaking the Same Language: An Overview of MEAL and RBM*, participants agreed that lack of agreed terminology in Arabic was a key challenge for the region. There was general agreement that clear definitions and unification of terms (i.e. developing an 'M&E dictionary/glossary of terms') in Arabic language is a necessary first step for strengthening the culture of evidence use. While the DAC Criteria have been translated into Arabic and a Glossary of RBM and Evaluation Terms has been issued jointly by OECD and IsDB, the discussion suggested that there is not much awareness about this resource, and it is not widely used by relevant stakeholders.

The second session of the day was led by Thania De La Garza, who presented on Mexico's experience in establishing a functional M&E system in the country. Participants found this to be an extremely engaging session and it led to extensive Q&A. An important point of discussion for this session was how long the process was in Mexico, giving participants a clearer sense of what it takes to establish a functional M&E system. Other points of discussion included:

- the importance of ensuring quality of data to enhance performance of MEAL activities,
- institutionalizing MEAL practices, policies, reporting requirements,

- engaging academia to promote individual capacity at the local level, and
- establishing NMES standards.

After lunch, Heather Bryant presented on GEI's MESA tool, describing its purpose, structure, and outputs followed by a case-study exercise showcasing the NMES in three fictitious countries and a 'mini-MESA' checklist enabled participants to get an initial sense of how this tool can help identify actions to help strengthen NMES. Through the exercise, participants were able to apply their understanding of the tool and NMES to assess what the fictitious countries needed to do to improve.

During the subsequent plenary session participants had the opportunity to share their reactions to the tool and NMES. Overall, there was broad agreement that willingness, resources, and central coordination in government is critical for a functional monitoring and evaluation system.

Participants noted that; in many cases, M&E solutions were present on paper but not in practice and strong motivation from the government would be necessary to change that. Many pointed out that very often, there is a lack of transparency in the region and evaluation reports are often not published or there is no follow-up on M&E outputs. On this point, it was agreed that, for evaluators, it is important to communicate their findings with the government in a way that enables constructive dialogue and learning.

In closing the first day of the workshop, participants were asked to use an online survey to reflect on the MENA region's M&E strengths and weaknesses, assets that can be leveraged, and what they think should be the priority for the next few years.

While answers varied based on each participant's country of origin, some responses were clustered along country income levels:

- Participants from high-income countries identified use of technology as a possible asset for the region
- Participants from low or middle-income countries emphasized support and resources from international bodies as an asset.

Majority of participants agreed on what should be periodized in the region as GEI and partners work on strengthening M&E systems:

- Strengthening national capacities on M&E and minimizing reliance on foreign expertise,
- developing national plans to encourage a systematic approach to strengthening M&E systems, and
- the importance of political will for establishing strong M&E systems.

Day 2

On the second day, sessions focused on helping participants construct a vision for the future of both their countries and the region's M&E systems. More specifically, Day 2 included two presentations that conveyed the value proposition of a regional approach to enhancing national M&E systems.

The day began with opening remarks and a recap of day 1's key points from Dugan Fraser and Ahmed Abdelgawad. Both speakers added their insights from the results of the reflection survey. There was also an opportunity for those participants that attended EvalMENA earlier in the month to recap those sessions and consider how they could connect with GEI's workshop.

After this, the first session of the day, *Vision for the Future through ECD*, introduced participants to some of the work already in process through GEI partners. Edoe Agbodjan presented on the CLEAR initiative and experiences of CLEAR Francophone Africa (CLEAR FA) and Thania De La Garza presented on a regional-level technical assistance (TA) project provided by the CLEAR Latin America and the Caribbean (CLEAR LAC) to the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Immediately after this session, there was an open discussion among participants about the prospect of setting up a GEI or CLEAR center in the region. Most participants were in favor of such a center, stating that with a clear mandate and adequate funding such a center would be very beneficial for the region.

Other participants agreed to the idea of a GEI center while expressing some reservations. Their primary concern was that a GEI center would overshadow regional VOPEs. However, both Edoe and Dugan shared how CLEAR Centers often work closely with VOPEs and build VOPE capacity as part of their work.

This discussion was followed by a group exercise where participants were asked to craft a newspaper headline for their country, imaging the possible impact if a GEI center was established. After extensive discussions, the groups presented the following impact statements:

- *The MENA Center(s) have received an award because a number of governments in the region adopted a national early grade assessment framework that aims at enhancing the performance of early grade students!*
- *An effective CLEAR center in the MENA region conducted several MESA studies and shared this information with different countries who as a result enhanced their performance and capacities!*
- *The Regional Ibn Rushd Center for M&E was awarded the GEI innovation award for 5 countries for enhancing their education systems and abilities!*
- *The GEI MENA Center is celebrating their 2000th graduate for supporting the National M&E plans in their country!*
- *Going down the Rabbit Hole: the Center has been Rewarded the Best Award this Year for Supporting 3 Governments for Establishing M&E Bodies in their Countries!*

The exercise highlights how participants agree that improved M&E and evidence-based decision making can lead to positive changes sectors such as education. Additionally, participants, through their headlines and subsequent discussions, also indicated that a demonstration effect would yield greater M&E results overall. Suggesting that if a GEI center is established in one country or sub-region and yields results, others will soon follow, changing the overall response to M&E.

For the final working session of the day, participants were asked to identify potential next steps to achieve the success that they envisioned during the 'Newspaper Headline' exercise. These were presented in plenary and each participant was asked to vote for the top five next steps. The findings of the prioritization exercise are shown in Annex C. The three most voted for items were:

- Undertake a regional mapping exercise of regional bodies/ stakeholders, including local M&E capacities and potential donors (i.e. ECD supply and Fundraising analysis)
- Establish a "Task Force" to do a (capacity gap analysis) study (CBA) & Establish a consultative/ advisory group composed of Government representatives & seek "support"
- Determine strategic priorities for the region & define mandate (for GEI's potential MENA Center)

These steps effectively brought the discussion back to the initial reservations some participants felt towards a GEI MENA Center and present options for avoiding any of the identified pitfalls.

The workshop concluded with an open session where participants could share their final thoughts for GEI. Many expressed satisfaction with the workshop and appreciated the opportunity to connect with their counterparts across the region. Additionally, there was a sense that this workshop is a first step and more similar events should follow with a wider range of stakeholders.

Next Steps

After concluding the workshop, GEI and its partners identified key new steps to maintain momentum in the MENA region:

1. Conduct a regional mapping exercise and share with community for feedback
2. Engage with representatives from countries that did not attend the workshop to ensure that all MENA countries are included in future discussions
3. Establish a Steering Group consisting of regional voices that can better guide GEI

Annex

A. Agenda

	Time	Session Title	Brief Description
17th May 2022			
I	9:00am – 5:00pm	Welcome and Introductions	In this first session, participants will be able to connect with one another and introduce themselves to the broader group.
II		Speaking the Same Language: An Overview of M&E and RBM	This session will start with a recap of key concepts around M&E and developing a culture of use of evidence for better results.
III		Sharing Regional and International Experiences with M&E systems strengthening: Sharing examples from Mexico	Institutionalizing monitoring & evaluation as a national policy is an undertaking that involves challenges at different levels, however experiences from different countries show this work brings more benefits than any of its foreseeable challenges.
IV		Identifying existing Strengths and Opportunities in M&E systems at the Country level	Group exercise that will enable participants to explore different dimensions and tools that form a NMES.
V		Reflection Exercise	After a day of learning and discussing different aspects of M&E and NMES, participants will be asked to reflect on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What assets can be leveraged and/or built upon at the country level? ii. What challenges need to be considered at the country level? iii. What needs have yet to be met?
18th May 2022			
VI	9:00am – 5:00pm	Day 1 recap	Discussion based on an analysis of the exit ticket responses.
VII		Vision for the future through Evaluation Capacity Development: Articulating a realistic yet ambitious vision in building an M&E system	Discussion: With respect to NMES (and informed by the findings from the Reflection Exercise), where could your country be 5 years from now?
VIII		Roadmap to success	Group exercise that will allow participants to identify milestones (for years 1, 3, and 5) to achieve their respective vision
IX		Agreements and Next steps	United with one vision, participants and development partners agree to supporting next steps for M&E systems strengthening in their countries, and regions.
X		Closing	Closing remarks from organizers

B. Participant List

Government and Civil Society representatives

Country	Name	Title, Affiliation
Algeria	Hynda Krachni	General Controller in charge of EPP, Ministry of Finance
Algeria	Djelloul Saci	Founding Member, EvalDZ
Egypt	Sherine Mourad	Chairman and Executive Director, Arab Foundation for Monitoring & Evaluation and Quality (AFMEQ)
Jordan	Amjad Al Attar	Evaluation Expert, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
Jordan	Mohannad Al-Rawashdeh	Deputy Director, Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU)
Morocco	Ahmed Bencheikh	President, Moroccan Evaluation Association (MEA)
Morocco	Nabil Larhmam	Director of Cooperation, Cour des Comptes du Royaume du Maroc
Oman	Muna Al Jabri	Director of Support & Evaluation of Economic Sectors, Ministry of Economy
Oman	Talal Al Saadi	Director of Development Plan Preparation, Ministry of Economy
Qatar	Aldana Al Athba	Head of monitoring and evaluation, Qatar Fund for Development
Qatar	Anis Ben Brik	Associate Professor, Hamad Bin Khalifa University
Saudi Arabia	H.E. Rakan Alsheikh	Assistant Deputy Minister for Economic Policies & Programs, Ministry of Economy and Planning (MEP)
Saudi Arabia	Ahmed Alshamrani	CEO, Saudi Impact Center (Alathar)
Tunisia	Walid Omri	Director, General Authority for Monitoring of public's programs, Presidency of Government
Tunisia	Olfa Soukri Cherif	Professor, Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis
U.A.E.	Dana Dajani	Director of Partnerships and Programs, Al Ghurair Foundation
West Bank & Gaza	Ghassan Kasabreh	Director, NGO Development Center
West Bank & Gaza	Ali Khatib	President, Palestinian Evaluation Association
West Bank & Gaza	Mahmoud Ataya	Director General of Planning, Office of the Prime Minister
Yemen	Nashwan Ahmed	Chair, EvalYemen

Partners

Name	Title, Affiliation
Abdel Hameed Bashir	Economist, Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA)
Aref Ben Abdullah	International Affairs Advisor, École Nationale d'Administration Publique – Canada (ENAP)
Edoe Djimitri	Director, Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Francophone Africa (CLEAR-FA)
Emmanuel Saka	Evaluation Specialist, UNICEF
Fahad Albassam	Senior Evaluation Specialist, Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)
Fahad Al-Kuwari	Qatar Fund for Development
Faisal Alflaih	Projects Manager, Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)
Ghada Alsous	Country Program Associate, United Nations Development Program – Independent Evaluation Office (UNDP-IEO)
Nadia Hamid Salman	Planning/ M&E Specialist, United Nations Development Program – Independent Evaluation Office (UNDP-IEO)
Niklaus Eggenberger	Senior Advisor – Strategic Planning Sector, Qatar Fund for Development
Rabia Hassan	Business Development Specialist, United Nations Development Program – Independent Evaluation Office (UNDP-IEO)
Rana Sallam	Regional Evaluation Officer, World Food Programme
Robert Stryk	Regional Advisor, UNICEF
Thania de la Garza	CLEAR LAC Project Manager & Consultant for the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) – The World Bank Group
Ziyad Aljebreen	Senior Evaluation Specialist, Saudi Fund for Development (SFD)

Organizers

Name	Title, Affiliation
Ahmed Abdelgawad	Evaluation Specialist, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)
Dugan Fraser	Program Manager, Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI)
Guilherme Cunha Lima	Consultant, Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) – The World Bank Group
Heather Bryant	Evaluation Advisor, United Nations Development Program – Independent Evaluation Office (UNDP-IEO)
Leonardo Lemes	Senior Operations Officer, Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) – The World Bank Group
Maurya West Meiers	Senior Evaluation Officer, Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) – The World Bank Group
Shaha Zehra	Operations Analyst, Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI) – The World Bank Group
Zaher Rebai	Director – Operation Evaluation Department, Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)

