

# Sustainability- inclusive evaluation:

## Practical ways to address the environment alongside equity in all evaluations

Andy Rowe, E. Jane Davidson, Thomaz K. Chianca



Webinar for the



February 27, 2025



# Why cover equity and sustainability in ALL evaluations?

Programs and policies with NO equity objectives and/or NO environmental objectives cause by far the biggest negative impacts.

They are the ones that MOST need equity- and sustainability-inclusive evaluation.

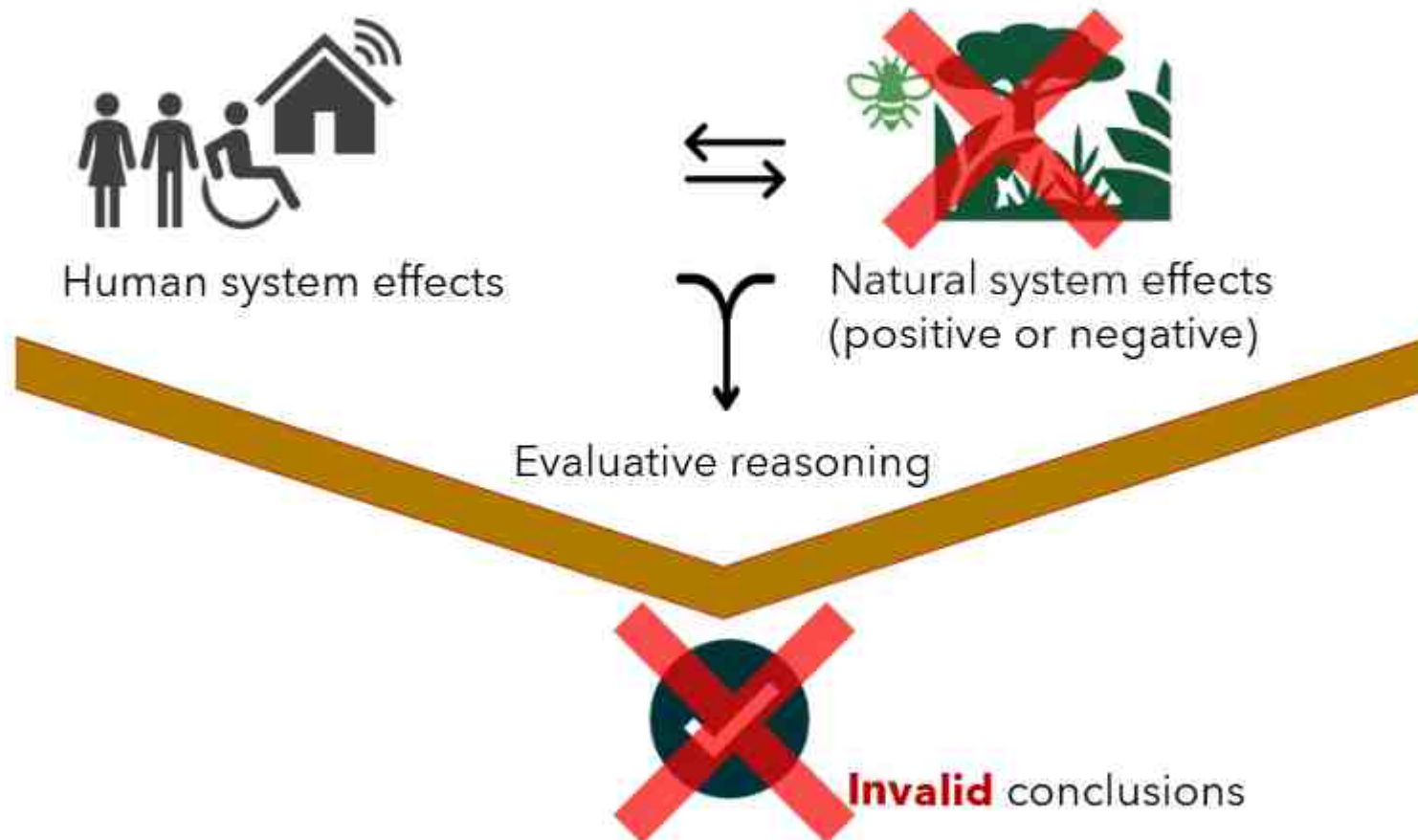
**NEGATIVE IMPACT OF  
OTHER PROGRAMS & POLICIES**

**POSITIVE IMPACT OF  
ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS & POLICIES**

imgflip.com



# Ignore natural systems → invalid conclusions!



# Imagine your evaluation practice in 5 to 10 years

Climate disruption and environmental degradation will be even more **blindingly obvious and urgent**.

Every single decision maker will be under **intense pressure** to show **what they are doing about it** and **how well that is working**.

To meet that moment, **ALL evaluations** must be **sustainability-inclusive**.

The time to **gear up** for this is **NOW!**

**Practical ways  
of addressing  
equity and  
sustainability in  
all evaluations**



# 1. Prioritize conceptual use

Create  
**lightbulb moments**  
for decision makers





# Conceptual use is key for the long game



## Instrumental Use

Providing insights to inform improvements to the **current policy or initiative**

If sustainability wasn't considered in the first place, there will be limits to what changes are feasible now



## Conceptual Use

Creating **"lightbulb moments"** that decision makers can never unsee

These new insights will inform their thinking not just now, but also in **future policymaking and initiative design**

## 2. Focus on a few key issues

**Less is more.**

**Trying to cover every aspect** relevant to sustainability **will hinder use.**

To **influence rather than overwhelm** decision-makers, it is better to pick two or three important environmental issues and explain them well





# How to select most important issues

Consider:

1. The most important environmental impacts
2. Issues where equity and sustainability are clearly at stake
3. Issues that have broad relevance
4. Issues that are currently high on the radar
5. Consequences of inclusion or exclusion
6. Implications for conceptual use



### **3. Tap into existing and additional evidence and expertise**

**A lot of the evidence gathering legwork has been done already!**

**Many organizations, communities, and networks have expertise that you can tap into**



# Finding existing research & evidence

Life Cycle Analyses (LCAs)

<https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/are/energy/lca>



Energy Efficiency Assessments

Environmental Impact Assessments completed for the project / system, including any risk mitigation strategies

Previous research and evaluation studies on the environmental impacts of this kind of program / policy / initiative / system

Monitoring or system data (e.g., energy consumption, incident reports)



# Where to look for relevant expertise

## Existing expertise

- Ask inside your own organization and networks first!
- Academic institutions / experts; ask about their graduate students
- Local and Indigenous knowledge holders and elders
- ENGOs (environmental NGOs)
- Experts in government agencies

## Additional expertise

- When commissioning an evaluation, write the TOR to require relevant natural science expertise on the evaluation team
- If you work in an evaluation unit, suggest filling the next vacancy with someone who also has expertise in the natural sciences

Be sure to include **boundary spanners** – people who can help translate discipline-specific concepts and facilitate productive interdisciplinary dialogue

# **4. Ask**

## **"coupled-systems"**

### **Key Evaluation Questions**



# Ask “coupled systems” evaluation questions



From “human systems”  
evaluation questions ...

To what extent did the program help smallholder farmers, including women and other marginalized groups, to adapt to climate change, enhance the value chain producing food for local markets, and sustain their livelihoods?

... to “coupled systems”  
evaluation questions



How well did the program help smallholder farmers, including women and other marginalized groups, to adapt to climate change, enhance the value chain producing food for local markets, and sustain their livelihoods **in ways that also protected and ideally restored the natural environment?**



# Ask “coupled systems” evaluation questions



From “natural systems”  
evaluation questions ...

To what extent has the program contributed to a reduction in targeted environmental pollutants or impacts (e.g., air quality, water quality, biodiversity loss)?

... to “coupled systems”  
evaluation questions



How well has the program contributed to a reduction in targeted environmental pollutants or impacts (e.g., air quality, water quality, biodiversity loss) **in ways that also enhance equitable access to clean water and air and green spaces - particularly for women, girls, low-income populations, and other marginalized groups (including their multiple intersectionalities) ?**

# Ask “coupled systems” evaluation questions



From “human systems”  
evaluation questions ...

To what extent does the program build on community strengths to address people’s needs and help them realize their aspirations – particularly women, girls, and other marginalized groups (including their multiple intersectionalities)?

... to “coupled systems”  
evaluation questions



How well does the program build on community strengths to address people’s needs and help them realize their aspirations – particularly women, girls, and other marginalized groups (including their multiple intersectionalities) **in ways that also protect and ideally restore any parts of the ecosystem that might be affected?**

# Download and share these free resources

## Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) to guide Footprint Evaluations

E. Jane Davidson and Andy Rowe

V5 – May 16, 2022



### Contents

Introduction .....	
KEQ 1: Relevance & Coherence .....	
KEQ 2: Design & Adaptation .....	
KEQ 3: Implementation .....	
KEQ 4: Outcomes & Impacts .....	
KEQ 5: Patterns, Outliers, and Links .....	
KEQ 6: Durability .....	
KEQ 7: Overall Value .....	
Glossary .....	
Other key concepts .....	

Suggested Citation: Davidson, E. J., & Rowe, A. (2022, May). *Key evaluation questions*. BetterEvaluation. <https://www.betterevaluation.org/tools-resources/evaluations>

## Preguntas de evaluación clave (PEC) para orientar las evaluaciones de la huella ecológica (*Footprint Evaluations*)

E. Jane Davidson y Andy Rowe

V5 - 16 de mayo de 2022



### Índice

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Cita sugerida: Davidson, E.J. y Rowe, A. (2022). Preguntas de evaluación clave (PEC) para orientar las evaluaciones de la huella ecológica (*Footprint Evaluations*) (versión 5). BetterEvaluation. (Obra original publicada en inglés como "Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) to guide Footprint Evaluations"). <https://www.betterevaluation.org/es/tools-resources/preguntas-de-evaluacion-clave-pec-para-orientar-las-evaluaciones-de-la-huella-ecologica-footprint>

Gracias, DEval, for the Spanish translation!



# Apply the OECD DAC Criteria in a Sustainability -Inclusive Way

[Topics](#)[Countries & regions](#)[Publications](#)[Data](#)[News & Events](#)[About](#)[English](#)

[OECD](#) > [Topics](#) > [Development co-operation evaluation and effectiveness](#) > [Evaluation Criteria](#)

## Evaluation Criteria

The OECD has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability – and two principles for their use. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of a development intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project or activity). They serve as the basis upon which evaluative judgements are made.

Focus

Key links

[Guidance: Applying Evaluation Criteria Thoughtfully](#) >

[Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management for Sustainable Development \(Second Edition\)](#) >



# OECD-DAC criteria

Is the intervention doing the right things with respect to both human and natural systems?

## RELEVANCE

is the intervention doing the right things?

How beneficial or detrimental are the intervention's effects on human and natural systems in the short to medium term?

## EFFECTIVENESS

is the intervention achieving its objectives?

## IMPACT

what difference does the intervention make?

How beneficial or detrimental are the intervention's effects on human and natural systems in the long term?



## COHERENCE

how well does the intervention fit?

How well does the intervention align with policies and commitments to protect and restore natural systems?

## EFFICIENCY

how well are resources being used?

How sustainably and equitably are resources and natural systems being used, protected, and restored?

## SUSTAINABILITY

will the benefits last?

How resilient and well sustained are the installations, activities, outcomes and impacts in the face of emerging environmental challenges?



# Download and share these free resources

Gracias, DEval, for the  
Spanish translation!

Addressing  
environmental  
sustainability  
through the  
OECD DAC Criteria  
for Evaluation of  
Development  
Assistance



**Footprint Evaluation Initiative**

February 2023  
Version 1.2



Evaluación de la  
sostenibilidad  
ambiental con base  
en los Criterios de  
Evaluación de la  
Asistencia al  
Desarrollo del  
CAD de la OCDE



**Iniciativa Evaluación de la Huella  
Ecológica**

Febrero de 2023  
Versión 1.2





# **5. Use evaluative reasoning to draw clear evaluative conclusions**

**Use the Footprint Evaluation Typology**

**Use rubrics for a particular application**

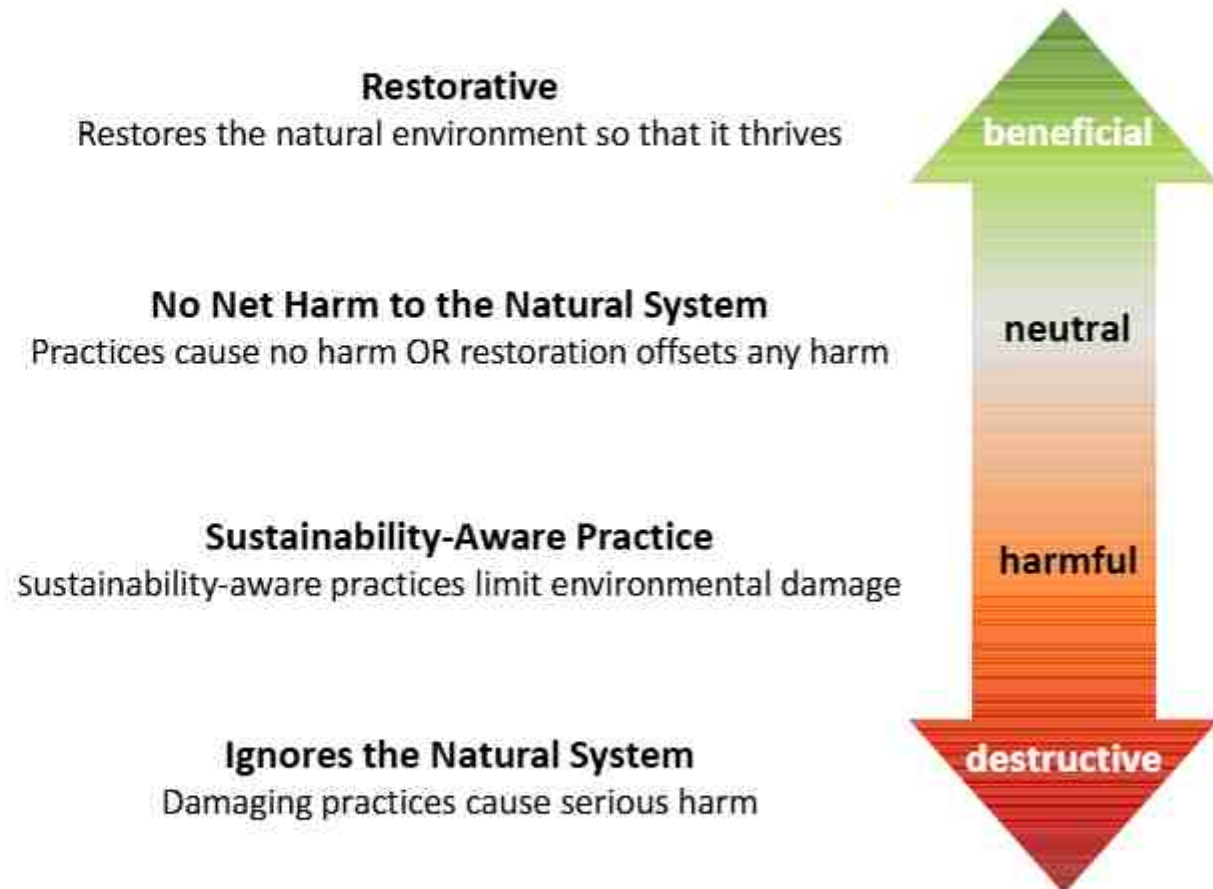
**Use Footprint's Equity-Sustainability matrix**



# Encouraging crystal clear evaluative conclusions

To influence decision makers with the appropriate level of urgency, **evaluations must be crystal clear about how beneficial or problematic the effects are** on both human and natural systems.

For effects on the natural system, we use a typology like this to assess the evidence and draw **clear, compelling, well-reasoned evaluative conclusions.**





# Applying the typology: 2 evaluations

## IFAD smallholder farming

**30 case studies**

**Largely qualitative information**



## Colombia government IT systems

**110  
government  
entities**

**Largely  
quantitative  
information**





# IFAD Smallholder Farming Evaluation



Sustainability assessed as an add-on to a larger evaluation

30 country case studies

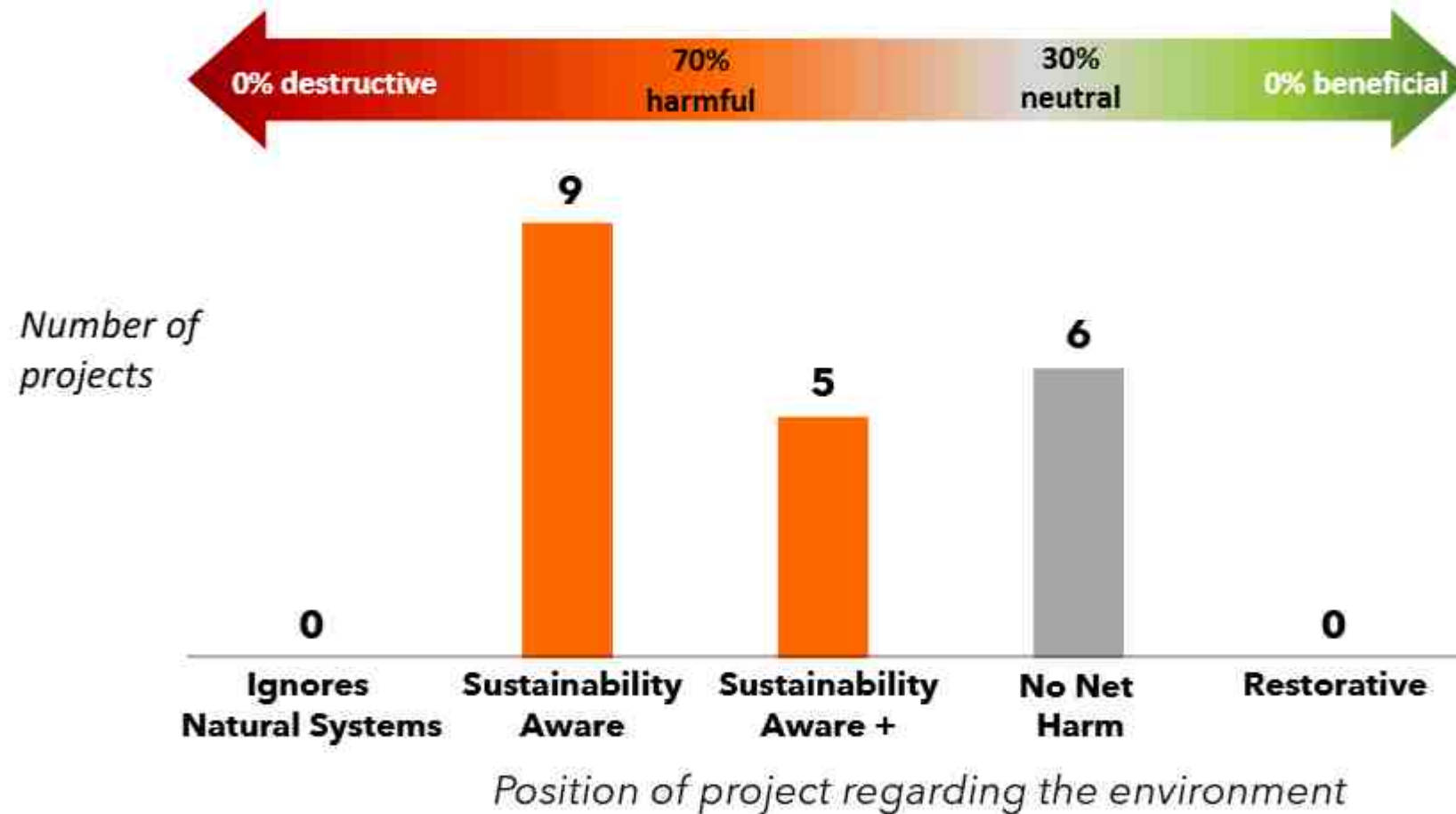
Largely qualitative information

**Initial assessments** were made by Andy Rowe, who is familiar with coupled-systems issues

**Ratings were reviewed**, adjusted, and **validated** by multiple people:

- case study lead
- evaluation team
- operations people at country and regional levels
- technical experts
- managerial staff

# The IFAD evaluation rated 20 projects on sustainability



Source: (Footprint evaluation forthcoming)

# Another option: the Equity-Sustainability Matrix

## Human System Effects



## Natural System Effects



	Destructive of natural systems	Sustainability aware but still harmful	No Net Harm to the natural system	Restorative (repair harm so systems thrive)
Extractive of women and other historically marginalized groups				
Gender and diversity aware but still inequitable				
Equitable system – no longer disadvantageous for certain groups				
Reparations rebalance multi-generational disadvantages				Ultimate aim: Systems are thriving for all



**Consider rating each project or site  
on both dimensions using the Matrix**

**Human  
System  
Effects**



**Natural System Effects**



	Destructive of natural systems	Sustainability aware but still harmful	No Net Harm to the natural system	Restorative (repair harm so systems thrive)
Extractive of women and other historically marginalized groups		<b>1</b>		
Gender and diversity aware but still inequitable	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	
Equitable system – no longer disadvantageous for certain groups		<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	
Reparations rebalance multi-generational disadvantages				Ultimate aim: Systems are thriving for all

# Colombian Government IT Systems



**Add-on** to a larger evaluation

**110** government entities surveyed

**Largely quantitative** information -  
10 multi-choice questions on  
sustainability

**Rubrics** developed to interpret  
survey results

Rubric-informed **algorithm** to  
generate ratings for each entity

# A seven-member partnership



Departamento  
Nacional de Planeación



Ipsos - Napoleón Franco



FOOTPRINT EVALUATION



CarbonBox



DEval

DEUTSCHES  
EVALUATIONSGESAMTHEIT  
DER ENTWICKLUNG  
ZUSAMMENARBEIT

GEI  
Global  
Evaluation  
Initiative

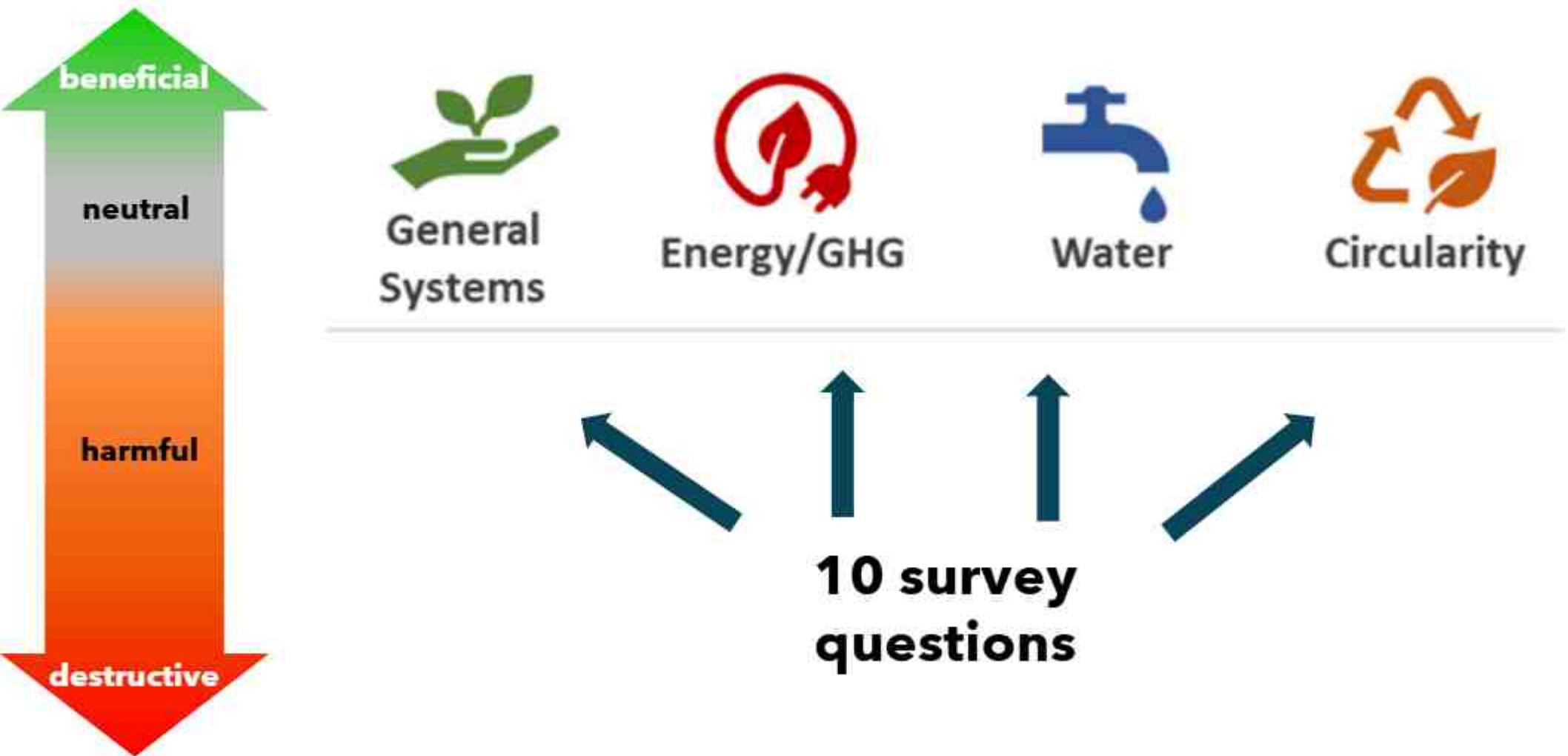


Yobiplex  
Corporation





## How to apply the Footprint typology to assess the 110 entities using the 10 survey questions?



## Water Efficiency



Rubric used to assess entities' sustainability practices based on survey results

Rating	Description
Restorative	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency has implemented restorative actions that <u>more than offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems, so that the agency's impact on the natural environment is net restorative, allowing natural systems to thrive.</p>
No Net Harm	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency is taking <u>restorative actions that fully offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems or the agency recycles the water used by the IT system and its buildings, resulting in no net depletion of water.</p>
Strong Sustainable Practices	<p>The agency has completed or is currently implementing <u>all three of the following</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A current, ongoing water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• Participation in campaigns in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> <li>• Calculation of the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems</li> </ul>
Some Sustainable Practices	<p>The agency has implemented or is currently <u>implementing at least one of the following</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• One or more campaigns in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> </ul>
Sustainability-Aware	<p>The agency has calculated the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems, but it <u>has not</u> (or respondents <u>do not know</u> if it has) implemented any programs or campaigns relating to water conservation and efficient use in the Systems area or elsewhere in the agency.</p>
Ignoring Sustainability	<p>The agency has implemented <u>none of the following</u> (or respondents <u>do not know</u> if it has them):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• A campaign in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> <li>• Calculation of the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems</li> </ul>



	Rating	Description	Algorithm
beneficial	Restorative	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency has implemented restorative actions that <u>more than offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems, so that the agency's impact on the natural environment is net restorative, allowing natural systems to thrive.</p>	Not possible to assess using the survey data
neutral	No Net Harm	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency is taking <u>restorative actions that fully offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems <u>or</u> the agency recycles the water used by the IT system and its buildings, resulting in <u>no net depletion of water</u>.</p>	Not possible to assess using the survey data
harmful	Strong Sustainable Practices	<p>The agency has completed or is currently implementing <u>all three of the following</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A current, ongoing water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• Participation in campaigns in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> <li>• Calculation of the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems</li> </ul>	<b>YES to all:</b> H6.1; H6A.1; H9.1
	Some Sustainable Practices	<p>The agency has implemented or is currently <u>implementing at least one of the following</u>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• One or more campaigns in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> </ul>	<b>YES to one of:</b> H6.1 or H6A.1 <b>And YES to:</b> H9.2 or H9.99
	Sustainability-Aware	<p>The agency has calculated the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems, but it <u>has not</u> (or respondents <u>do not know</u> if it has) implemented any programs or campaigns relating to water conservation and efficient use in the Systems area or elsewhere in the agency.</p>	<b>YES to:</b> H9.1 <b>And NO to:</b> H6.1 or H6.99 and H6A.1 or H6A.6
	Ignoring Sustainability	<p>The agency has implemented <u>none of the following</u> (or respondents <u>do not know</u> if it has them):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A water conservation and efficient use program</li> <li>• A campaign in the Systems area relating to water conservation and efficient use</li> <li>• Calculation of the water footprint of the buildings that house information systems</li> </ul>	<b>NO to both:</b> H6.1 and H6A.1 (or <b>YES to:</b> H6A.6) <b>And NO to:</b> H9.2 or H9.99
destructive			





Rating	Description	Algorithm
Restorative	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency has implemented restorative actions that <u>more than offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems, so that the agency's impact on the natural environment is net restorative, allowing natural systems to thrive.</p>	Not possible to assess using the survey data
No Net Harm	<p>The agency has minimized water consumption by considering water footprints in its procurement of technological infrastructure, including off-site and cloud hosting. It also uses best practices in water conservation and efficient use in its own sites and is tracking progress against the IT Systems building's water footprint calculation.</p> <p><u>In addition</u>, the agency is taking <u>restorative actions that fully offset any environmental harm</u> from its water consumption of its IT systems or the agency recycles the water used by the IT system and its buildings, resulting in no net depletion of water.</p>	Not possible to assess using the survey data
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**Clear overall conclusion: The vast majority of Colombian agencies are using at least some sustainable practices, but are likely still harming the environment**



The methodology helped identify **three entities with "strong sustainable practices"** in **all four rubrics** – which other entities can now learn from





# Building government capacity in sustainability-inclusive evaluation



Colombia is committed to including sustainability in evaluations right across its government portfolios

Capacity building with:

- DNP and the external evaluation team
- Government agency M&E staff
- Local evaluation consultants & experts



# Maximizing the value of your first efforts

How to get the most out of  
your early efforts to incorporate  
sustainability into evaluation





# Getting the most out of your first efforts

## Smart capacity building

- Involve the right people at the right times and in ways that work for them
- Key people learn the nuts and bolts hands-on, guided by experts
- Others are involved at key points, in ways that encourage conceptual use
- Write up how-to guides to keep the know-how in organizational memory

## Scaling conceptual use

- Think through what insights might also be informative to other stakeholders
- Find ways to share what you've learned with interested others
- Involve people from partner organizations in your next sustainability-inclusive evaluation – or offer to help them with theirs
- Invite other stakeholders to do a joint project



## **Urgency: 2030 is only 1 to 1.5 full project cycles away**

### **By the time newly initiated projects are evaluated, it will be too late**

- Typical development project is about 6 years from design to conclusion
- Evaluation typically occurs at mid-point and end of project
- Evaluation is not sufficiently timely considering the extreme urgency of sustainability – and even if it is timely, many evaluations skip this issue!

### **Project design processes often marginalize sustainability, so evaluation does too**

- Project design and negotiation always involve major budget squeezes
- Environmental sustainability gets marginalized and superficially addressed
- Evaluation designs tend to mirror program designs – so sustainability gets marginalized in evaluation too

# The evaluation function needs a redesign

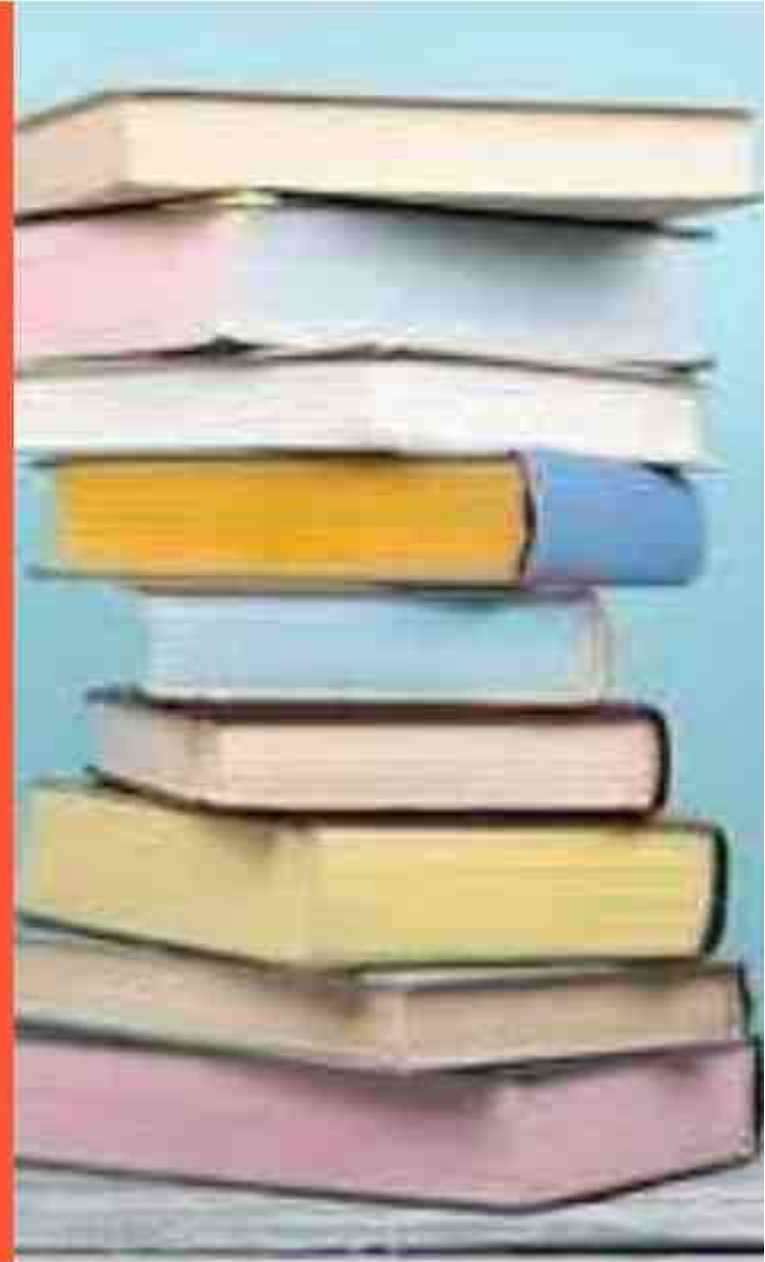
Equity and sustainability need to be built into program design and inception

Assess likely future effects now using already available information – don't wait to gather full primary data

Much more timely – rapid cycle, process, and real-time evaluation

Nimble adaptive management at all levels (project, program, strategy), not the usual slow 'management response'

# Some resources





# Footprint Evaluation Initiative resources



## Thought Experiments

Description, analysis and process of four examples which revisited completed evaluations to think through whether it would have been feasible and useful to include environmental sustainability.



## Evaluation of environmental sustainability aspects of a national strategy

Processes used to address environment as a cross-cutting issue despite constraints.



## Evaluating the environmental impact of personal protective equipment (PPE) in the COVID-19 pandemic

Drawing on a range of evidence to illustrate how an evaluation of PPE might consider environmental impacts.



## Sustainability-inclusive evaluation

Patricia Rogers, Kaye Stevens, Andy Rowe, Jane Davidson



## Addressing environmental sustainability through the OECD DAC Criteria for Evaluation of Developmental Assistance

This resource shows how the six OECD DAC evaluation criteria can be used to get environmental sustainability on the agenda for evaluations and monitoring.



## Key Evaluation Questions to Guide Footprint Evaluations

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) are designed to support the inclusion of environmental sustainability by embedding consideration of the environment in each evaluation question rather than adding environmental considerations as a standalone question.



## Identifying environmental commitments

Step by step guide to using The World Fact book to identify international agreements to which countries are signatories.

Connect to materials and community of practice

<https://www.betterevaluation.org/footprint-evaluation>.

# Some resources on evaluation rubrics methodology

## Rubrics Methodology in Detail: Helping Save The Children Turn Children's Experiences of Discrimination and Exclusion into Rich, Trackable Outcomes

Rubric Methodology in Detail: Helping Save The Children Turn Children's Experiences of Discrimination and Exclusion into Rich, Trackable Outcomes



E. Jane Davidson

Real Evaluation

<https://jmd.org/0000-0006-1>

Thomas K. Chienca

Real Evaluation

<https://jmd.org/0000-0002-2>

Nicole Dulien

Save the Children International

<https://jmd.org/0000-0002-3>

Anil Sigdel

Save the Children International



FASHION FOR  
GOOD

Independent Evaluation

COMEIA

COMUNICAÇÃO E AVALIAÇÃO LTDA.

Thomas K. Chienca, Ph.D.

E. Jane Davidson, Ph.D.

February 15, 2021



actionable  
evaluation  
basics



Getting succinct answers to  
the most important questions

E. Jane Davidson, Ph.D.



Children's Sessions A & B

Save the Children

Manuals, Toolkits and Guidance

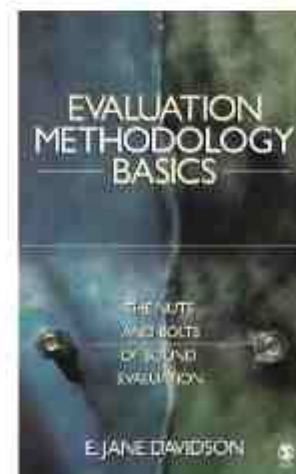
### Rubrics 11: A Toolkit to Address Child Discrimination and Exclusion

Publication year: 2024

English

Format: PDF (221.7 KB)

Publisher: Save the Children International





# Thank you!



**FOOTPRINT EVALUATION**