

Global Impact Evaluation Forum 2025 Discussion

Summary of the EvalforEarth Discussion

DECEMBER 2025

ABSTRACT

The 2025 Global Impact Evaluation Forum, hosted by WFP in partnership with BMZ and Norad, convenes practitioners and policymakers to advance evidence partnerships that can drive more coherent, cost-effective, and localized action across the UN system. Against the backdrop of increasing global fragility, constrained resources, and calls for a humanitarian reset, the Forum emphasizes the need to bridge persistent gaps between evidence and action—particularly in humanitarian and crisis-affected settings. The Forum aims to catalyze collective action to strengthen causal evidence generation and use across the UN system and its partners.

This document synthesizes preliminary reflections from the EvalForEarth online discussion held in preparation for the Forum. Key themes explored by participants during the discussion include designing evaluations around decisions rather than compliance, embedding continuous learning mechanisms, strengthening institutional cultures that value evidence, localizing evaluation design and ownership, aligning evidence efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace (HDP) nexus, and improving communication and partnerships to accelerate uptake.

OBJECTIVES

Participants were asked to reflect on the most effective ways the UN and its partners can strengthen the link between impact evaluation findings and real-time decision-making.



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1. Bridging evidence and action:** What are the most effective ways the UN and its partners can strengthen the link between impact evaluation findings and real-time decision-making?
- 2. Localizing evidence:** How can impact evaluations be designed and used to better serve the localization agenda, ensuring that local priorities, capacities, and contexts inform policy and programmes?
- 3. Supporting UN reform:** How can the impact evaluation community collectively contribute towards goals of coherency and cost-effectiveness in the UN system?
- 4. Connecting evidence:** How can various UN agencies and partners, with diverse mandates, align evidence agendas in the humanitarian, development, and peace nexus?

KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AND INSIGHTS

Bridging evidence and action — Strengthening the link between impact evaluations and real time decision making

- **Design evaluations for decisions, not compliance:** Impact evaluations should be conceived with a clear understanding of the decisions they aim to inform, the intended users, and the timelines for influence. This shifts the focus from bureaucratic reporting to strategic, action-relevant insights.
- **Move from endline reports to continuous learning:** Traditional evaluation cycles often come too late to inform meaningful change. Embedding rapid feedback loops, formative learning components, and adaptive management enables real-time course correction—crucial in fast-changing humanitarian contexts.
- **Leadership commitment and learning culture are essential:** Evidence can only shape policy and operations when institutional leaders create incentives and safe spaces for learning. This includes valuing negative or unexpected findings and integrating evidence into resource allocation, programme design, and priority-setting.
- **Systematic use of evidence in programme design:** Institutionalizing evidence reviews—through repositories, evidence syntheses, and structured design processes—prevents duplication, draws on prior learning, and ensures programmes build on what is known to work.
- **Translate evidence into action through communication and partnerships:** Uptake increases when evidence is shared in accessible, timely formats—such as briefs, dashboards, dialogues—and when champions within institutions and communities advocate for its use.

Localizing evidence — Designing and using impact evaluations to serve the localization agenda

- **Local actors must be co-producers of evidence:** This includes co-designing evaluation questions, using culturally appropriate methods, and integrating participatory and citizen-generated data to ensure relevance and legitimacy.

- **Adopt context appropriate, pluralistic methods:** Blend rigor with participatory action research, community scorecards, sentinel monitoring, and qualitative approaches rooted in culture; the “gold standard” is the method that best solves the local problem.
- **Strengthen local analytical ecosystems:** Invest in capacity of civil society organizations (MEL, data literacy, visualization), partner with universities/research institutes, and finance regional think tanks and data collectives to retain intellectual capital.

Supporting UN reform — Advancing coherence and cost effectiveness systemwide

- **Harmonize frameworks and invest in joint work:** Use shared theories of change, common indicators, interoperable data systems, and joint or multi-agency evaluations to reduce duplication and enable aggregation across the HDP nexus.
- **Create a UN wide “Evidence Compact”:** Agree on common platforms for meta-analysis and principles (open data, ethics, quality thresholds) so agency specific evidence becomes a UN public good.
- **Pool evaluation funds:** Shift from fragmented, small studies to pooled, strategic, cross mandate assessments on complex priorities (e.g., social protection, climate adaptation).

Connecting evidence — Aligning agendas across the Humanitarian–Development–Peace (HDP) nexus

- **Align evidence across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus:** Shared outcomes, harmonized indicators, and joint learning frameworks reduce fragmentation. Cross-agency collaboration strengthens coherence and maximizes limited resources.
- **Adopt a resilience lens and mandate “triple nexus” pilots:** Jointly design and evaluate integrated interventions to test whether combinations across pillars yield stronger sustainability and resilience than sequential efforts.

CONCLUSION

In a period defined by overlapping crises and tightening resources, the UN system must evolve toward more agile, collaborative, and evidence-informed action. The insights emerging from the preparatory discussions for the Global Impact Evaluation Forum 2025 highlight a collective commitment to strengthening causal evidence generation and use—particularly in crisis-affected contexts. By designing evaluations around decision needs, embedding continuous learning, localizing ownership, and aligning evidence across agencies and mandates, the impact evaluation community can play a central role in advancing UN reform objectives and supporting more responsive, equitable, and effective interventions. The Forum serves as a catalyst for forging stronger evidence partnerships that can translate knowledge into tangible improvements in the lives of the people the UN serves.

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RESOURCES

Find session recordings to [HERE](#) and [HERE](#) • Read the key takeaways [HERE](#)