

Beyond Silos: Advancing Gender, Human Rights, and LNOB through Integrated, Systems-Based Evaluation

Lessons from the Zimbabwe United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2022-2026) Evaluation

Presentation at the EvalforEarth 2026 IWD's Panel discussion: "Give to Gain: Advancing Gender Responsive and Inclusive Evaluation"

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Presentation outline



**1. WHERE DID
TRANSFORMATIVE
EVALUATION BEGIN?**



**2. HOW WAS STRUCTURAL
TRANSFORMATION
ASSESSED?**



**4. WHAT EVIDENCE AND
STRATEGIC INSIGHTS
WERE GENERATED?**



**5. IMPLICATIONS AND
CALL TO ACTION**

1. Where did the Integrated, Systems- Based Evaluation



1. Cooperation framework design - transformation embedded at the CF design stage — not retrofitted at the evaluation stage

2. Context analysis: (i) Identification of **systemic and structural barriers** (ii) Analysis of gender inequalities and LNOB (iii) Political economy and institutional diagnostics

3. A Cross-Pillar, Multisectoral ToC:

- **People | Planet | Prosperity | Peace**
- recognized interdependencies (social – economic - climate–food security–governance–resilience)
- Assumptions and strategies across pillars are designed as interconnected, not siloed

4. Pillar-specific ToC aligned to systems transformation: Each pillar articulated transformation across:

- **Policy shifts**
- **National and Subnational Institutional Strengthening**
- **Rights holders' empowerment**
- **Accountability mechanisms**

Transformation was defined as **structural, institutional, and empowerment**, not programmatic.

5. Results & Monitoring Architecture Designed for Transformation: tracking policy shifts, institutional performance and coordination; voice, participation, and decision-making power of rights holders

**Where did
Transformative
Evaluation Begin?
*From Design to
Systemic Intent***

2022-2026 Planet Theory of Change Logic

IF

- Policies and regulatory frameworks for environment, food systems, and climate action are strengthened
- National and subnational institutions (state and non-state) have enhanced capacity to implement mitigation and adaptation
- Governance systems improve coordination and accountability
- Citizens — particularly those furthest behind — are empowered to participate, influence decisions, and manage climate and disaster risks

THEN

- Environmental sustainability is institutionalized
- Resilient services and climate-responsive systems are strengthened
- Food systems become more inclusive and shock-resistant
- Better production, better nutrition, healthier lives, and resilient livelihoods are achieved

→ **Delivering equitable and sustainable transformation, leaving no one behind.**

Strategic Insight

Transformative evaluation did not begin at the end of term evaluation

It began with a **systems diagnosis, an integrated theory of change, and results architecture intentionally designed to measure structural change.**

Evaluability Assessment contributed to the design of the transformative evaluation.

2. How Was Structural Transformation Assessed?

From Outputs to Systems Change



1. Theory-Based, Mixed-Methods Evaluation Approach

- Explicit testing of the **Theory of Change assumptions**
- Quantitative and qualitative evidence triangulated
- Assessment focused on:
 - **Policy shifts and regulatory reforms**
 - **Examined accountability mechanisms**
 - **Institutional capacity, coordination, and joint programming**
 - **Empowerment and decision-making power of rights holders**

Transformation assessed as structural, institutional, and relational change — not programme delivery alone.

2. Gender, Human Rights & LNOB Integrated

Embedded in all evaluation criteria and more explicitly under effectiveness criteria:

- To what extent has the ZUNSDCF achieved its intended results, especially for marginalized populations as defined in the CA?
- How effectively has the UN system under the Cooperation Framework promoted:
 - Human rights
 - Gender equality
 - Youth inclusion
 - Disability inclusion
 - Environmental sustainability

Effectiveness was explicitly framed around equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

3. Cross-Sector Integration and Joint Programming assessed

1. Case Study Approach

Joint programmes and initiatives (e.g., ERVHIZ, Cyclone Idai rehabilitation) were assessed as practical examples of integration

Focused on real-world delivery, coordination, and resilience outcomes

2. Cross-Sector Joint Programming

Analysed integration across climate, environment, food systems, and governance

Examined how sectors reinforce each other rather than operate in isolation

3. Cross-Pillar Coherence & Adaptive Capacity

Evaluated alignment across People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace pillars

Assessed whether adaptive systems were resilient, equitable, and capable of sustaining change

Structural transformation occurs when **joint programming and cross-sector coherence** translate policies and institutional capacity into **systemic, inclusive, and resilient outcomes**

4. Participatory inclusive approaches

Inclusivity in the Evaluation Process - Participatory methods to capture voice and lived experiences

Inclusive Governance of the Evaluation - Evaluation Management Team included:

- UN representatives
- Office of the President and Cabinet
- Government ministries
- Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VoPEs)
- Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
- Civil society/NGOs
- Gender-balanced representation

What evidence and Strategic Insights were generated?

1. Integration delivered gains

- Transformation occurred where systems were aligned, not where sectors operated independently
- Joint programming across climate, food systems, governance, and social protection strengthened resilience and equity
- Cross-sector collaboration acted as a structural enabler of Leave No One Behind (LNOB)

2. Policy & Systemic reforms institutionalized LNOB

- LNOB embedded in national systems through policy reforms - improved access to services and livelihoods
- Previously overlooked groups, such as migrants and refugees, gained recognition and inclusion
- LNOB shifted from a targeting tool to a governance principle

3. Institutional strengthening as an engine of change

- Policies translated into durable public functions via national and subnational institutional capacity
- Strengthened systems in justice, gender, disability, and climate-resilient planning
- Sustainable transformation achieved by embedding reforms in institutions, not standalone projects

4. Empowerment of Rights Holders

- Rights holders actively shaped outcomes, e.g., farmers adopting climate-smart agriculture - enhanced food security, adaptive capacity, and resilient livelihoods

Evaluation showed that **systemic alignment + policy shifts+ institutional strengthening + empowerment** produces equitable, resilient, and inclusive outcomes.

Implications and Call to Action



Core Components of a Systems-Based Framework for Transformative, Inclusive Evaluation

- **Focus on Transformational Change**
Prioritize the assessment of **structural and systemic change**, going beyond outputs to evaluate whether policies, institutions, and programmes are generating **sustainable and lasting impact**.
- **Institutional Capacity and Accountability**
Evaluate the **strength and effectiveness of institutions and systems** to implement, sustain, and scale change, while ensuring **transparent governance and accountability mechanisms**.
- **Voice and Agency of Rights Holders**
Ensure that **rights holders—particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups—have meaningful opportunities to influence decisions**, shape programmes, and hold institutions accountable.
- **Systems Interconnections and Integration**
Recognize and analyze the **interlinkages across sectors**, such as food security, climate, environment, and governance, to identify **leverage points where integrated interventions can produce multiplier effects**.
- **Adaptive Capacity and Resilience**
Assess how systems **anticipate, respond to, and recover from shocks and emerging risks**, ensuring programmes remain **flexible, adaptive, and resilient** in changing contexts.
- **Equity and Inclusion**
Monitor progress in addressing **intersecting vulnerabilities and inequalities**, ensuring that development efforts are **inclusive and prioritize those most at risk of being left behind**.

Implications for evaluators

- **Shift to Systems-Level Analysis**
Move beyond project-level performance assessments to examine **how interventions influence broader systems, structures, and long-term development outcomes.**
- **Integrate Political Economy and Power Analysis**
Incorporate **political economy perspectives** to better understand **power dynamics, incentives, and institutional relationships** that shape programme effectiveness and sustainability.
- **Track Institutionalization and Policy Embedding**
Assess the extent to which initiatives are **embedded within policies, institutions, and governance systems**, and monitor how these changes are **sustained and scaled over time.**
- **Apply Mixed-Methods Approaches**
Use **complementary qualitative and quantitative methods** to capture not only measurable results but also **voice, agency, and the lived experiences of beneficiaries and rights holders.**
- **Assess Gender Equality, Human Rights, and LNOB Outcomes**
Explicitly evaluate how programmes contribute to **gender equality, the realization of human rights, and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle**, ensuring that impacts on the most marginalized populations are clearly measured and understood.

Implications for development practitioners

1. Design for Systems Transformation

Develop programmes from the outset with a focus on **integration and systemic transformation**, ensuring that interventions address root causes and contribute to sustainable, long-term change.

2. Invest Across Multiple Levels of Change

Promote impact by working simultaneously across interconnected levels:

- **Upstream:** Support **policy development, legal reform, and strategic frameworks** that create an enabling environment for change.
- **Meso Level:** Strengthen **institutional capacity, coordination mechanisms, and governance systems** to effectively implement and sustain reforms.
- **Micro Level:** Empower **rights holders and communities** through capacity development, participation, and access to opportunities and services.

3. Embed Gender Equality, Human Rights, and LNOB Principles

Ensure that **gender equality, human rights, and the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle** are systematically integrated across all levels of programming upstream, meso, and micro so that development efforts are inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of the most marginalized.

THANK YOU!

International Women's Day 2026: Give to Gain

*Investing in gender equality, human rights, and LNOB, evidence, and the planet **today** creates a more just and sustainable **tomorrow!***

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