



## The EvalIndigenous Network for Evaluation



## FINAL Protocol – Indigenous African Ethical Protocol for Evaluations

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## 1. Introduction

EvalIndigenous Network is a multi-stakeholder partnership built on the foundation of the knowledge and expertise of indigenous peoples around the world. EvalIndigenous seeks to bring awareness to, include, and celebrate the cultural traditions and values, languages, legal/political governance practices, and ways of life of Indigenous peoples wherever they live. Our focus is to ensure that policies and evaluation practices for Indigenous peoples are based on equity, fairness and justice (EvalIndigenous, 2019).

EvalIndigenous Network aims to:

- Increase recognition, understanding and implementation of responsive evaluation practices within Indigenous contexts
- Promote traditional approaches as well as local innovation in evaluation practice with Indigenous peoples
- Cultivate understandings and use of responsive evaluation methodologies to ensure Indigenous peoples' full participation in evaluation
- Build evaluation thinking and capacity among Indigenous peoples, evaluation practitioners, evaluation commissioners, and politicians
- Document evaluation and research protocols developed or endorsed by Indigenous peoples
- Facilitate Indigenous people's self-determination, including that they are able to fully participate in evaluations in their communities

Indigenous peoples are renowned for their rich cultures, traditional knowledge systems and unique ways of life. In many countries, however, they are dispossessed of their ancestral lands and territories, as well as deprived of their natural resources upon which they depend for their survival (United Nations, 2014).

Indigenous peoples play an important role together with representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations in developing statements, declarations and guidelines of considerable political and symbolic significance (Tunón, Kvarnström, & Lerner, 2016). The preamble of the UN Declaration recognizes the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent rights of indigenous peoples, that indigenous peoples are free and equal to all other peoples, and have the right to be free from discrimination, in particular, discrimination based on their indigenous origin or identity (Article 2).

According to the Australian Government Productivity Commission (2020), the key principle of an Ethical Protocol is to centre indigenous people, perspectives, priorities and knowledges in evaluations of policies and programs that affect them. All stages of evaluation – planning, commissioning, conduct, reporting and use, should be conducted in an ethical way.

## 2. Definition of Key Concepts

**EvalIndigenous:** EvalIndigenous is a Network that was formed as part of EvalPartners, a global movement to support the evaluation discipline to become a core instrument for social, economic and environmental transformation.

**Indigenous African:** People who are natives of the African continent, or any other person residing in Africa who holds the values and aspirations of the African communal spirit. They should have a self-identification as Africans; with special attachment to and use of their traditional and ancestral land and territory and are in one way or the other in a state of subjugation or marginalization.

**Made in Africa Evaluation:** This is an attempt to identify and articulate how African culture, history, belief systems and contexts contribute to evaluation theory, practice and methods. The contribution should include a deliberate effort at originating or developing completely new evaluation practices from within *'the continent'*, and *'uncovering practices that could inform the evolution of evaluation in the rest of the world'* (Chilisa, 2015).

**Indigenous Knowledge:** This refers to knowledge that is generated, preserved and transmitted in a traditional context and between generations; and associated with a traditional or indigenous community through a sense of communal ownership, custodianship or cultural responsibility. It may also refer to the performances, inventions and information resulting from intellectual activity of the local community. It builds upon and is inspired by the traditional knowledge base.

**Evaluator:** A person who seeks to generate knowledge in a specific context with the sole purpose of informing decisions for purposes of learning and improvement of interventions for defined stakeholders.

**Ethics:** This refers to the moral principles that govern the behaviour of a professional in conducting an activity. It is the process of questioning, discovering and defending our values, principles and purpose as Indigenous Africans. Ethics does not prescribe a specific set of rules or policies. Instead, it provides a framework for evaluating problems and determining an appropriate course of action. Ethical analysis should reflect both internationally accepted norms and locally relevant cultural values. Conducting evaluation in an ethical way involves protecting participants privacy and confidentiality, beneficence, do no harm, maximise possible benefits and minimise possible harms or risks, and obtaining voluntary and informed consent. It is concerned with Values, Principles, Beliefs and Norms.

**Protocol:** A set of guidelines that guide a professional practice, in this case Evaluation. It is a set of official rules of procedure or system of rules governing affairs of evaluation in the African context. It is a code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence in a profession. It also refers to the system of rules and acceptable behaviour used by the professionals in a discipline.

### **3. Purpose of the Ethical Protocol**

The purpose of this Indigenous African Ethical Protocol for Evaluators, is to promote the full implementation of ethical principles when engaging in monitoring and evaluation activities with the African people with the aim to support monitoring and evaluation practices that respect the rights of the African indigenous peoples, and function for their benefit.

The Guidelines are designed to be used as a framework for discussing ethical issues, and for helping the indigenous African people to recognise and resolve particular ethical issues that arise in the course of an evaluation.

### **4. On the Question of Definition of Indigeneity and Africanity**

#### **4.1 From the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Persons**

According to Article 2 of United Nations (2007), indigenous peoples and individuals are free and equal to all other peoples and individuals and have the right to be free from any kind of discrimination, in the exercise of their rights, in particular that based on their indigenous origin or identity. Article 3 adds that indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. Under Article 13.1, Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons.

#### **4.2 From the African Commission on Definition of Indigenous Africans**

It is often being argued that all Africans are indigenous to Africa. For all intents and purposes for this Ethical Protocol, our focus is on self-definition as indigenous and distinctly different from other groups within a state; on a special attachment to and use of their traditional land whereby their ancestral land and territory has a fundamental importance for their collective physical and cultural survival as peoples, because these peoples have different cultures, ways of life or modes of production than the national hegemonic and dominant model (African Commission, 2015).

The following 4 Criteria set out in African Commission (2015), may help us in defining indigenous people in the African context:

1. The occupation and use of the African territory;
2. The voluntary perpetuation of African cultural distinctiveness, which may include the aspects of language, social organization, religion and spiritual values, modes of production, laws and institutions;
3. Self-identification, as well as recognition by other groups, as a distinct collectivity;
4. An experience of subjugation, marginalisation, dispossession, exclusion or discrimination.

#### **4.3 From Webinar Engagements on Definition of Indigenous Africans**

We are all indigenous from somewhere, having moved from some places to other places. 'Indigenous' is more of using the traditions and cultural practices of communities to qualify an

evaluation. This is achieved through storytelling and being cognisant of the traditions and culture of the communities, we work in and with. Everyone on the African continent is an indigenous African, with a challenge for evaluators of how to use community traditions to bring out the best in communities. We need to appreciate and understand the value of the roots. In our conceptualisation of Indigenous Africans, we should not marginalise those of the African descent. There is need for recognition of diversity of the community as well as respect for traditions.

There is the need in our conceptualisation to try and come up with a term for the Francophone, that dispels the negative connotations associated with the word 'indigenous'. Besides, there is a certain ambiguity when it comes to defining who is considered to be indigenous across the board: first nations and Indians in America, Aborigines in Australia, and so on. So in the context of Africa, it is of key importance to agree on the criteria, the values and definitions, ideally regardless of the language used.

Indigeneity should refer to the natives of the land and the original people of the Continent. Being indigenous involves having a deep cultural connection to the land, to nature, having a deep connection between people and the land on which they live as well as the sharing of communal spirit. 'Indigenous' is about culture, practices and language. There is need to have a platform where these are nurtured and taught to others for the interest of passing this knowledge from one generation to another.

## 5. Building a Business Case for African Ethical Protocol

There is general consensus that more evidence on the effectiveness of Indigenous programs is needed to improve Indigenous outcomes (Hudson, 2017). According to Taylor (2003), there are unavoidable and undeniable cultural, or rather inter-cultural, manifestations and consequences to evaluations, based on a perspective held by an evaluator. An explanation for the variances in evaluation outcomes can be found, to a very large degree, in the significant inter-cultural differences in experience, ideology and origins of 'practice' between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous evaluators and stakeholders involved.

There has been tension between Western or European models of evaluation and world views and indigenous laws, customs and world views. There has been a growing concern in the African continent and in the Global South generally, that Evaluations have continued to be conducted with western frameworks and a concentration of Euro-centric frameworks and lens. This has meant that the evaluations have not been able to establish respectful relationships through their inability to incorporate culturally appropriate ethical standards. As Jeng (2012) notes, blind reliance on Eurocentric models, strategies and techniques often lead to inadequate assessments, wrong prescriptions and flat evaluation models.

The Evaluations anticipated in the African contexts, should assist indigenous and local communities to develop, promote and preserve their local knowledge and traditional structures in the process of evaluation. The Evaluation process should assist in safeguarding and promoting cultural integrity and diversity. Indigenous knowledge comprises information held in human memories that is by recall and the practice of learned skills in a useful way in day to day life.

This Protocol seeks to ensure a respectful and ethical dialogue, between nations and between peoples in relation to conservation and sustainable use of natural resources in the process of conducting evaluations, specifically in the African context.

In building a business case for the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE), Chilisa (2015) observes that concerns had been raised earlier by researchers policy analysts and evaluators that much of the evaluation practice in Africa is based on external values and contexts, is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid.

This Ethical Protocol has the overall goal of showing respect to the indigenous communities in Africa and its ownership and guardianship of knowledge and practices as relate to the practice of evaluation in Africa. Ethically, participants in any research or evaluation project, are required to provide voluntary, informed consent prior to participating

This Ethical Protocol is in line with the resolutions made during the 4th AfrEA Conference in Niamey, Niger (Chilisa, 2015), which included:

- African evaluation standards and practices should be based on African values and world views
- The existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa.

- There is a need to foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

African evaluation has to be part of solutions the world needs now. Evaluation has the power to accelerate change. It can support development that is transformative. The time is therefore right for insights from the continent to complement and enrich evaluation theory and practice worldwide (AfrEA, 2020).

Heterogeneous organisations, whether society as a whole, private and public companies or research institutions, are populated by actors, agents and individuals that share resources to coordinate their activities effectively, in order to achieve common goals (Turilli, 2007). Indigenous Evaluators in the African context are actors, who should have some degree of control over their internal state, which enables them to perform their operations autonomously, i.e. without the direct intervention of other entities.

All research or evaluation participants have a legal right to privacy. Upholding individuals' rights to confidentiality and privacy is a central tenet of every psychologist's work. Indigenous Evaluators will therefore need to devise ways to ask whether participants are willing to talk about sensitive topics without putting them in awkward situations (Smith, 2003). Privacy in evaluations is protected through anonymity and confidentiality. By ensuring and reassuring that the participant's personal information will be protected, they will be more likely to participate and respond truthfully. Codes of ethics and statements requiring privacy and confidentiality can also protect the researcher.

Evaluations should be designed to ensure the collective good of the community. Empowerment in evaluation is key for the community, especially the elements of collectiveness and indigenous people empowerment. There is need for the recognition of traditional institutions of power, as well as the understanding of local narratives of values, identify, relations within the indigenous community.

## 6. Core Ethical Principles for Evaluators in the African Context

**Credibility of Accountability Mechanisms:** Any external Evaluator should ensure that they establish credible accountability mechanisms appropriate to the local context, with consideration given to social, cultural and gender norms that may affect reporting.

**Meaningful Consultation and Participation:** In order to ensure the participation of the indigenous communities, meaningful consultations with individuals and groups should make efforts to fully include all groups and sub-groups, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. Participation is not only that Indigenous peoples and local communities should be invited to participate in a project, they should also be involved in the design process of the evaluation in order to get mutual benefits.

**Curb Misappropriation of Indigenous Knowledge:** Measures should be established to curb the misappropriation of indigenous Technical Knowledge to prevent the misuse of the local knowledge by the Evaluators, without the authorization of the holders of the knowledge.

**Respect for Diversity:** The External Evaluators should recognise the diversity of the people and the contexts in which they work. The need to obtain feedback from a wide range of stakeholders, not leaving behind the most vulnerable.

**Promote Respect to Rights:** Evaluations should promote respect and adherence to indigenous rights and rights of the local communities. Evaluators should be sensitive to the cultural and social environment of all stakeholders and conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to this environment.

**Enhance Individual Sense of Agency:** The evaluations should as much as is practically possible, enhance the individual's sense of agency, as well as their ownership of the issues raised, and the solutions found.

**Respect for Indigenous Knowledge:** The evaluators should recognise the specialist knowledge of particular community members and their potential contributions to the research endeavour and involve such persons wherever possible and appropriate.

**Respect for Confidentiality:** The Evaluation Team must ensure confidentiality is respected at all times. The Evaluation should be guided by the principle of "do no harm" so as not to expose the respondents.

**Prior Informed Consent:** The Evaluator(s) should at all times make sure they obtain prior informed consent of the local community through their leadership. They should obtain this after making the case by presenting the purpose of the evaluation, the methodology, and the expected benefits both for the organization and the local community. Communication on this, should be made in a language that is understandable to the local community, and they should be given ample time to make a decision on this.

Informed consent may be sought from a legally authorised representative if a potential research subject is incapable of giving informed consent for example children or persons with

intellectual impairment). However, the involvement of such populations must fulfil the requirement that they stand to benefit from the research or evaluation outcome.

**Inclusivity:** Evaluation should involve the indigenous African people in all levels of the evaluation, from design phase right through to analysis and communicating findings. It should include stakeholders in the identification of the core focus and questions an evaluation. Evaluators have the responsibility to understand and respect differences among participants, such as differences in their culture, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation and ethnicity, and to account for potential implications of these differences when planning, conducting, analyzing, and reporting evaluations.

**Trust:** Build trust with participants by demonstrating to the local communities, the value and benefit of the information they will share as part of the evaluation. Working on the principle of trust, the Evaluator should strive to gain an understanding of, and treat fairly, the range of perspectives and interests that individuals and groups bring to the evaluation, including those that are not usually included or are oppositional.

**Reciprocity, mutual benefit, equitable sharing:** The evaluation purpose provided by the evaluation commissioner should ensure that the community's purpose for the evaluation is included. The evaluator should negotiate with the local community, ways in which the evaluation could consider strengthening their capacity. This can include, but not limited to mentoring, peer coaching, reflective practice and learning circles. Participants giving their information to evaluators should reap some benefit. The findings of the evaluation should be made available and where possible presented to participants, providing information of benefit to them and their wider community.

**Community-led Evaluations:** These should address the needs of the community. Local Evaluators should be the leaders of the Evaluation process and advise the Evaluation Team on the community needs for the evaluation.

**Positive Working Relationships:** Evaluations should seek to promote positive working relationships that enhance or build mutual respect, trust and cooperation between the local communities and the donors or project implementers.

## 7. African Evaluators Perspectives on Ethical Protocol

### **What it means to be an Indigenous African**

- Self-identification as belonging to an indigenous people, nation or community; as well as recognition by other groups, as a distinct collectivity

### **Protecting Indigenous Knowledge during Evaluations in Africa**

- Recognize the value of traditional knowledge
- Promote conservation and preservation of indigenous knowledge
- Support indigenous knowledge systems
- Contribute to safeguarding traditional knowledge

### **Manifestation of the Afrocentric paradigm in Evaluations**

- Researchers and evaluators must hold themselves responsible for uncovering, hidden, subtle, racist theories that may be embedded in current methodologies
- Researchers must work to legitimise the centrality of African ideals, values as valid frame of reference for inquiry, acquiring and examining data

### **How Indigenous Knowledge promotes creativity and innovation in Evaluations**

- Encourage, reward and protect tradition-based creativity and innovation
- Ensure proper attribution of rights through recognition of Indigenous Knowledge
- Promote creative intellectual activity

### **Respect for prior-informed consent translated in practice in Evaluations**

- Indigenous Knowledge should not be used for commercial purposes without the voluntary and conscious consent of its holders
- Ensure prior informed consent and exchanges based on mutually agreed terms
- Mechanisms for implementing the principle of prior informed consent should be understandable, appropriate

### **How indigenous evaluation promotes economic and social development**

- Recognizing the rights of traditional and local communities over their knowledge
- Identification, documentation, transmission, revitalization and promotion of cultural heritage
- Intellectual property right protection should be extended to indigenous knowledge

### **Acknowledgement of Custodianship, Ownership and Property rights**

- It should promote fair benefit sharing arising from the use of Indigenous Knowledge
- To acknowledge ownership of traditional knowledge

### **Reasons for justification of equitable sharing of benefits**

- Prevent exploitation and misuse of Indigenous Knowledge by non-holders
- Promote the fair and equitable sharing and distribution of monetary and non-monetary benefits
- Fair and equitable benefit-sharing and recognition of knowledge holders
- Guarantee the rights of the holders of such knowledge against appropriation from outside the community

**Concepts in identifying the evaluative impulse in local African culture**

- Stakeholder involvement, collective effort and political discretion
- Transparency, Responsibility and Governance

**Key values of an Afrocentric evaluation**

- Build community relationships and to inform evaluation intent, motive and methodology
- Emphasis on belongingness, togetherness, interdependence

**Typical statements within a consent form**

- Purpose, process, and duration of the project
- Indication that their participation is voluntary, and they can withdraw at anytime
- Guarantee of anonymity and/or confidentiality

**Ethical considerations of highest priority in Indigenous Evaluations**

- Informed consent
- Voluntary participation
- Confidentiality

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