



Policy Brief

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Institutionalizing a National Evaluation Policy (NEP)

1. Introduction

Without an NEP¹, the Philippines is missing the opportunity to improve accountability and transparency in providing objective and evidence-based assessments towards greater effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, sustainability, and equity of its management and operations.



The SEPO Policy Brief, a publication of the Senate Economic Planning Office, provides analysis and discussion on important socio-economic issues as inputs to the work of Senators and Senate Officials. The SEPO Policy Brief is also available at www.senate.gov.ph.

Every year, public funds are spent to deliver key services to Filipinos in the form of policies and programs/projects. Historically, however, not enough attention has been given to systematically measure the results arising from implementing these interventions (ADB, 2013). This hampers the ability of government to learn from and make use of findings from evaluations to fine-tune and improve the delivery of services and thus also ensure that public funds are spent wisely.

The absence of a “culture of evaluation” or the lack of widespread use of evaluations in the Philippines has negative implications to the country’s good governance, transparency, and accountability and is also a major hindrance in the push to promote evidence-based decision making in the government. The dismal performance of some government agencies in implementing some programs or projects can often be traced to an absence of proper monitoring and evaluation (M&E), which then feeds back into the lack of evidence to inform the planning and implementation of subsequent policies, programs or projects.

However, when properly conducted, evaluations produce findings and recommendations that have helped improve programs such as in the case of the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* (4Ps). The 4Ps is a national poverty reduction strategy and a human capital investment program that provides conditional cash transfers (CCT) to improve the health, nutrition and educational aspects of poor households. At the very start, M&E has been embedded in the program to assess the process regularly and improve the quality of its implementation.

Learnings from the three evaluation studies of the 4Ps² have led to modifications in its program designs (i.e., expanding the age of coverage, increasing grant for older children, and expanding the duration of coverage) and institutionalization of the program itself under Republic Act No. 11310 or the 4Ps Act, thereby guaranteeing the sustainability and continuity of the program, along with its budget.

¹ NEP is pronounced or read as / En.Ee.Pee /.

² The first evaluation was conducted by the World Bank in 2011, while the subsequent evaluations were done by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) in 2013 and 2017-2018.

Hence, measuring results is the only way to assess whether the government is spending on the right things, obtaining the best value for money, and is living within its means (ADB, 2013). It provides understanding of what works and what does not, what is being done well and what is not, and what should be pursued and should not. Failure to do so undermines the ability to improve, thus hindering development.

Unfortunately, M&E in the Philippines is limited and has not been widely integrated in the processes and systems of the government. While there is presently a National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF), it suffers from some weaknesses as it is fragmented across government agencies and only covers the Executive branch of government. The NEPF also does not require all government offices to implement M&E activities to ensure that all major and strategic policies, programs, and projects are evaluated periodically.

Currently, the few evaluations of programs and projects conducted in the country are largely on the initiative and demand of donor and funding agencies. There is a weak evaluation culture and so evaluations are hardly demanded and used. Moreover, challenges abound in the operationalization of the NEPF due to weak technical capacity, lack of financial resources, and inadequate institutional capacity.

Institutionalizing an NEP by having it legislated would address the existing gaps of the NEPF and would ensure better government processes and accountability. It would provide timely and credible findings where decision-makers can draw and determine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of a given intervention. In the absence of an NEP, programs and policies can potentially be left unchecked and officials held unaccountable, leading to inefficiency and ineffectiveness (Mwaijande, 2018).

This paper thus aims to: (1) present the concept and significance of an NEP; (2) cite international experiences with implementing an NEP; (3) review NEP initiatives in the Philippines; (4) examine current efforts of legislating an NEP in the country; and (5) provide policy recommendations and possible improvements to

the current legislative proposals. Overall, it endeavors to bring to the attention of policymakers the urgent need of institutionalizing an NEP.

2. Concept of an NEP

2.1. Key terms. There are two important words to understand the concept of an NEP—*evaluation* and *policy*. **Policy** is a set of purposeful decisions that frame a particular problem or issue (Cochran and Malone, 2014) while **evaluation** is a periodic assessment of the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of policy or program/project to recommend ways forward (UNICEF, 2018; UNEG, 2011; OECD, 1991).

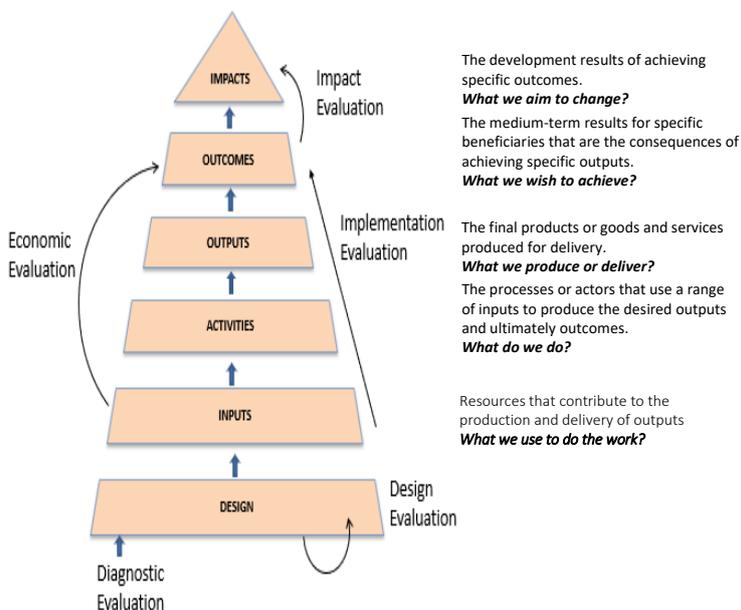
The main purpose of evaluation is to examine whether the intended results were achieved or not. **Evaluation** seeks to measure and analyze cause-effect links between policy or program/project intervention and its results through predetermined indicators of outputs, outcomes and impact.

Evaluation is sometimes confused with monitoring. **Monitoring** is a crucial prerequisite for evaluation as it involves continuous or ongoing collection of data and analysis of information about the implementation of a policy or program/project to review its progress. It compares actual progress with what was planned so that corrective actions and necessary adjustments can be made in the implementation. Evaluations become extremely difficult if monitoring data for the policy or program/project are not available. In other words, monitoring is descriptive and an important (but not exclusive) source of information that can be used within the content of an evaluation.

2.2. Types of evaluation. Evaluations are often understood as something that is done at the end of a program. However, there are five types of evaluation that can be conducted prior to an intervention, during, and after the implementation of a policy, program or project, which can occur in different stages: (1) diagnostic; (2) design; (3) implementation; (4) economic; and (5) impact evaluation (Figure 1). This is based on the logic-

model (cause-effect), which links inputs to activities, outputs, and outcomes. This will help to develop a common evaluation language and establish standard evaluation procedures.

Figure 1. Types of Evaluation



Source: Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of South Africa, 2019.

2.2.1. Diagnostic or ex-ante evaluation is preparatory research, which examines the best alternative modalities in achieving the intended results. It estimates various implications of a policy option based on a set of indicators and parameters.

2.2.2. Design evaluation helps to analyze whether the logic model/change theories and consistency of the program is working either before a program starts, or during implementation. It also assesses the quality of indicators and assumptions underpinning the theory of change. This is done for new programs using secondary information.

2.2.3. Formative or implementation evaluation is done during the implementation stage. It builds on existing monitoring systems in order to examine whether “operation logic” (e.g., activities, outputs and outcomes, use of resources, and the causal links) have been implemented as intended. It is also called process evaluation because it focuses on the improvement of future operations of the policy or program/project.

2.2.4. Economic evaluation is conducted at the beginning, during or after the program’s implementation. It investigates whether the costs of implementing and delivering a policy or program/project are commensurate with the benefits generated. Types of economic evaluation includes cost-effectiveness analysis and cost-benefit analysis. The former values the costs of implementing and delivering the policy and relates this amount to the total quantity of outcome generated to produce a cost per unit of outcome estimate, while the latter places a monetary value on the changes in outcomes.

2.2.5. Impact evaluation is conducted at the end of or after a program closure. It seeks to measure changes in outcomes and the well-being of the target population that can be attributed to a specific intervention. The main objective is to inform decision makers on the extent to which an intervention should be continued or not, and if there are any potential modifications needed.

2.3. NEP and its objectives. An NEP is an important framework to structure, systematize, and guide M&Es at the country level. It guides the public sector agencies to undertake and coordinate evaluation processes, activities, resources and utilization of evaluation results. There are key factors that justify the need to legislate an NEP in the country, which include the following:

2.3.1. It increases demand and use for evaluation to support evidence-based decisions. The NEP can mandate all government agencies and sectors to increase demand for and use of evaluation findings to improve policies, programs and projects design. It helps ensure that evaluation results are used to enable evidence-based decision making.

2.3.2. It allows for a strengthened linkage between policy and budgeting. An institutionalized NEP will make M&E a regular activity of every agency and instrumentality of government. It shall form part of the policy, program, and project cycle (from planning, implementation, M&E, back to

planning and so on). Evaluation findings can be made a compulsory requirement for granting budget to policies, programs, and projects, thus helping ensure that public funds are directed towards the best interventions.

2.3.3. It ensures transparency and accountability.

Taxpayers, donors, and other interested parties will be provided with information both positive and negative on the government's policies, programs, and projects. This facilitates increased trust in government as all stakeholders will know where and how funds are being spent.

2.3.4. It provides a structure to the national evaluation system.

The NEP would provide the legal basis for a minimum standard of evaluation across government to inform planning, budgeting, policy review, program management and performance improvement. It would harmonize the management, conduct and utilization of evaluation to enhance governance, transparency, accountability and evidence-based decision making.

2.3.5. It ensures capacity building.

The NEP can provide guidance and structure to national efforts of evaluation capacity development as it shall integrate evaluation into an agency's program cycle. This would ensure that government officials and technical staff responsible for managing evaluations are empowered with the requisite knowledge, skills and capacities to successfully oversee and implement evaluation.

2.3.6. It strengthens the government's database management system.

Institutionalizing an NEP would compel all government agencies to maintain a database management system. Republic Act No. 11315 or the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS) Act, enacted in 2019, is a good complement of an NEP as it provides information at the household level.

2.3.7. It facilitates continuous advocacy for development results.

While influential champions for an NEP are needed to move forward, champions can come and go as political administrations change. Hence, it is crucial for good evaluation practices to remain regardless of political leaders. A legislated NEP can ensure this.

2.3.8. It assists in most efficiently meeting national targets of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The country is committed to end any forms of human deprivation as embedded in the SDGs' 17 goals, 169 targets and 232 indicators. An institutionalized NEP would greatly help in tracking the progress of achieving the localized SDGs.

2.3.9. It ensures achievement of the aspirations laid down in the AmBisyon Natin 2040.³

The immense spectrum of the long-term aspirations of Filipinos implies that the complexity of evaluating the achievements of targets and indicators set forth by the government would require a rigorous M&E framework. An institutionalized NEP would determine whether the government is on the right track of achieving the Filipinos' aspirations, and if not, it would suggest corrective measures to be able to get there.

2.4. Evaluation framework.

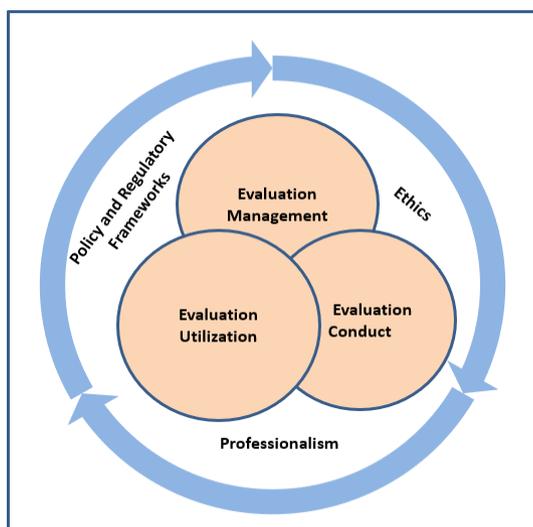
In 2015, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Framework on Evaluation Standards (ARFES) was launched by a consortium led by the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) and the United Nations (UN). The intention is to catalyze the development of a national framework of evaluation standards within the ASEAN region. It offers a common generic framework with broad outline to enable individual countries to draw up a national framework on evaluation standards in their respective efforts and allows flexibility to

³ The *AmBisyon Natin 2040* is a collective long-term vision of Filipinos over the next 25 years embedded in the national development plans, strategic policies, programs and projects of the government that will help realize the following aspirations: (1)

building a prosperous, predominantly middle-class society where no one is poor; (2) promoting a long and healthy life; (3) becoming smarter and more innovative; and (4) building a high trust society.

accommodate localization and contextualization of situations. The structure of the ARFES (Figure 2) consists of three interlocking core elements—Evaluation Management, Evaluation Conduct, and Evaluation Utilization, enabled by three key considerations present in the environment—Policy and Regulatory Frameworks, Professionalism, and Ethics. These enabling environmental factors, either working singularly or in tandem with each other, set out 13 principles in managing, conducting and utilizing evaluation.

Figure 2. Structure of ARFES



Source: EvalPartners and IOCE, 2015.

2.4.1. Enabling environment

a. Policy and regulatory frameworks

Principle 1. Clarity of policy and/or regulations. An evaluation policy shall include a clear explanation of the purpose, concepts, rules and use of evaluation; provide details on the institutional arrangements, roles and responsibilities; and shall be consistent with all existing applicable legislations or administrative mandates to avoid duplication and contradiction.

Principle 2. Conformance to acceptable practices. For an evaluation policy to be practical, it must consider local issues and conform to cultural norms and practices of each country. Moreover, for a national evaluation policy to be of value to the global evaluation community, it must conform to globally recognized and internationally acceptable principles, guidelines, standards and practices.

Principle 3. Compliance to laws, rules and regulations. An evaluation policy should not be formulated strictly based on a template or prescribed format. It should be developed based on studies of various national evaluation policies of different countries to identify respective policy strengths and weaknesses and the necessary measures taken to ensure awareness and compliance to relevant laws, rules and regulations of the nation.

b. Professionalism

Principle 4. Adherence to a professional code of conduct. All engaged in evaluation must possess integrity and shall abide by a prescribed code of professional conduct. This includes respect to people, sensitivity to cultural diversity, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, disability, age, gender and ethnicity, honesty, integrity, independence, impartiality, and confidentiality.

c. Ethics

Principle 5. Adherence to a code of ethics. Evaluators shall be guided with a code of ethics, for instance, Republic Act No. 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. They shall remove pressures to jeopardize objectivity of evaluation and value independence of stakeholders to ensure fairness and honesty of the entire process of evaluation.

2.4.2. Core elements

a. Evaluation management

Principle 6. Institutionalization. Evaluation needs to be institutionalized. It involves setting up of institutions, procedures, functions, mechanisms and practices with adequate resources for the acculturation of evaluation.

Principle 7. Capacity and capability development. To manage evaluation, adequate capacity and capability development plan shall be formulated and implemented. This is to ensure that all persons involved in the evaluations are knowledgeable, skilled and competent in key aspects of evaluation that can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning.

Principle 8. Professionalism and transparency. In the conduct of evaluation, purpose and scope of work shall be clearly defined. Consultation should be held among relevant stakeholders during the design, implementation, findings, and reporting of evaluation findings.

b. Evaluation conduct

Principle 9: Competencies. Persons conducting evaluation should have the qualifications, skills, experience and attributes required to carry out evaluation functions. Where an evaluation is multi-disciplined in nature, the evaluation team should consist of subject matter experts from the relevant disciplines. The type of specific expertise required in an evaluation team depends on the specific evaluation to be undertaken.

Principle 10: Evaluation design. The design of an evaluation should be consistent with the principles of scientific inquiry which covers the stages of planning, implementation, reporting, and utilization.

Principle 11: Objective and credible reporting. A credible evaluation report is one which is accurate, objective and comprehensive and free from bias. Any findings and recommendations contained in an evaluation report must be contextualized and localized in terms of social, political, cultural and environmental aspects. Any conclusion arrived at has to be well-grounded and justified with hard data and evidence to enable informed decision making by its intended users.

Principle 12: Internalization of evaluation. Self-evaluation should be mainstreamed in the internal value system of the government for evidence-based decision making on policies, programs and projects.

c. Evaluation utilization

Principle 13: Utilization-focused. The findings, conclusions and recommendations from evaluation should be viewed as valuable lessons for better program/project performance leading to possible up-scaling and sustainability management. It should include standards for the utilization plan and dissemination of evaluation results.

3. International experience on NEP

When advocating for an NEP, it is crucial to consider lessons from countries that have implemented the policy. Lessons are drawn from different countries' experiences in implementing their NEP, mostly from Japan, Mexico, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Switzerland.

3.1. Create an independent body for evaluation. In Mexico, one of the catalysts in the institutionalization process for evaluation was the creation of the National Council for the Evaluation of Social Policy (CONEVAL) under the Social Development Law. While COVENAL is under the Executive branch, and its head of office (Executive Director) is appointed by the federal government, its leadership is composed of six academic councilors elected for a period of four years and chosen from certified academic institutions. The engagement of academicians facilitates the development of methods, conduct, and commission of evaluations that are independent, technical, reliable, and credible to stakeholders.

In Switzerland, the Parliamentary Control of the Administration (PCA) was established to carry out independent evaluations to analyze the effectiveness of public policies and public services on behalf of the Control Committees in the Federal Assembly. The work of PCA serves as the basis for recommendations on parliamentary procedures, and amendments of existing laws. They also instigate learning processes in relation to administrative activities.

3.2. Develop a national evaluation plan. Most countries mandate an annual evaluation of all government programs, however the capacity and capability of evaluating units restrict them to accomplish such mandate. Hence, the Mexican government has adjusted its Annual Program of Evaluation to identify the sequence and types of evaluation that needs to be implemented in the years to come. In South Africa, a five-year National Evaluation Plan guided the government agencies with areas of evaluation linked to 12 outcomes (i.e.,

education, health, safety, employment, skills, economic infrastructure, rural development, integrated human settlements, local government, environment, internal and external relations).

3.3. Ensure adequate composition of an evaluation unit.

It is important that an evaluation unit/department is supported with enough technical experts and administrative staff. In Japan, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications which is the central unit for evaluation has more than 100 employees dedicated to evaluation. In Mexico, the CONEVAL is composed of 70 professionals and administrative staff while South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) is filled with 130 positions.

3.4. Formulate and implement capacity development plan for evaluation.

Quality evaluations and utilization of their findings and recommendations can make valuable contributions to accountability and learning which call for continuous human resource development and capacity building in the government. In Sri Lanka, a capacity development plan was formulated from the readiness assessment conducted in Line Ministries to address the capacity gaps in evaluation. On the other hand, South Africa has established a country-led strategy for national evaluations capacity development to strengthen the enabling environment for evaluations. It was achieved through three main initiatives: (1) offer evaluation degrees in the universities; (2) roll-out of M&E courses by the National School of Government (NSG), which replaced the Public Administration Leadership and Management Academy (PALAMA); and (3) conduct of in-service training for government officials. These programs were continuously delivered to government stakeholders across South Africa to address key competencies in undertaking M&E.

3.5. Improve quality of evaluation. While countries have devoted efforts to institute a uniform policy of evaluation across government, improvement in the quality of evaluation results is still a challenge. In 2006, the Ministry of Finance in Japan noted that

most of the policy evaluation records (such as targeted goals and accomplishments) are in the form of self-appraisal for budget requests and remain abstract or qualitative. Hence, the need to clarify policy systems, quantify policy objectives and publish evaluation data is recommended. Moreover, improvement of evaluation methods, such as analysis of causal relationship between policy implementation and its outcome should be enhanced.

3.6. Promote the utilization of evaluation results in a timely manner.

One of the challenges identified by the evaluation in South Africa is the use of evaluation results in a timely manner. Some of the reasons for the delays that have been cited include protracted procurement processes, unavailability of data to conduct impact evaluations, contestations around evaluation findings, and quality assurance concerns because of the poor technical quality of some evaluation results. In Mexico, the evaluation guidelines for utilization of evaluations results, which identified responsible actors and instruments, were issued to ensure that key findings would be disseminated and effectively reached decision makers.

3.7. Promote the value of learnings in the conduct of evaluation.

When evaluation is properly used for management (i.e., planning, implementing, and disseminating programs), practitioners have found it to be more acceptable than when perceived as a fault-finding and/or policing activity. In every phase of management cycle, learnings and continuous feedback should be emphasized in the evaluation.

3.8. Engage different actors in the evaluation council.

Engaging a variety of actors in the governing council of evaluation encourages greatest participation and garners expertise and experiences which result from learning and linking theories to practice.

4. Philippine initiatives on NEP

4.1. Development of an evaluation framework.

Although a widespread culture of results-based

M&E is not in place in the Philippines yet, steps have been taken incrementally introducing it as a feature of development efforts over the years. Several policies were already put in place to gradually improve performance management in the public sector.

In 2000, the Organizational Performance Indicator Framework (OPIF) was introduced to improve the way the budget is allocated, spent, and reported towards greater accountability and transparency in the delivery of public services. It shifted budget focus from inputs to outputs. However, the OPIF, which was considered then as a major reform, was implemented inadequately and constrained by four major issues.

First, the OPIF suffered from **fragmented performance management systems**. The OPIF was supposed to connect the Major Final Outputs (MFOs) to the goals stated in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP). However, in the roll-out of its implementation, the OPIF was limited to the identification of performance indicators at the level of agencies' MFOs. The organizational outcomes did not provide the corresponding performance indicators and targets. Also, the MTPDP did not have specific information for the higher levels of performance.

Second, agencies reported **poor quality of performance information**. The objective of the OPIF was to report the performance of agencies in delivering outputs and hold them accountable. However, during that time, agencies reported MFO-based performance indicators based on inputs (e.g., number of phone calls) instead of outputs.

Third, **reporting of agencies performance targets was in a separate document from the budget documents**. The OPIF Book contained the agencies' budgets based on the MFOs and the performance indicators and targets. However, the OPIF Book was considered as a separate document from the budget, particularly the National Expenditure Program (NEP) which serves as the basis of the General Appropriations Bill (GAB).

The attribution of programs and projects to the MFOs was a tedious process, especially when programs and projects fall under two MFOs. The OPIF Book had also been submitted late to Congress which made the budget deliberations more focused on costs, inputs and line items rather than on outputs.

Fourth, the **OPIF had limited coverage of the MFOs and indicators**. MFOs refer only to the operation of agencies' ongoing programs and activities that directly relate to the delivery of their mandates. These did not include "line-item" structures of the budget. In addition, assignment of performance indicators was limited to the agency-proper budgets and not to additional sources of funds to the agency. Therefore, the OPIF did not provide the full linkage between an agency's expenditures from all fund sources and its performance.

Hence, to address these concerns, the government scaled up the OPIF and made the link between budgeting and results clearer (DBM, 2012). From 2010 to 2016, the government established the government-wide Results-Based Performance Management System (RBPMS) using the OPIF as a core framework.

In 2011, the Program Expenditure Classification of the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) was introduced restructuring the "line item" budgets of agencies, which aligned outputs with budget spent that contributed to higher level organizational, sectoral and societal outcomes.

Parallel to this, Administrative Order No. 25 (Creating an Inter-Agency Task Force on the Harmonization of National Government Performance Monitoring, Information and Reporting Systems) was issued to harmonize, unify, streamline and simplify all existing monitoring and reporting requirements and processes as embodied in the RBPMS. This was developed by the Inter-Agency Task Force created for the purpose and subsequently adopted for the whole of government.

In the medium-term (2010-2016) Philippine Development Plan (PDP), the Results Matrix (RM) was introduced which served as a tool to monitor the progress of government agencies in achieving the national targets. It consisted of an indicator framework for evaluating results corresponding to the strategies, programs and projects and was being monitored and updated annually.

In 2015, in order to further strengthen the link between the budgeting and planning process between the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the DBM, the two agencies issued Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) No. 2015-01 which established an NEPF. This was aimed at governing the practice of evaluation of programs and projects receiving budgetary support from the government. It provided key elements of the evaluation policy framework which included the scope of evaluation, guiding principles or the evaluation standards, as well as the creation of an Inter-Agency Evaluation Task Force and its Secretariat. However, the JMC applied only to the agencies of the Executive branch, and like other Executive circulars, its implementation is subject to uncertainty and can easily be reversed whenever there is a change in administration or even just a change in internal priorities.

In 2016, the DBM issued National Budget Circular No. 565 on the Adoption of a Results-Based Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (RBMER) Policy. This policy was aimed at strengthening, streamlining and standardizing the RBMER system evidenced by a timely, useful, accurate and credible reporting of performance information to support policy and program improvement, expenditure management, and local and national decision making. Just like the JMC, this policy also provided guiding principles in the conduct of the RBMER and created an Inter-Agency Technical Working Group headed by a DBM Undersecretary with members from the NEDA, Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), Presidential Management Staff (PMS) and two representatives from implementing agencies in charge of M&E, all of whom shall be Undersecretary level.

The shift towards development results has already started in the Philippines, but it has yet to trickle down to the national inclusion policies.

4.2. M&E in policies/laws. Several Philippine laws already include a provision/section for its monitoring and evaluation activities. However, M&E is not being put into practice by concerned agencies and policymakers.

In most cases, designated agencies or committees under certain laws only focus on monitoring activities as they provide data produced out of the programs or projects to both Houses of Congress. Most often these data do not say much about evaluation in terms of policy impacts, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability.

M&E and the pandemic response

Republic Act No. 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal As One Act, which authorized the President to exercise powers necessary and proper to combat the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, faced several lapses mainly due to lack of concrete M&E structure. Some of the challenges encountered in the implementation of the law thus far include the following: (1) delayed distribution of emergency assistance to all affected sectors, including the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) and special risk allowance for Department of Health (DOH) personnel; and (2) low utilization rate of obligated funds and low turn-out of beneficiaries for the Expanded Sure Aid and Recovery Project, among others. Although there has been a weekly reporting on implementation progress built into the law, there seems to be no follow-up on how to address the findings.

There are several factors that act as barriers which include: (1) lack of established and entrenched evaluation culture or an appreciation of the inherent benefits of evaluation within institutions and organizations in the public sector; (2) lack of competent staff to do or manage the evaluation; (3) inadequately trained evaluators and difficulties in retaining those who do possess the necessary skills; and (4) insufficient budget to conduct the evaluations.

5. Proposed legislative measure towards institutionalizing a Philippine NEP

In the 18th Congress, there are four bills proposing for the institutionalization of an NEP in the country: (1) Senate Bill No. 788 by Senator Risa Hontiveros; (2) Senate Bill No. 1885 by Senator Imee Marcos; (3) House Bill No. 3293 by Representative Alfred Vargas; and (4) House Bill No. 8025 by Representative Luis Raymond Villafuerte Jr. The Senate bills have been referred to the Committee on Economic Affairs, which has already conducted a public hearing for the preparation of a substitute bill.

5.1. Salient provisions of the bills. The four proposed measures have the same objectives in strengthening the legal and institutional framework for the regular conduct of M&E of public policies, programs and projects and other forms of government interventions. The bills also have basically the same provisions, which were largely sourced from the existing NEPF for the Executive branch of government, with some modifications.

5.1.1. On scope and coverage. Under the proposed measures, all departments, agencies, state universities and colleges (SUCs), government-owned and/or -controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs) and other instrumentalities of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the National Government shall undertake evaluation of major public policies, programs, projects, services and other activities funded by the government. This would greatly broaden the scope of evaluation in the country given that the current framework is only limited to the Executive branch. Operationally, this would start with evaluating major policies and programs but eventually expanding to cover everything else.

5.1.2. On funding the implementation of the NEP. The proposed measures shall mandate national government agencies (NGAs) in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches to allocate at least three percent of their annual budgets for the implementation of the NEP. Minimum standards

and requirements for evaluation design and implementation, as well as reportorial and distribution requirements, are also included in the proposals.

5.1.3. On the creation of the National Evaluation Council (NEC) and its Secretariat and their functions. The bills seek to create an NEC to lead the implementation of the NEP. It shall be comprised of representatives from the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the National Government, experts from academe, private sector and civil society. The NEC Secretariat shall also be organized to provide technical, managerial and administrative support to the NEC.

Also to be created are Independent Evaluation Units (IEUs) of all covered government entities by the NEP which would lead the implementation of the evaluation agenda of the agency, in support of the NEC.

5.1.4. On the evaluation agenda. The bills propose to have a six-year rolling evaluation agenda which would include policies, programs, projects and services that shall be identified by the NEC and be subjected for evaluation. The NEP shall be mainstreamed in the National Government and its agencies and instrumentalities in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches.

5.1.5. On the utilization of evaluation findings. The proposed measures seek to ensure that evaluation findings are being used by relevant agencies and instrumentalities. The bills mandate the submission of all evaluation findings and recommendations to the concerned decision makers to ensure that these findings are used to improve all aspects of public policies, programs and projects.

6. Recommendations to further enhance the proposed legislative measure

6.1. On scope and coverage. It is important to include the Local Government Units (LGUs) in the

coverage of the proposed legislation. This is in support to the Operative Principles of Decentralization under Section 3 of Republic Act No. 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991, which stipulates that there shall be established in every LGU an accountable, efficient and dynamic organizational structure and operating mechanism that will meet the priority needs and service requirements of its communities.

In terms of scope, all policies, programs or development interventions shall be evaluated on a periodic basis. However, due to limited capacity and capability of the government, evaluations should start with major interventions.

The practice of the government of South Africa may be considered wherein it sets the following criteria in prioritizing interventions to be evaluated: (1) strategic importance of a policy or program/project; (2) replicability that decisions have to be made about the continuation of the policy or program/project; (3) innovative, from which learnings are needed; and (4) of significant public interest (e.g., key frontline services).

6.2. On the creation of an NEC. The creation of an NEC is very vital and crucial for the successful implementation of the NEP. It is imperative that it should involve participation from the broadest array of stakeholders. Thus, it is suggested to include the LGUs, private sector, civil society, academe and professional evaluators in the Council. The critical roles of the PSA and the PMS should also be noted and they can be enlisted as permanent non-voting members of the NEC.

6.3. On evaluation design and execution. The Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) has pointed out that specifics of research methodologies should not be included in the proposed legislation as these may vary on several factors such as data availability, situation on the ground, timing and others.

The policymakers should not be limited from utilizing evaluation results from other

methodologies provided they satisfy the principles and standards of evaluation.

6.4. On the NEC Secretariat and its functions. Given the magnitude of the responsibilities of the NEC Secretariat, the creation of a new, distinct and permanent unit is recommended within the NEDA to perform the functions of the NEC Secretariat that is focused mainly on evaluation activities, with full-staff complement, as precondition to the full implementation of this legislative measure.

Currently, the Monitoring and Evaluation Staff (MES) of the NEDA, as the identified interim Secretariat, has 32 officials and employees (with 26 technical staff and 6 non-technical staff). It is composed of five divisions, namely: (1) Transport Infrastructure Sector Division; (2) Non-Transport Infrastructure Sector Division; (3) Social Sector Division; (4) Economic Sector Division; and (5) Systems and Data Analysis Division. Hence, it is crucial to determine the staffing requirement of the NEC Secretariat and its budget should be commensurate to its size and functions.

6.5. On the creation of IEUs. It is recommended that LGUs shall also establish IEUs in their respective offices with the same functions as stipulated in the proposed legislation.

6.6. On the utilization of evaluation findings. The PIDS stresses that the most crucial element of the policy is how to ensure the utilization of evaluation findings and results in the policymaking process. It would be extremely important to specify later on in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), if not in the law itself, the specific strategy that will be implemented to ensure that policies will benefit from evaluation.

One thing to consider in the formulation of the IRR is to follow the practices of other organizations in other countries which embed evaluation in their Annual Agency Plan (which contains programs/projects). This is reflected in the Evaluation Plan that will be submitted by the agency to the NEC. The evaluation shall include information on the

timely utilization and dissemination of evaluation findings, recommendations and lessons learned.

6.7. On the funding of an NEP. Specifying the uses of the fund in the law, as proposed, may cause lack of flexibility in actual operationalization. Instead of enumerating the specific uses of the three percent of the agency budget as allocated in the proposed measures, a more general statement for evaluation activities be considered.

A provision for such general statement may include the conduct of evaluation studies, capacity development activities and other expenses necessary for developing and cultivating the evaluation culture within the agency and its official and staff.

7. Conclusion

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Philippine government to improve the delivery of public service to Filipinos, there is a long way to go before managing for development results will be completely assimilated into the public sector culture. An institutionalized NEP in the government systems would be instrumental for achieving significant progress towards a government-wide shift to development results. Promotion of an evaluation culture at various levels, securing a higher-level policy commitment, and addressing capacity gaps in managing evaluations are key attributes in the utilization of evaluations. Thus, institutionalizing an NEP in the country through the passage of the proposed legislation would be a major step towards achieving this.

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