



CONCEPT NOTE

10th Conference of the African Evaluation Association

March 8-12, 2021, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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Introduction

1. The Board of the African Evaluation Association (AFREA) is pleased to share with you a draft framework for organizing and implementing the 10th AFREA Conference in 2021. This concept note was informed by consultations with the AFREA Board, AfrEA Past Presidents, President and members of the Ethiopian Evaluation Association (EEvA), evaluation experts in Africa and globally and review of relevant documentary materials. The process of developing the concept note was undertaken by the AFREA Board, with support from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The conference shall be organized by AFREA and hosted by the Ethiopian Evaluation Association (EEvA) in Ethiopia.
2. It is appreciated that this Concept Note is being released at a time of uncertainty when its is not clear when the lockdown associated with COVID 19 pandemic will end and when the international borders will be opened. It is uncertain how the pandemic will have affected the financing institutions and even our ability to organise the conference within the statutory time. The intention is to continue with the face-to-face format in 2021, but there may be need to consider adjustments in the format and timing of the conference, given the preparation time lost during the COVID 19 pandemic lock down.

History of African Evaluation Association

3. Founded in 1999, the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA), brings together evaluation practitioners and commissioners across the African continent. With the Secretariat in Accra, Ghana, AfrEA serves as an umbrella body for 39 Voluntary Organisations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) in Africa, 12 institutional members and 81 individual members. AfrEA objectives are:
 - Supporting evaluations that contribute to real and sustained development in Africa.
 - Promoting Africa-rooted and Africa-led evaluation through sharing African evaluation perspectives.
 - Encouraging the development and documentation of high quality evaluation practice and theory.
 - Supporting the establishment and growth of national evaluation associations and special evaluation interest groups.
 - Facilitating capacity building, networking and sharing of evaluation theories, techniques and tools among evaluators, policymakers, researchers and development specialists.

- Regular international conferences, held in partnership with one of the national VOPEs, is one of the core pillars of AfrEA's operation. Since its establishment, AfrEA has already conducted 9 conferences. These conferences provide platforms for networking, knowledge sharing, forging strategic partnerships and capacity building for members, funders, partners and other evaluation stakeholders. The conferences involve global actors but are focused particularly on Africa. For example, the previous 9th conference held in Cote D'Ivoire in 2019 attracted 682 participants from 60 countries and was supported by 35 partners.



Ethiopian Evaluation Association

- Within Ethiopia, the conference will be co-hosted by the Ethiopian Evaluation Association (EEvA) in collaboration with Plan and Development Commission of Ethiopia.
- EEvA was established in 2009 and legally registered in 2010. EEvA aspiration is to become the centre of excellence in evaluation competency and standards in Africa. EEvA mission is to engage and enable evaluation professionals to contribute to the socio-economic development of the country through knowledge generation, awareness creation, capacity building, advocacy and rendering model service in evaluation.
- EEvA has 200+ registered members who are M&E practitioners, evaluators and representatives of interested groups from different sectors: government institutions, academia, UN agencies, NGOs and private consultants. Since its establishment EEvA has been creating forums for professional exchange, supporting evaluation capacity development through training, promoting useful evaluations that support developments and provide professional supports; encouraging the publication of high quality materials on evaluation practice, research and theory of change development; and collaborating with different stakeholders like UNICEF and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).
- EEvA closely works with the Plan and Development Commission of Ethiopia on national evaluation capacity assessment, evaluation capacity development initiatives and advocacy and influencing evaluation practice in the country.

Putting the 10th AFREA conference in context

Africa: taking its future into its own hands

9. The 2020s are a promising decade for Africa. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates, through at least the first half of the decade, economic growth across Africa will continue to outperform other regions and the continent will continue to be home to seven of the world's ten fastest-growing economies. Still many social and economic problems persist and may be further exacerbated by climate change and the more recent COVID 19 pandemic that has devastated all economies globally. The IMF predicts the global economy will shrink by 3% due to Corona Virus 19 and definitely this will have far reaching implications to the African economy and specifically Sub Saharan Africa¹.

10. Despite having numerous social development policies and execution of many sectorial programs and projects; and Africa being one of the fastest-growing regions in recent decades, 40 percent of African countries are still classified as “low income”, with a GNI per capita below \$1,025 per year. As of 2015, sub-Saharan Africa had the highest concentration of the world's poor, with 41.3 percent of people living under the poverty line. An estimated 600 million people do not have access to electricity, and millions die every year from preventable diseases. Thirty-one African countries need food aid, and more than 30 percent of the 830 million people worldwide suffering from inadequate food supply live in Africa.

11. The prevalence of undernourishment increased from 234.6 million in 2016 to 256.1 million in 2018. And climate change may potentially lead to less of 40 to 80 percent of cropland by the 2030s-2040s². Despite the fact that several African countries have established national evaluation systems, the evaluation functions of the national governments are not well developed yet, and the role of evaluation in providing evidence in development planning, accountability and learning aspects is yet to be fully explored. Moreover, the existing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) departments focus mostly on monitoring and the use of M&E data in carrying out evaluations to inform decision making is still limited.

12. Africa is firmly determined to take its future into its own hands. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want has established a shared framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development to build an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven and managed by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

13. Among other things, Agenda 2063 calls for:

¹ World Economic Outlook. International Monetary Fund (IMF), April 2020; Chapter 1

² Africa Growth Initiative (2020). Foresight Africa 2020: Top priorities for the continent 2020-2030. 92 pp.

- A prosperous Africa based on **inclusive growth and sustainable development**—Africa will by 2063 be a continent of shared prosperity, which finances and manages its own growth and transformation.
- Africa with a **strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics**—Africa, as the cradle of human civilization, is custodian of a cultural patrimony that has contributed enormously to human progress. African cultural identity, values and ethics as a critical factor in Africa’s re-emergence on the global stage in the decade of the 2010s, will be promoted and strengthened by 2063.
- Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children—by 2063, Africa will be a continent where all citizens are actively involved in decision-making in all aspects of development, including social, economic, political and environmental. **Africa will be a continent where no child, woman or man is left behind.**³

14. Africa has also embraced the Agenda 2030: 90 percent of African countries mainstreamed the SDGs into their national development plans. Agendas 2030 and 2063 are complementary and align on over 85 percent of their goals.

Evaluation in Africa

15. There are signs of growing African ownership of the evaluation practice. Agenda 2063 – for the first time in the history of continental initiatives – includes a monitoring and evaluation component to ensure that planned activities, outputs, outcomes are on track for attainment- with the mid-term reviews providing the basis for programme re-alignment. Several African countries, including South Africa, Cote d’Ivoire, Uganda, Ghana and Benin, have established national evaluation systems. Nigeria is one of world pioneers in using evaluation to analyze its progress towards SDGs. The capacity of evaluation to inform decision-making processes was recognized by members of African parliaments who formed the African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation (APNODE).

Conference content

Conference theme

16. The proposed conference theme **“Evaluation That Leaves No One Behind: Empowering Progress Towards the Africa We Want”** invites evaluation practitioners, commissioners and potential users to explore and reflect on:
- Importance of giving voice to stakeholders who have less social economic power;
 - Importance of embracing indigenous ways of knowing and use of culturally appropriate evaluation theories, methodologies and instruments (Made in Africa Evaluation);

³ Agenda 2063. Background Note 1.

- Importance of maintaining the dialogue between evaluation practitioners and a broad range of stakeholders who are potential users of evaluation results, who can contribute towards enabling environment for evaluation and generation of data that can be used for evaluation. These stakeholders could include members of parliaments, other oversight bodies, grass root beneficiaries, representatives of executive power, monitoring specialists, philanthropists, members of the academia, impact investors etc;
- Importance of opening access to young and new evaluation professionals by investing more in the young emerging African evaluators and point of intervention being at the level of training, mentoring and networking.
- Importance of recognizing and embracing the diversity of African evaluation communities and integration of these communities across language barriers.
- Importance of analyzing and utilizing big data to segregate information hence reveal how each stakeholder group especially the marginalized and most vulnerable ones like women, children, disabled, those in war zones and hazardous environment are brought to the attention of the policy makers and socio economic programmers as no one should be left behind.
- Bring to the fore, the importance of greater donor coordination and harmonization towards national evaluation systems based on a well-defined vision of Evaluation “made in Africa and made for Africa”.
- The importance of evaluators to prepare for the future, tapping into new resources and technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Big Data.

17. To support development and implementation of policies and programmes that will make Africa a continent where no child, woman or man is left behind, evaluation practice on the continent shall be truly inclusive – reaching to the furthest behind, rooted in local values and ways of knowing, embracing diversity of stakeholders, perspectives and approaches.

Conference time and venue

18. The 10th Conference of the African Evaluation Association will take place on March 8-12, 2021 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in the African Union (AU) Compound.

Conference format

19. The conference will include two days of professional development workshops and three days of plenary and parallel sessions (including paper and panel presentations, poster presentations, expert lectures, think tanks/round tables).

20. In the spirit of collective knowledge co-creation which is part of traditional African culture, the plenary sessions will use a talk show format where prominent African experts will reflect on a set of questions related to the conference theme. Tentatively, the plenary sessions will be devoted to the following topics:

Day 1	Positioning evaluation in a broader context: what an evaluator should know about African development agenda.
Day 2	Made in Africa Evaluation: how African evaluation community can support progress towards the Africa We Want.
Day 3	Closing plenary: Highlights from all conference strands.

Conference strands

21. The final list of conference strands will be developed after wide consultations with the VOPEs, partners and evaluation stakeholders. The tentative list for review and refining includes the following topics:

Strand topic	Potential partner(s)
1. What an evaluator should know about the current development context in Africa (plenary session and a series of expert lectures)	African Union
2. Made in Africa Evaluation	African Union, VOPEs who will participate in the USDS project (Made in Africa evaluation studies)
3. Evaluation of agricultural interventions	EvalFORWARD, FAO, WFP, IFAD
4. Evaluation of education interventions	
5. Evaluation of health intervention	
6. Evaluation of climate-related interventions	
7. Evaluation of SDGs	UNICEF, EvalSDGs
8. Evaluation of transformative initiatives	SDG Transformation Forum
9. Evaluation in fragile and humanitarian settings	ALNAP
10. National evaluation systems	UNICEF/UNDP
11. Evaluation and parliaments	TanEA
12. Evaluation in philanthropy and impact investing	
13. Young and emerging evaluators	EvalYouth
14. Digital technology and evaluation	
15. Professionalization of evaluation	CLEAR
16. Academia and evaluation, including academic research into endogenous monitoring and evaluation methods in Africa	International Universities

17. Gender Responsive and Equity Focused Evaluation	UN Women/UNICEF/EvalGender/AGDEN
18. Policy evaluation (content, implementation and impact of policy)/use of evaluation for policy influence	

Partnership options

22. AfrEA is inviting interested organizations to become partners for preparation and conduct of its 10th conference.

23. Partnership options include:

Non-financial contribution	A partner can facilitate or co-facilitate a strand, including organization of review of abstract submissions and moderation of strand session during the conference.
Non-targeted financial contribution	Funds will be used towards overall conference expenses, including hire of venue, service of conference organizer, simultaneous translation, strengthening operations of AFREA Secretariat as a coordinating entity, other administrative costs as well as covering travel expense of key note speakers as necessary.
Bursaries for conference attendees	Given the high cost of transportation and accommodation, bursaries are important to ensure participation of evaluators who don't have sufficient means, especially young people. A partner may contribute to a pooled conference bursaries fund as well as identify a specific category of attendees to be supported.
Bursaries for pre-conference workshops presenters	A number of facilitators usually provide workshop and trainings prior to conference, majority of them requires financial support to cover costs of transport and meals and accommodation.
Strand sponsorship	Strand sponsorship involves both non-financial and financial contribution. The sponsor takes responsibility for refining the strand theme, review submissions and preparing the strand programme that may include pre-conference workshops, sessions and side events to promoted networking between interested participants. A sponsor shall contribute towards overall conference expenses and cover necessary expenses for key resource people for the strand. A sponsor is encouraged to offer bursaries for strand presenters. A sponsor also shall contribute towards promotion of the strand to the potential participants.

Conference organization

24. The conference shall be organized by AFREA with support of EEvA, VOPEs and key evaluation stakeholders in Africa and globally. The conference preparations shall be coordinated through the AFREA Secretariat and technically guided by the AFREA Board. An international conference organizing committee shall be set up to manage actions through sub-committees. A national conference organizing committee headed by EEvA will be set up in Ethiopia to coordinate the local implementation in-country.

25. An International Conference Organizer and a National Conference Organizer shall be hired to assist the International and National Conference Organizing Committees in planning and executing agreed actions expeditiously.

26. Conference organization shall be managed through Committees such as:

- **Executive Committee (EC)**

EC will perform the following tasks:

- Leadership and coordination of the conference process.
- Selection of Event Management Company.
- Coordination with selected Event Management Company.
- Ensure proper monitoring, evaluation and reporting for the conference

- **Programme committee (PC)**

PC will perform the following tasks:

- Approve the format for conference abstract submission;
- Organize review of abstracts and papers, including coordination of abstract and paper review process with strand sponsors
- Compile the conference programme.
- Assign moderators to sessions.
- Select speakers for plenary sessions, contact them and coordinate their participation in the conference.
- Workshop Management

- **Fundraising/ Partner relations committee (FPRC)**

FPRC will perform the following tasks:

- Contact and follow up with potential conference partners.
- Develop a standard Memorandum of Understanding with a partner.
- Link partners who have agreed to be strand sponsors with the Programme Committee.
- Organize an event for partners during the conference.
- Manage preparation and dissemination of thank you letters for partners and conference report to partners after the conference.

- **Registration, Revenue Collection and Accounting**

RRC will undertake the following functions:

- Ensure development of an online registration and receipting platform
- Manage and track all registrations
- Track all revenue collected and banked
- Ensure all funds are properly accounted for

- **Administration (Coordination and Logistics)**

- Transportation (local and international)
- Visa, Diplomatic Passes and Protocol
- Hotel Arrangements
- Notices and Information Centre
- Human Resource Management
- Venue and Floor Management
- Hospitality and Entertainment

- **Marketing, Publicity and Communications committee (MPC)**

CC will perform the following tasks:

- Oversee development of the conference logo.
- Oversee design and production of promo materials for the conference (banners, bags, roll-ups, etc.)
- Prepare and disseminate conference-related press-releases.
- Run conference social media campaign.
- Manage preparation, publication and dissemination of the conference report.

- **Local Arrangements committee (LAC)**

LAC will perform the following tasks:

- Identify, contact, follow up and coordinate with potential partners in Ethiopia.
- Promote the conference among potential participants in Ethiopia.
- Develop cultural and entertainment programme.
- Recruit and manage local volunteers who would support conference participants from other countries.

27. Members of these committees shall be drawn from VOPEs, partners and other evaluation stakeholders in Africa. Detailed terms of reference shall be prepared for each committee once we agree on which committees must be put in place.

Funding the Conference

28. Since 1999, AfrEA and the Local Hosts have gathered a large number of technical and financial partners as well as strategic and honorary partners (see below). AfrEA will rely on this institutional memory to mobilize funds and technical support for the conference. To mobilize the necessary funds and other resources, AfrEA and its partners will focus not

only on its traditional partners but also on potential partners at international and national level.

Budget

29. The estimated cost of a face to face conference held in Ethiopia is about \$2,490,893. This cost is within range of the cost of previous conferences, adjusted for inflation.

Financial controls and auditing

30. Both AfrEA and EEvA have robust financial control mechanisms to ensure responsible management of partner financial contributions. Upon completion of the conference, AfrEA and EEvA will commission independent audit of conference accounts. All efforts will be made to ensure payments are made electronically using either web based payment system using secure lines of communication with robust encryption technology or Points of Sale which are fully automated by designated bank's swiping cards. Cash transactions will be highly discouraged.

AfrEA's Donors/Partners :

1. African Development Bank (AfDB)
2. Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)
3. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
4. Better Evaluation
5. Claremont Graduate University
6. Department for International Development (DFID)
7. EvalPartners Initiative
8. Finland Ministry of Foreign Affairs (FORMIN)
9. Foundation Rockefeller
10. Global Environment Facility (FEM)
11. Inter Action
12. International Organization for Cooperation and Evaluation (IOCE)
13. International Initiative for Impact Evaluation (3ie)
14. Islamic Development Banque (IDB)
15. Management Sciences for Health (MSH)
16. MasterCard Foundation
17. Netherland Ministry of Foreign Affairs
18. Network of Network for impact Evaluation (NONIE)
19. Oxfam International
20. PACT International
21. Regional Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR)
22. Réseau Francophone d'Evaluation (RFE)
23. United Nation Children Fund (UNICEF)
24. United Nation Development Programme (UNDP)
25. United Nation Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of women (UN women)
26. United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
27. World Bank

and

Marketing and Communication Strategy

Conference target audiences

Group	Their interests and challenges	Benefits they can get from AfrEA conference
Young and emerging evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to get access to the profession of evaluation • Need capacity development • Lack of professional experience is a barrier for landing evaluation jobs and service contracts • May not have money to cover participation in the conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased professional skills and knowledge through workshops and attending conference sessions • Networking, including with potential employers • Grants to attend a conference • Gaining inspiration from some of the renowned regional and global evaluators
Independent evaluation consultants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development (new methodologies, tools and techniques etc.) • Networking with colleagues and potential customers • Strategic Partnerships and collaborations • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased professional skills and knowledge through workshops and attending conference sessions • Networking and identifying strategic partners for forging collaborations • Identifying potential consultancy opportunities
Staff of M&E departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development and capacity building • Networking with colleagues from similar departments and organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased professional skills and knowledge through workshops and attending conference sessions • Professional Networking
Academia staff who teach and do research on evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional development • Networking with colleagues • Need to publish • Need to carry new research in various elements of monitoring and evaluation discipline • Need to develop new courses and improve the existing ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased professional skills and knowledge through workshops and attending conference sessions • Professional Networking • Ideas for new research and courses
VOPE leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to attract new members • Stronger VOPE managing skills • Need to raise VOPE profile nationally and Africa wise • Fund raising and looking for joint projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity for exchanging idea with the national government executives and members of parliament to share information about the conference. • Identify funding opportunities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forging strategic partnerships and collaborations • May not have enough financial resources to sponsor representatives to the conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify potential partners for project collaborations • Enhanced capacity to manage VOPES properly and improve good governance.
Government Executives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to demonstrate effectiveness of government operation • Need to understand how to formulate public policies backed by evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater understanding and appreciation of evaluation • Understanding of different constituents when it comes to evaluation ecosystem. • Understanding the power of evidence generated by data.
Members of parliaments (MPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to demonstrate their value for constituency be re-elected • Need to understand the power of evidence back up by data to demonstrate what they have been able to achieve in their constituencies • Will need financial support to attend conference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater understanding and appreciation of evaluation • Networking with other MPs • Understanding of how evidence derived from evaluation can be used for oversight function of the parliament.
African philanthropies/ foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective use of funds • The power of evidence to solicit more funds • The power of evidence to support cause for upscaling • The power of evidence to forge collaborations and strategic partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to evaluation as an instrument for better interventions • Appreciation of the power of evidence for advocacy
UN agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing Agenda 2030 and facilitating progress towards SDGs • Some agencies have a mandate of evaluation capacity development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference helps to fulfill the evaluation capacity development mandate
Development agencies (USAID, DFID, GIZ, AusAID,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some agencies have a mandate of evaluation capacity development and evidence-based decision making • Understand Africa's development challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference helps to fulfill the evaluation capacity development mandate • Exchange of ideas with fellow donors on how best to support development interventions

SIDA, Swiss Aid, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how African wants to measure development and how Western metrics are not appropriate for Africa. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of best practices and knowledge • Conference helps them to understand Africa better and its cultural context.
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Communication campaign story lines

31. The communication campaign has two objectives:
- Inform potential participants about the conference and important conference-related dates (Start and deadline to abstract submission, start of conference registration);
 - Promote AfrEA conference as a useful professional experience.
32. Conducting its 10th conference has a symbolic value for AfrEA and an opportunity to reflect on its progress and impact of the previous conferences. One of the themes of the information campaign may include information pieces about past conferences (short texts, e.g. testimonies of the Past Presidents) and well as a storytelling competition for AfrEA members where they are invited to share stories (text and video) of what impact participation in AfrEA conference had on their professional life.
33. Hashtag for the conference on social media - #EvalAfrica2021

Key Milestones

Timing	Milestone
Upon approval of the concept note	Establish conference committee. Start selection of the event management company. Confirm the venue in Ethiopia.
August 2020	Announce the conference. Start communication campaign.
November 2020	Deadline for abstract submissions
December 2020	Open conference registration
March 2021	Conference
May 2021	Conference report completed and disseminated