Final report

Evaluation of Evaluation Capacity Development at DEval

Carrying out an evaluation of the ECD work area at the German Institute for Development Evaluation

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BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CD	Capacity Development
CIFF	Children's Investment Fund Foundation
CLEAR	Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results
CR	Costa Rica
ECD	Evaluation capacity development
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEval	German Institute for Development Evaluation
EcP	Comunidad de Práctica en Evaluación
Focelac	Fomento de capacidades en evaluación en Latinoamérica
Focelac+	Fomento de una cultura de evaluación y de aprendizaje en América Latina con proyección global
FOCEVAL	Fomento de capacidades en evaluación
GEI	Global Evaluation Initiative
GHG	Greenhouse gas
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
IPDET	International Program for Development Evaluation Training
KII	Key informant interviews
LAC	Latin America and The Caribbean
Mideplan	Costa Rican Ministry of Planning and Political Economy
MRV	Monitoring, Reporting and Verification
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NEP	National Evaluation Platform
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
ReLAC	Red de Seguimiento, Evaluación y Sistematización de Latinoamérica y el Caribe
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TL	Team Leader
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
YEE	Young and Emerging Evaluators

Executive summary

In 2023, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) commissioned an independent evaluation of DEval's work on Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD). The purpose of this evaluation was to provide evidence to support and improve future ECD initiatives within DEval. Particular issues that were of interest to the client were: learning from past successes and challenges of DEval's ECD work, as well as from collaboration with partners and networks; how DEval can best cooperate and enhance synergies with international organisations; how to transfer DEval's work to new regions; and how to support the uptake of ECD into the institutional structure of DEval.

To address these questions and provide a focus for the evaluation, we devised a set of four interlinked "evaluation lenses":

- *Project lens*: How can ECD activities be improved?
- *Transferability lens*: Which aspects of the ECD can be used and useful outside of Latin America?
- *Institutional lens*: How can the Latin American experience enable mainstreaming of ECD within DEval?
- *Cooperation lens*: Which aspects of the ECD experience can be valuable to other ECD agencies?

As the initial scope for this evaluation was large geographically and methodologically, we focused on several initiatives processes and collaborations in Costa Rica and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) that represent DEval's ECD work. We further examined the uptake of ECD within DEval, as well as international collaborations. Over approximately 6 months, we conducted a series of meetings, workshops desk-based research, a survey and over 40 interviews that informed the evaluation.

The overall ECD approach
DEval's ECD projects evolved over time to respond to changing context in Costa Rica and the region. These developments were driven by adopting systemic principles that included the need to respect and respond to local context, focus on outcomes, decentralise power and control, adaptation and resilience, managing surprises and collaboration akin to equal partnership with key stakeholders. The catalytic, facilitative role of DEval created a sense that this was a Latin American project, responding to Latin American needs and values. This created a strong sense of ownership that appeared infectious, as well as respect and appreciation of DEval's staff and their work.

The Project Lens
The project initially focused on strengthening the existing evaluation culture in Costa Rica. Costa Rica is politically stable and has a solid reputation in LAC, which formed a strong base for the ECD project to spread outwards from. The downside of this strategy is that some of the attempts to replicate the successes from Costa Rica have met with challenges

and delays. More successful have been the regional initiatives that spread outwards from the Costa Rican centre and not relied on specific country contexts. The ECD team members and the ECD team as a whole, were crucial to the success of the project. German team members all spoke Spanish, were familiar with the local culture and political context. These factors were important understanding local needs and responding to those with flexibility, team-spirit, open communication and collaborative work. The work ethos of the ECD team has lessons that can be transferred to DEval's work and to other German Development Cooperation projects.

Transferability lens

In accordance with BMZ's priorities, DEval's ECD work is expanding its focus to sub-Saharan Africa. DEval's systemic ECD work is about adapting to context, rather than developing a one-size fits all approach. Thus, many of its fundamental principles are likely to be transferable and adaptable to other contexts. These include stakeholder mapping, willingness to negotiate, opening and maintaining space for dialogue, assistance with developing capacity and capability locally, building alliances, and a strong focus on sustainability and long-term involvement. DEval is well placed to transfer some of its methods and methodologies to those different contexts. There are, however, some limitations. Particularly, local political contexts, governance, evaluation culture, languages and cultural practices need to be considered. As the experience in Costa Rica shows, reliable local implementation partners that understand local complexities and practices are key to successful transferability.

Institutional lens

ECD is one of the key pillars of DEval and the institution is committed to integrating ECD with its other pillars of work. However, ECD mainstreaming has to date been limited. There are several reasons for this. The dominant paradigm within DEval places prime value on the 'independence' and 'impartiality' of its work. Within this world view, ECD is perceived as being neither. Another important factor is the nature of DEval's evaluations, which, in accordance with the requirements of BMZ, are not geared towards including partner countries in evaluations, or indeed share results. This is despite growing commitment to partner-orientation both within BMZ and DEval. At an administrative level, ECD staff work on a project-basis and can only dedicate a small amount of their time for working with other parts of DEval. Thus, in practice, ECD ideas and practices have been adapted on an ad-hoc basis into DEval's work, rather than *adopting* the partner-centred ECD world view and developing innovative ways of working. These are important issues, since the development evaluation scene is changing and calls for partner orientation and 'decolonising evaluation' are growing.

International collaboration lens

The ECD project and the team are well respected within the international ECD sector. The team has formed a range of fruitful collaborations and networks with international organisations over time. DEval is also establishing a working relationship with GEI. While DEval and GEI are working from different positions methodologically, these approaches can compliment each other and synergies are being pursued. Working with the CLEAR centres,

as the implementing bodies of the GEI is one direction that DEval is currently exploring in transferring its approach to Anglophone Africa. While DEval is currently not working closely with other German Development Cooperation, there is potential to expand collaboration. Particularly, GIZ often has strong local expertise and infrastructure that can support the implementation of ECD initiatives at local level. To enable such collaboration, a range of bureaucratic and technical barriers need to be addressed. There are also opportunities for knowledge transfer from Costa Rica, and Mideplan particularly, to other regions and partners.

Overall, DEval and the ECD team have established a range of international cooperation partnerships, alliances and networks. Some of these allow DEval to gain international influence with minimal resources required, while others seem to be more resource intensive. DEval enjoys a diverse range of ongoing and emerging collaborations that support its international presence on ECD.

1 Evaluation context & background

Since its foundation in 2012, the German Institute for Development Evaluation (DEval) conducts independent evaluations, analysis, and assessment of German development cooperation. Together with DEval's commissioner and shareholder, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the DEval management commissioned an independent evaluation of DEval's work and initiatives on Evaluation Capacity Development (ECD) to date.

This report continues by describing DEval's work on ECD. It then outlines the evaluation approach and methodology, before presenting key evaluation findings. We finish the report with a set of concluding thoughts to help inform future ECD initiatives within DEval and in the international ECD community.

ECD is one of DEval's three core working areas, as agreed between BMZ and DEval. DEval's ECD work began in 2014, when DEval replaced GIZ on the FOCEVAL project (*Fomento de capacidades en evaluación*). At the time, it was suggested that ECD should be implemented by an institute with specialised evaluation capacities. Since then, DEval's ECD work has been implemented in two-year project increments. Budgets for these projects have been agreed with BMZ separately to DEval's overall budget allocation. Table 1 provides a brief overview of the phases of DEval's ECD work, objectives of each phase, key components and main initiatives.

DEval's ECD work was first implemented in Costa Rica (CR) and over time expanded to other parts of Latin America. The implementation of all project phases was done jointly with Mideplan, the Costa-Rican Ministry for Planning and Political Economy. At present, the focus of DEval's ECD project[1] is shifting, with the aim of taking DEval's approach to ECD and lessons learned from Costa Rica and the Latin American and The Caribbean (LAC) experience and applying them in other regions and through international cooperation networks, such as the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI). In January 2023, the 2nd phase of the Focelac+ project began. This phase largely maintains the objectives of the 1st phase, with a growing emphasis on enhancing cooperation with GEI and transferring the DEval ECD experience and expertise to Anglophone Africa.

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[1] DEval's work on ECD is often referred to by DEval and its partners the "ECD project". We therefore use this term here to refer to the entirety of DEval's work on ECD in LAC. ECD project phases – refer to the different phases of the encompassing ECD project, as elaborated in Table 1. ECD initiatives – refers to the specific initiatives within the project, in which DEval has been an implementing partner.

Table 1 Main stages of DEval's ECD project

Year	Name	Objectives	Key components	Main initiatives
1st stage: 7/2011-6/2014 (GIZ) 2nd stage: 7/2014-12/2016 3rd stage: 1/2017-12/2018	FOCEVAL	Strengthening the role of evaluation in political decision making and managing policy measures in CR and selected LAC countries	1st phase – GIZ. 2nd phase efforts to institutionalise evaluation in CR; opening to regional initiatives; ECD training, with promotion of citizen participation. 3rd phase: consolidation in CR; dissemination in LAC; DEval ECD strategy development.	In Costa Rica: • National Evaluation Platform (institutional) • Individual capacities (YEE, training courses) • Networks • SDG evaluation • National evaluation agenda • National evaluation policy • 2017 EvalYouth CR country chapter
1/2019-12/2020	Focelac	Strengthened and networked actors in selected LAC countries to make increased use of evaluations, in the context of the 2030 Agenda	1. Evaluation structures and functions in state institutions 2. Education and research offer 3. Practical and methodological competencies for evaluation professionals 4. Civil society participation 5. Networking and knowledge exchange	• EvalParticipativa • INCE • Grounding ECD in Systems Theory
1/2021-12/2022	Focelac+	Ensure evaluations in LAC (and Anglophone Africa) enhance accountability, transparency and learning, strengthening good governance, as a requirement to meet the 2030 agenda.	1. Promoting evaluation capacities in public institutions 2. Inclusive evaluation processes 3. Evaluation capacities in selected LAC countries 4. Knowledge exchange among stakeholders	• Online course for evaluation managers • Update workshop on evaluation criteria • Updated evaluation standards for LAC • SDG evaluation • YEE in evaluation • Support ReLAC • EvalParticipativa • EcP inclusive evaluations (Mexico, CR) • GEI collaboration • Ecuador National Evaluation Platform • Ecuador: evaluation guide for public policies • INCE

As the different project phases progressed, DEval's systemic ECD approach emerged and guided the ECD project. This approach "aims to strengthen the entire evaluation system of a country (see Figure 1). It recognises the diversity of actors involved in the evaluation system and their interconnections". Establishing capacity at the individual and institutional levels, as well as nurturing an enabling environment are also key to this approach[2]. The principles underlying this systemic ECD approach are described in a paper published by Klier et al. in 2022[3]. While this evaluation did not set out to evaluate this approach, we do acknowledge its centrality in guiding DEval's work on ECD.

Figure 1 Components of a national evaluation system[4]

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[2] See e.g. Focelac+ stage 2 application

[3] Klier, S. D., Nawrotzki, R. J., Salas-Rodríguez, N., Harten, S., Keating, C. B., & Katina, P. F. (2022). Grounding evaluation capacity development in systems theory. Evaluation, 28(2), 231–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/13563890221088871

[4] Source: DEval (2023), Focelac+, https://www.deval.org/en/evaluation-capacities/current-ecd-projects/focelac

2 Evaluation approach

2.1 Evaluation purpose

As stipulated in the Terms of Reference (ToR), the overall objective of this evaluation is to "improve the design of ECD initiatives at DEval". To uncover the expectations and usefulness of this evaluation, we went beyond the ToR. We analysed the views and perspectives of key stakeholders within DEval, as the main client and user of the evaluation, and of BMZ, as DEval's commissioner and shareholder. We did so through meetings with DEval's ECD core team and a series of 10 inception interviews, as described in Section 3.

Accordingly, the primary purpose of this evaluation is to provide evidence to support future ECD activities within DEval. Particular issues that are of interest to the client include: past achievements and challenges of the ECD project at DEval; highlights from collaboration with partners and networks; how DEval can best cooperate with GEI and selected affiliated organisations, enhancing synergies in their work; how to transfer DEval's work and unique approach on ECD to new regions and partners; and how to support the uptake of ECD into the institutional structure of DEval.

To address these questions and provide a focus for the evaluation, we devised a set of four interlinked "evaluation lenses", focused on usefulness.

- **Project lens** – focuses on examining the ECD project by assessing several of DEval's ECD initiatives in Costa Rica and LAC, unpacking successes, challenges and mediating conditions that influenced the implementation of the ECD project.
- **Transferability lens** – focuses on the transferability and application of DEval's ECD work both regionally and in other parts of the world.
- **Institutional lens** – focuses on how the principles and practice of ECD can be adapted or adopted within DEval. Additionally, it examines the current structure of organising DEval's ECD work primarily on a project-basis.
- **Collaboration lens** – focuses on the value of DEval's ECD activities to other, primarily international, agencies and particularly GEI. It also examines the usefulness of these agencies to DEval's ECD work.

These lenses are interrelated and inform each other. They enabled the evaluation team to understand what information we needed to obtain to inform this evaluation and achieve its objectives, within existing time and resource constraints (see Section 3.4).

2.2 Evaluation scope

The initial scope for this evaluation was large geographically, methodologically and logistically. To define the boundaries, focus and scope of the evaluation, we relied on the evaluation lenses presented above and in Figure 2. Thus, we set the focus of the evaluation on those aspects of the ECD project that provide the most useful evaluative insights from

the perspectives of these four lenses. During the inception phase, we drew upon the ToR, team meetings and inception interviews to further define the scope of this evaluation. We also conducted a mapping of DEval's ECD project phases and initiatives (see Table 1). This was important to better understand the breadth of DEval's ECD work.

It is worth noting that up until 2019, DEval's strategy implemented ECD work primarily through the FOCEVAL and later FOCELAC and FOCELAC+ projects. More recently, several DEval evaluations have included an ECD component. Indeed, our mapping showed that the majority of DEval's ECD work was implemented through its ECD project through a range of initiatives, partnerships and collaboration networks arose that are emblematic of DEval's ECD approach.

The inception interviews, team meetings and document analysis were instrumental in shaping our understanding and prioritising this universe of information. They helped us to select and focus on certain initiatives and relationships with stakeholders, to prioritise the evaluation schedule. After discussion with DEval, we thus primarily focused on the initiatives, processes and collaborations presented below. These initiatives represent initiatives that were successful, contrasting them with those who faced more challenges. They are further emblematic of the range of public, private and third-sector stakeholders that DEval engages with, as well as a range of different ECD tools and instruments.

The National Index on Evaluation Capacities (Índice Nacional de Capacidades en Evaluación, INCE)

The INCE measures national evaluation capacities and practices in the field of public policies, programmes and services. The set of indicators is designed to provide a snapshot of a national evaluation system, encouraging a participatory process. It can be used by a range of stakeholder to to strengthen the capacities of national evaluation systems[5]. DEval, together with the World Food Program and other partners, has acted as facilitator for the INCE and the community of practice that has developed around it. It has facilitated the establishment of the set of indicators, application of the index in numerous countries in LAC, networking, bringing key stakeholder together and most recently the INCE website. The initiative is considered successful, as it is a Latin American product to measure national evaluation capacities, understand local ECD needs and allow stakeholders to take ownership and track progress of their national evaluation systems. INCE has established not only strong partnerships with international and regional institutions and networks, but also a robust community of practice, comprised of regional policymakers, evaluation professionals and third-sector actors. These actors exchange experience and knowledge on national evaluation systems through annual meetings and increasingly through web-presence.

Country-led SDG evaluations

In DEval's 2019-2025 ECD strategy, the opportunity to strengthen national evaluation capacities as part of countries' national evaluation systems under the 2030 Agenda was recognized. To date, one country-led evaluation was supported by the ECD team/ Focelac

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[5] https://inceval.org/es/acerca-del-indice

in Costa Rica. The evaluation looked at non-reimbursable international cooperation funding for biodiversity and climate change. It was led by Mideplan, with support from DEval and the Focelac project. This evaluation also informed the work of the international working group on SDG evaluations – connecting national priorities to SDGs[6]. This group includes IIED, Unicef, EvalSDGs, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as other partners.

At present, DEval is supporting two more country-led SDG evaluations based on the handbook. Costa Rica is starting an evaluation of its national biodiversity strategy. Ecuador will evaluate its zero child-malnutrition strategy. DEval is accompanying the planning units of the relevant Ministries in the evaluation, which they hope will feed into the global SDG evaluation community. DEval is also contributing to an SDG evaluation course, based on the handbook. In a second working group, DEval is collaborating with CLEAR AA (and previously also CLEAR LAC) on VNR mapping[7]. In addition, DEval is supporting some country-led evaluation components, as part of its covid-response evaluations.

Participatory evaluation
Strengthening inclusive evaluation processes in line with the 2030 Agenda is one key objective of DEval's ECD work. The flagship initiatives here are the EvalParticpativa platform, as well as the Evaluation with Participation (EcP) approach.

EvalParticipativa was established in 2019 as a joint initiative between the Program of Studies of Work, the Environment and Society (PETAS) of the National University of San Juan (Argentina) and DEval. The web-based platform serves as a community of practice and learning for participatory evaluation in LAC. To date, there are four main groups of activities within EvalParticipativa: sharing of evaluation experience; participatory evaluation manual[8] and audio-visual materials; course and toolbox on participatory evaluation; and repository on participatory evaluation[9]. The aims of EvalParticipativa are: 1. Capitalise on experience in participatory evaluation and provide a space to showcase work; 2. Make tools and methodologies accessible and allow exchange of information among its 4000 members; 3. Influence academic research, promoting practical application, as well as conceptual work. EvalParticpativa has gained a strong reputation and brand name in the region, which enables collaboration with a range of governmental and non-governmental organisations.

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[6] IIED, 2020, Evaluation to connect national priorities with the SDGs: A guide for evaluation commissioners and managers, IIED, London,

[7] DEval, CLEAR-AA and CLEAR-LAC (2022) VNRs and SDG evaluations in Anglophone Africa and Latin America: a mapping of common challenges and emerging good practices, German Institute for Development Evaluation, Bonn, https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/1d96b638-044e-4f05-a8f1-b14250a730b2/content ; Dlakavu, A.and Hoffmann, D. 2023. Limited use of evaluative evidence in public policy, planning and Voluntary National Review (VNR) development. Recommendations for governments, evaluation communities and ECD stakeholders, https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/4ad5a821-3ab5-4303-9f22-ee8319f0483a/content

[8] Siembra y cosecha. Manual de evaluación participativa / Esteban Tapella; Pablo Rodríguez Bilella; Juan Carlos Sanz; Jorge Chavez-Tafur; Julia Espinosa Fajardo. - 1a ed. – Bonn, Alemania: DEval, 2021. https://evalparticipativa.net/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/SIEMBRA-Y-COSECHA-MANUAL-EVALUACION-PARTICIPATIVA-pdf-media.pdf

[9] See the EvalParticipativa website: https://evalparticipativa.net/actividades/

EcP is led by policymakers, with a focus on involving stakeholders, especially civil society, in the evaluation process. The evaluator assumes a facilitator and mediator role, in order to make stakeholders find a common ground and work towards a common issue. A successful example of incorporating EcP into public planning and evaluation processes at sub-national level is the Mexican Evalua Jalisco platform[10]. With support from DEval, mainly by capacity building and technical assistance, the Jalisco public planning authority involved citizens and other stakeholders in evaluation processes. By incorporating the EcP approach, Evalua Jalisco involves citizens in ongoing evaluations which matter to them and shares evaluation results. For example, in a transport sector evaluation stakeholders, such as fleet managers, bus drivers, and users were involved. As a result of participating and learning about other stakeholder's perspectives, the different parties were able to build solutions together that would benefit all parties and develop the transport system more inclusively and sustainably.

National Evaluation Platforms

The NEP are dialogue and discussion spaces, led by the national evaluation authority, that seek to advance public planning, monitoring and evaluation. The NEP's purpose is to bring together multiple stakeholders, among them the academia, professional evaluators and consultants, public sector, NGOs, and representatives from youth and civil society organisations to discuss, build and implement a (national) political framework for evaluation. The NEP is key for the institutionalization and sustainability of national evaluation systems. The NEPs are critical in developing and guiding evaluation demand and supply.

A successful example is the Costa Rican NEP, led by Mideplan. The NEP meets every 2 months and stakeholders take decisions, for instance, on implementing and advancing the National Evaluation Policy and conducting capacity building activities. The establishment of the Costa Rican NEP was closely supported by DEval. Today, DEval is a stakeholder invited to participate in the platform. In Ecuador, DEval provides technical and organisational assistance to the Ecuadorian Planning Secretariat to support its NEP.

Young and Emerging Evaluators

DEval supports YEE groups through collaboration with youth representatives of (voluntary) networks, VOPEs, and individual young and emerging evaluators (e.g. as consultants). A key aspect of this is the collaboration with Eval Youth Global and EvalYouth LAC chapter. DEval's support to YEE ranges from logistical and financial support for events, financing scholarships for individual capacity building events or conferences (e.g. the ReLAC conference), to hiring young consultants in order to boost their career development.

To answer the evaluation questions (see Figure 3, Table 2), we also examined potential for integration and mainstreaming of ECD within DEval's work through a series of interviews with key informants within the organisation. We further looked at international cooperation and particularly coordination with GEI and affiliated bodies, such as the Centres for Learning on Evaluation and Results (CLEAR).

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[10] https://evalua.jalisco.gob.mx/

2.3 Our conceptual understanding of the evaluation

Figure 2 illustrates a generic map of ECD systems and their environment[11] and the specific lenses through which the evaluation assessed the DEval system.

ECD systems can be considered as comprising two main sub-systems. The '**capacity sub-system**' contains all the activities, products, values and results to develop the necessary technical, organisational, political and social skills and knowledge to design and undertake evaluations. The '**capability sub-system**' contains all the activities, products, values and results to develop the necessary technical, organisational, political and social space that allows the application and use of these skills and knowledge. Outside the ECD system is an **environment** that mediates (i.e. helps and hinders) that system in doing its job. This is a simplified ECD system map, which does not detail interlinkages among its different components. Nonetheless, this approach allowed us to better understand DEval's ECD work and explore its components and interrelations.
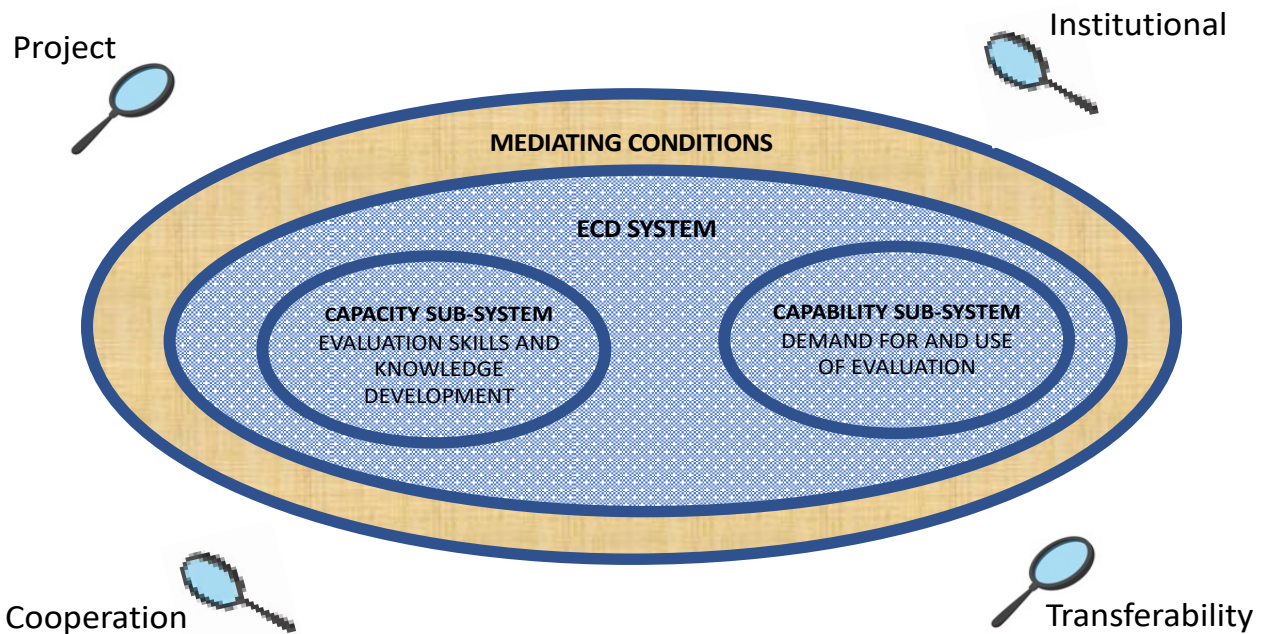
Figure 2 ECD system

The four lenses, as presented in Figure 3, represent the different framings that the evaluation used to look at what can be learned and applied from the system, its internal behaviours and response to its environment. The relative importance of these four lenses emerged as the evaluation progressed and we got to understand better the client's expectations on the use of the evaluation.

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[11] Cousins, J. B., Goh, S. C., Elliott, C. J., & Bourgeois, I. (2014). Framing the capacity to do and use evaluation. In J. B. Cousins & I. Bourgeois (Eds.), *Organizational capacity to do and use evaluation. New Directions for Evaluation*, *141*, 7–23.

2.4 Evaluation questions

We derived the evaluation questions from the four evaluation lenses. We focused on two to three evaluation questions per lens. In close discussion with the client, the evaluation questions draw on those from the action research field, which were agreed to be appropriate for this work.

As illustrated In Figure 3, and in Table 2, the evaluation questions corresponding to the **Project Lens** focus on the demonstrated merit of a selection of past and current initiatives in Costa Rica and LAC, from the perspective of DEval and its key partners within the region.

The **Transferability Lens** focus on which activities and outcomes of those activities provide valuable guidelines to DEval's future ECD work outside of Latin America. It also looks at how DEval's system approach to ECD can be applied to other contexts[12].

Questions under the **Institutional Lens** focus on how the experience of integrating ECD work within DEval's processes and organisational structures can inform mainstreaming of ECD within DEval. Insights here are particularly relevant for informing two operational matters. First, whether and how can ECD be better mainstreamed in DEval. Second, whether DEval's ECD work would better be institutionalized, remain project-based, or a benefit from alternative arrangements.

Lastly, questions under the **Cooperation Lens** focus on how the experience of DEval's ECD work can contribute to the ECD work GEI and other international ECD organisations. It further examines cooperation with other German development cooperation actors.

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[12] Klier, S. et al. (2022). Grounding evaluation capacity development in systems theory. Evaluation 2022, Vol. 28(2) 231 –251. DOI: 10.1177/13563890221088871

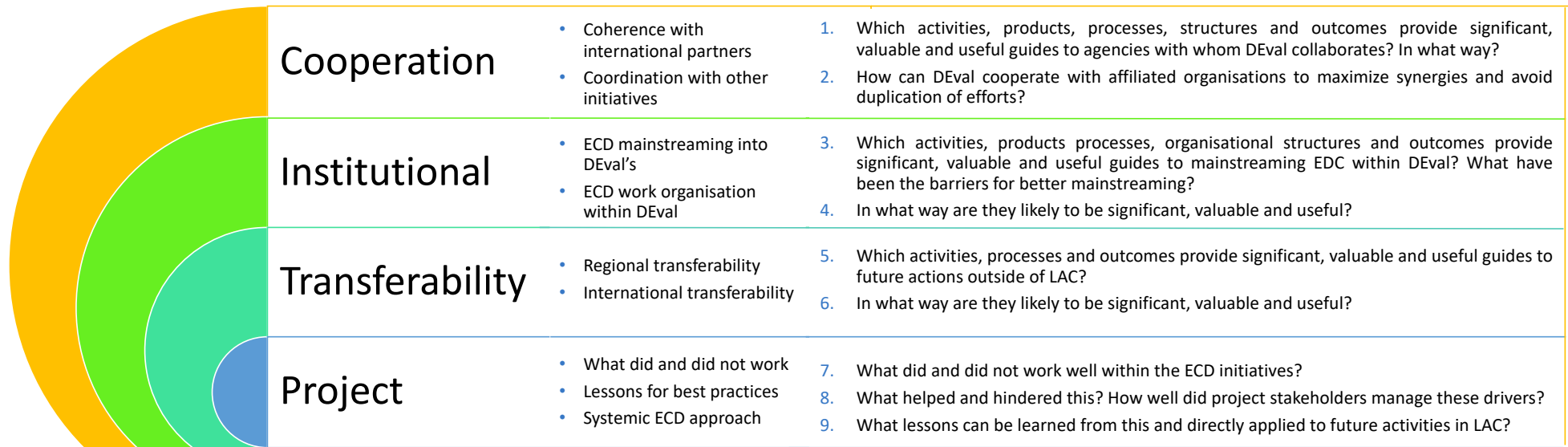|		
Cooperation	• Coherence with international partners • Coordination with other initiatives	1. Which activities, products, processes, structures and outcomes provide significant, valuable and useful guides to agencies with whom DEval collaborates? In what way? 2. How can DEval cooperate with affiliated organisations to maximize synergies and avoid duplication of efforts?
Institutional	• ECD mainstreaming into DEval's • ECD work organisation within DEval	3. Which activities, products processes, organisational structures and outcomes provide significant, valuable and useful guides to mainstreaming EDC within DEval? What have been the barriers for better mainstreaming? 4. In what way are they likely to be significant, valuable and useful?
Transferability	• Regional transferability • International transferability	5. Which activities, processes and outcomes provide significant, valuable and useful guides to future actions outside of LAC? 6. In what way are they likely to be significant, valuable and useful?
Project	• What did and did not work • Lessons for best practices • Systemic ECD approach	7. What did and did not work well within the ECD initiatives? 8. What helped and hindered this? How well did project stakeholders manage these drivers? 9. What lessons can be learned from this and directly applied to future activities in LAC?

Figure 3 Evaluation lenses and evaluation questions

Table 2 Evaluation overview

Evaluation lens	Proposed evaluation questions	Evaluation criteria	Key evaluation initiatives	Instruments used
Project: How can the ECD activities be improved?	• What did and did not work well within the ECD initiatives? • What helped and hindered this? How well did stakeholders manage these drivers? • What lessons can be learned from this and directly applied to future activities in LAC?	• Appropriateness • Coherence / integration • Flexibility/ adaptability • Sustainability • Transferability / scalability • Usefulness	• INCE • EvalParticipativa • EcP • YEE • country-led evaluations • NEP	• Individual and small group interviews • 1 short survey
Transferability: What are the implications for ECD outside of South and Central America?	• Which activities, processes and outcomes provide significant, valuable and useful guides to future actions outside of LAC? • In what way are they likely to be significant, valuable and useful?	• Coherence/ integration • Flexibility • Transferability/Scalability • Effectiveness/ sefulness • Appropriateness	Draw on lessons from: • INCE • NEP • EcP +EvalParticipativa • YEE • country-led evaluations	Individual interviews and other methods as in project lens
Institutional: In what way can the LAC experience enable mainstreaming of ECD within DEval?	• What hindered incorporation of ECD into DEval's other strands of work? • Which activities, products processes, organisational structures and outcomes provided significant, valuable and useful guides to mainstreaming ECD within DEval? • How has DEval's work on ECD been organised?	• Appropriateness • Transferability • Usefulness	• Conversations with different DEval stakeholders, lessons from country-led SDG evaluations and other initiatives that may be relevant to mainstreaming	Individual interviews
Cooperation: Which aspects of the ECD experience can be valuable to other ECD agencies?	• Which activities, products, processes, structures and outcomes provide significant, valuable and useful guides to agencies with whom DEval collaborates? In what way? • In what way are they likely to be significant, valuable and useful?	• Coherence/ integration • Scalability • Transferability • Adaptability • Usefulness	• Insights from other activities and particularly YEE, INCE/ (MESA), speak to GEI and affiliated organizations (IPDET, CLEAR)	Individual interviews

2.5 Evaluation criteria

As outlined in Table 2, the evaluation questions inform and provide answers to the specified evaluation criteria, which are the measures against which to judge the evaluation. Once we better understood the evaluation purposes and uses, and came up with the evaluation lenses, we revisited the evaluation criteria and questions suggested in the ToRs. We then suggested some changes to the evaluation criteria, which were discussed and validated in a debriefing meeting with DEval (21.12.2022).

Related to the evaluation questions, we proposed evaluation criteria. The focus of the evaluation was on usefulness. It was the main criterion that underpins the evaluative inquiry itself. Other relevant criteria were used to assess the evaluand rather than the evaluation. The resources available to the evaluation were relatively small and the timescale relative short (roughly December 2022 to April 2023, see Annex 1: Workplan). Thus, each part of the data collection process needed to collect data that informs all four 'lenses' and address as many questions simultaneously.

In accordance with the OECD DAC Criteria, the ToR specified initially three main criteria (coherence, efficiency and sustainability) responding to an overall question: "How successful is DEval's ECD work and how can its success be increased?". Throughout the inception process we heard more questions and expectations that correspond to different, multiple possible criteria. After discussing and validating them with DEval, we used following evaluation criteria, which address both the expectations discussed with DEval, as well as the original evaluation questions as in the ToR:

1. **Appropriateness**: refers to doing the appropriate work, it has therefore an ethical aspect.
2. **Coherence/integration**: are important both in development cooperation and for DEval's work. It is essential to ask how coherent DEval is with their partners in LAC, and if their ECD work is aligned with their strategies, demands and needs.
3. **Flexibility/ adaptability:** ability to respond to changes.
4. **Sustainability**: there are different levels of sustainability: organizational (how to mainstreams ECD sustainably at DEval, so that it lasts), and project level (how can the initiatives "survive" later).
5. **Transferability/scalability:** Is the ECD experience transferable to other contexts and ought it to be. This criterion is particularly important for informing the transferability lens and evaluation questions above.
6. **Usefulness:** Whether the ECD experience can inform future practice.

3 Methodological approach

The evaluation can broadly be divided into four stages: design; data collection and analysis; evaluation and results sharing; additional support and follow up, as illustrated in Figure 4.
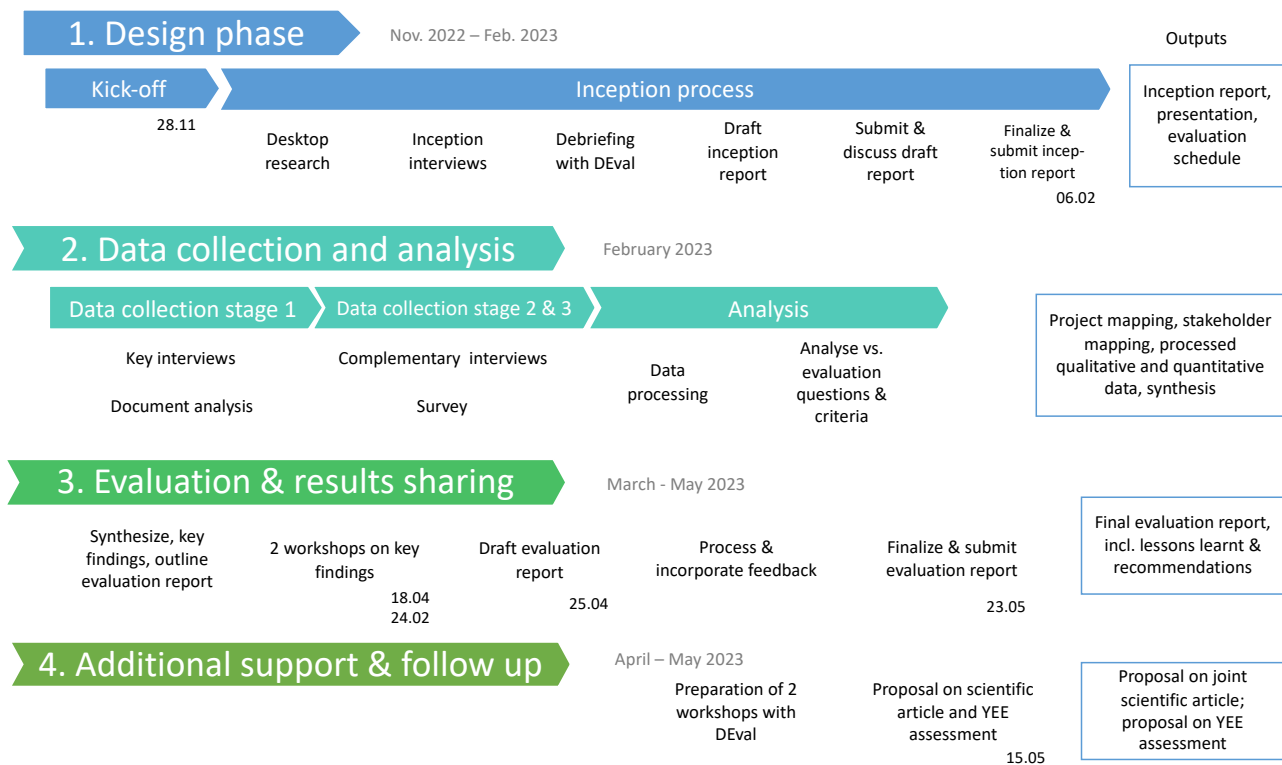

Figure 4 Methodological approach

3.1 Design phase

Phase 1, the Design Phase, comprised from the kick-off meeting to the submission of the inception report.

A kick-off meeting between HEAT and DEval took place on November 28th, 2022. It allowed us to introduce the team, discuss the relevant framework conditions; the communication and coordination mechanisms; information to be shared; the detailed work plan and the project's implementation process. Relevant documentation was shared and agreed upon.

The inception process followed the kick-off meeting. We conducted two additional meetings with DEval's ECD, a preliminary document review and a series of inception interviews. We undertook 10 individual inception interviews in December 2022 and January 2023. These interviews allowed us to better understand the context of the evaluation, unpack expectations and identify the needs and usefulness of the evaluation process and its findings. Through this inception process we were able to better understand the purpose, use and scope of the evaluation.

Based on the information collected, we shared a draft inception report with the DEval ECD team in order to validate the evaluation approach, agree on evaluation questions and define the next evaluation stages. After discussing the draft report and receiving DEval's feedback, we submitted the inception report for this evaluation at the beginning of February 2023.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

For the **Data collection and Analysis (Phase 2)**, we designed a two-stage data collection process. In the first stage, we identified which data would prove useful for each of the four evaluation lenses and the corresponding evaluation questions. In the second phase, we collected the data that would provide the necessary information. Later on, we added a third clarification stage to fill in data gaps.

Data collection comprised document analysis and speaking to a select number of key informants, reaching out to additional informants in phases 2 and 3.

Our **data collection methods** included:

- **Documentary analysis** to better understand the context of the initiatives to be evaluated. For this we relied on the documents already shared by DEval, as well as additional resources, e.g. websites, obtained through our independent desk-based research and through discussions with our key informants.
- **Key informant interviews** were held mostly individually, or in small groups of 2 people, via online platforms, in English, Spanish or German according to the interviewee's preferences. These interviews were based by a series of semi-structured and open-ended questions to allow the evaluation team to adapt to and receive the most useful and factual information from each informant (Annex 4: Interview questions). The evaluation questions were tailored according to the various initiatives, key informants and their experiences, as well as the overall four evaluation lenses. No interviews were recorded in order to protect the informants' privacy.
- **Short survey** – we examined the possibility of conducting a short survey with collaborators and/or users of the EvalParticipativa platform. The survey was launched online, in coordination with EvalParticipativa, and comprised 9 questions about the usefulness of the platform (Annex 5: Survey questions). The results were anonymised and no personal information was collected.

We used one or more of these data collection methods to triangulate and validate data collected. We kept close contact to DEval to discuss and clarify some aspects as we progressed with the evaluation.

In analysing the data, we returned to the original evaluation questions, analysing data both according to evaluation lenses and the individual initiatives examined. This allowed us to extrapolate the common themes and findings presented in Section 4. The timescale and budget didn't allow us to use any sophisticated qualitative analysis tools. Instead, themes were identified from the interview notes by the three team members, using our knowledge of the region, organisational change processes and evaluation capacity development.

Themes identified independently by all three were more closely examined. We also used a 'contradiction analysis' method developed by one of the team members that draws on a particular systems approach based on Vygotskian learning theory and known as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT). It builds on the common systemic approach of looking for differences in data rather than similarities, and then explores potential explanations for those differences. This process focuses first on identifying exceptions to general data trends (*in general .. but*), then contradictions in the data (*on the one hand … on the other hand*), moves onto surprises (*we expected to see X but it wasn't in the data, we didn't expect to see Y, but it was in the data*). Not only does this promote deeper analysis of the data but also reduces the potential for confirmation bias[13].

3.3   Evaluation and results-sharing

For **Phase 3, evaluation and results-sharing**, we conducted two workshops with key stakeholders. The purpose of the workshops was to present initial evaluation findings, triangulate these and discuss possible implications, as well as co-develop recommendations and take ownership of the process and solutions.

The first workshop included the DEval ECD team in Germany and Costa Rica, as well as partners from Mideplan (see Annex 6: Agenda for workshop with ECD team and Mideplan). In this workshop we constructed a collective storyline for the ECD project, discussed some of the findings and brainstormed how this experience can inform transferability to an imaginary country in Sub-Saharan Africa. This workshop was primarily focused on the project and transferability lenses.

The second workshop was a high-level workshop with DEval and BMZ management (see Annex 7: Agenda for workshop with BMZ and DEval. Here, we were predominantly interested in getting input into the institutional and collaboration lenses. The workshops contributed to both validating the evaluation results and bringing to our attention new perspectives of looking at the evaluation and the evaluand.

3.4   Limitations

Below we outline some of the limitations of this evaluation and how we addressed them:

- We could not determine how the combined impacts of individual ECD interventions contributed to the overall evaluation capacity within the LAC region. We were dealing with both ontological (i.e. inter-relationship) and epistemological (i.e. perspectives) complexity that means that individual activities and people's perceptions of those activities cannot be linked directly to the overall outcome of the project. What's more resource constraints meant we were only able to evaluate the results of a small

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[13.] A Data Analysis Tool. https://www.bobwilliams.co.nz/methods-frameworks-and-tools.html Accessed 21 April 2023

sample of the project's interventions. We addressed this limitation by being cautious about overall impact claims.

- The specific impact of the DEval contribution could not be identified with any accuracy. The evaluation covered over ten years of DEval activity. At best, we could access DEval reports and people's memories of the situation when any particular intervention took place. They may not be accurate reflections of the actual reality. We therefore could not assess accurately how developed evaluation capacity and capability were when the project started, nor could we assess how it might have been today if the DEval intervention had not taken place. There was no reliable way of addressing these two issues other than to be aware when drawing conclusions.

- The intervention included the actions of many hundreds of people over more than a decade. We could not access all those people; only those available and sufficiently interested to contribute to the evaluation, with the resources available to the evaluation team. We managed this issue by having a sample design that sought to provide a variety of potentially contrasting experiences. We did this both through our choice of initiatives to look at and through choosing informants that have different interests and perspectives in the evaluand (for the list of interviewees, refer to Annex 3: List of informants).

- In terms of the transferability and international collaboration lenses, we did not have the time or resources to investigate the complex contexts of the areas where DEval is hoping to focus its future activities. We addressed this bias by interviewing a small sample and using our own knowledge of the evaluation dynamics of sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

- Inevitably, we collected data from people who are enthusiastic about the project overall, and have some stake in sustaining DEval's presence in LAC. That may have led to an overemphasis on the positive aspects of the project. Our question frame asked people what helped and hindered their own part of the project. This helps reduce confirmation bias.

- The sample survey of EvalParticipativa had an estimated response rate of 20%, from an unknown demographic. Thus, no significant conclusions can be drawn about the reception and impact of EvalParticipativa. To overcome this, we focused on the free-entry comments. These were not assessed numerically and each response was treated as an individual source of information.

- The interviews were conducted in three languages - English and Spanish, and a couple in German. Most of those interviewed in English were not native speakers. Thus, things can get literally lost in translation. We managed this limitation by having a team member fluent in German, English and Spanish, and also seeking to identify 'outlying' comments that may have been a translation or cultural issue.

- Evaluator bias. We managed this by having a team that have very different perspectives on evaluation and use different evaluation methods and approaches.

4 Key findings

4.1 Project lens

The evaluation questions corresponding to the *Project Lens* focused on the demonstrated worth and significance of a selection of past and current initiatives in LAC. As discussed in Section 2.2, the representative initiatives were selected, in consultation with DEval, to represent the breadth of their ECD work. We spoke to key informants involved in the INCE, EvalParticipativa, Evaluación con Participación, YEE, Country-led SDG evaluations and National Evaluation Platforms. In the original evaluation matrix, we asked the following evaluation questions:

- What did and did not work well within the ECD initiatives?[14] What helped and hindered this?
- Which lessons can be learned from this and directly applied to future activities in LAC?

We then took a step back to assess to what extent, and in what way the ECD project was, as a whole, more than the sum of its parts, and if this was significant.

DEval's ECD project as a whole displayed all the features of a complex situation. It contained multiple initiatives interacting (or not) in multiple ways, on different timescales. Each initiative served individual purposes, although within an overall strategy. That makes assessing or even understanding the whole from its parts impossible. DEval started off with a (relatively) simple Theory of Change that ultimately transformed into a complex, multi-pronged strategy informed by interpretations of various systems theories, as well as the evolving ECD landscape in LAC. The components of that systemic ECD strategy included the need to respect and respond to context, focus on outcomes, decentralise power and control, be adaptable and resilient, manage surprises, and have a high level of collaboration akin to equal partnership with key stakeholders[15].

However, the question remains as to whether the ECD project as a whole had a result that was more valuable than the combined achievements of each individual initiative. Even with more time and resources, it's a question that is impossible to answer definitively. As an approximation, we identified common features and results that are generally acknowledged to be powerful factors in creating the conditions for enhancing and spreading the impact of individual initiatives.

At the heart of DEval's systemic ECD approach is the support for **partnerships, networks and individuals** within these groups. Words such as 'listening', 'paying attention' and 'being flexible' were used to describe DEval's cooperation style. People involved felt that their

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[14] "Well" as in satisfying one or more of the following criteria: Appropriate, Coherent / Integrated, Flexible/ Adaptable, Sustainable, Transferable / Scalable, Useful

[15] Klier, S. et al. (2022). Grounding evaluation capacity development in systems theory. Evaluation2022, Vol. 28(2) 231 –251. DOI: 10.1177/13563890221088871

position, personal and professional perspectives, knowledge and skills were respected and welcomed. Interviewees did associate these characteristics with the 'holistic' and systemic ECD approach. For example, the INCE created a robust community of practice in the region and is driven by a strong partnership with the World Food Program (WFP) and other contributing international organisations. EvalParticipativa established a strong community of practice; the Costa Rican National Evaluation Platform allowed stakeholders to work together under the lead of Mideplan. Our interviewees acknowledged and appreciated this person-centred approach. DEval was seen as flexible, listening to partners and opening spaces and opportunities. Its genuine partnership approach was also praised.

In this context, DEval's role was seen as catalytic. Rather than acting solely as an implementing agency, it enabled and facilitated partners in implementing *their* initiatives more effectively. DEval gave partners the autonomy to determine and control which initiatives to implement and how. Further, interested partners approached DEval to ask for support in learning and helping their ideas become reality, such as the case of Jalisco's public sector approaching DEval to incorporate participatory and inclusive perspectives in the evaluation system. DEval's catalytic role, mobilised by its systemic ECD approach, was a significant success factor in the implementation of the various ECD initiatives.

A number of factors enabled DEval's style and approach:

As mentioned above, a **partner-led, needs-centred approach to ECD** was key to the uptake of all the initiatives we examined. Some partners felt this was the first time in many years that they were respected and listened to within international development cooperation projects. In contrast to the 'donor led' approach, DEval's approach was to support countries' and stakeholders' own priorities, to build something based on those needs and ideas. Transparent communications, which improved with time, were an essential ingredient in this partner approach and for fostering relationships based on mutual trust. Most initiatives depended strongly on the enthusiasm and commitment of individuals involved in them. DEval acted to empower stakeholders to implement various ECD initiatives, provide peer-to-peer and technical support.

Flexibility and adaptability to partner's requirements, as well as to changing contexts, were another key enabling factor to the uptake of the different initiatives. DEval was good at identifying and creating entry points. It was attentive and listened to others, keeping its plans open and flexible to incorporating interesting ideas. DEval staff were active, proposed creative 'out of the box' ideas and showed goodwill and openness to work with other teams. Their adaptability was a particular strength, as was their sensitivity to context and their understanding and affinity with local cultural and political contexts.

Throughout the different project phases of the ECD projects (from FOCEVAL to Focelac+), DEval continually adapted its support to various initiatives, responding with flexibility to stakeholders' ideas and needs. This was seen, for example, in funding 'innovative' initiatives, such as EvalParticipativa and INCE, supporting conference organisation, workshops and training and engaging with new staff in places with high staff rotation.

Multi-level capacity development: The different initiatives within the ECD project targeted stakeholders at various levels of capacity development. For example, at the individual level DEval supported individual YEEs in their career development trajectories, with several of those supported establishing themselves professionally. DEval provided a variety of training courses, conference attendance and participation in evaluations, among others. At the institutional level, several of the initiatives supported institutional ECD. These included Country-led/ SDG evaluations; the INCE; NEP and more. At the enabling environment level, the uptake of the national evaluation policy in Costa Rica, for example (not examined by this evaluation) provided an important background for the uptake of evaluations. Combined, this approach addressed both the demand and supply of evaluation capabilities and capacities.

Participatory approaches are a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they help generate support and sustainability, provide structure, process and values for addressing conflicts and contradictions. This helps with sustainability and legitimacy of individual initiatives. They can also have a multiplier effect. For example, in Costa Rica, by incorporating the right people in a coordination group, the group evolved to become the Costa Rican National Evaluation Platform.

On the other hand, participatory approaches are resource intensive and not always easily scalable or replicable. The identification of "the right people" to engage with is per se a resource intensive task. Participatory approaches also require skilled staff for moderation, facilitation and conflict management. These staff often need to be trained, supported and their capacity developed.

Nevertheless, partnerships have been central to DEval's ECD work. These include:
- INCE - measure evaluation capacity and capability using participatory approach.
- EvalParticpativa - promotes and makes participatory evaluation resources accessible to a range of actors
- EcP, which focuses on participation facilitated and enabled by government.

For DEval, participation starts with the joint identification of needs, initiatives, or products to work on with their partners. Thus, DEval puts importance on facilitating workshops, events and conference to provide a space for stakeholders to come together and share their views. DEval was praised for its talent to facilitate sessions and events, with facilitation seen as an in-house expertise.

In addition, throughout our evaluation it became evident that several factors could either help or hinder the implementation of ECD initiatives, as discussed below.

Project-based financing: Even though there was a good level of confidence in securing continued project funding from BMZ to enable continuity of the ECD project and the various initiatives, there were some uncertainties and difficulties in accessing funding. For example, the German Ministry of Finance wants to ensure that large sums of money are not kept in external bank accounts. Thus, the DEval project team needed to request for funds to be released every 6 weeks. There is an option of receiving a lump sum of project finance, but

this meant that all funds must be allocated before December, leaving a gap in funding the various initiatives towards the end of the calendar year.

In addition, the **2-year project funding** means that a significant amount of planning, reporting and associated paperwork needs to be done both at the beginning of each year and towards the end of each funding period. For example, some informants mentioned that between January and March DEval are often focused on planning their activities for the year and are less engaged 'on the ground'. This may result in delays to planned activities and political partners losing interest and motivation. The 2-year project funding also means that staff have no firm guarantee of contract continuity. While in practice, there has been a good level of staff continuity, this was still perceived as a risk among some informants. Project funding cycles also places significant administrative burdens on the ECD project implementation. At the same time, and as discussed above, the (relative) flexibility of project funding has allowed the ECD team to be more adaptable in its allocation of funds according to partner needs (e.g. to fund demands for consultants, logistic support, etc.), as long as BMZ's funding priorities are broadly followed.

The initial lack of **infrastructure** (e.g. office space, staff presence) was seen as an important hindrance. It was seen as crucial to have the necessary infrastructure in Costa Rica, to enable the team to be effective in that country and subsequently in the region. More recently, DEval staff with local decision-making power have helped make communications faster, more efficient, and include the right people in the communications. Mideplan provided office space for the team. Conversely, some interviewees commented that the lack of infrastructure helped, since without it the ECD team had to build and rely on high quality and lasting local partnerships in order to use the locally available infrastructure.

Support, coordination and communication: DEval was praised for being flexible, supportive, and communicative with their partners. Peer-to-peer support and effective communication channels were essential. On the other hand, coordination demands considerable time and effort. In some cases, therefore, expectations were raised beyond the capacity of DEval. Also, as coordination between DEval and its key partners, such as Mideplan, is so close and frequent, secondary stakeholders, such as national networks or VOPEs, feel themselves relegated, and point out that DEval supports or involves them only when they directly reach out to DEval for very specific requests.

Political stability or instability affected the implementation of ECD initiatives. Political stability in Costa Rica led to government buy-in and built understanding of the purpose and use of the evaluation. In other countries, political instability was a major factor in unsuccessful ECD initiatives. Along with stability, there also has to be the political and administrative will to engage with and use evaluations. The different outcomes of the work in Costa Rica and Ecuador were frequently identified as contrasting examples of these conditions.

Continuity of personnel has been an important factor in the uptake of ECD initiatives within national and sub-national governments. For example, several key Mideplan staff have been

a constant in the evaluation team. Additionally, they have been key partners for implementation and knowledge dissemination within Costa Rica, and able to develop a leadership role within the region. In contrast, frequent changes in personnel in Ecuador's Secretariat of Strategic Planning (SPE) resulted in delays to both SDG evaluations and the uptake of the NEP.

So, what does this mean for the ECD project as a whole, rather than just its parts?

As we mentioned at the beginning of this section, the question is important but difficult to address. Not only is there an issue of measurement, but also issues of time and timing. Some impacts take many years to evolve, until the project reaches a tipping point of influence. And the emergent properties of ECD meant that some opportunities arose for just a short time and need to be exploited without too much regard for the overall picture or impact.

But some cautious conclusions are possible. The catalytic role of DEval, building on its systemic ECD approach, created the sense that this was a Latin American project, responding to Latin American needs and values, and not a German project parachuted into Latin America. This created a strong sense of ownership that appeared infectious, as well as respect towards and appreciation of DEval's staff and their work.

There are many different levels of working together; networking, coordinating, co-operating, collaborating. As you move through these styles, the need for shared values, shared goals, high levels of trust, high levels of mutual respect, frequent and clear communication, long time scales and flexible financial arrangements increases. These are not easy conditions to achieve. One or two successful initiatives are not going to create these conditions.

Finally, the ECD project created an exemplar in Costa Rica that can serve as a blueprint for other countries. Some informants (both within and outside LAC) stated that DEval is now in a strong position to continue its work in LAC (especially by innovating and deepening niche knowledge, or expanding the cultural and language focus), support countries that have very limited or no national evaluation systems, enable inclusive participation in evaluation, as well as gender and environment sensitive evaluations and ensure the existing initiatives DEval supports can be sustained over time. This may be through continued funding (whether through DEval funds or BMZ project funding), technical support, supporting Mideplan as a key knowledge transfer partner and more.

4.2 Transferability lens

The Transferability Lens focuses on which activities and outcomes of those activities provide valuable guides to DEval's future ECD work outside of Latin America. It also looks at how DEval's system approach to ECD can be applied to other contexts. Below, we provide an overview of our findings relating to the transferability lens. We then examine specific factors that may help or hinder transferability, before presenting some guiding steps for transferability (see Box 1).

Broadly, and in line with our conceptual understanding of ECD presented in section 2.3, ECD components and practices that can be transferred can be divided as follows:

- Evaluation knowledge and skill supply;
- Evaluation knowledge and skill demand;
- A space for supply and demand to develop, be useful and be sustained;
- The connections, that is the interactions, links and articulation between stakeholders.

So how well did the project perform against these transferability features?

The initiatives were locally generated, culturally appropriate and in their own terms succeeded very well against most of the relevant evaluation criteria. What helped was the clarity, adaptability and consistency of the DEval team and its catalytic role.

DEval's most important and most effective role was helping to **create the space** for others to develop the demand for and the supply of necessary evaluation knowledge and skills. It did not impose particular aspects of evaluation methods or methodologies and trusted those sufficiently motivated to be involved to find, adapt and explore knowledge and skills appropriate to the various contexts. This also allowed stakeholders to feel ownership of the ECD initiatives. Creating the space is an active process of boundary setting. Too much space, and effort is dissipated, too little space and there is no room for development, adoption or innovation. Overall, the view is that DEval got the balance right, often based on their deep understanding of the LAC political, cultural and societal context.

DEval got its **entry points** right. Following BMZ's and GIZ's knowledge and experience of the cooperation and ECD landscape in CR, the project chose to start with building relationships and evaluation capacity/capability within a country that not only had the necessary conditions for successful ECD, but also enjoyed a strong reputation within the region for its political stability, policy leadership and innovation. This gave the DEval ECD project a degree of respect and legitimacy outside CR, which they could subsequently build upon. Thus, both parties gained from the association with each other and this could be used to leverage ECD. Box 1 below further analyses DEval's entry points and steps for transferability.

Conversely, while the systemic approach was successful in a range of initiatives, it made the overall ECD project **vulnerable to circumstances** that were beyond its ability to influence. Thus, DEval's role appeared to be less effective, or less sustained, when local stakeholders were unmotivated, unavailable, or where there was insufficient organisational and political support. Donors often seek to buy support, and the DEval team not only did not have the resources to do so, but it also did not have the inclination.

An important decision in the systemic ECD approach is where to place the **boundary between control and autonomy**. Compared with many development projects, the

boundary between control and autonomy was strongly decentralised. This had implications for the project's mandate to focus on German development policy priorities. For instance, some interviewees commented that the ECD project did not focus much on equity and gender, which are now a German cooperation development priority. Where to place the boundaries between autonomy and control will always be a difficult balancing act between funder priorities and 'local' priorities.

Understanding language and culture were important factors in the effectiveness and sustainability of the project. The countries of South and Central America are culturally diverse, but with the exception of Brazil, The Guianas and The Caribbean, all share a common language. There is also a history in most countries of political engagement and civil participation. The DEval ECD team all speak Spanish, understand the cultural and political dynamics and have a strong affinity with the region. These factors gave the project the ability to firstly, engage varied stakeholders within one country (public sector, academia, civil society incl. NGO, youth, international networks); and secondly, scale the project geographically across country boundaries.

Time mattered a lot. In its various forms, the project has stretched for over a decade. Strong relationships have been built over time, specific people have been identified as key partners and supported in their practice. People working in development cooperation are understandably suspicious of the 'aeroplane flyover' approach of many donors. Even the two to three-year funding tradition of development is short in comparison with the career timelines of people who live and work with evaluation in donor recipient countries. The DEval ECD project has demonstrated a ***long-term commitment*** to the region. This appears to be a major part of its success. Moreover, many opportunities arise from such a long-term investment, such as strengthened and committed people ready to innovate, deepen their knowledge and practice in evaluation niches, or share their lessons abroad.

So, in principle the particular approach that DEval took to ECD shows features that were contextually sensitive and responsive. The question then is whether these features can be transferred in practice.

There are four important dynamics at play when transferring initiatives – all within a particular context[16]:

- What is transferred and why? The idea (e.g. ECD); the practice (I.e. specific methods and methodologies); or the model (the ECD project)?
- How much is transferred?
- How the transfer takes place (e.g. when, who is involved, how, for how long and on what terms)?
- How adaptable the transfer is to context?

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[16] See Price-Kelly, van Haeren & McLean (2020) The Scaling Playbook. International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada. http://www.idrc.ca/scalingscience

Based on our knowledge of ECD and the DEval project, we conclude that the issues below *would help transferability* in practice.

- The *systemic approach* developed by the ECD team has served it well both as a way of describing why it does what it does, but also as a strategic framework for future action that is highly transferable and relevant since it guides both theory and practice.
- BMZ and some of the future partner countries share *common ground* and common objectives.
- The *degree of control* DEval wants or needs to exercise over ECD initiatives (leading to the question about the formats of the transfer or cooperation).
- A robust *identification of stakeholders* and the motivations of those needed to be involved to develop or adapt aspects of the ECD project and its initiatives.
- Identifying *organisations and initiatives* already operating in the region and liaising with them to maximise impacts and synergies and minimise replication of work.
- A *long-term commitment* to a particular region and the available resources. Much of the DEval ECD project success can be attributed to its long-term presence in LAC. Some have questioned not only whether the ECD project as a whole has evolved into something uniquely relevant to LAC and difficult to adapt to other regions, but also whether it is a valuable and efficient use of DEval's time and resources. On the one hand, there is still much to do in LAC. On the other, other regions could also benefit from this systemic ECD approach.
- The relevance of the *ECD experience to non-ECD activities*. Actively demonstrating respect for stakeholders, the idea of different levels of collaboration (including 'partnership') and addressing the question of 'who benefits' is something that DEval (and development cooperation more broadly) could make use of in adopting and adapting its evaluation and research activities. We discuss this more in the following institutional lens section.

Factors that are likely to *reduce the transferability* of the LAC experience to Africa and other regions include:

- The lack of a common regional language in many parts of the world.
- The current low knowledge of DEval staff of other languages and cultures relevant for transferring experiences to Africa.
- Cultural and political contexts that do not support the idea and practice of evaluation.
- Highly participatory approach may not suit more hierarchical cultures.
- The impacts of colonisation and growing resistance to evaluation approaches controlled by colonising countries (e.g. the Made in Africa movement).
- A history of poor experiences and relationships with other donor agencies. The strategy of having a local partner like Mideplan may not be possible. Or it may be

that DEval will find it easier to collaborate with other allies to gain support from relevant government and non-government agencies.

Drawing on our interviewees' experience and suggestions, we extracted some key components and stepping stones that can inform the transferability of the ECD project, as presented in Box 1 below:

Box 1. Guiding elements for transferability

- **Mapping**
  - Conduct a robust stakeholder mapping. Identify well the people, their motivations and resources. Especially, identify and engage the public institution responsible for evaluation and ECD (the national, or subnational authorities, those with ECD-related mandates). Engage motivated and active partners, especially the academia, third sector and YEEs.
  - Map the institutions and organizations, but also the individuals (individual level). If possible, focus on key functions (because of staff rotation both in public institutions and in voluntary organizations).
- **Negotiate**
  - Negotiate and find common objectives with the key local partner (common objectives between German cooperation, donor, and national authorities).
  - Manage expectations.
  - Negotiate efforts, resources, timings, etc.
  - Officialize the cooperation (sign agreement).
- **Space for dialogue**
  - Create a 'safe' space to bring stakeholders together.
  - Facilitate discussion and exchange.
- **Build local capacity and capability**
  - Identify existing resources and needs for capacity and capability building.
  - If capacities or capabilities are not available or insufficient, support their building and development.
  - If capacities or capabilities are locally available strengthen them, conduct training of trainers, etc.
  - Share and exchange knowledge, lessons and experiences.
- **Allies**
  - Find allies to support in, e.g. funding, networking, capacity building. Allies can be international cooperation, but also international or national networks, the academia, civil society, etc.
  - Allies and relationships are key for sustainability.
- **Build sustainability**
  - Institutionalize the roles and functions of the national authority (also essential to guarantee funds and resources).
  - Manage knowledge and develop systems for knowledge management and transfer.
  - Focus on the professionalization of evaluation (as a career). Build offer and demand.
  - Generate conditions for innovation, and replication, on evaluation and ECD.

4.3 Institutional lens

DEval's institutional functions are:

- Implementation of independent, impartial, scientifically sound evaluations and studies, primarily geared to answering strategic political questions in development cooperation for which BMZ is responsible.
- Development and dissemination of methods and standards in the field of evaluation.
- Promote evaluation capacities and capabilities in partner countries of German development cooperation, thereby contributing to good, evidence-based governance.

A further goal of DEval is the cross-cutting knowledge dissemination and transfer of the three above actions to ensure the usefulness of DEval's work. This last goal raises issues regarding the extent to which the ECD experience, approaches and expertise are feasible and relevant to DEval's evaluation and research roles.

Consequently, our evaluation questions around the institutional lens were:
- What helped and hindered incorporation of ECD into DEval's other strands of work?
- Which activities, products, processes, organisational structures and outcomes provided significant, valuable and useful guides to mainstreaming ECD within DEval?
- How has DEval's work on ECD been organised?

It was not our task to evaluate the whole DEval system, such as its position within the German development cooperation system, its legislative responsibilities and overall work program. However, these factors loomed large over the feasibility of incorporating ECD into DEval's core activities and therefore form part of our comments.

We have divided the discussion of the potential for using the ideas and practice of ECD within DEval's other strands of work into three topics: principles, values, legitimacy; evaluation practices; and resources.

Values, identity and legitimacy

Several important factors relate to corporate identity, evaluation ethos and perceived benefits and burdens of ECD within evaluations. It is clear from our evaluation that within DEval and its stakeholders the three core pillars of its work (that is evaluations, evaluation methodologies and ECD) draw on different epistemological and ontological traditions. They gain legitimacy from different sources and for different reasons, have different beneficiaries, use resources (knowledge, people, time, money, skills, infrastructure) in different ways and their legitimacy is determined by different internal and external rules, values and standards.

In term of **corporate identity**, DEval sees itself as an independent, impact-oriented and research-based institution for independent, research-based and strategically useful evaluations in development cooperation. The ECD project promotes and operates in ways

that challenge the ideas of independence and impartiality within DEval. Thus, ECD work is generally not perceived within DEval as impartial or independent.

The tensions between **DEval's evaluations and its ECD work** can also be observed. On the one hand, DEval evaluations are primarily geared towards addressing strategic questions in development cooperation, which are under BMZ's responsibility. In this context, DEval's evaluations are donor-led, with recommendations geared towards BMZ and the German Parliament, with very little (if any) involvement from countries in which evaluation takes place. On the other hand, the ECD work aims to strengthen evaluation capacities in partner countries of German Development Cooperation. However, currently, few synergies have been made between these two dynamics. despite commitment to partner orientation within BMZ and DEval.

There were mixed views on the **desirability** of introducing ECD components. The ECD team has worked with colleagues to inform and to try to incorporate ECD elements in evaluations. Some viewed the idea as adding further burdens to already demanding processes and timescales, with very little (if any) benefits for the evaluation process. Others were more supportive of the idea, even if in some cases the understanding of ECD was limited.

Furthermore, interviewees often doubted the **feasibility** of ECD being successfully integrated into DEval's wider practices without substantial changes to what is considered legitimate evaluation within DEval. Support for ECD mostly involved *adapting* ECD principles and practice into evaluations, rather than full scale *adoption* of the DEval ECD approach. Adoption would require a major reassessment of DEval's purpose, process and structure; in contrast adaption allows a degree of "cherry picking" those aspects of ECD that can be more easily integrated.

Evaluation Practice

DEval evaluation take two years to complete, although the in-country fieldwork is often as short as 2-4 weeks. A major lesson from the ECD project is that developing the necessary networks for successful ECD takes months if not years. The DEval evaluation teams don't have the time to develop strong networks.

A further constraint is that many of DEval's evaluations are multi-country, topic led, rather than focused on a single location. Thus, for these kinds of evaluations, adopting ECD requires the construction and maintenance of multiple networks and relationships. There is a growing interest in country-portfolio and country-program evaluations, however, that do provide ECD opportunities. At present, this appears to be ad-hoc rather than part of an explicit process.

DEval evaluation are often conducted by young, contract-based, inexperienced evaluators led by experienced senior evaluators who have worked at DEval for many years. Thus, senior evaluators may lack the time and resources or management support to incorporate

ECD components in the evaluations. While younger evaluators, who often conduct the field work often lack the skills, experience and expertise to implement ECD elements.

Finally, there is significant pressure from BMZ and policymakers to reduce the timescale of DEval's evaluations, so that evaluation findings remain politically and policy-relevant and useful. This pressure could further hinder the application of ECD ideas in individual evaluations. However, there seems to be some willingness within BMZ to consider prolonging relevant evaluations' timescales to include ECD components.

Within the current practice of DEval evaluations it is thus a struggle to involve partners, especially from the Global South. As mentioned above, evaluations' processes and recommendations address the needs of BMZ and implementing agencies and are not geared towards involving or informing local stakeholders. Evaluations are extractive - the client is primarily German agencies and not local stakeholders.

At the moment DEval addresses these particular issues by (very selective) cherry-picking ECD ideas and adapting them to DEval evaluations. It does so in an ad-hoc way rather than as part of an overall management strategy. There are some efforts to include lessons learned from the ECD project through the Communities of Practice and the Working Group on partner orientation.

Funding & management factors

ECD is predominantly funded through BMZ project funds rather than DEval base funding. This means that DEval's ECD team, with the exception for one team member who now acts as a liaison between DEval and the ECD team, can only dedicate about 10% of their work to work outside the ECD projects. This hinders integration of ECD within the institution.

Also, German financial regulations and policies tend to force DEval into a relatively short-term project funding operational model, using a lot of temporary staff. This creates barriers for project staff to work on other DEval pillars. Staff on long-term contracts can work across different initiatives and projects. This is not the case for staff on short-term contracts, who can only work on pre-determined initiatives after the first two years of the contract. In addition, DEval's international ECD team are contracted through leasing, due to regulatory and administrative barriers. This also forms a hindrance to mainstreaming ECD knowledge into DEval. Also, the management of the ECD project is devolved. It is not integrated into the day-to-day management of DEval. While that autonomy gives project the flexibility it needs to respond to local conditions, it operates largely independently of other parts of DEval. There is no management structure or process for EDC to integrate with other parts of DEval. Inevitably collaborations between ECD and the rest of DEval tend to be ad hoc rather than formally part of the DEval management process.

So what do these considerations mean for the integration of ECD into DEval's other pillars?

It became evident during our evaluation that rather than an encompassing **adoption** of ECD into DEval's work, it would be easier to **adapt** lessons learned from the ECD project to DEval's evaluations and also its evaluation standards and methodologies. Some of these are presented below.

- Partner orientation is becoming increasingly important for DEval and BMZ. There is significant experience that the ECD team can share with colleagues and help in incorporating this into DEval's work.
- Country-level evaluation: according to informants, these are easier for incorporating ECD elements in them, than multi-country evaluations.
- Looking forward, it was suggested that DEval could revisit its long-term vision and set how it could move towards country-led evaluations.
- In terms of methodologies and standards – it was suggested that a tool for incorporating ECD into evaluations could be developed. This could help overcome some of the conceptual and procedural barriers for including ECD components in individual evaluations.
- A step-by-step approach to convince colleagues of the benefits and compatibility of ECD with DEval's institutional objectives may help incorporating ECD in DEval's work.

The distinction between control and autonomy is important. There are those who have the power to control the availability of resources, and those who have the autonomy to manage the resources once they are made available. We have observed a certain lack of clear commitment on the level of resources, structures, and processes dedicated to ECD work. Importantly, who controls the resources used in evaluations, and who manages those resources are also different. While the evaluation locus of control lies substantially within DEval, the management of ECD and its resources lies within the ECD project. This creates not only a practical barrier to integration of ECD within the other areas of DEval's work, but also a cognitive separation between the ECD team and the remainder of DEval's staff.

4.4 International collaboration lens

DEval collaborates with various international agencies. From our interviews with representatives from some of those agencies it is clear that DEval's ECD work in LAC is widely respected and supported. We were able to identify some common trends.

Collaboration within German Development Cooperation: GIZ has significant resources, infrastructure, personnel and in-country knowledge that can help the uptake of ECD initiatives (as mentioned under the project lens). There is some ad hoc but no formal collaboration between the agencies. There are several potential barriers to deeper collaboration with GIZ. First, ECD was transferred to DEval from GIZ in 2014 and there may still be some tension between the two organisations. Second, there is a concern in some quarters that collaborating with GIZ may affect DEval's impartiality when GIZ projects are evaluated by DEval. Finally, any collaboration needs to avoid double funding, which is not

allowed under German financial regulations. This limits even minor tasks such as providing or funding training on ECD. Several interviewees suggested that it would be best to explore collaboration with GIZ (and to a lesser extent with KfW) on a country-level, rather than through the central agency.

Looking at *regional and international knowledge transfer*, Mideplan has acted as a regional knowledge transfer partner and has supported various governments in the region, including Ecuador, Colombia and others. Mideplan are interested in broadening this role both regionally and internationally and would be open to share knowledge with Africa. Some informants claimed that sharing knowledge among public authorities with similar legislative powers can strengthen ownership, capacity and capability. Fostering this type of knowledge transfer needs funding, exposure in relevant platforms and some bureaucratic barriers removed.

A relatively recent *collaboration between DEval and the Global Evaluation Initiative* was established in 2022. GEI's primary role is to reduce fragmentation of ECD initiatives globally. BMZ supports GEI financially including a BMZ/ ECD project-funded staff member working for GEI. While DEval and GEI share the same goal, the means of achieving it differ substantially. DEval's ECD approach is primarily bottom-up and emergent, whereas GEI's approach is primarily top-down and more formally structured. GEI promotes a common approach internationally to developing and accessing evaluation capacities and capabilities, through its MESA Tool[17], whereas the equivalent framework developed by DEval (INCE) has more emphasis on bespoke approaches.

However, GEI's focus on gaining support from influential evaluation actors in relevant national ministries provides opportunities for DEval to establish future ECD initiatives. So far, the collaboration with GEI allowed DEval to strengthen existing ties with other partners. For example, DEval are starting to work with CLEAR AA to establish collaborations in Anglophone Africa. DEval are also starting to work with IPDET on both the delivery and participation in evaluation courses, with DEval staff delivering IPDET courses and BMZ funding scholarships through GEI. GEI and DEval also collaborate on a global strategy for YEEs.

Through its LAC initiatives DEval established *strong collaborations with a range of international agencies*. For example, through the INCE, DEval has established close working relations with the WFP, as well as other regional and international partners, such as the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), UN Women and a host of other international organisations. The INCE provides numerous opportunities for collaboration with regional and international partners and has established a strong multi-actor, regional community of practice in LAC.

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[17] GEI, 2022, MESA: Diagnostic tool for a monitoring and evaluation system analysis, https://mcusercontent.com/1f2a1ea0afb3b65dabccade00/files/876f222f-d95b-6cb7-40cd-bfd3c8decdee/GEI_MESA_GuidanceNote.pdf

DEval established **strong networks** that support SDG evaluations. DEval participates in two working groups related to SDG evaluations. These give DEval access to wider international networks and opportunities to influence international evaluation discourse. The first is the international working group on SDG evaluations that connects national priorities to SDGs[18]. This group includes IIED, UNICEF, EvalSDGs, the Finnish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as other partners. DEval contributed to the first handbook, including the Costa Rica SDG evaluation case study, with a second edition in the pipeline. They are also contributing to an SDG evaluation course, based on the handbook. In the second working group, DEval is collaborating with CLEAR AA (and previously CLEAR LAC) on a mapping of Voluntary National Review (VNR) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG evaluation[19]. These partnerships allow DEval to position itself as a thought leader and team player in the field of both SDG and Footprint evaluations, within the context of the 2030 Agenda.

5   Summary and conclusions

The task of this assignment was to evaluate the performance and lessons learned from DEval's nearly decade long ECD project, assisting development of evaluation capacity and capability in LAC. In the evaluation of the project, our assessment of worth and importance of the performance and lessons learned are based on the six evaluation criteria mentioned under Section 2.5 and throughout the report.

Briefly, DEval's approach aimed to build or strengthen various evaluation systems within LAC. It achieved this by recognising the diversity of actors involved in each evaluation system and their interconnections. It established evaluation capacity and the capability to use and support evaluation at the individual, institutional and national levels. Fostering an enabling environment was also key to this approach.

The most noteworthy and important aspects of the project's performance and lessons are based on the four evaluation lenses through which we explored the ECD work.

The Project Lens

The project **philosophy and style** enabled it to be seen as appropriate, adaptable and useful within its LAC context. Unlike many ECD approaches, it did not seek to impose a particular model of evaluation. Rather, DEval acted as a catalyst, facilitating local actors and stakeholders in developing both the capacity and capability to undertake evaluations and

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[18] IIED, 2020, Evaluation to connect national priorities with the SDGs: A guide for evaluation commissioners and managers, IIED, London, https://www.iied.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/migrate/17739IIED.pdf

[19] DEval, CLEAR-AA and CLEAR-LAC (2022) VNRs and SDG evaluations in Anglophone Africa and Latin America: a mapping of common challenges and emerging good practices, German Institute for Development Evaluation, Bonn, https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/1d96b638-044e-4f05-a8f1-b14250a730b2/content ; Dlakavu, A. and Hoffmann, D. 2023. Limited use of evaluative evidence in public policy, planning and Voluntary National Review (VNR) development. Recommendations for governments, evaluation communities and ECD stakeholders, https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/server/api/core/bitstreams/4ad5a821-3ab5-4303-9f22-ee8319f0483a/content

develop evaluation policies and strategies that suited local conditions, needs and cultures. This systemic approach to ECD developed and evolved through practice, reflection and adaptation to the local context in CR and LAC.

Overall strategy: LAC has a diverse evaluation history, infrastructure and capability. In some countries evaluation culture is relatively strong and locally determined, in others it is weak and has depended on external donor approaches and expertise. Rather than seeking to work at a regional level, the project initially focused on strengthening existing evaluation culture in Costa Rica. Politically, Costa Rica is stable and has a solid reputation in LAC, which formed a strong base for the ECD project to spread outwards from. The downside of that strategy meant that some of the attempts to replicate the successes in Costa Rica have met with hindrances and delays. More successful have been the regional initiatives that spread outwards from the Costa Rican experience and not relied on specific country contexts. Scale is also important. Building ECD at the national level is easier in smaller countries. However, in larger countries, such as Mexico, working at sub-national scale provided more leverage and better grounds to work on.

The individual **ECD team** members, and the ECD team as a whole, were crucial to the success of the project. German team members all spoke Spanish, were familiar with the local culture and political context. These factors were important in ensuring an understanding of local needs and responding to those with flexibility, team-spirit, open communication and collaborative work. The work ethos of the ECD team has lessons that can be transferred to DEval's work specifically and to other German Development Cooperation projects and agencies more broadly.

Transferability lens

The German development agenda is focused on multi-lateral collaborations and bilateral arrangements within specific countries. In accordance with BMZ's strategic orientation, DEval is increasingly expanding the focus of its ECD work to sub-Saharan Africa.

The style of DEval's ECD work is about adapting to context, rather than developing a one-size fits all approach. Thus, many of the fundamental ECD principles are likely to be transferable and adaptable to other contexts. These include stakeholder mapping, willingness to negotiate, opening and maintaining space for dialogue, assistance with developing capacity and capability locally, building alliances, and a strong focus on sustainability and long-term involvement. Consequently, DEval is well placed to transfer some of its methods, methodologies and elements of the systemic ECD approach to those different contexts.

There are, however, some limitations. LAC has a unique combination of Hispanic and indigenous cultures. There is a long history of participatory action and a commitment to social justice. Most people speak Spanish or Portuguese. There is a long history of participatory action and a commitment to social justice. In Costa Rica, the strong democratic and policy innovation context allowed DEval to forge a strong partnerships with Mideplan,

as well as other stakeholders. These partnerships and alliances enabled the implementation of the ECD project both in Costa Rica and regionally. DEval's ECD approach developed within and responded to these contextual factors. These aspects may be absent in other parts of the world. This will limit the degree to which the specifics of the LAC experience can be transferred.

Institutional lens

ECD is one of the key pillars of DEval and the institution is committed to integrating ECD with its other pillars of work. However, ECD mainstreaming has to date been ad-hoc and with limited impact.

There are several reasons for this. Three factors are particularly influential. The dominant paradigm within DEval places prime value on 'independence' and 'impartiality'. Within that dominant world view, ECD is perceived as being neither. Another important factor is the nature of DEval's evaluations. Currently BMZ do not require the majority of DEval's evaluations to include partner countries in evaluation design and implementation, or indeed share results. Despite growing commitment to partner-orientation and country-level evaluations within BMZ and DEval, there is still a gap between the systemic, partner-oriented ECD approach and the nature of DEval's evaluations. At an administrative level, there are also different employment practice that result in much of the evaluation work being done by relatively inexperienced evaluators on short-term contracts. ECD work needs more experience and longer employment timescales. In addition, ECD staff are predominantly employed through 2-year project cycles and can only allocate a fraction of their work time to other pillars of DEval's work.

In practice, it has therefore been a matter of ad hoc *adapting* ECD ideas into DEval's other work strands, cherry picking things that fit, rather than *adopting* the partner-centred ECD approach and committing to ways of developing innovative and genuinely new ways of working.

These are important issues since the development evaluation scene is changing. There is increasing criticism of donor-led 'extractive', fly-over evaluation approaches that are focused on the donor as the primary beneficiary of evaluations, rather than the country or countries within which the evaluations take place. The German development cooperation system is responding to these criticisms, with growing acknowledgement of the need to 'decolonise evaluations' and increase partner orientation. This trend and the German response essentially acknowledge the world view that evaluation concepts and practice are never independent or impartial; that they always reflect somebody's priorities, perspectives and ideologies. Within this world view, ECD could be seen as helping to create a space for multiple priorities, perspectives and ideologies to communicate, coordinate and cooperate. Depending on how the notion of 'partnership' evolves between German and recipient countries, DEval may have to adopt ECD as an underpinning principle rather than continue its current adaptation strategy.

International collaboration lens

The ECD project and the team are well respected within the international ECD sector. Over the years the ECD team has collaborated and cooperated with a variety of ECD organisations, either on specific ECD initiatives (e.g. WFP, IIED and more), or with ECD-related training (IPDET, CLEAR Centres, UNFPA and more). Through its various ECD initiatives, DEval has established closely knit collaboration networks, with scope for influencing and shaping the international evaluation community, as well as related fields, such as SDGs and Agenda 2030 implementation.

The German government is a major donor to the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI). Recently established by the World Bank's Evaluation Division, the GEI is tasked with bringing some order and consistency to the fragmented global ECD sector. DEval is establishing a working relationship with GEI, with one DEval staff on secondment with GEI. While this relationship is still developing, DEval and GEI – methodologically – are working from different positions. GEI promotes a common approach internationally to developing and accessing evaluation capacities and capabilities, whereas DEval champions its systemic ECD approach. Both acknowledge that there is room for both approaches, but it is too early to assess how well this works. Working with the CLEAR centres, as the implementing bodies of the GEI, is one direction that DEval is currently exploring in transferring its approach to Anglophone Africa.

There is also interest in willingness to transfer ECD knowledge from Costa Rica to other regions, in strong partnership with Mideplan. This would require some facilitation from DEval or other partners.

In terms of cooperation with other German Development Cooperation agencies and particularly GIZ. GIZ often has strong local expertise and infrastructure that can support the implementation of ECD initiatives, there has been relatively little cooperation between the two organisations. Some of the reasons for this are historical while others are connected with German financial regulations that do not allow 'double funding' of initiatives. There are also concerns within DEval that close cooperation would undermine its current concepts of 'impartiality' and 'independence'. Still, several interviewees expressed support for more coordination and cooperation with GIZ, probably on a country-by-country level.

Overall, DEval and the ECD team have established a range of international cooperation partnerships, alliances and networks. Some of these allow DEval to gain international influence with minimal resources required, while others seem to be more resource intensive. DEval enjoys a diverse range of ongoing and emerging collaborations that support its international presence on ECD.

6 Annexes

Annex 1: Workplan

Work schedule and planning for deliverables		Project timeline																													
Deliverables/ Tasks	working days	November				December					January				February				March					April				May				June		
		02.11-6.11	7.11-13.11	14.11-20.11	21.11-27.11	28.11-4.12	5.12-11.12	12.12-18.12	19.12-25.12	26.12-1.01	2.01-8.01	9.01-15.01	16.01-22.01	23.01-29.01	30.01-5.02	6.02-12.02	13.02-19.02	20.02-26.02	27.02-5.03	6.03-12.03	13.03-19.03	20.03-26.03	27.03-2.04	3.04-9.04	10.04-16.04	17.04-23.04	23.04-28.04	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
A. Design phase — 25																																	
1 Joint preparation and participation in a virtual kick-off meeting	2				28.11.																												
2 Preparation and presentation of a detailed draft Inception Report	20										15 to 20.01																						
3 Preparation and presentation of the final Inception Report	3														6 to 10.02																		
B. Data collection and analysis phase — 37																																	
4 Document Analysis	7																																
5 Data Collection	20																																
6 Data Analysis	10																																
C. Evaluation support — 21,5																																	
7 Preparation of draft Evaluation Report	15																							06.04									
8 Presentation of Evaluation findings	1,5																									18.04							
9 Revision and preparation of final Evaluation Report	5																								draft 26.04		final 15.05						
D. Project management & support — 10																																	
10. Organize and conduct a results sense-making workshop with DEval ECD team	3																								18.04								
Organize and conduct a high-level results sense-making workshop with DEval	3																									24.04							
Abstract for a scientific publication as a result of the evaluation	1,5																																
Develop a proposal to evaluate the YEE initiative	2,5																																
Backstopping & continuous Heat administrative, technical and financial	-																																
Total Staff-days	93,5																																

** Explenations/ Abbreviations

- Activity in progress
- Milestone / deliverable

Annex 2: DEval's ECD stakeholder map
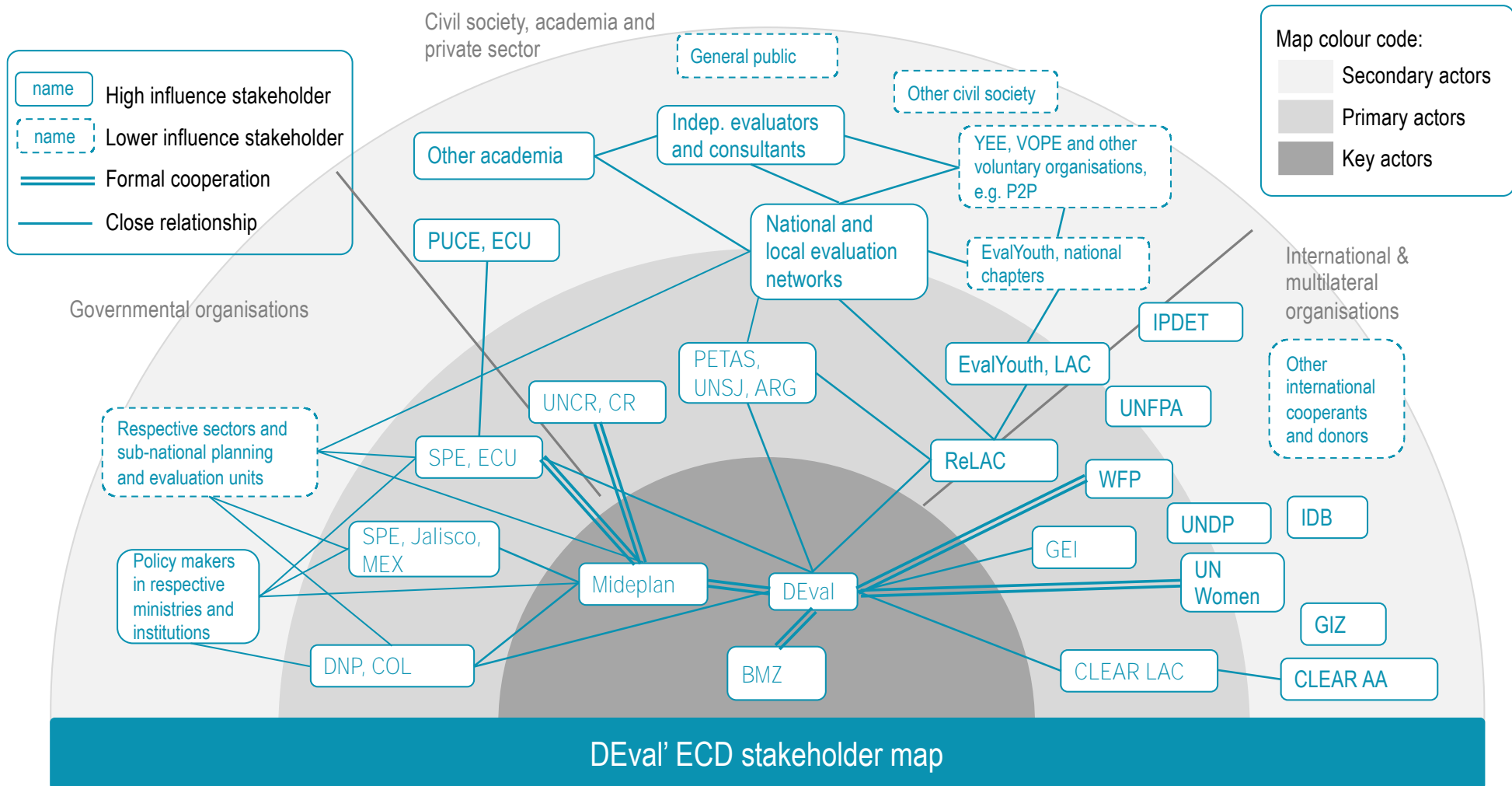
DEval' ECD stakeholder map

Annex 3: List of informants

NAME	ORGANIZATION
BERTHOLD HOFFMAN	BMZ
SARAH KLIER	DEval
JUAN CARLOS SANZ	DEval
HELENA STADTMUELLER	DEval
NATALY SALAS	DEval
SVEN HARTEN	DEval
JÖRG FAUST	DEval
MIRIAM AMINE	DEval
KIM LÜCKING	DEval
MARTIN BURDER	DEval
MORRIS VIERTEL	DEval
CAROLINA ZÚÑIGA	Mideplan
EDDY GARCÍA	Mideplan
CELESTE GHIANO	ReLAC
MICHALA ASSANKEPON	WFP
ESTEBAN TAPELLA	PETAS, Universidad Nacional de San Juan
PABLO RODRIGUEZ	PETAS, Universidad Nacional de San Juan
MARINA APGAR	IDS
FLORITA AZOFEIFA	Mideplan
LEONARDO CASTELLÓN	UCR
DONALD ZHANGALLIMBAY	Secretaría de Planificación, EC
VIVIANA LASCANO	VOPE
DIRK HOFFMANN	DEval
MAGDALENA ORTH	DEval
ADA OCAMPO	IDEAS
ANDREA MENESES	DEval
KAROL CRUZ UGALDE	Mideplan
MONICA BALLESCÁ	EvalJalisco
EMANUEL BLANCA	DEval
CLAUDIA OLAVARRÍA	EvalYouth
GABRIELA RENTERÍA FLORES	EvalYouth
GERARDO SÁNCHEZ-ROMERO	EvalYouth
DALILA MENDOZA	P2P
NANCY MORALES	P2P
SCOTT CHAPLOWE	Independent ECD expert
STEFFI KRAPP	IPDET
CANDICE MORKEL	CLEAR AA
GABRIELA PÉREZ YARAHUAN	CLEAR LAC
HEATHER BRYANT	GEI
JOSEFSZ VAESSEN	GEI
DUGAN FRASER	GEI

Annex 4: Interview questions

- Introductions - informant, interviewer, team, HEAT (briefly)
- Purpose of the interview: DEval has commissioned an evaluation of their ECD work, from 2012 to present. Following the completion of the inception phase, we are particularly interested in understanding how lessons from DEval's ECD work can be integrated with other strands of DEval's work, future projects in LAC and other regions and in international cooperation networks.
- Consent and data protection: all information collected will be anonymised and generalised as much as possible, with the purpose of informing the evaluation. We will take notes (no videos or recordings). We will keep our notes and findings in accordance with DEval and HEAT data protection guidelines and policies.

In conducting the interviews, we chose from the following repository of questions and adapted them to the individual interviews.

<u>General questions: project lens, transferability and cooperation lenses</u>

1. What is your overall experience of DEval's work on ECD?

2. Which of DEval's ECD initiatives were you primarily involved in?

3. What was your main involvement/ role within these initiative(s)?

4. Which initiatives, processes, networks, structures, products and other aspects do you consider were more/less successful?

5. What did and didn't work well within the ECD initiative(s) you were involved in?

6. What helped and hindered this? How well did you/project stakeholders manage these drivers?

7. Describe the nature of the collaboration; what worked well and what didn't work well?

8. What mechanisms are there to support communication, cooperation, coordination and collaboration on ECD (across the DEval ECD initiatives discussed and if relevant your organisations, partnerships and broader networks)?

9. What ought to be kept, chucked, created or changed in future ECD activities (country/region/other regions/globally – adapt to interview)? Why is this the case?

10. Which activities, processes, structures, networks and outcomes do you think would provide significant, valuable and useful guides to future actions both regionally and outside of LAC and for agencies with which DEval cooperates? In what way are they likely to be significant, valuable and useful?

11. Who are the existing/ potential partners (public agencies, VOPEs, research centres etc) that could serve as reliable partners for future ECD initiatives/projects?

12. How well does DEval enable partners to take ownership and conduct their own ECD activities? Do they involve all the relevant partners?

13. Which drivers (e.g. funding, political agendas, institutional structures and processes etc.) dictate ECD priorities within your organisation?

14. Is there some other important topic we have not mentioned yet and you would like to add?

15. If I lost my notes, what would be the one thing you'd like me to remember from our conversation?

Institutional lens (used for DEval interviews)

1. What is driving/ hindering the demand for ECD within the organisation?

2. How might organisational policies, procedures and administrative processes affect DEval's ECD practice and mainstreaming?

3. What support is available for ECD within the organisation?

4. What is the specific commitment for, or resistance to ECD within DEval?

5. What incentives/disincentives are there for ECD within DEval?

6. What are the key opportunities and barriers to mainstreaming ECD within the organisation?

7. How does the organisational structure of the ECD project (i.e. project funding vs. staff funding) affect its integration with DEval's work?

8. What is the current level of human, financial, physical and technology resources for ECD at DEval? What are the funding prospects for sustaining and improving ECD?

9. What ECD-dedicated training, resources and capacity building activities are available for ECD at DEval? What would be needed?

Annex 5: Survey questions

Survey on EvalParticipativa users' perception	Encuesta sobre la utilidad de EvalParticipativa
Thank you for taking the time to fill in this short survey. It should take 5-10 minutes to complete this. Responses will be anonymised and will inform an independent evaluation of the EvalParticipativa platform usefulness. The survey will also provide insights for planning future activities and platform development. Thank you for your honest and constructive feedback. We will receive answers until Sunday 19th March 2023.	Gracias por su tiempo para contestar esta breve encuesta, la cual debería poder completarse entre 5 a 10 minutos. Las respuestas serán de carácter anónimo y servirán de insumo a una evaluación independiente sobre la utilidad de la plataforma EvalParticipativa. La encuesta también proporcionará información para planificar futuras actividades así como el desarrollo de la plataforma. Gracias desde ya por sus comentarios honestos y constructivos que realmente apreciamos. Recibiremos respuestas a esta encuesta hasta el Domingo 19 de marzo del 2023.
1. As a member of EvalParticipativa, which of the following groups do you best identify with? *Tick all that apply.* ☐ Professional evaluator ☐ Public servant ☐ Member of academy or research centre ☐ Evaluation student ☐ Civil society organisation employee ☐ Private sector ☐ Other:	1. Como miembro de EvalParticipativa, ¿con cuál de los siguientes grupos se identifica mejor? *Tick all that apply.* ☐ Evaluador profesional ☐ Funcionario/ empleado del sector público ☐ Académico o miembro de centro de investigación ☐ Estudiante de evaluación ☐ Miembro de una organización de la sociedad civil ☐ Sector privado ☐ Otro:
2. How many years' evaluation experience do you have? *Mark only one oval.* ◯ No evaluation experience ◯ Less than 2 years ◯ 2-5 years ◯ 5-10 years ◯ 10-15 years ◯ Over 15 years	2. ¿Cuántos años de experiencia en evaluación tiene? *Mark only one oval.* ◯ Sin experiencia en evaluación ◯ Menos de 2 años ◯ 2-5 años ◯ 5-10 años ◯ 10-15 años ◯ Más de 15 años

HEAT

3. To what extent has the EvalParticipativa website been useful to your evaluation work?

Mark only one oval.

- ○ Not at all useful
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ Very useful

3. ¿Hasta qué punto el sitio web de EvalParticipativa le ha sido últi para su trabajo en evaluación?

Mark only one oval.

- ○ Nada útil
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5
- ○ Muy útil

4. For which aspects of your work have you used the EvalParticipativa website for?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Networking
- ☐ Learning from courses, guides and experiences
- ☐ Peer-to-peer communication and exchange
- ☐ Sharing own results and knowledge
- ☐ Accessing methodologies, tools and other materials, in order to apply them in evaluations
- ☐ Organising events, courses, evaluations, etc.
- ☐ Staying up-to-date with EvalParticipativa activities, information and news
- ☐ Other:

4. ¿Para qué aspectos de su trabajo ha usado el sitio web de EvalParticipativa?

Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Conexión en red
- ☐ Para aprender de cursos y conocer guías y experiencias sobre evaluación participativa
- ☐ Comunicación e intercambio entre pares
- ☐ Compartir resultados propios y conocimientos
- ☐ Acceder a metodologías, herramientas y otros materiales para utilizarlos en las evaluaciones
- ☐ Organización de eventos, cursos, evaluaciones, etc.
- ☐ Mantenerse actualizado con las actividades, información y noticias de EvalParticipativa
- ☐ Otro:

5. Which of the following EvalParticipativa features have been useful to your work?
Tick all that apply.

☐ EP social networks
☐ Blogs and articles
☐ Audio-visual materials
☐ Guides and manuals
☐ Participatory evaluation tools
☐ Courses and workshops
☐ Other:

5. ¿Cuáles de los siguientes elementos de EvalParticipativa han sido útiles para su trabajo?
Tick all that apply.

☐ Las redes sociales de EvalParticipativa
☐ os blogs y artículos
☐ Los materiales audiovisuales
☐ Las guías y manuales
☐ Herramientas de evaluación participativa
☐ Sus cursos y talleres
☐ Otro

6. How have you applied these characteristics in your work?
_____
_____
_____
_____

6. ¿Cómo ha aplicado estas características en su trabajo?
_____
_____
_____
_____

7. Has the manual Siembra y Cosecha been useful to your work?
Mark only one oval.

○ Yes, very useful
○ Yes, somewhat useful
○ Neithter useful, nor unuseful
○ Not very useful
○ Not useful at all
○ I have not accessed the manual

7. ¿El manual de Siembra y Cosecha ha sido útil para su trabajo?
Mark only one oval.

○ Sí, muy util
○ Sí, algo útil
○ Ni útil, ni inútil
○ No muy útil
○ No es útil en absoluto
○ No he accedido al manual

8. EvalParticipativa was developed for Latin America and the Caribbean. Which aspects of EvalParticipativa do you think would also work in other parts of the world?

_____
_____
_____
_____

8. EvalParticipativa fue desarrollada para América Latina y el Caribe. ¿Qué aspectos cree que también podrían funcionar en otras partes del mundo?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. How can EvalParticipativa become more successful and useful in the future?

_____
_____
_____
_____

9. ¿Cómo puede EvalParticipativa ser más exitosa y más útil en el futuro?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Annex 6: Agenda for workshop with ECD team and Mideplan

Workshop:
Evaluation of DEval's ECD work

Date: Tuesday 18th April 2023, 15:00 – 17:00 CEST

Participants:

- Sarah Klier
- Juan Carlos Sanz
- Helena Stadtmüller
- Nataly Salas
- Dirk Hoffman
- Nuria Domenech

- Eddy García
- Karol Cruz
- Carlos Murillo
- Carolina Zúñiga
- Emanuel Blanca

- Bob Williams
- Elah Matt
- Stefanie Korswagen

Objectives:

- Fill in the gaps between information pieces and develop a collective story on DEval's ECD approach.
- Triangulate information from interviews.
- Discuss key findings.

Agenda:

Time (CEST)	What	Who
15:00 – 15:10	1. Welcome	Sarah
15:10 –15:20	2. Agenda & progress to date	Elah

15:20 – 17:00	3. Telling the story of the ECD program
	   3.1 Discussion on key phrases
	   3.2 Discussion on ECD storylines
		Steffi & Elah

17:00 – 17:25	4. Final thoughts on key findings	All
17:25 – 17:30	5. Take away messages	Elah

Source:
https://reliefweb.int/report/world/climate-change-impacts-human-im-mobility-sub-saharan-africa-recent-trends-and-options

Annex 7: Agenda for workshop with BMZ and DEval

High-level workshop:
Evaluation of DEval's ECD work

Date: Monday 24th April 2023, 10:30 – 12:00 CEST

Participants:

DEval
- ☐ Jörg Faust
- ☐ Berthold Hofman
- ☐ Gottfried von Gemmingen
- ☐ Sarah Klier
- ☐ Sven Harten

HEAT Evaluation Team
- ☐ Bob Williams
- ☐ Elah Matt
- ☐ Stefanie Korswagen

Objectives:

- ☐ Discuss headline findings.
- ☐ Triangulate data & fill a few information gaps.
- ☐ Encourage dialogue on possible future steps.

Agenda:

Time (CEST)	What	Who
10:30-10:40	1. Welcome and round of introductions	Sven
10:40-10:45	2. Workshop purpose, evaluation process and approach	Elah
10:45-11:00	3. Key findings	Elah
11:00-11:45	4. Discussion	Bob/All
11:45-11:55	5. Final thoughts	All
11:55-12:00	6. Next steps	Elah