CODE OF ETHICS FOR EVALUATION IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

Published by
Asia Pacific Evaluation Association

For the Theme of
Professionalization of Evaluation
Under Asia Pacific Regional Evaluation Strategy

September 2023
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Foreword

The following Code of Ethics for Evaluation in the Asia Pacific Region developed by Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) is a significant milestone in professionalizing the field of evaluation in the region. This Code of Ethics for Evaluation was created using the existing literature developed by international organizations and Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) around the world. This Code of Ethics of Evaluation is not just a set of rules and principles; it is a testament to APEA’s commitment as evaluation professionals to uphold the highest standards of ethical conduct during evaluation studies.

Additionally, we would like to appreciate the hard work done by the Professionalization of Evaluation theme members part of the Asia Pacific Regional Evaluation Strategy in developing this Code of Ethics of Evaluation. Furthermore, we greatly appreciate the input provided by representatives of VOPEs and EvalYouth Chapters in development of this Code of Ethics of Evaluation during the Fourth Virtual Summit on Professionalization of Evaluation for VOPEs and EvalYouth Chapters in the Asia Pacific Region.

Let us embark on this journey with a deep sense of responsibility and a steadfast commitment to ethical excellence in evaluation.

Dr. Asela Kalugampitiya
President of APEA
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The Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) would like to thank the representatives of Voluntary Organization for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) and EvalYouth Chapters that provided feedback to the code of ethics document during the Fourth Virtual Summit on Professionalization of Evaluation for VOPEs and EvalYouth Chapters in Asia Pacific Region. Furthermore, APEA would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors of this Code of Ethics for Evaluation document—Erdenechimeg (Chimgee) Ulziisuren, Prof. Keiko Nishino, Randika De Mel, and Madhuka Liyanagamage. APEA is grateful for the guidance and support provided by Dr. Asela Kalugampitiya in drafting the Code of Ethics in Evaluation for the Asia Pacific Region. Finally, APEA acknowledges Ahmad Syaifur Rijal for designing this document.
1. Introduction

Professionalization of evaluation is one of the eight themes of the Asia Pacific Regional Evaluation Strategy developed with the leadership of the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA) in 2020 to promote the evaluation culture in the region. According to the Strategy, one of the action points to achieve enhanced public recognition of evaluation profession within the Asia-Pacific Region as a service with an altruistic value to citizens is to develop a code of ethics for evaluation professionals.

Respondents of the recent survey on the status of professionalization of evaluation in Asia-Pacific Region said that they either do not have it in their country or are not aware of its existence of evaluation ethics (76%). Therefore, this Code of Ethics for Evaluation will not only contribute to the professionalization of the evaluation function but also will provide guidance to Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs) in the region to prepare their respective national evaluation Code of Ethics.

This document was produced using the existing literature and scholarship in the field of code of ethics and ethical guidelines of international organizations and VOPEs around the world. In particular, the four principles of ethics in evaluation were inspired and based on the United Nations Evaluation Group’s “Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation” - 2020, as well as the works of Japan Evaluation Society, Australian Evaluation Society, Canadian Evaluation Society among others. Furthermore, the first draft of the Code of Ethics of the APEA was presented and discussed at the Fourth Virtual Summit on Professionalization of Evaluation for VOPEs and EvalYouth Chapters in the Asia Pacific Region in May 2023, and was revised in accordance with the feedback from the participants.

- Rationale

The Asia Pacific region has diverse contexts in which evaluators may need to make complex judgements and often find themselves in ethical dilemmas. Therefore, it is of a particular importance that APEA as a regional VOPE defines principles of ethics and expected ethical behaviours that to be upheld by national VOPEs, commissioners, evaluators and all actors in evaluation. Systematic attention to ethics helps balance the goals of evaluations and those who drive them with the rights and interests of diverse participants and their communities, otherwise, will have adverse consequences for all the stakeholders both beneficiaries and implementers.

- Definition of ‘ethics’

There is no agreed definition on ‘ethics,’ and unlike methodology, ethics cannot be standardised. Ethics require awareness and consideration of the local and national socio-cultural, religious and political contexts. Though there is not a comprehensive list of ethical considerations which fit all evaluations due to the variability of context and the different ethical
challenges that may arise in each situation, ethical conduct in an evaluation often means the following: i) evaluation is designed to respect the rights of participants and ensure any potential for harm is minimised, in particular, the evaluator needs to consider whether participants will be exposed to any physical or psychological risk, burden, inconvenience or breach of their privacy, and on the other hand, ii) right or agreed principles and values that govern the behavior of an individual within the specific, culturally defined context within which an evaluation is commissioned or undertaken.

- Purpose of this document
This document helps APEA members ensure that an ethical lens informs day-to-day evaluation practice and for the purpose of evaluations to contribute to sound development of our society and institutions in the Asia Pacific Region. This document provides:
  ➢ Four ethical principles for evaluation;
  ➢ Guideline on rolling out the Code of Ethics in their respective VOPEs; and
  ➢ A detachable Pledge of Commitment to Ethical Conduct in Evaluation that all those involved in evaluations should discuss and may sign (as an Annex)

2. Principles of Ethics in Evaluation
The four APEA guiding ethical principles for evaluation are integrity, accountability, respect and beneficence.

**INTEGRITY**

**INTEGRITY** means *upholding and embodying moral values and professional standards to ensure responsible evaluation practice.*

Integrity in evaluation requires:

- **Honesty and truthfulness** with all stakeholders in evaluation including commissioners, participants and beneficiaries. This involves not to deliberately make false, incorrect and misleading oral and written statements throughout the evaluation process
- **Professionalism** immersed in competence, commitment and trustworthy behaviour
- **Independence, impartiality and incorruptibility.** These are interdependent yet independent of thought and integrity of behaviour. They mitigate or prevent conflicts of interest, bias or undue influence of others, which may otherwise compromise responsible and professional evaluation practice. The following gives descriptions of each:
  - Independence: Those involved in evaluation shall ensure objectivity of evaluation and value independency of stakeholders, in particular that of evaluators.
Impartiality: Those involved in evaluation shall not be biased with respect to what is being evaluated.

Incorruptibility: Those involved in evaluation shall stand with high moral ethics to avoid doing something wrong.

ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNTABILITY is to ensure the quality, usability, and accuracy of their findings as well as to answer any inquiries posed by stakeholders.

Accountability in evaluation requires:

- **Transparency**: Evaluators should document the evaluation purposes, designs, procedures, data and results without any biases or distortions. Evaluations should be conducted in view of improving management performances and the betterment of the public. Evaluators should pay sufficient attention to those who are affected by the results.

- **Responsiveness**: Evaluators should honestly cope with any events that arise during evaluation such as corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation and abuse, other misconduct, or waste of resources.

RESPECT

RESPECT in evaluation means treating all the stakeholders involved with kindness, dignity, and consideration and recognizing and valuing their differences, such as gender, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, religion, and adapting to their unique needs and backgrounds. It's about being responsive and mindful of their feelings, well-being, and individual choices while conducting evaluations.

Respect in evaluation requires:

- **Respect the differences and fair treatment to** all individuals or organizations that are involved in or affected by an evaluation and are treated respectfully, fairly and impartially regardless of their social, power or ability differences.

- **Privacy and Confidentiality**: Respect participants’ privacy and allow them to share information confidentially and make sure that participants fully understand the scope and limits of confidentiality. Evaluators must also ensure that no one can figure out who provided sensitive information to protect participants from any negative consequences. Sensitive information should not be used without the participants’ permission, and it should be kept anonymous so that no one can trace it back to them.
BENEFICENCE

BENEFICENCE means striving to do good for people and the planet while minimizing harms arising from evaluation as an intervention.

Benefice in evaluation requires:

- Those involved in the evaluation design must consider if there will be a benefit to the beneficiaries from the evaluation study and how the results will be used to improve programs and projects.
- Those involved in the evaluation must ensure that no stakeholder is subject to any situation or conduct that can cause embarrassment or trauma to their physical or mental well being at any point during the evaluation.
- Evaluators need to think about what the evaluation can do to bring about good assumptions, practices, processes, and outcomes for the stakeholders and the larger community and world.
- Evaluators when working with different communities in the Asia Pacific Region need to be culturally competent and sensitive and must understand the cultural context of the evaluation study.

3. Guidelines for Implementing the Principles

Implementing the principles is a shared responsibility. All those engaged in commissioning, hosting, designing, conducting and managing evaluation activities as well as those subject to evaluation should understand and adhere to the four ethical principles. In this section, guidelines are provided for VOPEs in the Asia Pacific Region on how to roll-out the Code of Ethics in their countries. The VOPEs act to ensure an overarching guidelines for ethical conduct of evaluation in place in which members can operate in line with the ethical principles. The responsibilities for VOPEs are laid out below:

Rolling out Phase:

- VOPEs to facilitate and contribute to introducing the Code of Ethics to their members, and encourage them to put the Code of Ethics into practice among their VOPEs, organizations and governments, and spread the word out about the launching of the Code of Ethics at every engagement and speaking opportunities at conferences, workshop, and virtual and on-site forums.
- Integrate the Code of Ethics into training packages and initiatives by and for EvalYouth Chapters in their respective countries.
- VOPEs to encourage academic or tailored programs in evaluation to include the Code of Ethics in their curriculum and to consider developing training courses and workshops related to the subject in public institutions and their Monitoring and Evaluation bodies.

Monitoring and Evaluation Phase:

- Carry out periodic surveys among VOPE members regarding the use of the Code of Ethics.
- Revise periodically to reflect the changing demands on evaluation as contexts change and opportunities emerge.
4. Annex

ETHICAL GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION
PLEDGE OF ETHICAL CONDUCT IN EVALUATION

By signing this pledge, I hereby commit to discussing and applying the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and to adopting the associated ethical behaviours.

INTEGRITY
I will actively adhere to the moral values and professional standards of evaluation practice as outlined in the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation and following the values of the United Nations. Specifically, I will be:

- Honest and truthful in my communication and actions.
- Professional, engaging in credible and trustworthy behaviour, considering competence, commitment and ongoing reflective practice.
- Independent, impartial and incorruptible.

ACCOUNTABILITY
I will be answerable for all decisions made and actions taken and responsible for honouring commitments, without qualification or exception. I will report potential or actual harms observed. Specifically, I will be:

- Transparent regarding evaluation purpose and actions taken, establishing trust and increasing accountability for performance to the public, particularly those populations affected by the evaluation.
- Responsive as questions or events arise, adapting plans as required and referring to appropriate channels where corruption, fraud, sexual exploitation or abuse or other misconduct or waste of resources is identified.
- Responsible for meeting the evaluation purpose and for actions taken and for ensuring redress and recognition as needed.

RESPECT
I will engage with all stakeholders of an evaluation in a way that honours their dignity, well-being, personal agency and characteristics. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Access to the evaluation process and products by all relevant stakeholders – whether powerless or powerful – with due attention to factors that could impede access such as sex, gender, race, language, country of origin, LGBTQ status, age, background, religion, ethnicity and ability.
- Meaningful participation and equitable treatment of all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation processes, from design to dissemination. This includes engaging various stakeholders, particularly affected people, so they can actively inform the evaluation approach and products rather than being solely a subject of data collection.
- Fair representation of different voices and perspectives in evaluation products (reports, webinars, etc.).

BENEFICENCE
I will strive to do good for people and planet while minimizing harm arising from evaluation as an intervention. Specifically, I will ensure:

- Explicit and ongoing consideration of risks and benefits from evaluation processes.
- Maximum benefits at systemic (including environmental), organizational and programmatic levels.
- No harm. I will not proceed where harm cannot be mitigated.
- Evaluation makes an overall positive contribution to human and natural systems and the mission of the United Nations.

I commit to playing my part in ensuring that evaluations are conducted according to the Charter of the United Nations and the ethical requirements laid down above and contained within the UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. When this is not possible, I will report the situation to my supervisor, designated focal points or channels and will actively seek an appropriate response.

(Signature and Date)
5. References


JES (2012). Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations

