

Stream 2: “Evaluating transformational change under the Agenda 2030”

Lead agencies: IFAD, UN-HABITAT, UNIDO

Background

At the beginning of the 21st Century, a comprehensive plan of action, with the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), intended to address challenges of extreme hunger and poverty, education, gender equality and women empowerment, child mortality, maternal health, diseases including HIV/AIDs, environmental sustainability, and partnership for development was adopted by 189 UN member countries. The progress made by the end of 2015 is a testimony of how the world is still facing problems and the necessity transformational changes. The 2030 Agenda, which has 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), offers yet another turning point to transform into a more peaceful, secure, prosperous and sustainable developed world.

In 2015, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UN Member States committed to a renewed and more ambitious framework for development. The SDG agenda is all about transformative change. In its preamble the Outcome Document calls for bold and transformative steps which are urgently needed to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path, and it includes a number of goals that are of a transformative nature. Transformative approaches aim to overcome the root causes of inequality and discrimination through promoting sustainable development and far-reaching change.

At the moment there seems to be a lack of clarity on what “transformative change” in the context of the SDGs means. Yet, it will be of critical importance for evaluation to have a clear understanding on what the key dimensions and parameters are that define this type of change, commonly presumed to be of a “profound and radical” nature, and how they can be measured in the context of evaluations. The idea of transformative change is not new and some organisations have produced lessons that can be considered as reference, for example IEG learning product on “Supporting transformative change for poverty reduction (2016) and a recent CGIAR working paper on “measuring transformative change” (Hillenbrand et al. 2015). This EPE session will provide an opportunity to explore the concept and ways of evaluating transformative based on the experiences from UNEG partners.

Objectives

The main objective of this session is to contribute to greater clarity and understanding among UNEG members on what the emphasis on *transformation* implies for evaluations under the Agenda 2030. Specific objectives include:

- To develop a workable definition of “transformative change” through discussion of case studies from recent evaluations;
- To identify examples of transformative change processes in the context of specific SDGs; and
- To discuss possible approaches, but also the limitations of evaluating them.

Format (duration 3 hours)

Short presentations (10 Minutes) on case studies in plenary followed by thematic group discussions. Closing plenary to wrap up discussion on key themes.

Presentations

Potential presentations include

- Capturing key dimensions of gender transformative change – experiences from the IFAD evaluation synthesis on gender
- UNDP
- UN Women
- UN-Habitat
- UNIDO
- Others to be identified

Group discussions

Following the plenary presentations participants will be divided in four thematic groups, covering the different SDGs:

- Group 1: no poverty; end hunger, food security and improved nutrition
- Group 2: healthy lives, well-being, gender equality
- Group 3: infrastructure, industrialisation; sustainable management of natural resources
- Group 4: Global Partnership

The groups will work on the following common tasks and questions:

- Where there any common aspects on how the concept was defined in the presentation?
- How could this be applied within the context of your theme?
- What would be examples of transformative changes within your theme?
- How could they be evaluated?
- What will be the challenges and limitations for evaluation?