

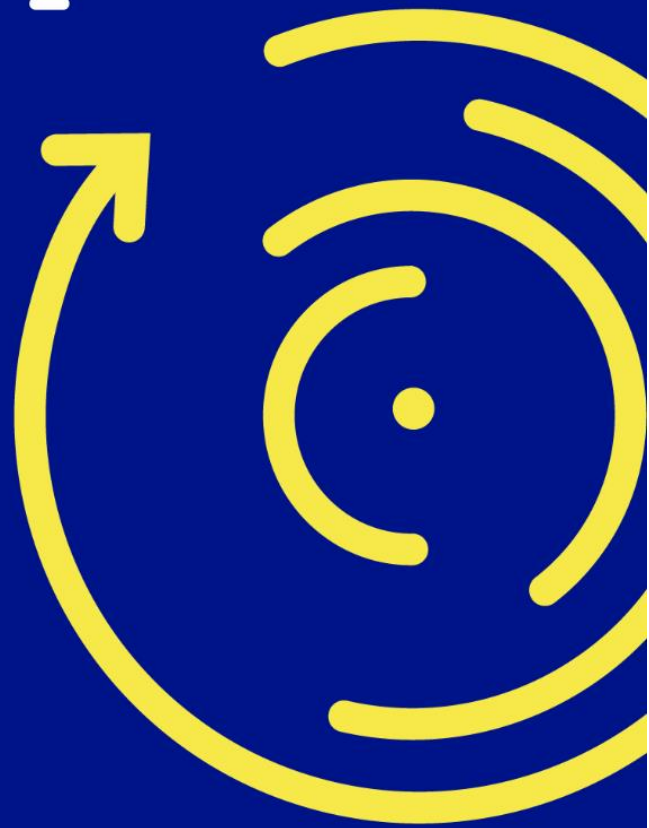
IPDET

INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM FOR
DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION TRAINING

Better policy making through evaluations - Evaluation Report

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GEI
Global
Evaluation
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Introduction

The International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) is an **executive training program that aims to provide decision-makers, managers and practitioners with the tools that are required to commission, manage, and evaluate policies, programs, and projects at the local, national, regional, and global levels. At the same time, use those evaluations for decision-making.**

The program is a collaborative effort between three partners: The Center for Continuing Education (ZUW)¹ at the University of Bern, Switzerland, the Center for Evaluation (CEval) in Saarbruecken, Germany², and the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank (IEG)³. This partnership brings long-standing roots in development evaluation and training as well as a strong faculty with on-the-ground experience.

Since 2020, IPDET is a **core implementing partner of the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI)**⁴ of the World Bank Group and receives funds especially for scholarships and Global Outreach activities from GEI funding partners. GEI is an inclusive global partnership committed to developing country-owned, sustainable monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and capacities to promote the use of evidence in public decision-making, enhance accountability, and achieve better results.

Background of the training ‘Better policy making through evaluation’ | Following the completion of the virtual workshop series in October & November 2021, IPDET, within its IPDET Global Outreach-strategy⁵, **in partnership with the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association (APEA)**⁶, **Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (GPFE)**⁷, and **Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (APPFE)**⁸, hosted the **first international on-site training on evaluation for parliamentarians and parliament staff from Asia Pacific** from 27-30 March 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The four-day training was conceived in recognition of the increasing use of evaluations not only as a key administrative tool for the executive branch, but also as a fundamental instrument of policy processes. As such, it **aimed to provide participants with essential knowledge and tools to use evaluative evidence** to play an active role in parliamentary debates, better justify decisions to the public, strengthen oversight roles, and fulfil constitutional duties.

Evaluation approach and methodology | The purpose of this evaluation report is to **gain insights into the results of the training, promote further improvement of future trainings and promote transparency for the stakeholders** of the training and implementing organizations.

The evaluation results of the training were gained through a mix of different data collection and analysis methods. Initially, background data of participants were collected during the application process. A few days prior to their arrival, participants were asked to fill out a pre-questionnaire (n=32), which asked for further data on their background and motivation to participate in the training. At the end of the training participants were asked to fill out the final questionnaire (n=31) to assess the training itself. Additionally, a total of seven on-site interviews were conducted. Fragments of these interviews were mainly used to present five country **‘Spotlights’**.

¹ <https://www.zuw.unibe.ch/>

² <https://ceval.de/en/>

³ <https://ieg.worldbankgroup.org/>

⁴ <https://www.globalevaluationinitiative.org/>

⁵ https://ipdet.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/IPDET_GlobalOutreachStrategy.pdf

⁶ <https://asiapacificceval.org/>

⁷ <https://gpffe.org/>

⁸ <https://gpffe.org/asia-pacific-parliamentarians-forum-for-evaluation/>



Background and relevance of the training



Overall relevance of the training | Living in any part of the world, most people face challenges of access and efficient use of scarce resources. They trust their voices, expectations and hopes for their well-being to decision-makers. Those have not only a delegated power, but a responsibility to be efficient, responsive, accountable and open. To meet those expectations, decision-makers need verified data, on-going analysis and experience, they need evaluation. **The shift in policy towards evidence-based rational governance, that has accompanied the development of modern societies, has luckily also led to an increased importance of evaluation.** Evaluation has become a central instrument of policy processes.

This change affects not only the executive, but also the legislature. With their workforce of democratically elected representatives of citizenry, **parliaments represent one of the central pillars of democratic process and are rightfully identified as playing a crucial role in driving and sustaining equitable development within the state.** The support of growing demand for, and use of evaluation-evidence within parliamentary oversight systems is therefore an intervention that has the potential to benefit both poor and previously disadvantaged groups through strengthening political representation and building government's accountability to citizens. **Parliamentarians can use results of evaluations in a number of ways:** Parliamentarians who know how to use evaluation evidence can influence the budget-approving process, can play an active role in parliament debate, better justify their decisions to the public and strengthen their oversight role. Furthermore, using evaluations can help them to fulfil their constitutional duties. At large, parliamentarians around the world have a key role to play to ensure that national evaluation cultures and policies are developed.

In order to achieve this, evaluation must get on the agenda and step out of its shadows. This was reinforced when the UN General Assembly passed Resolution A/RES/69/237, *'Evaluation Capacity Building for the Achievement of Development Results at Country Level'*⁹. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015 and their focus on country-led evaluation in line with identified priorities for SDG targets that are most relevant to the national and local context have also emphasized the need for countries to review of the SDGs will be *'rigorous and based on evidence'*.

The context of Asia Pacific | In 2020, APEA led the development of the **Asia Pacific Regional Strategy**¹⁰ through a highly consultative and participatory process with VOPEs, parliamentarians, public officials, evaluators, and development partners actively taking part in defining the key themes of the strategy and their related actions. Officially launched on 10 December 2020, it includes eight thematic areas that contribute to the overall goal of promoting and championing the greater use of evaluation contributing positively to achievement of national development goals and the SDGs in the Asia Pacific region.

Recognizing the key role of parliamentarians in cultivating the evaluation culture in the region, **one of the thematic areas of the Asia Pacific Regional Strategy is 'Engaging parliamentarians for demand and use of evaluation'**. This thematic group aims to contribute to enhanced engagement of parliamentarians to demand and use evaluation, increase in the number of countries embarking on the development of National Evaluation Policies and Systems, and increase demand for program-based evaluation by stakeholders including citizens, parliamentarians and policy-makers.

Evaluation capacity-building of parliamentarians in the Asia- Pacific region, therefore, is the beginning of a process of bridge-building – bridge-building between those with evaluative knowledge and expertise on the one hand, and on the other, legislators who have the ability to transform them to action for people. The trainings in 2021 and 2023 explore and identify strategies for using collective experience and evidence that can guide parliamentarians moving forward with effective role and are crucial in order to deepen understanding of the value and potential uses of evaluations for evidence-based policy making for parliamentarians and parliament staff.

⁹ <http://www.unevaluation.org/mediacenter/newscenter/newsdetail/105>

¹⁰ <https://asiapacificeval.org/programs/regional-evaluation-strategy/>

They further respond to the need for strengthening the capacities of parliamentarians and parliament staff in the Asia Pacific region to better promote and use evaluation in the parliament processes. Further, to institutionalize evaluation in the Asia Pacific region in order to promote national M&E-systems.

Training approach and structure | After the first workshop series in October & November 2021, it was planned to **deepen and expand this series with new topics and to once again draw attention to the usefulness of evaluation results for parliamentary work**. Not to mention the **aim of leaving evaluation not only as an administrative tool to the executive branch, but also to use it for legislative purposes**.

After an inaugural event, with contributions from Kabir Hashim, Member of the Parliament of Sri Lanka and Chair of GPFE, Oscar Calvo-Gonzales, Acting Director General of Evaluation World Bank Group, Tikiri Jayathilake, Assistant Secretary General, Parliament of Sri Lanka, Dorothy Mae Albiento, Co-leader of EvalYouth Asia, Marco Segone, Director of UNFPA Evaluation Office, and Asela Kalugampitiya, President of APEA, the training was structured on the basis of four topics, with the following learning objectives:

Topic 1 – ‘The utility of evaluation for parliamentarians’ work’ (0.5 days)

This module dealt with the question of **how evaluation can support the work in parliaments**. The following central tasks of parliamentarians were addressed: Legislation and policy-making, adoption of budgets or supervision and control. To fulfill these tasks, evaluation results are an important source of information that enable decisions to be made on a rational basis.

Topic 2 – ‘The use of evaluations for evidence-based policy and societal development’ (1.5 days)

Evaluations can serve different purposes: They can be used to provide project/program management with information and recommendations to adapt and further develop projects/programs to changing contextual conditions. They can also be used for accountability purposes to find out whether the intended results have been achieved, or for legitimation purposes, to show parliament and/or the general public whether governments, individual ministries or organizations have worked successfully. However, the evaluation reports can often be too technical and/or difficult for non-specialist to comprehend. Participants would be **enabled to extract the essential findings from an evaluation report and to prepare them in a way that is appropriate for the target audience**, such as other parliamentarians in debates.

Topic 3 – ‘How to make parliamentary debates and policy making evidence informed’ (1 day)

In the context of evidence-based policy, it is important for parliamentarians to be able to ask questions in order to (1) play an active role in parliamentary debates, (2) question political strategies or government plans, (3) obtain information or require it to (4) be able to make evidence-based decisions on the basis of this information, and (5) generally fulfill the oversight function of a parliamentarian. The aim of the session was to help to **impart the ability to formulate evidence-based questions**.

Topic 4 – ‘Practical experience sharing session with academia and parliamentarians in Sri Lanka’ (0.75 days)

On the last day of the training, the delegation visited the Parliament of Sri Lanka. The aim of this was to **contribute to a more pronounced understanding of better policy-making through evaluation** as well as to **provide a platform for knowledge and learning sharing exchange** on the institutionalization of evaluation between parliaments.

Contributors of this event were the Speaker of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, Leader of the House, Parliament of Sri Lanka, Susil Premajayantha, Leader of the Opposition Sri Lanka, Sajith Premadasa, GPFE Chair, Kabir Hashim, Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Dhammika Dasanayake, President of APEA, Asela Kalugampitiya, the Deputy Secretary General of the Parliament of Sri Lanka, Tikiri Jayathilake, the Vice Chancellor of Kelaniya University, Nilanthi De Silva, Director of the UNFPA Evaluation Office, Marco Segone and Founder and Director for the Center of Evaluation, Saarland University/Germany, Reinhard Stockmann.

Throughout the entire training theoretical inputs were combined with extensive practical exercises, panel discussions and Q&A-sessions.

Primary target group | Since **parliamentarians** are often occupied and unable to read long evaluation reports, the most suitable group who can support them are **parliament staff**. The staff can help parliamentarians with brief evaluation findings and recommendations which they can easily use. Therefore, it was important to also include parliament staff in the training. Assuming that staff members can devote more time to such trainings than parliamentarians, the training was also intended to impart more in-depth evaluation knowledge to this group of people.

Project management | Preliminary work on the implementation of the training took place mainly **from the third quarter of 2022 onwards**. In terms of personnel, a **core organization team of six people** was formed, covering a number of tasks: Application & participants management, venue administration, content development and coordination, travel arrangements, marketing and social media, evaluation & outreach, etc. The organization team consisted of Asela Kalugampitiya (APEA), Dorothy Mae Albiento (APEA), Laszlo Szentmarjay (IPDET), Madhuka Liyanagamage (APEA), Randika Lawson De Mel (APEA) and Reinhard Stockmann (IPDET).

The concept development, content elaboration as well as delivery of the training was done jointly by Asela Kalugampitiya (APEA) and Reinhard Stockmann (IPDET).

Crucial for the successful implementation was the very close communication with participants about their status of participation as well as the implementation of the training, regarding:

- administration: communication via different channels (email, WhatsApp, skype, phone calls); support in the visa and travel process; fundraising of additional financial resources for participation; etc.
- content: early information about the content and scheduling of the training; clear guidelines for preparing the content of the training in advance (e.g., providing case studies and sample evaluation report in advance); involvement of participants in the training (e.g., as panelists or moderators); etc.

Regulations for participation | Interested persons had to apply for the training via a registration form. The applications were then screened and suitable individuals were selected. The **selection process was determined by a variety of factors, such as gender balance, regional balance, expected multiplier effects, etc.**

No fees were charged to the participants for costs of training, accommodation and meals. Fortunately, this budget was covered by funds from the GEI. However, **participants were responsible for their own travel expenses** (flight ticket, visa fee, airport transfer, etc.). The organizers supported this with further raised funds, especially from UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) Evaluation Office, UNFPA Asia and the Pacific and Philippine Offices, Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), UN Women Office in Bangladesh, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), and it is important to express sincere gratitude to them for their contribution.



Results of the training



Background information on participation

The training attracted **46 individuals in total**. 11 of them (24%) already participated in the workshop series in 2021, while 35 participants (76%) were new to this kind of training.^{11,12} **Gender** | As inherent to all IPDET trainings, the organizers focused on boosting the attendance of women. This is reflected in a **female participation of 43%** (n=20) in the training. **Occupation** | A bit more than half of the participants were **Parliament Staff** (54%, n=25) followed by **Parliamentarians** (22%, n=10). In addition, the training was also attended by the Academia (13%, n=6), VOPE members (7%, n=3), UN (2%, n=1) and the GEI partner organization CERP (Centre for Economic Research in Pakistan) (2%, n=1). **Countries** | Participants came from **18 different countries**. The countries with the highest participation numbers were Sri Lanka (n=9), the Philippines (n=6), as well as Cambodia, Fiji and Pakistan (n=4 each)¹³ (Table 1).

Table 1: Origin country of participants (n=46)

No. of participants	9	6	4	3	2	1
Country	Sri Lanka	Philippines	Cambodia, Fiji, Pakistan	Kyrgyzstan	Bhutan, Kenya, Mongolia, Nepal	Bangladesh, Lebanon, Macedonia, Marshall Islands, Mexico, Qatar, Uganda, Vanuatu

Years of experience in M&E | Participants with an **intermediate experience in M&E** of ‘1 to 3 years’ and ‘3 to 5 years’ counted up to around a little more than half of participants and represented the majority (53%, n=17). Very experienced in the field of M&E with at least 5 years’ experience were 25% (n=8). A minority of questionnaire respondents (22%, n=7) reported to had ‘none’ or ‘less than one year’ experience in M&E (Figure 1).

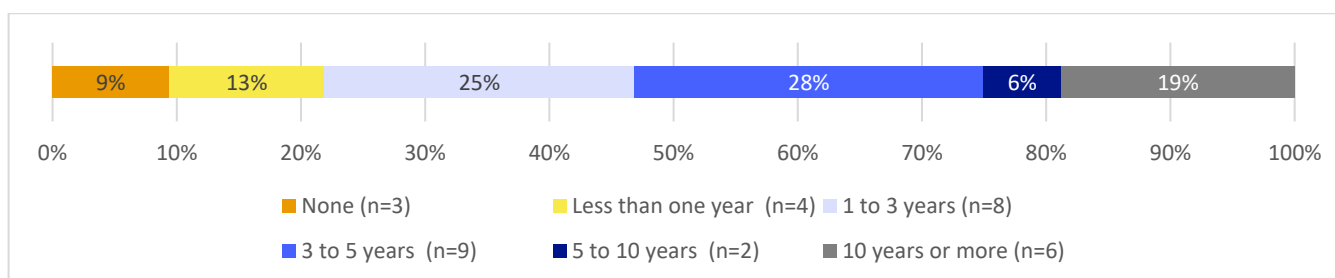


Figure 1: How many years of professional experience have you dedicated to Monitoring and Evaluation before this training? (n=32)

Primary function in M&E | Comprising almost half of the participants were professionals whose primary point of contact with evaluation is to **‘use M&E results and/or make requests for evaluations’** (46%, n=21). The items: ‘manage and/or supervise the conduct of evaluations’ or ‘teach and/or research on evaluation’ were indicated by 10 participants each (22%). Only a few participants claimed to ‘design and/or conduct evaluations’ (11%, n=5) (Figure 2).

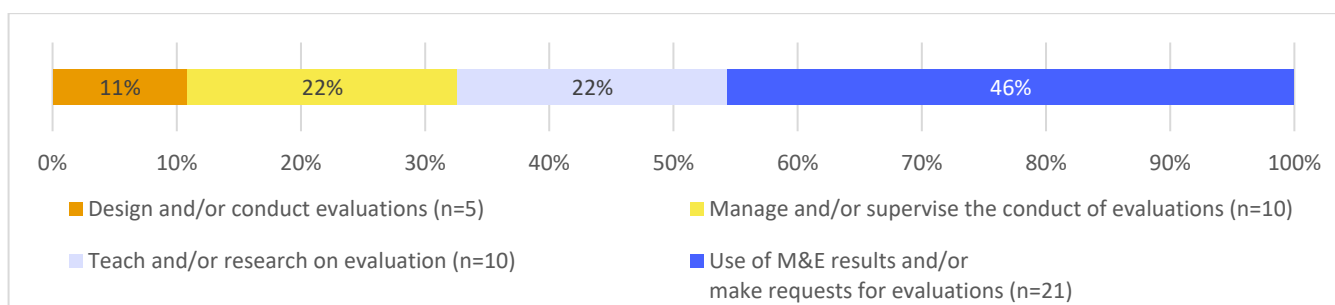


Figure 2: Which of the following describes your primary evaluation function best? (n=46)

¹¹ In the planning phase of the training, the distribution was around one third *new* and two thirds *previous participants*. Due to changes in time schedule, lack of travel budgets, etc., the distribution shifted more and more towards *new participants*.

¹² See also the **section ‘Looking back: 2021’ Participation** for follow-up results on their participation.

¹³ On Friday before the start of the training, a total of six participants from India, Nepal and Pakistan had to cancel their participation. They were replaced with participants from Sri Lanka, as they did not require special travel arrangements.

Learning about the training | Almost two-third of respondents found out about the training **through a colleague** and/or were **nominated by an institution** to apply and participate (63%, n=20). A third (34%, n=11) indicated to have (also) been **approached by the organizing institutions** directly. While all other information channels played a minor role, it is important to note that ‘word-of-mouth’ was the most common method to get participants into the training (Figure 3).

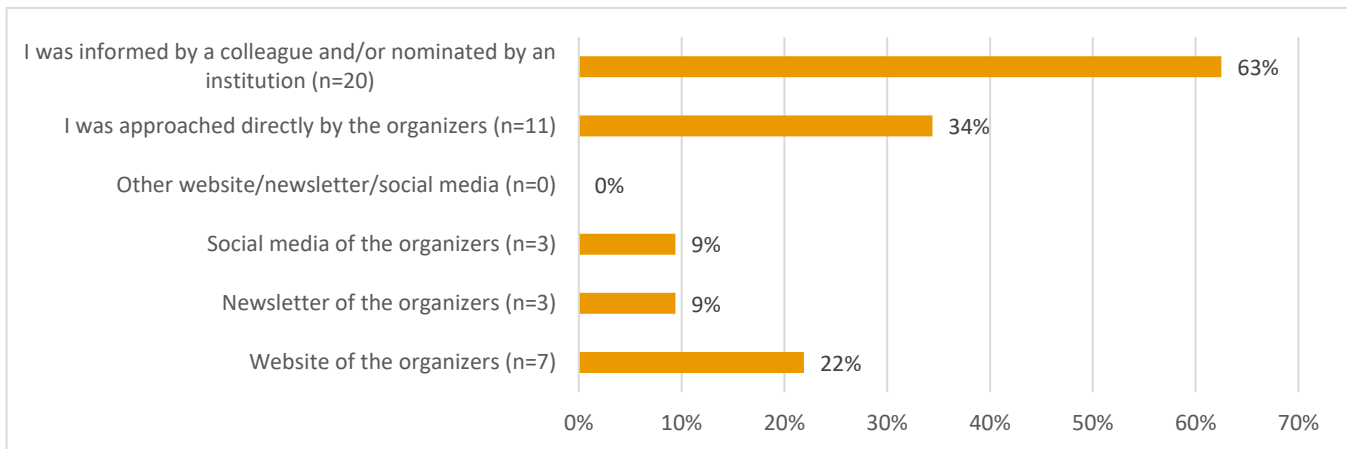


Figure 3: How did you find out about this training? (multiple answers possible) (n=32)

“It is a great pleasure to be with you all in all aspects; nationally, culturally, traditionally, and most of all ideologically to have one aim in consideration. Further, it was a nice gathering for all of us for exchanging more views not only on the subject matter of the workshop, but did we exchange many things, including cultural ones.” J. Kennedy – Sri Lanka

Funding | As indicated above, the training itself was conducted free of charge for participants. However, participants were responsible themselves to find funding for their travel expenses. From the feedback it becomes obvious, that the majority of two-third (n=21) received support covering these expenses through the **organizing institutions**, which fundraised additional budgets from the international organizations ADB, APDA, UNFPA, and UN Women, **and/or another organization**. 31% (n=10) of respondents indicated to have obtained these funds from their **employer**. Only one person mentioned having paid the travel expenses him/herself (Figure 4).

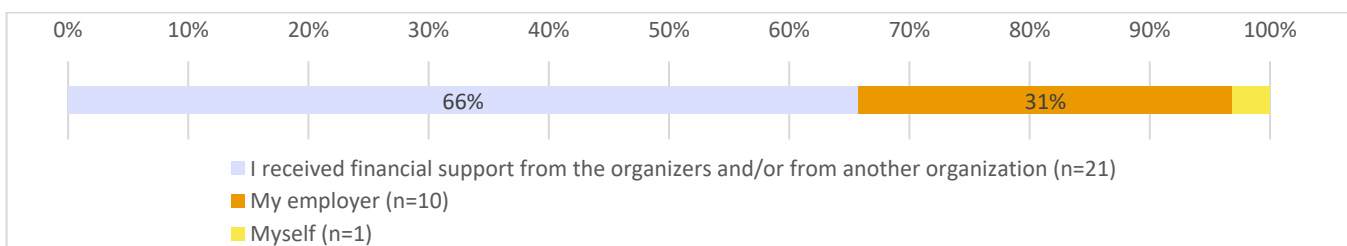


Figure 4: What was your main funding source for your travel expenses to attend the training? (n=32)¹⁴

Regarding the total amount of funding received to attend this training, based on feedback from questionnaire respondents, the mean sum is 1.850 USD per person and a total sum is around 40,000 USD (n=22). Scaling this sum up to the entire participants number (n=37; excl. participants from Sri Lanka, which did not have relevant travel costs) an amount of **around 70,000 USD was additionally raised for travel expenses** of participants.

Participants were further asked if they **‘would have attended the training as well if a fee had been charged’**. **The majority of respondents (63%, n=19) answered in the negative**, citing ‘lack of funds’ as the main reason. On the other hand, respondents who expressed willingness to pay for the training mentioned an average fee of approximately 350 USD.¹⁵

¹⁴ For better readability, percentages below 5% were removed from item batteries.

¹⁵ Minimum fee: 100 USD, Maximum fee: 1,000 USD | Ranges: 0-499 USD: n=5, 500-999 USD: n=2, >=1,000 USD: n=1.

Summary and conclusions on 'Background information on participation':

Participants' background shows a diverse distribution which was eminent to provide diverse perspectives on the topic of M&E and create opportunities for diverse learning.

It became apparent, that it is easier for parliament staff to find the time to participate in a four-day training (excluding travel time). Nevertheless, the participation of almost a quarter of parliamentarians is an enormous success, which underlines the high relevance of the topic for this target group.

The primary target group of the training was highly met, as the majority do not design and/or conduct evaluations themselves, but use M&E results for decision-making.

The results concerning funding and potential payment of fees for this type of training highlight the indispensable necessity and importance of diverse fundraising strategies to get participants involved – from both, organizers and participants. This is, however, highly dependent on the willingness of potential funding organizations, which need to see parliamentarians and parliament staff as very key actors in building functional, effective and robust national M&E systems, especially in the Global South.



SPOTLIGHT BHUTAN:

Lhatu and Tashi Samdrup, both Members of the National Council of Bhutan, on their motivation to attend the training and challenges regarding M&E in Bhutan:



How is your work connected to evaluation and what was your motivation for attending the training?

Lhatu: *I am in the upper house of the parliament and we review lots of plans and policies of the government. But sometimes it is very difficult to raise the right questions and to find the facts. With evaluation we are better equipped to do so. The virtual training in 2021 was very useful regarding this and after it I joined the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum. Therefore, I thought this training now is the best opportunity. On one side, to give me an enriching tool. On the other side, to better advocate and talk with colleagues, the government and stakeholders on the issue.*



Another thing that has motivated me was networking. Because through networking you can share your experiences. Otherwise, if you do not have networking it becomes difficult to know, whom to contact.

Tashi Samdrup: *I did hear about the training from a colleague. I went to the training description and realized: This is a very important training for us as parliamentarians! When we amend acts or frame policies and when we make recommendations to the government, it would be very helpful to have evidence-based evaluations. For the last three days I have learned a lot and I think the content of the training was very impressive. Not only the way of teaching, also the interactions between the instructors/facilitators and the participants, the case studies and group work. So, everybody can come forward and fully participate.*

What do you see as the main challenge in your country regarding evidence-based policy making/evaluation?

Lhatu: *Bhutan is going through a drastic change, what we call transformation. In this process, a lot of changes are coming up by initiative of the government, e. g., in education, civil service recruitment processes, or tourism. These are areas where we can actually take this knowledge from the training in order to analyze, whether policies have been useful to the country or not.*

Tashi Samdrup: *In Bhutan we can find a lot of information and data. However, sometimes we lack coordination among the agencies and we do not get the right figures and details. Different agencies have different data, that is why we must have a central agency who is taking care of this.*

Additionally, in the framework of this transformation process, most of the sectors want to adopt new systems. What we really do not know is, whether they carried out evaluations on the existing systems and what exactly needs to be changed. Through this training I think we will be able to advise some of our law- and decision-

makers about evaluation of their policies. And then you can come up, based on the evidences, with very good policy decisions.

What are you planning to you apply from the training in your work?

Tashi Samdrup: In the House of Reviews, in special occasions, we can ask questions to the ministers about their decisions. Through this training, we know now about the importance of clear evidence. This gives us the opportunity to challenge ministers that they are not doing what the evidence suggests.

Lhatu: In Bhutan we can really ask those kinds of questions like ‘What kind of studies have you done to come to this kind of argument? You said you have this number of this and that, from where did you get this figure?’ This is a now big tool we have got from the training, because if you do not ask the right questions, you will also not get the right results, figures, etc.”

Each ministry also has their annual report. We can get a lot of information from there, but sometimes we do not or cannot really cross-check. That is the problem and we really need to work on our personal evidence-creation as well to support our own arguments. This means, we have to draw out our own studies. Only if we are accurate, then they can be accurate too.

What we also have is the Evaluation Association of Bhutan. They are still in an emerging phase but promoting evaluation a lot in the country. So far there is no institutionalized contact with them, but first contacts are made. Of course, they could give presentations in the parliament. This would be important, because not all parliamentarians are able to get this kind of training like us. But also, we two are now multipliers and have a special role in promoting evaluation to other colleagues.

Assessment of the training

Overall assessment | Overall, an **extraordinary positive result can be drawn from the training**. All respondents indicated to be ‘considerably’ or ‘strongly’ satisfied (Figure 5) (a) with the training, are **willing to recommend** this training (b), and would also **participate in another training conducted by the organizing institutions** (c):

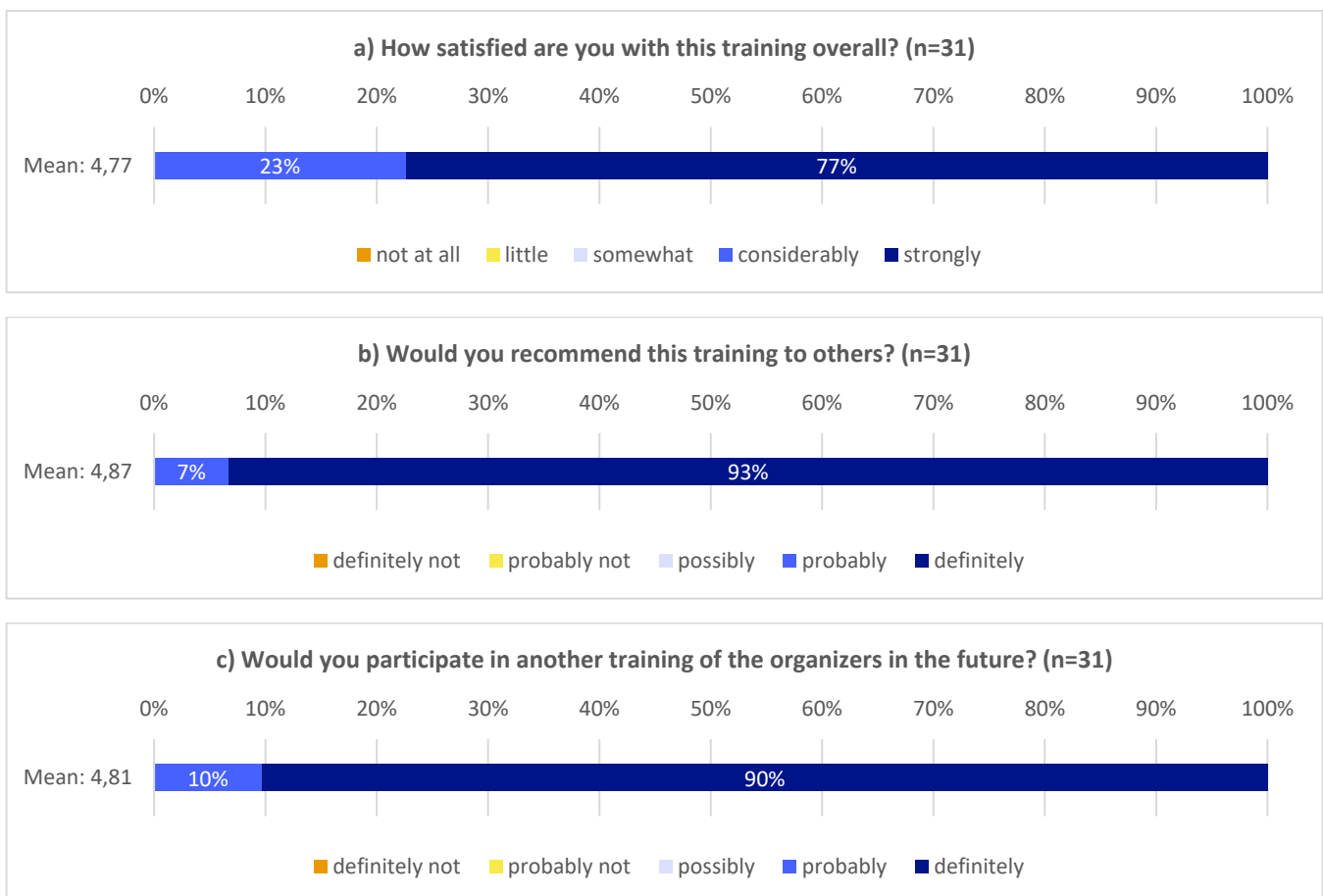


Figure 5: Overall assessment of the training

Knowledge gained per topic | Going further into the details of the training, the feedback reveals that the training was **very effective in increasing knowledge of participants for all topics**: For Topic 1, all participants indicated to have gained ‘considerable’ or ‘a lot’ of new knowledge. This is also the case for Topic 2, according to 97% of respondents, and similar gains for Topic 3 according to 87% (Figure 6).

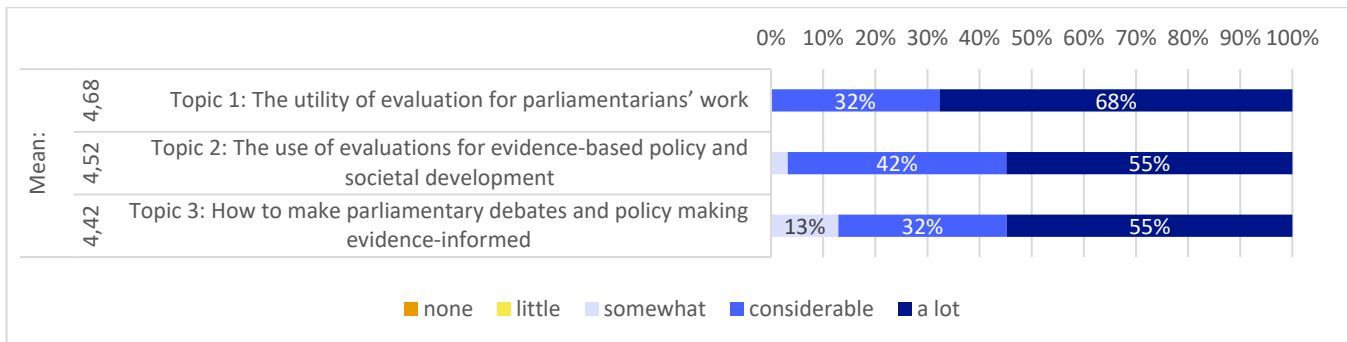


Figure 6: How much knowledge have you gained as a result of this training? (n=31)

“This was a very well executed training by an efficient team. Great insights and lessons learned in the four days of intensive training, experience sharing, and role play. In a nutshell, evaluation must inform policy and decision-making.” **Bonnie Mathooko - Kenya**

Quality and delivery | In terms of the quality and delivery **every item received at least 93% ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ ratings**. Superior ratings were given to the items ‘content’, the ‘delivery’ itself and the ‘interactive participation’. Around three-fourth of the results were rated ‘excellent’ for ‘group work and discussions’ (Figure 7).

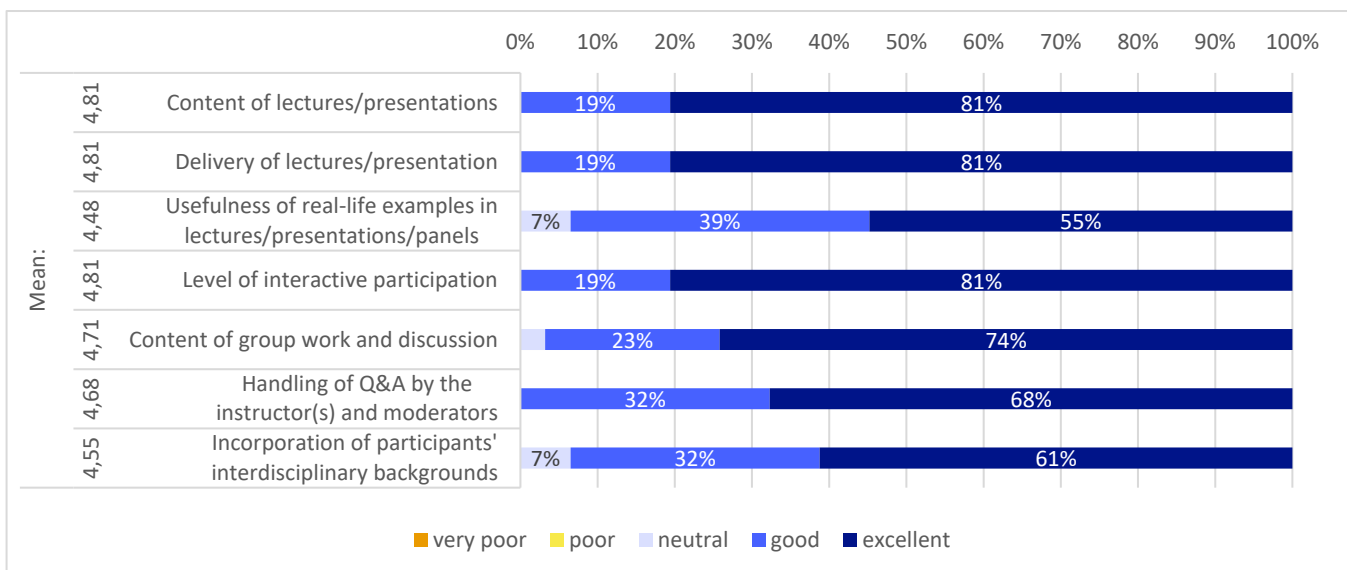


Figure 7: How do you rate the quality and delivery of the training? (n=31)

“The training was incredibly fruitful and very knowledgeable. The trainers were magnificent, not only in their presentations, but also in answering the questions. I had very comprehensive sessions and many takeaways from this training and I also had learned a lot through knowledge sharing and ideas from participants.”

Vanthen Kong - Cambodia

Didactics and structure | All items on didactics and structure of the training were rated very positively with **(more than) 97%**. Only one respondent was ‘neutral’ regarding the ‘time management’ (Figure 8).

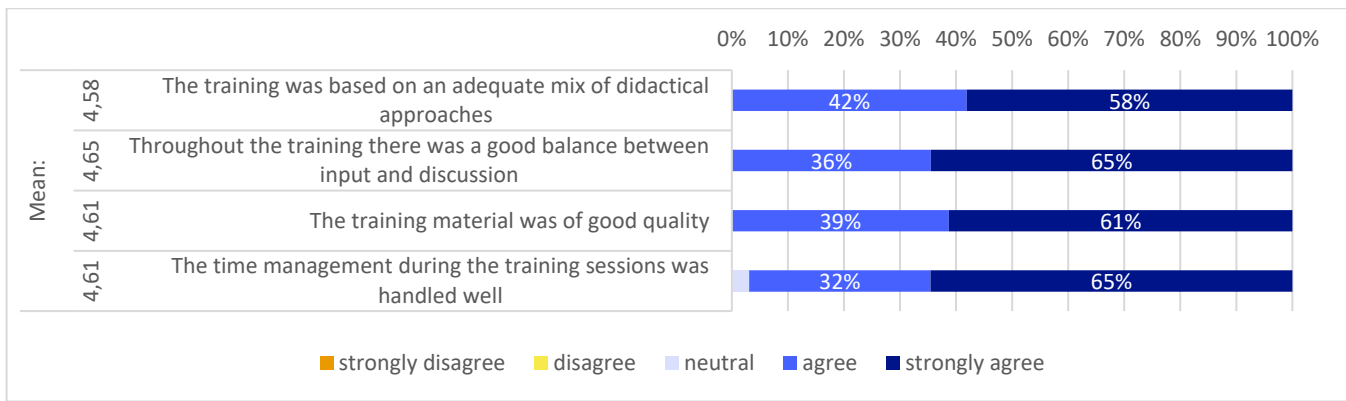


Figure 8: How do you assess the overall didactical and organizational structure of the training? (n=31)

Performance of Instructors | The performance of the two instructors was rated based on the sub-criteria: 1) the “provision of meaningful feedback to the respondents’ comments”, 2) the “ability to promote and guide open discussion and learning”, and 3) the “possession of a strong expertise in his or her field”. **Both instructors were given excellent ratings, with every sub-criteria rated very positively by (more than) 97% of the respondents** (Figure 9 and Figure 10).

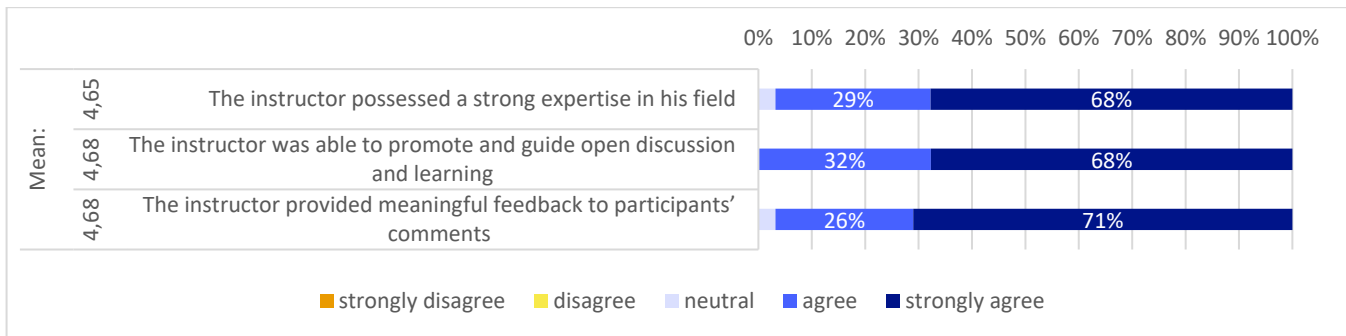


Figure 9: How do you rate the performance of instructor 1? (n=31)

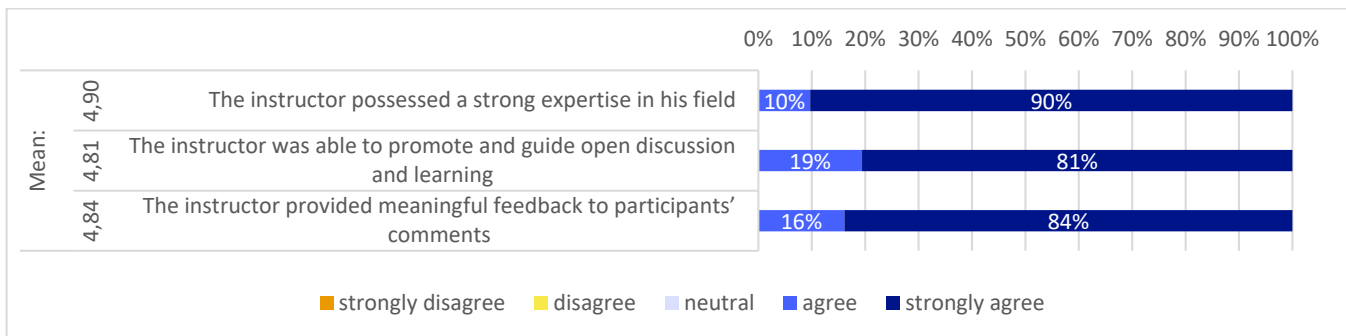


Figure 10: How do you rate the performance of instructor 2? (n=31)

Summary and conclusions on ‘Assessment of the training’:

The assessment of the training reveals outstanding results for all aspects explored. Participants expressed very high satisfaction with the training, the willingness to recommend it to others and to attend other trainings organized by the same institutions. Similarly, the content delivered, its quality and delivery, the didactics and structure of the training, and the performance of both instructors also received excellent ratings.

No negative ratings were given to any item connected to this block of questions, which is so far certainly unparalleled in the field of such trainings. The overall results show, that the expectations of the target group were highly met and the training covered an (so far) unmet training demand. They further indicate, that the training will have a great reverberation via word-of-mouth and further evaluation training with this target group is needed and absolutely meaningful in order for them to use evaluation results for evidence-based policy making.



SPOTLIGHT SRI LANKA

Mylvaganam Thilakarajah, Former Parliamentarian, Sri Lanka, on using evaluations for improved policy-making:



What do you see as the main challenge in your country regarding evidence-based policy making/evaluation?

As a former colonized country, we are still acting under colonialist practices we had like 100 years before. We have the 75th anniversary of independence this year. But still our laws and policies are very old and should be updated. However, our policy-makers are still lacking the capability of making decisions based on evidences and they are not much aware about evaluation and how we can benefit from it.

That is why we are conducting awareness program among the parliamentarians and the policy-makers and other sector stakeholders, like administration officers, the planning officers, and the civil society who can influence in decision-making. So, this project creates the environment for evidence-based decision through evaluation.

What was your main take-away from the trainings in 2021 and how did you apply it?

I did participate in the training in 2021 and also in the summer program in 2018 in Bern/Switzerland. I want to say that in 2018, when I was in Bern, it was great to share the knowledge with the evaluators, because I am not an evaluator, but I am for evaluations. Of course, that influenced me, that evaluation is very important for decision- making. And 2021 was specially designed for parliamentarians, I was able to focus on that, how parliamentarians would benefit from that. The take-away message from these trainings and the one now in Sri Lanka is: "We must meet on-site!". Of course, all the online trainings are great regarding content, but you cannot talk to and get to know each other the same way, especially when it comes to share best practices.

What I did realize after the trainings is the following: First, we as participants can influence our/other parliamentarians with our new evaluation knowledge. Second, we can influence the institutions about evaluation. For example, for Sri Lanka we developed three major recommendations: 1. Enact the bill on evaluation. 2. Set up a standing committee on evaluation within the parliament. 3. Enhance the parliament research division as an evaluation unit. Third, most discussions on evaluation are done in English. To get more parliamentarians involved we need to transmit to local languages. There is no language barrier per se, but it would support spreading the word about the topic.

What are you planning to apply from the training in your work?

I am not a member of the Parliament anymore, but working for example for the Sri Lankan Evaluation Association (SLEvA) as a resource person and project manager now. What I do in this context is managing evaluations with the government institutions. We have selected three pilot evaluations, one from education, one from health, and one from agriculture. I am enjoying that, being a former parliamentarian becoming an evaluation consultant through the benefits of the all the trainings I attended.

What I am going to do after this training now, is to further share all the materials and knowledge with others. With all these stakeholders and the network, we can move forward and create policies or programs on evaluation for evidence-based decision-making.

My final message is the following: We need to serve our people and be accountable to them regarding what happened to the tax money we collected from them. Through evaluation we can find a way to take right decision on how to serve people. This is the scientific method to make decisions. We can understand through the experts and professionals and we can implement evaluation for the betterment of the country and the people.

Results and take-aways of the training

Reasons to participate | Regarding the question “Which were your main reasons for participating in this training?” it became clear, that almost all participants chose the training to ‘**enhance knowledge and skills in evaluation**’ (94%, n=30). Another important reason was the **networking** aspects – to share insights, learn from and (potentially) collaborate with each other (78%, n=25) (Figure 11).

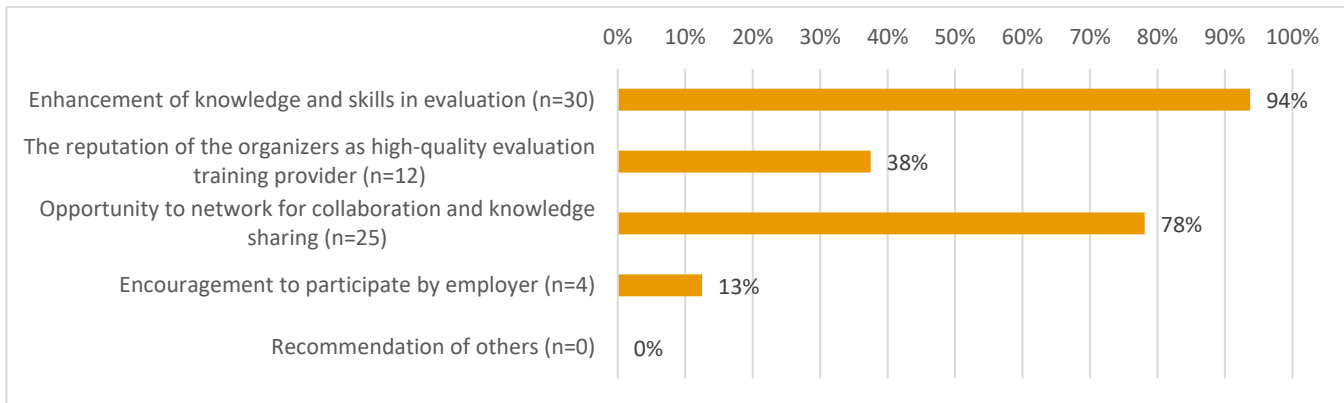


Figure 11: Which were your main reasons for participating in this training? (multiple answers possible) (n=32)

Personal and professional benefit | When these reasons are set against the personal and professional benefits of the training an extraordinary positive result can be drawn: **For all but one item all respondents indicated to have ‘considerably’ or ‘strongly’ benefitted from this training.** With this, the respondents confirmed ‘acquiring new thematic expertise’, that the ‘competencies and knowledge acquired are applicable to their own work’ and an ‘increase of interest to further deal with the subject of evaluation’. Although slightly less, the item ‘**benefit from the experiences of other participants**’ still received a highly positive rating of **87%**, which consisted of the responses ‘**considerably**’ or ‘**strongly**’ (Figure 12).

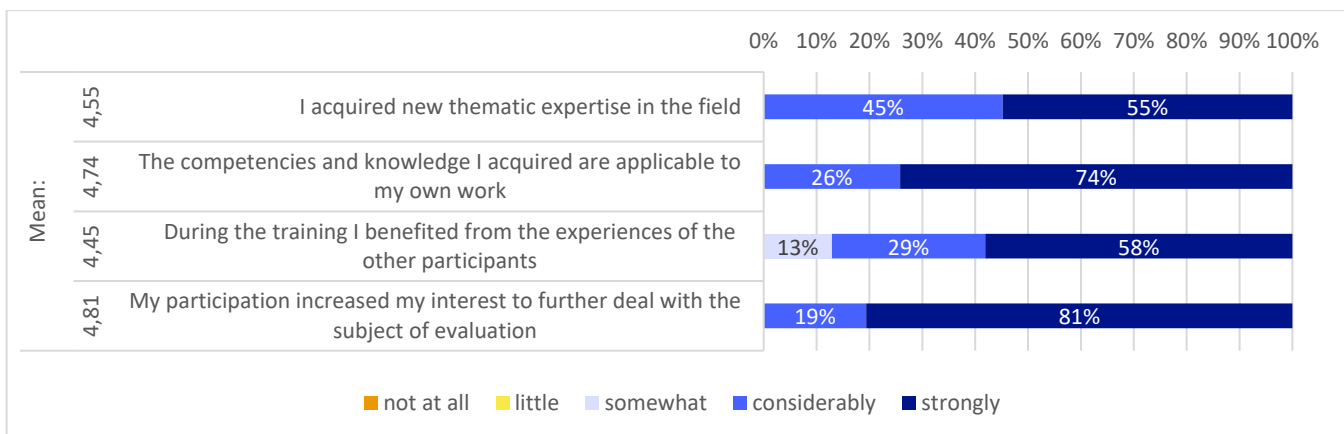


Figure 12: To what extent did you personally and professionally benefit from this training? (n=31)

“This live and practical workshop on monitoring and evaluation was absolutely mind blowing with the changing context. We should nurture the platform for younger generation for the global village for a just society.”

Aroma Dutta - Bangladesh

Enhanced competencies and skills | As mentioned at the beginning of the report, each of the three topics had specific learning objectives. In order to measure the achievement of these learning objectives participants were asked to assess them individually. From this assessment, we can conclude the following (Figure 13):

- All ten items were assessed extremely positive with **at least 90% ‘considerably’ or ‘strongly’ ratings** when respondents were asked if the training *‘enhanced their competencies and skills’*.
- While the items on Topic 2 (‘technical aspects of M&E’) only received ratings in the top two categories, Topic 1 received the best assessment, as only the top rating ‘strongly’ category was taken into account.
- Topic 3 was the only one which also received ratings in the ‘little’ category. However, it is important to note that, a) this was submitted only by one respondent, and b) this topic tackled content which is the closest to parliamentarians and parliament staff and their daily business. Therefore, the content can be subjected to an even more critical assessment by the respondents.

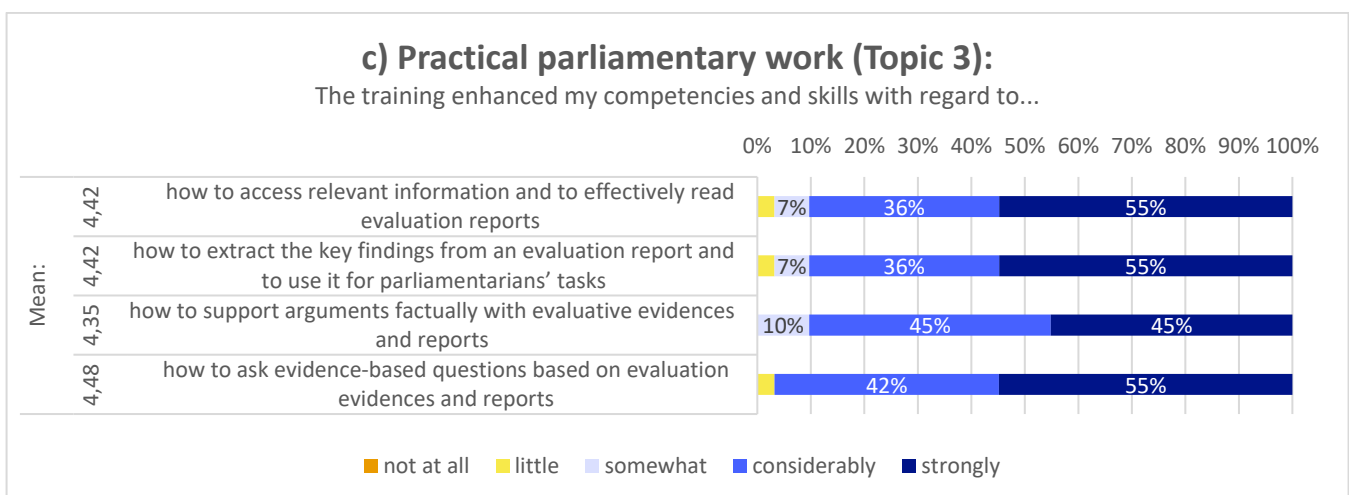
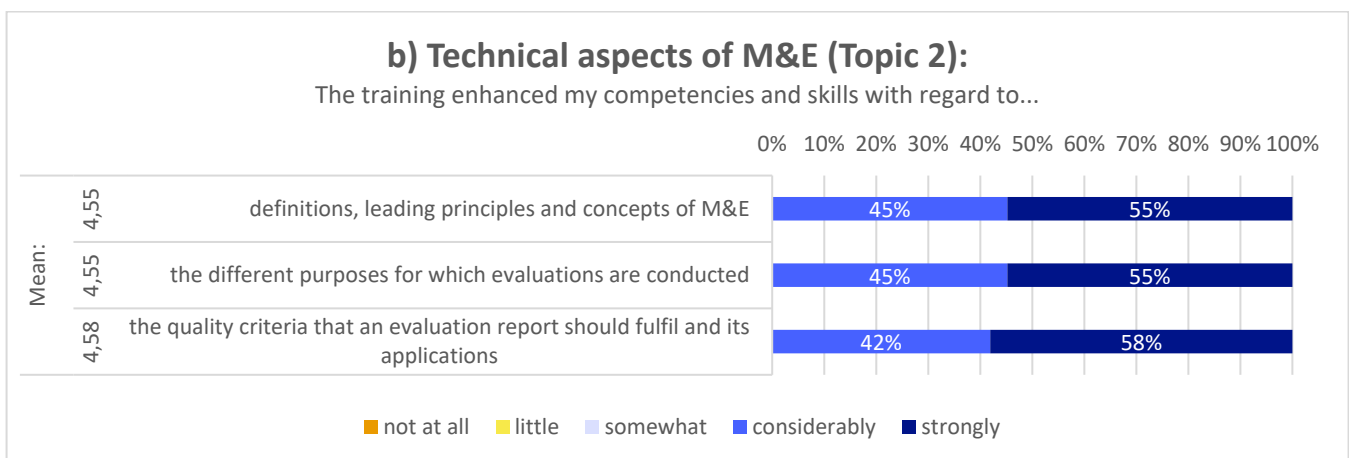
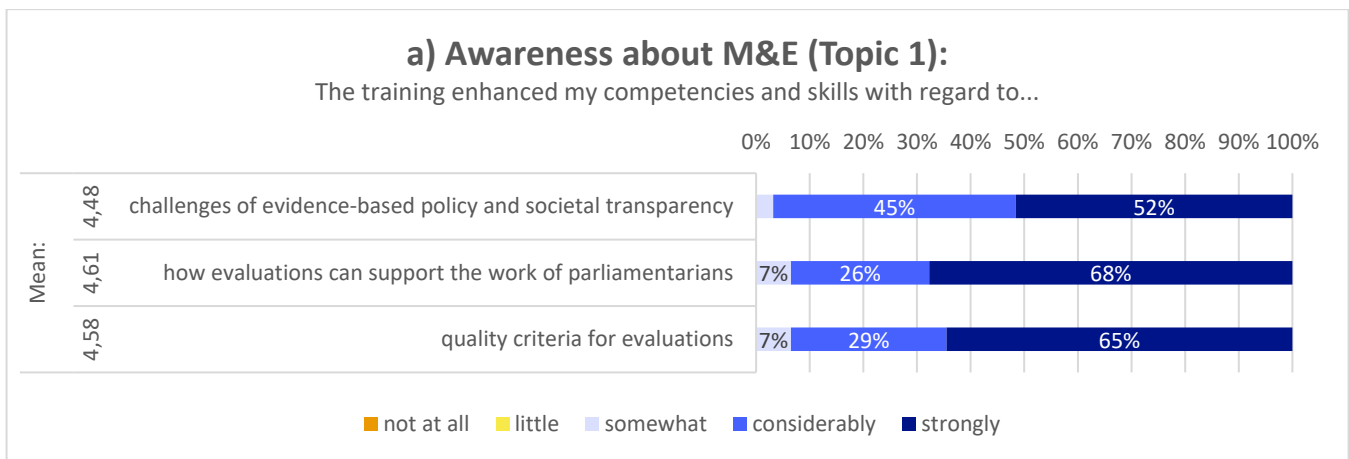


Figure 13: To what extent has this training enhanced your competencies and knowledge with regard to the following aspects? (n=31)

Summary and conclusions on 'Results and take-aways of the training':

The clear motivation of participants to participate in the training was to enhance knowledge and skills in evaluation and for networking reasons.

According to the questionnaire results, these objectives were absolutely fulfilled overall and also per topic. In particular, it became clear that the training highly increased participants' interest to further deal with evaluation as well as that the content taught is applicable to their own work – an extraordinarily important factor, as the training overall was designed to give participant tools on hand which can be directly implemented in their daily-business.

These results also confirmed the effectiveness of the overall structure by splitting the content into three different sub-topics. This can serve as a role model for further trainings to be conducted with parliaments.



SPOTLIGHT PAKISTAN:

Mahira Rafique, Staff of Parliament, National Assembly of Pakistan, on institutional change:



How is your work connected to evaluation and what was your motivation for attending the training?

I work in the National Assembly of Pakistan. My department deals with stakeholder management, which means that all external institutions / development partners, which would like to work with the different departments of the National Assembly, need to work with and through our office. Furthermore, we oversee the 5-year Strategic Plan of the National Assembly.

The reason why I joined this training is because we felt a lack of M&E-knowledge, of how things are being driven by partners and if their objectives are aligned with those of us. As we do not have a dedicated evaluation office, my office encouraged me to attend this training.

What do you see as the main challenge in your country regarding evidence-based policy making/evaluation?

There is a lack of knowledge about evaluation. For example, before attending this training, I did not know about the exact difference between a performance audit and an evaluation. I do not see this as a lack of will but a lack of knowledge/skill-sets about this field and dedicated attention to it. That is why we do not have in-house experts in this field. So, this particular training has exposed me to an entirely different realm of evaluation.

You participated in the virtual workshop series 2021. What was your main take-away from the trainings and how did you apply it?

I have been actually able to draft Terms of References (ToRs) for our performance auditors/evaluators. I have also commissioned at least two reports, one on Womens' Parliamentary Caucus and the other on the SDGs' Secretariat; both cross-party active platforms of the Parliament pursuing women empowerment and global development agenda, respectively. In this context, I was the key person who sat down with the donor organizations and for the first time, the ToRs and the assessment questions came from the Parliament itself. This was all thanks to the 2021 training.

With this, was it possible for you to generate/contribute to a change in your organization/parliament?

The key findings of these two reports were, that in both caucuses the agenda being pursued was not aligned to the Strategic Plan of the National Assembly. Instead, they were completely donor driven. So, we realized, that all our resources actually went into fulfilling partner driven goals and not our own. So, basically the priorities were misplaced.

This led to structural changes within our organization; we implemented structural change and made these caucuses formal part of the National Assembly Secretariat. Additionally, we hired around 12 in-house consultants who will directly work for us under pre-defined targets and JDs. Finally, we are not including partner-given consultants anymore. I think this is a huge historic reform, which had not taken place during the past two decades, ever since these two caucuses were established.

As a result of the training, have you engaged in further M&E-related activities?

Thanks to this training, I was very happy to be elected as the Vice President for the Global Parliamentarians Forum in the Asia Pacific. We have been able to develop a constitution for the forum and also created brochures on OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. Right now, I am distributing these brochures to the parliamentarians and especially to the SDGs' Secretariat at the National Assembly, to use them as evaluation criteria for their oversight tasks of the various projects being undertaken by the Ministry of Planning and Development.

What are you planning to apply from the training in your work?

I think one thing that I have learnt is that evaluation is lacking in the Asia Pacific-region, overall. We have seen that Europe is way ahead when it comes to evaluation, especially at the parliamentary level. Relevant is that we are now not only questioning where the budget was spent in terms of moneys, but also about the quality and impact of such expenditures.

All in all, I feel there is a need for a culture of evaluation. We need to be more aware about evidence-based information and we need more skilled and qualified people in this professional niche.

A very interesting idea that I learnt here was from the Sri Lankan model, which was to have a dedicated evaluation office in the Parliament. The reason being that commissioning external evaluators is a lengthy process that needs a lot of approvals. So, the two ideas from Sri Lanka; establishing a National Evaluation Policy and setting up a dedicated office for evaluation within the Secretariat of the Parliament, is something which I would like to discuss further with the parliamentarians back home.

Application of newly acquired knowledge

Looking back: 2021' Participation

Questionnaire respondents were asked about their participation in the virtual workshop series in October and November 2021. In total, 11 individuals confirmed their participation. As a follow-up, they were asked several questions on the benefit of these trainings and the application of their new knowledge.

Retrospective assessment of benefit from the training | From the results (Figure 14), it became clear that **for the majority of the respondents, the trainings 'increased their interest to further deal with the topic' in a 'considerable' or 'strong' way (91%)**. All respondents stated also to have at least 'somewhat' 'applied the acquired competencies in their work', which shows the **practical relevance of the content taught**. Room for improvement can be seen for the follow-up 'exchange with other participants'.

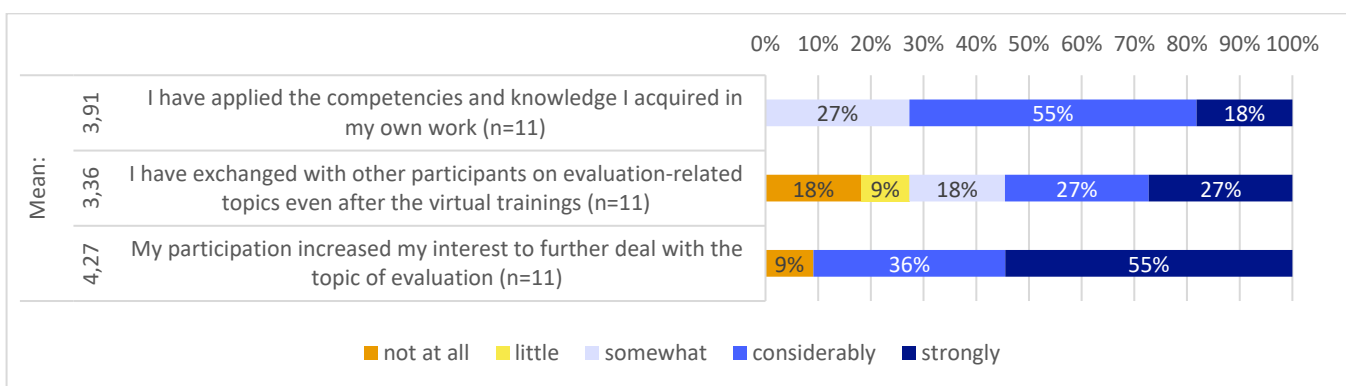


Figure 14: To what extent do you agree with the following statements on the virtual trainings in October and November 2021? (n=11)

Application of new knowledge, insights and skills | Diving deeper into the concrete application of new skills and knowledge, we can see that around **four out of five (82%, n=9) respondents 'promoted the usefulness of evaluation to (parliamentary) colleagues'**, e. g., through meetings or experience-sharing session. Around **two-third (64%, n=7) also called for the 'use of evaluation results and/or the conduction of evaluation'**, e. g., in a parliamentary debate or committee work, **and almost half (45%, n=5) 'used evaluation results for decision-making'**, e. g., preparing for debates or adjusting a decree/law. Advocacy work for an 'evaluation clause' or an 'evaluation decree/law' was far less stated by respondents. However, these two aspects are also the most difficult

ones to achieve, requiring a lot of groundwork to build upon. It is therefore not surprising that only a small share of respondents confirmed this application. Another unexpectedly positive aspect is that **no one indicated ‘not having used’** the newly acquired knowledge, insights and skills (Figure 15).

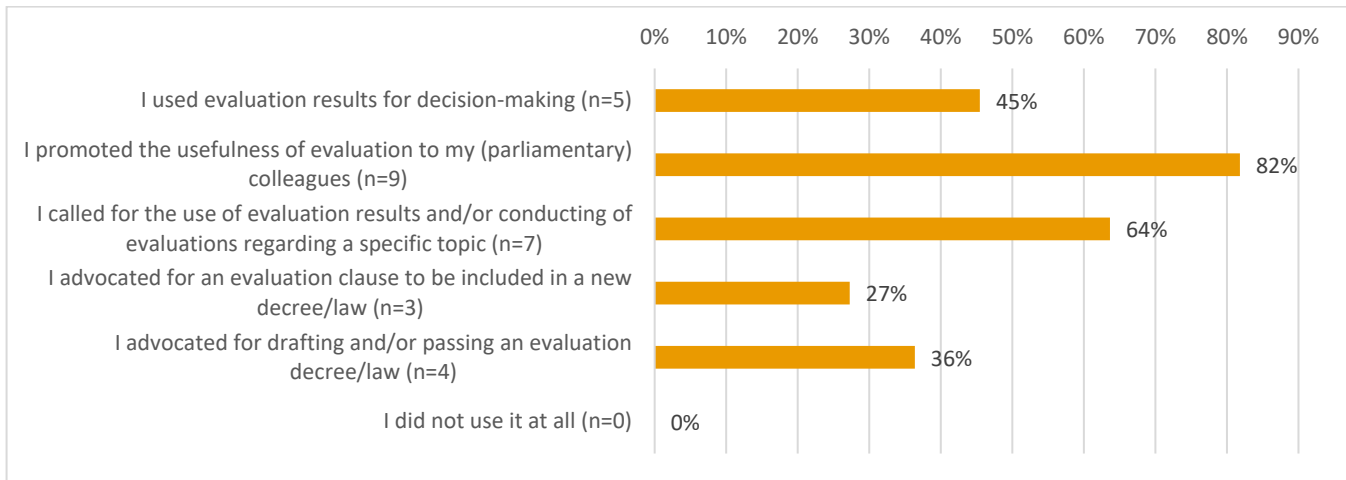


Figure 15: How did you use the newly acquired knowledge, insights and skills from the trainings in October and November in 2021? (multiple answers possible) (n=11)

Other M&E-related activities | Another relevant indicator for the usefulness of the trainings is how participants continued to engage in other evaluation-related activities after the trainings. Fortunately, we can see from the results that all participants have remained engaged in M&E topics and **further participated in ‘evaluation communities and networks’ and/or in ‘evaluation conferences and events’**. Respondents mentioned in this context, among others, the ‘Asia Pacific Regional Dialogue on National Evaluation Policies and Systems 2022’; ‘Launch of Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation’; and ‘3rd APEA Conference & EvalFest 2022’ (Figure 16).

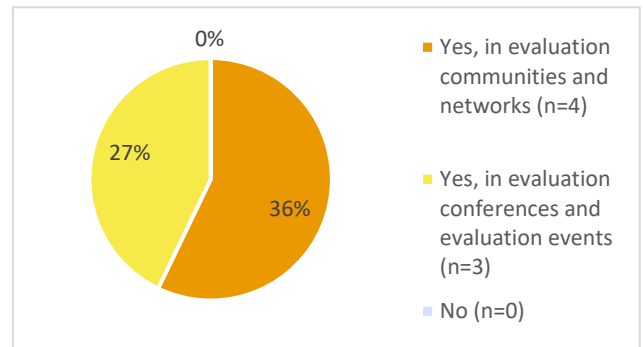


Figure 16: As a result of the virtual trainings in October and November 2021, did you participate in evaluation communities and networks (e. g., evaluation associations, VOPEs), evaluation conferences and evaluation events? (multiple answers possible) (n=11)

Lastly, it is important to state that **all respondents did end up recommending the virtual trainings** in October and November 2021 to their personal and professional networks (100%, n=10).

Here, it is important to note that the **virtual workshop series in 2021 was a catalyst in the formation of the Asia Pacific Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation (APFFE) in June 2022**. The objective of the APFFE is to provide a forum that will support parliamentarians in Asia Pacific region to make use of and advocate for development evaluation in order to promote development effective and inclusive growth. Currently, five out of the six executive members of APFFE were participants of the virtual workshop series in 2021 and of the on-site training in 2023. The **on-site training 2023 was critical for the region to further strengthen the APFFE network by getting more parliamentarians and parliament staff as members to work towards promoting evaluation in their parliaments and enhancing the capacity of individual parliamentarians and parliament to demand solid evaluation evidence and to make use of it in their parliamentary duties**.

“It is indeed such a great opportunity for us the Fiji participants. This is the first time we had attended such workshop. After attending this workshop, we have realized the paramount importance of using evaluation results by the parliamentarians to guide them in decision-making, as well as the role and responsibilities of parliament staff in providing evaluation brief to members to enable them to use it as a guide in sound decision making, and also to carry out their constitutional mandate effectively and in an efficient manner. Also, we had learnt a lot through knowledge sharing, ideas and sharing our own country experiences during the workshop amongst participants.” Avinesh Sharma - Fiji

Looking forward: 2023' Participation

Application of new knowledge, insights and skills | If we now look at the results of the intended application, we see a similar prioritization (Figure 17): **Almost all respondents (90%, n=28) can imagine to 'promote the usefulness of evaluation to (parliamentary) colleagues'**. Another high share of around three-quarter of respondents 'will use evaluation results for decision-making' (77%, n=24) and/or 'call for the use of evaluation results and/or conducting of evaluations regarding a specific topic' (74%, n=23). Again, the advocacy work for an 'evaluation clause' (71%, n=22) or an 'evaluation decree/law' (61%, n=19) are the least mentioned aspects, but still with highly satisfactory results.

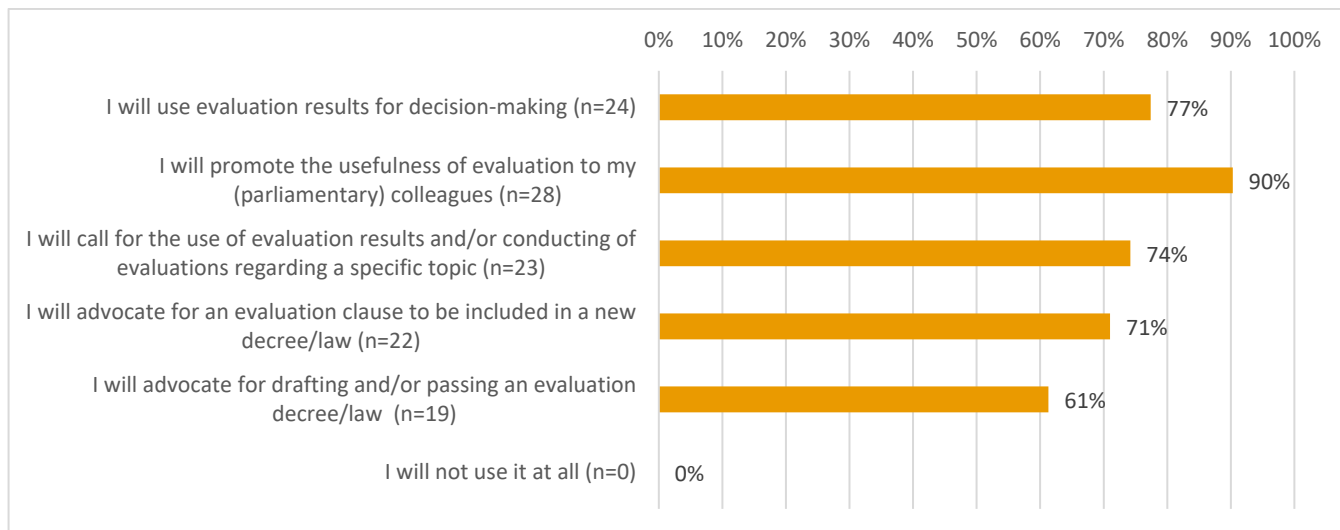


Figure 17: How do you plan to use the newly acquired knowledge, insight and skills? (multiple answers possible)

To bring some qualitative aspects to these results, selected mentions have been summarized in the following box:

I will use evaluation results for decision-making:

- ✓ “...evidence-based information for doing research by developing database in evaluation & planning.” - Participant from Bangladesh
- ✓ “As a staff of Parliament and a researcher I am able to now use the tools to make informed briefs on evaluation results to assist law-makers undertake their oversight roles.” - Participant from Fiji
- ✓ “I will use evaluation results for preparing policy briefs, evaluating annual reports and giving evidence-based information.” - Participant from Sri Lanka
- ✓ “I oversee all the committees, research division and bills office of the parliament in our country. Thus, I am in a position to direct officers to use evaluation in their work.” - Participant from Sri Lanka

I will promote the usefulness of evaluation to my (parliamentary) colleagues:

- ✓ “...this is an opportunity for the secretariat to take up discussions on conducting research to assist members of parliament undertake their roles to oversight and legislate and be better policy-makers.” Participant from Fiji
- ✓ “I will emphasize the message that evaluations generate and provide evidence to inform the policy reform advocacies of our legislators.” - Participant from Philippines
- ✓ “I consider very important to organize a course for the other parliamentary researchers and for the own parliamentarians, about the basic aspects of the course.” - Participant from Mexico
- ✓ “Yes, at the university level in any master's level program.” - Participant from Sri Lanka

I will call for the use of evaluation results and/or conducting of evaluations regarding a specific topic:

- ✓ “...to work with the standing committees, including Ministry of Planning on data collection and research methodology by applying participatory tools.” - Participant from Bangladesh

I will advocate for an evaluation clause to be included in a new decree/law:

- ✓ “Our M&E framework is currently under review so I will advocate for evaluation to be strengthened in our review framework/policy.” - Participant from Fiji

- ✓ “I will push for the enactment of a results-based national evaluation policy in the Philippines.” - Participant from Philippines
- ✓ “I will advocate that proposed laws mandate the conduct of periodic formative evaluations to inform their implementation. Moreover, in our policy briefs, I will recommend the inclusion of mandates for implementing agencies to include a Theory of Change and Results Framework in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) to make it easier to evaluate these laws.” - Participant from Philippines

I will advocate for drafting and/or passing an evaluation decree/law:

- ✓ “I will continue to write policy briefs to raise the awareness and appreciation of legislators on the importance of a legislated National Evaluation Policy (NEP), especially the institutional arrangements (e. g., national agency to spearhead implementation, formation of independent evaluation units within each government agency to facilitate the conduct and use of evaluations, mandates of agency heads to use evaluations) in ensuring the regular conduct and use of evaluations in the public management cycle.” - Participant from Philippines

Summary and conclusions on ‘Application of newly acquired knowledge’:

Not only did participants from 2021 report on a wide range of examples of how they have implemented the knowledge they gained. This year’s participants also see enormous potential for implementing this in their practice.

What is particularly striking is the extensive range of contact points between the content of the training and the range of backgrounds that participants bring with them. The spotlights also show very well the different situations in which participants normally operate and the complex dynamics in which they are involved. This makes them particularly valuable in their role as multipliers and pioneers in the field of M&E in their countries to (further) promote robust and effective national M&E-systems.

Obviously, it is the rather low-threshold topics (experience sharing, using evaluation for own decision-making, and calling for evaluations) that makes implementation possible. The anchoring of evaluation clauses and/or evaluation laws, on the other hand, still require a considerable effort in the future and cannot, of course, be borne by individuals alone, but require further, as well as institutional, support. This offers a variety of further cooperation opportunities for training in the future and must be followed up with.



SPOTLIGHT PHILIPPINES:

Romulo Emmanuel Miral, Jr, Staff, House of Representatives/Congressional Policy & Budget Research Department on the mainstreaming of M&E systems:



What do you see as the main challenge in your country regarding evidence-based policy making/evaluation?

Unless we have a common understanding about evaluation, it is very difficult to make use of evaluation as an effective tool for development. We need to formulate a policy that will systematize the use of evaluation government-wide. After all, many of the problems and issues that we attempt to address through policies and programs are interconnected; if each sector or agency undertakes evaluation in its own way without coordinating and linking with other sectors or agencies, we will fail to sufficiently address the complexity and depth of these problems and issues. Many government agencies have their own M&E-systems, but there is no integrated M&E system for the whole of government.

To make this government-wide M&E evaluation system work, we need to improve the way we utilize administrative data. A by-product of a good monitoring system is quality administrative data that are useful to evidence-based evaluation, decision making, and policy making. Our legislators would be very happy to have in their hands the evidence that they need to effectively oversee the programs, policies, and projects of government, but unfortunately, the evidence or the data that they need, are not always there.

What was your main take-away from the trainings in 2021 and how did you apply it?

Overall, although the trainings have been brief, they were well-organized and they sufficiently covered the theories and concepts on evaluation. The lectures provided opportunities for the participants to gain a common understanding of evaluation.

The content of the online workshop series introduced me to systems, standards, criteria, and practices that give flesh to the theories and concepts of evaluation. This enabled me to delve into the chief functions of evaluation in government operations, namely, a) ensuring that our scarce resources are allocated to the correct programs and projects based on efficiency and effectiveness criteria, and b) guaranteeing that these programs and projects achieve their intended results and outcomes.

With this, was it possible for you to generate/contribute to a change in your organization/parliament?

At my level and at this point of the evolution of evaluation in our government, my best contribution is to advocate for and provide informational foundations for the enactment of a national evaluation policy. My target audiences, of course, are my principals, the legislators.

The more I learnt, the more I became convinced that we need to have a policy that would guide, structure, and integrate the M&E-systems of the different agencies of the government that are currently very fragmented. Our office, CPBRD, has been very active in pushing for the enactment of a national evaluation policy, which has already been in the legislative agenda of the Philippine Development Plan. This would institutionalize evaluation as a tool for policy- and decision-making.

I also tried to look for opportunities for our office to engage in capacity-building for evaluation. This is essential because institutionalizing an evaluation policy is one thing, and actually possessing and using the skills, competencies, tools, and mindset to operationalize the policy is another. With the help of UNICEF, we were able to access some capacity-building activities. Also, through networking with the Asia Pacific Evaluation Association we were also able to access online trainings and now this on-site IPDET training.

What are you planning to apply from the training in your work?

We continue our initiative on advocating for and providing information and learnings on institutionalizing a national evaluation policy. We are also trying to engage other government agencies towards the establishment of an integrated M&E system.

Further results

Service and information provided

Information and support provided | The information and support received before and during the training was rated as excellent by at least 97% of all respondents (strongly) agreeing with all items assessed (Figure 18).

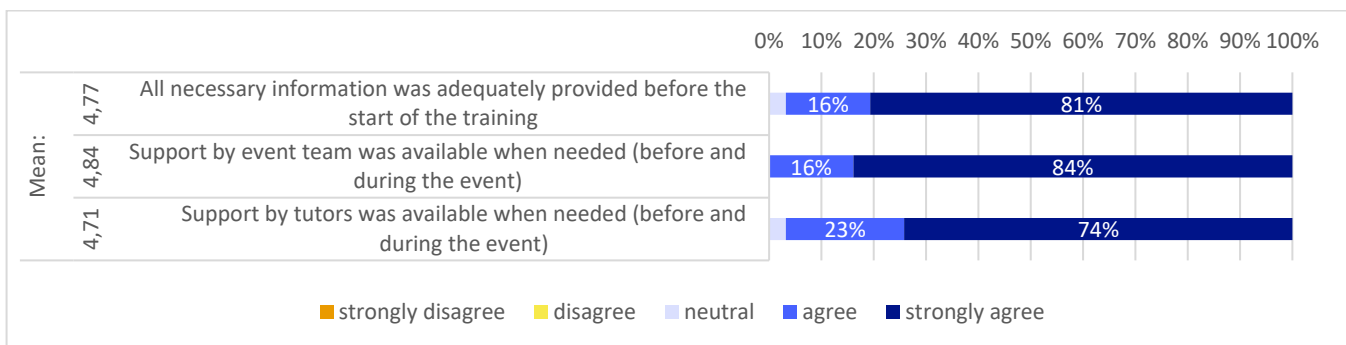


Figure 18: Please rate the quality of information and support provided by the organizers (n=31)

Accommodation | Accommodation was provided in the Galadari Hotel in Colombo/Sri Lanka. The items ‘cleanliness’ and ‘overall comfort and amenities’ received both 97% ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ ratings. Only the item ‘internet connection’ received additionally some/more ‘poor’ or ‘neutral’ ratings (Figure 19).

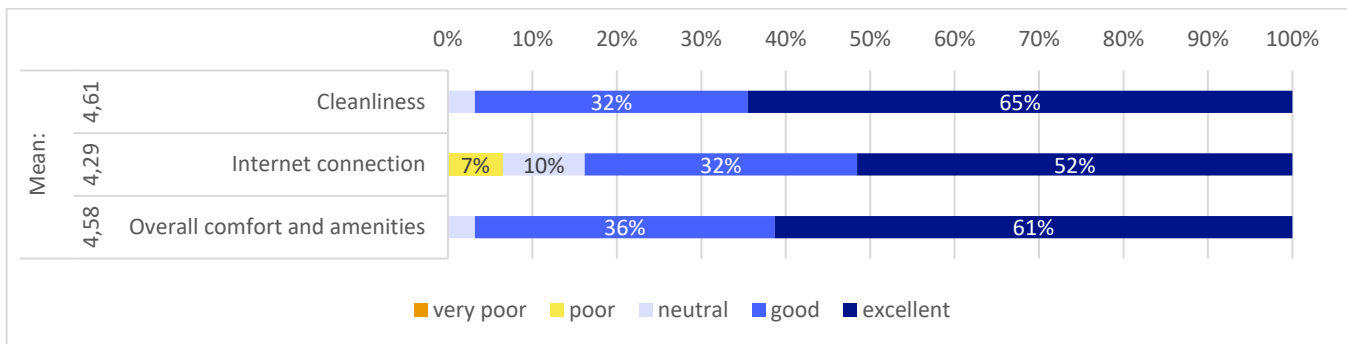


Figure 19: How do you assess the accommodation? (n=31)

Food service | Also the food service was assessed with extraordinary ratings, being (at least) 97% of the scores ‘good’ or ‘excellent’. Especially, the ‘variety/selection’ and ‘options for dietary restrictions’ need to be emphasized here. Both aspects were highly important, as participants stayed several days in the same hotel and we need to keep in mind, that the training took place during Muslim and Christian fasting period, which made it necessary to stay flexible in providing the food service (Figure 20).

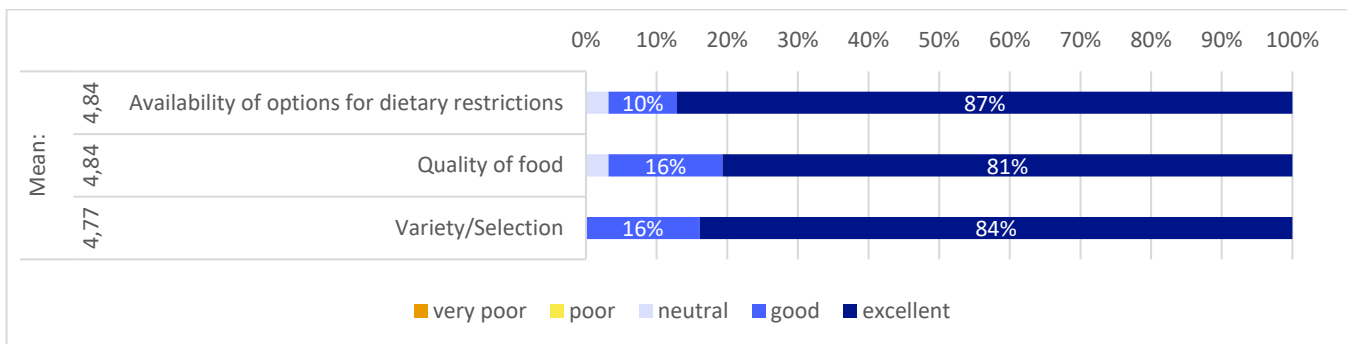


Figure 20: How do you assess the food service? (n=31)

Staying engaged and content

Stay engaged | An extremely positive result is that **all participants want to remain in contact with the organizers**. The preferred medium for communication is email, e. g., via newsletter (90%, n=28). Around three quarters (77%, n=24) also want to read social media posts. A smaller group is in favor more accessible options, e. g. in the form of WhatsApp or similar platforms (‘Other’, 19%, n=6) (Figure 21).

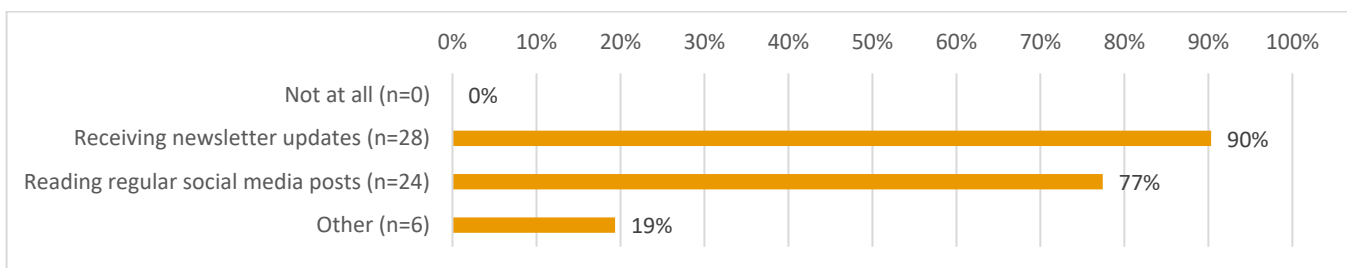


Figure 21: To what degree would you like to stay engaged with the organizers? (multiple answers possible) (n=31)

Receiving content | All of the proposed content options related to the question “Which content would you appreciate to receive from organizers?” seem to be highly interesting to the respondents. Frontrunners are ‘further material on latest topics’ with 94% and ‘event announcements’ (90%). This highlights the variety of information that the organizers need to provide to keep the alumni further engaged and interested in the topic.

Further reception of the training

Further comments and suggestions | Questionnaire respondents were also offered the opportunity to provide further feedback and suggestions for improvement. From a total of 25 feedbacks, five thematic clusters were formed, the biggest group on the necessity of follow-up trainings:

- **Follow-up (n=8):** The great desire for more events to deepen and expand the theme, e. g., in other countries or in online formats. Furthermore, specialized trainings only for parliament staff to dive into details of conducting an evaluation.
- **Content (n=5):** Other ideas for workshop topics, such as data collection and analysis methods or evaluation implementation. Furthermore, more space for knowledge exchange to learn from other parliaments.
- **Overall (n=4):** There is a desire for shorter class times and more social activities.
- **Group work (n=4):** Feedback was given on more time for group work and changing group composition.
- **General feedback (n=4):** This cluster contained messages of appreciation and gratitude only.

Social Media | IPDET published a total of 25 social media posts about the training on LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter. These generated 10,840 impressions¹⁶ (434 impressions per post) and 205 likes (9 likes per post). In the months of the program year so far, this represents an absolute **peak in IPDETs external communication** and is so far only surpassed by the promotion of the scholarships for the On-Site program in July.

Public perception | In addition, the training garnered an **extremely high public interest**: This included a visit by the Sri Lankan Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena during the official opening, two TV reports¹⁷ on the evening news of one of the largest media networks in Sri Lanka, Voice of Asia Network's and Siyatha TV (Siyatha News), and other numerous newspaper articles.

"I understand that the learnings from this training are means rather than ends, and because we are trained to focus on results, we pay attention to those that are likely to deliver on the results that matter. We might not be able to comprehend and retain all the information provided to us, but I think we are aware of the most important lessons that will serve as motivation and hope as we work diligently to institutionalize National Evaluation Policy in our individual countries. We have a lot of work ahead of us after learning these lessons, I'm sure of it. As the evaluation champion, lets always do the right thing."

Maricel Solatre - Philippines

Summary and conclusions on 'Further results':

At the risk of being repetitive, the results on service, accommodation and food also showed exceedingly positive feedback. These results are especially encouraging because the organizing team put in a lot of administrative effort into the planning and execution of the training.

Furthermore, it is promising to see that all participants are highly interested in the subject and want to stay in contact with the organizers and receive further content. For this purpose, it must be considered how own content can be provided specifically for this target group and/or how this can be integrated even better into the existing programs of the organizers.

In addition, the training generated extremely high visibility, both in terms of social media and the general public.

¹⁶ Impressions are the total number of times social media browsers have been showed the content, means this number is the number of individuals reached with a post.

¹⁷ [Event opening](#) and [Parliament session](#) (35:04-36:38).



SPOTLIGHT KYRGYZSTAN

Natalia Nikitenko, Former Member of Parliament of the Kyrgyz Republic, on networking and advocacy for evaluation:



How is your work connected to evaluation and what was your motivation for attending the training?

During my time as member of the parliament for eleven years I was chairperson for different committees and worked a lot with evaluators and VOPEs. Therefore, it is my strong conviction that evaluation is a more than proper tool for decision-makers, which can make changes on the political level.

In this time, we initiated the law on evaluation in Kyrgyz Republic, which was accepted by the parliament in 2014. The law sets the overall framework for the government, parliament, local councils, civil society, professional evaluators etc., and approaches the agenda on evaluation. However, building a national evaluation policy takes time. Having the legislation is not enough and only one of the important fragments. That is why we worked together with the VOPE to engage in capacity-building. The information from the virtual training in 2021 and the training this year is an excellent source for building my capacity as an expert in this sector. For example, I learnt a lot about structure of evaluation reports, evaluation methodologies, or how to inform stakeholders. All this definitely broadened my perspective on the topic of evaluation.

What is the importance of networks for the advocacy for evaluation?

I think it is extremely important to build regional connections in one bigger platform, which is the actual objective of the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation. That is why I really appreciate the in-person format. Right from the beginning within the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation, we had the ambitious plan to build the networks on regional level and one global platform in order to establish sustainable communication, in terms of promoting evaluation agenda and very practical exchange of information. For achieving these goals, it is important to continue building-capacity, and especially minimizing the gap between VOPEs and decision-makers. This training now helps us to continue cooperation on a regular basis in order to help the evaluation culture in the countries and to build national evaluation policies.

In Kyrgyzstan, for example, when we adapted the law in 2014, we did not know about the global evaluation movements or networks. We just worked on ourselves on the national level. Through our VOPE I was then step by step more involved in the international activities and met decision-makers from other countries, which brought a new perspective to me. Through this we were able to develop very practical methodologies, like evaluation of laws or evaluation of national programs. We also built the capacity of people working in the parliament and for the government, linked them to the VOPE, and linked them to the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation. And then we developed our own national evaluation policy on the parliamentary level. We are far from having a national evaluation policy as a whole, but with all this we have good fragments to make a change in the country, improve the quality of decision-making and rise the agenda of evaluation. This is a result of our international involvement as a country.

What do you see as the main challenge in your country regarding evidence-based policy making/evaluation?

Right now, we have political changes in the country for around two years. There is a new constitution, a new president, a new political system, which brings new challenges like building transparent system of good governance. However, this also brings new opportunities.

I am not a member of the parliament anymore, but now working as an expert with the parliament, ministries and UN organizations to help the government building system of good governance, accountability and to implement evaluations. This also includes trainings for parliament staff on evaluation and I am using all tools and channels to continue the work we have started many years before.



Overall summary, lessons learned & outlook



Overall summary

In many countries, parliamentarians' decisions are not based on facts. Instead, beliefs, subjective views or even information from unreliable sources dominate.

In order to fill the phrase of an 'evidence-based policy' with life, i. e. a policy based on reliable data and facts, IPDET, in partnership with APEA, GPFE, and APPFE, on behalf of the GEI of the World Bank Group, conducted the first international on-site training on evaluation for parliamentarians and parliament staff from Asia Pacific, from 27-30 March 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka. This training aimed at showing how evaluation can contribute to generating such 'evidence' and supporting parliamentarians and staff in their work tasks.

The 46 participants from 18 primarily Asia Pacific countries discussed with great enthusiasm the opportunities that evaluation offers in policy-making. The participants showed **overwhelming commitment** in solving work tasks, analyzing practical case studies and conducting a simulated parliamentary debate.

The results of the final questionnaire support this positive feeling with evidence: **Without exception, all dimensions examined achieved extraordinarily good results, some of them even the best ever achieved** by an IPDET training, and certainly unprecedented by comparable M&E trainings of other organizers.

It became clear that not only did the training develop an understanding of the benefits of evaluation for parliamentary work, but also the firm will to use evaluations in the real political practice.

In particular, looking ahead, we are confident that the trainings conducted in 2021 and 2023 will have a catalytic effect:

- (1) At APEA, follow-through activities are lined up to further engage parliamentarians in the region. For instance, the APPFE is planning to raise awareness and promote knowledge about the importance of using evidence, generated by evaluation for oversight, policy and decision-making through webinars and conferences. A regional consultation on NEPs is in the pipeline at the 4th APEA Conference in December 2023. A session at the Parliament (House of Representatives) of the Philippines is also being planned as part of the conference.
- (2) The will to implement the knowledge and experience gained in the workshop in their own parliaments was reflected in the results of the final questionnaire: **90% of respondents stated that they want to convince their (parliamentary) colleagues of the usefulness of the evaluation.** Around three quarters want to use evaluation results for decision-making in the future, demand that evaluations be carried out or anchor evaluation clauses in new laws and decrees. Even if only a part of these declarations of intent are put into practice, the training has actually helped to turn the workshop motto 'Better Policy Making Through Evaluation' into reality.

Especially the second point is a great success, because the **development of national evaluation structures and processes**, one of the central goals of the GEI, **cannot succeed without the involvement of the legislature.** The political change towards evidence-based, rational governance does not only affect the executive, but also requires a legislative foundation. Parliamentarians can not only use evaluation results for their debates and decision-making, but they can also make a significant contribution to setting the framework for evidence-based politics by enacting evaluation laws or building evaluation clauses into laws.

Lessons learned & outlook

Organization and delivery of the training

- ✓ The **organizational implementation went very smoothly** thanks to highly motivated and extremely competent partner organizations. Of particular importance was the cooperation with APEA and GPFE as regional and thematical partners. This collaboration serves as an exemplary best-practice for future trainings.
- ✓ Trainings with parliamentarians and parliament staff as intended target group require a **high degree of flexibility and perseverance**. Up until the end, the organization team put a lot of administrative efforts into securing the participants for the training. Also, last-minute adjustments need to be considered.
- ✓ The excellent feedbacks do not just fall down from the sky. They are the clear result of **rigorous and precise planning and organizing**. This also includes tailoring the content to the actual needs of the primary target group and clear communication on their own preparation for the training. Regular follow up with parliamentarians and parliament staff are required to ensure their participation in the training.
- ✓ Trainings in the Global South require a **diversified fundraising strategy** to attract enough participants. The various cost factors of the training must be considered, whereby the first implementation, due to its novelty, always causes higher costs than subsequent training based on it. Potential sponsors must be made very clear about the purpose of support.

Individual base

- ✓ It has become apparent, that there is a **significant interest of parliamentarians and parliamentarian staff in attending trainings to further improve their skills and knowledge in evidence-based policy-making**. The participants expressed their gratitude for the training opportunity, and were very engaged during the training.
- ✓ The willingness to learn about evaluation can be seen as an indicator that parliamentarians are **seeking to shift their political style towards a more rational approach to decision-making**. Evaluation can serve as an important tool in this regard.
- ✓ The feedback of participants shows, that the content of the training provides them with tools and guidance for working more efficiently and effectively in areas such as analyzing (progress) reports of projects/programs/bills, budget research, drafting of and/or final decision-making on new laws. This indicates, that the **goal to convince and equip participants with knowledge and skills to use evaluative evidence in the policy-making process has been achieved with great success**.

Follow-up on overarching structures

- ✓ There is a significant (and so far, unmet) demand for further trainings in this area. Therefore, to further raise awareness about evaluation among parliamentarians and parliament staff worldwide, this **training series should also be offered in other regions**. This includes partnering with other organizations to deliver the training.
- ✓ To build robust and effective national M&E systems, **parliamentarians and parliament staff cannot be ignored as target groups**. Therefore, it is important, to focus on the **further mainstreaming of M&E in parliamentary structures**, which goes beyond solely individual trainings. It is of utmost importance to demonstrate not only how participants can apply their new knowledge in their daily work, but also how they can establish evaluative structures within their countries.