

The document is the final summative evaluation report that aims to assess the extent to which the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) has achieved its intended objectives. The evaluation examines the significant accomplishments, challenges, and necessary steps to realize the NEPF's goals fully. The summative assessment focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of the policy framework in the following areas: (1) strengthening M&E capacities, including knowledge, skills, competencies, and practices, across government agencies; (2) enhancing the planning, management, and implementation of public sector evaluations by national government agencies; (3) ensuring effective dissemination, management response, and utilization of evaluation outputs; and (4) establishing an organizational structure aligned with the policy framework, including the establishment of a central evaluation unit at the national level.

The evaluation process involved a comprehensive analysis of the NEPF, assessing its alignment with national priorities and adherence to global best practices and evaluation standards. The implementation of the NEPF and its impact on the public sector evaluation system and practice were also reviewed. Consultations with key stakeholders, including government agency representatives and development partners, were conducted to gather their perspectives on the NEPF's implementation. These consultations provided valuable insights into the NEPF's implementation and guided the formulation of recommendations to strengthen the policy framework, the evaluation system, and practices in the Philippines. Overall, this evaluation approach offers a thorough assessment of the NEPF and valuable insights for enhancing the evaluation system and practices within the Government of the Philippines.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

On Relevance. The NEPF aims to address the need for a standardized evaluation system and promote the use of evaluation in the public sector. However, there is limited awareness of the framework among government agencies involved in the evaluation. According to survey respondents, 60% (6 out of 10) reported being unfamiliar with the policy framework, and many interview respondents also expressed their lack of knowledge about it. Despite being signed in 2015, the NEPF remains relevant today due to several factors: (1) increasing demands from the Filipino people for transparency and accountability in government; (2) the COVID-19 pandemic highlighting the importance of evidence-based decision-making in managing public health crises; (3) a growing recognition of the value of quality evaluations in assessing the effectiveness and impact of government programs and policies; (4) a continued focus on results-based management and efficient use of public resources by the national government; (5) the underutilization of the NEPF and the yet-to-be-achieved ultimate goal; and (6) persistent development challenges in public sector evaluation. While the Joint Memorandum Circular (JMC) serves as an appropriate policy instrument to institutionalize and govern the practice of evaluation in the public sector, a policy instrument with greater enforcement power would have facilitated optimal NEPF implementation, although the JMC is sufficient to compel government entities to act on the policy framework.

On Coherence. Regarding coherence, national legislation related to evaluation is currently lacking; however, the NEPF aligns with reform initiatives aimed at enhancing results orientation in the management of the public sector in the Philippines. The evaluation also revealed that the NEPF aligns with ongoing efforts to establish a National Evaluation Policy (NEP) in the country. Furthermore, the NEPF adheres to recognized and established international evaluation norms and standards set by organizations such as the Evaluation Cooperation Group (ECG), Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG), American Evaluation Association (AEA), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group (WB-IEG), and the Asian Development Bank - Independent Evaluation Department (ADB-IED).

On Effectiveness. The framework provides a set of guidelines and standards that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of programs and projects. The NEPF's contributions to public sector evaluation are as follows: (1) Established evaluation standards to address fragmented evaluation approaches in the public sector; (2) Conducted or commissioned evaluation studies adhering to the

NEPF and draft guidelines (3) Strengthened NEDA's leadership and oversight of public sector evaluation; and, (4) Stimulated conversation and demand for evaluation. The evaluation unearthed several factors that have contributed to the NEPF's accomplishments. These include the availability of the 200 million pesos and the establishment of the M&E Fund, which have played a crucial role in supporting the NEPF implementation roll-out. Despite losing partners from other oversight agencies, NEDA has demonstrated leadership and commitment to the NEPF rollout. Developing the Draft NEPF Guidelines has provided a comprehensive framework for evaluation practice and utilization, mainly through the Strategic M&E Project. Collaboration with development partners, including 3ie, UNICEF, and UNDP, has also been beneficial.

The NEPF's Theory of Change (ToC) outlines its objective of institutionalizing the evaluation function within government agencies and fostering a culture of evidence-based decision-making. Intermediate Outcome 1.4 of the ToC emphasizes the importance of agencies having an evaluation agenda. However, among the interviewed agencies, only OPAPRU indicated that they had developed an evaluation agenda in response to the NEPF. Other agencies may have established a research and development agenda without familiarity with the NEPF. In addition, National Evaluation Agenda was not developed as planned. The ToC also emphasizes the importance of sustained resources for evaluation initiatives to foster a strong evaluation culture. Planning evaluations with an appropriate budget is crucial to achieving this goal. The evaluation findings reveal that among the engaged agencies, only OPAPRU has successfully developed an evaluation plan due to the NEPF. Although several agencies have provided a list of their evaluation-related resources, the evaluation could not determine if the NEPF has facilitated the implementation of evaluation by other agencies. The evaluation lacks robust evidence to establish a direct link between these outputs and the influence of the NEPF.

Correspondingly, an outcome of the TOC is the effective communication and use of evaluation results. The evaluation uncovered several mechanisms implemented as part of the NEPF rollout to promote the dissemination and utilization of evaluation results, such as the annual M&E Network Forum, the National Evaluation Portal linked to the NEDA website, and the Evaluation Reference Group (ERG), which is inter-agency in nature. Furthermore, the NEPF encourages using Management Response, a process where the concerned government agency provides feedback on the evaluation findings and outlines actions to address the recommendations. While Management Response is an essential aspect of commissioned evaluations under the Strategic M&E Project, the evaluation identified a lack of a mechanism to track the progress of the actions outlined in the Management Responses.

In the NEPF's ToC, establishing a functional agency-level neutral evaluation unit is highlighted as crucial for strengthening the evaluation culture within the public sector. However, among the agencies engaged in the evaluation, only OPAPRU has established a centralized evaluation unit in line with NEPF provisions, placing the Evaluation Unit directly under the Office of the Secretary. It is worth noting that the Department of Agriculture (DA) also established a Neutral Evaluation Unit through a Special Order released in February 2023. Also, NEDA has established a Central Evaluation Unit. The other evaluated agencies have not established a centralized evaluation unit. These agencies typically have project-based M&E, where each project has its own donor with specific M&E protocols and standards.

Similarly, according to the ToC, improving the capacity of individuals and institutions is crucial for promoting the practice and use of evaluation in the public sector. The ToC identifies two outputs to enhance individual and organizational capacity: (1) the rollout and implementation of a competency framework for evaluation in the public service across the entire public sector and (2) the implementation of a national capacity development plan. However, the evaluation findings indicate that the National Capacity Development Plan was not developed. Upon reviewing the available information, the evaluation found that a series of M&E webinars was implemented through the Strategic M&E Project. However, due to the lack of data, it is challenging to assess whether these activities successfully increased the capacity of the participating agencies or contributed to developing their capacity-building plans for M&E.

The evaluation found the following significant challenges that may have impeded the full realization of the NEPF's potential. These include the non-convening and non-establishment of the ETF and its Secretariat. Leadership changes following the 2016 national elections resulted in the loss of champions from Oversight Agencies. Limited dissemination and inadequate cascading of the NEPF to agency level evaluation units by top management officials have hindered its implementation. Insufficient awareness of the NEPF has prevented its institutionalization within agencies, leading to a lack of central evaluation units in implementing agencies. Furthermore, the design limitations and narrow focus on project and program evaluations have overlooked the importance of policy evaluations and have confined the NEPF's scope to the Executive Branch of the government.

On Efficiency. The ETF plays a crucial role in implementing the NEPF in the Philippines, as it is responsible for leading and coordinating the policy framework's implementation across the government. However, the evaluation revealed that the ETF was not convened and formally established as intended by the JMC. Consequently, the ETF's roles and the Secretariat were not performed as envisioned. The Interim Secretariat, led by NEDA-MES, took on the responsibility of overseeing the NEPF implementation. NEDA-MES acted as the custodian of the M&E Fund and played a coordinating and supervisory role in the rollout of the NEPF and the utilization of the fund. The evaluation question regarding the adequacy of the ETF's structures and processes cannot be addressed due to the ETF's non-establishment.

Based on the ToC, sustaining resource allocation for public sector evaluation initiatives is crucial for the Intermediate Outcome of strengthening the culture of evaluation. An initial Php 200 million M&E Fund is allocated to NEDA, along with an annual fund, to support this objective. However, the annual fund is decreasing despite the persistent evaluation challenges in the Philippine government. To fully optimize the NEPF, Budget Guidelines for using the General Appropriations Act specifically for evaluation are necessary. This will ensure sustained resources for capacity development, hiring human resources, and conducting evaluations within the government. Alongside addressing knowledge and skills gaps, organizational and institutional changes are necessary to enhance public sector evaluation.

On Sustainability. A key challenge in sustaining the gains of the NEPF is the limited capacity among implementing agencies and other stakeholders to conduct evaluations effectively. Although the framework provides principles and guidelines, the evaluation revealed that many government agencies have not institutionalized the NEPF. Despite this challenge, efforts have been made to support implementing agencies and other stakeholders in maintaining the benefits of the NEPF, such as the development of the Draft NEPF Guidelines and the regular M&E Network Forum.

On Impact. One of the notable positive effects is the increased emphasis on evidence-based policymaking. The NEPF has established a formal evaluation system, institutionalizing evaluation as a crucial component of the policy-making process. Another positive outcome of the NEPF is its contribution to enhancing the capacity of government agencies to conduct evaluations. On the other hand, an unintended consequence is the potential for evaluations to be viewed solely as a compliance requirement rather than a valuable tool for learning and program improvement. This may result in evaluations being conducted merely to fulfill NEPF's obligations without generating meaningful insights to inform policy-making decisions. At a higher level, the NEPF has contributed to developing a culture of evidence-based policy-making in the Executive Branch. Furthermore, the NEPF has positively influenced the use of evaluations for program improvement. Another positive effect of the NEPF is the enhanced collaboration between government agencies and other stakeholders in the evaluation process.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The summative evaluation's recommendations are shown in the section below. By strengthening capacity-building initiatives, encouraging evidence-based decision-making, improving coordination and communication among stakeholders, and prioritizing result program design and evaluation, the recommendations aim to fortify the nation's NEPF and evaluation system and practice. The

recommendations constitute a road map for enhancing the evaluation system and practice in the Philippines and are based on the evaluation findings.

Recommendations	Timeframe	Who
<p>Recommendation 1: Strengthen the NEPF and its support. This can be achieved through:</p> <p>1.1 Enhancing the NEPF's Institutional, financial, technical, human, and political support resources</p> <p>1.2 Strengthening the policy backing of the NEPF through the National Evaluation Policy (NEP) or an Executive Order (EO).</p> <p>1.3 Re-engaging DBM and OP-PMS and securing their continued support for the NEPF</p>	<p>Immediate and from short to long-term</p> <p>Immediate and short-term</p> <p>Immediate and short-term</p>	<p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the government.</p> <p>ETF</p> <p>NEDA</p>
<p>Recommendation 2: Strengthen the NEFP implementation rollout and public sector evaluation activities. This can be achieved through:</p> <p>2.1 Broadening the application of the NEPF to include all branches of the government, such as the legislative and judicial branches, and integrating policy evaluations into the framework.</p> <p>2.2 Conducting additional evaluation studies and increasing demand for evaluation by providing training and building capacity. It is also essential to continue or finalize the development of the National Capacity Development Plan. Additionally, it is necessary to prioritize the development of a pipeline for evaluation studies in the near to medium term through the formulation of the National Evaluation Agenda.</p> <p>2.3 Optimizing the existing National Evaluation Portal as the centralized evaluation database or registry and tracking actions on the Management Response. Additionally, the current interface can be improved by creating a summary/dashboard of the evaluation studies, classified according to evaluation type and showing key details (e.g., implementing agencies, budget, impact, and outcomes of</p>	<p>Medium to long-term</p> <p>Short to long-term</p> <p>Immediate</p>	<p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within the government.</p> <p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the government.</p> <p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the government.</p>

<p>evaluation subject, and the corresponding results). Furthermore, the portal must allow the uploading/submission of evaluation studies and M&E data into the portal by implementing agencies.</p> <p>2.4 Rolling out the Draft NEPF Guidelines.</p> <p>2.5 Establishing an evaluation quality assurance mechanism</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Short to medium-term</p>	<p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the government.</p> <p>ETF</p>
<p>Recommendation 3: Enhance stakeholder engagement and awareness, particularly the government agencies, to improve their knowledge of the benefits of the NEPF in achieving their organizational goals.</p>	<p>Immediate</p>	<p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within the government.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4: Restructure the ETF by incorporating additional members from both within and outside (academic and research institutions, development partners, NGOs) the government, preferably at the advisory level.</p>	<p>Medium-term</p>	<p>ETF and other relevant stakeholders within and outside the government.</p>