

# FOOTPRINT EVALUATION - INCORPORATING CONSIDERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY INTO ALL EVALUATIONS

UNEG group

Andy Rowe and the footprint evaluation team

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I gratefully acknowledge that I have been made welcome to live and work on the unceded traditional territory of the Coast Salish. As a settler on this land, I confirm my commitment to actively work against colonialism and to support Indigenous self-determination and jurisdiction in this territory and across Canada.

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## The footprint evaluation team



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Footprint evaluation focuses on evaluating the 'footprint' that human systems make on natural systems.

Importantly, it includes evaluating the potential and actual environmental impacts of interventions that do not have explicit environmental objectives.

Footprint evaluation is accompanying BetterEvaluation to the Global Evaluation Initiative (GEI)

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# First year of footprint evaluation

Developed Footprint Evaluation organisation – core team, thought partners, discussion group community of practice

Undertook a series of retrospective thought experiments on real evaluations

- To test the premise that interventions assumed to be human system are strongly coupled to environment
- To test the premise it is feasible to address environment in evaluation of these interventions
- To identify and articulate some strategies that could be used

Undertook an empirical footprint evaluation as part of a larger evaluation

- To further develop the strategies identified
- To test ways of getting evidence for actual evaluations

Started to identify and develop methods and tools

- Revised Key Evaluation Questions to address sustainability
- Concept and initial testing of a typology to assess position of interventions regarding harm caused to environment
- Identifying existing environmental commitments at a national level

Created thematic page and repository for resources on the BetterEvaluation knowledge platform

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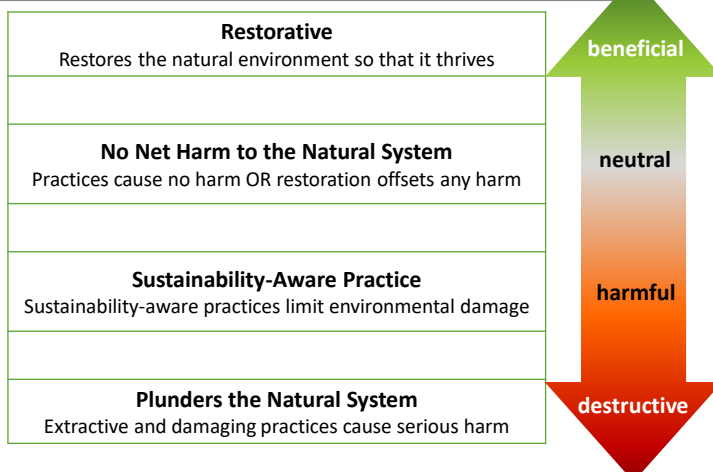
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## What do we mean by sustainability?

“Sustainable” development means development that meets the needs of the present **without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs**.

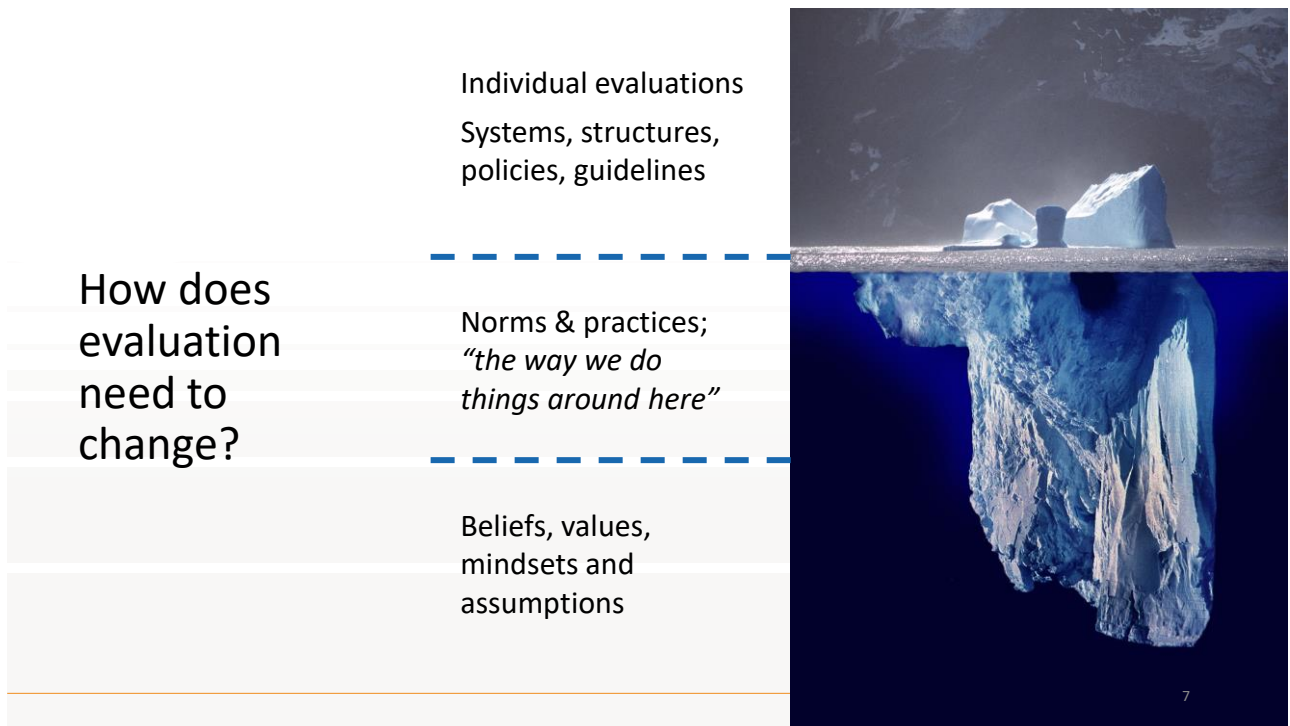
IPCC (2018) defines sustainability as a dynamic process that guarantees the **persistence of natural and human systems** in an equitable manner.

Suggests that we need to be able to assess the effect of all interventions on natural systems



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## Consider: Increased Urgency 2030 is 1 to 1.5 full project cycles away

BY THE TIME NEWLY INITIATED PROJECTS ARE EVALUATED IT WILL BE TOO LATE

- Typical development project is about 6 years from design to conclusion
- Evaluation typically occurs at mid point and conclusion
- Supervision reviews can occur annually
- Evaluation not very timely considering the urgency of sustainability

SOME POSSIBLE ADAPTATIONS OF THE EVALUATION FUNCTION

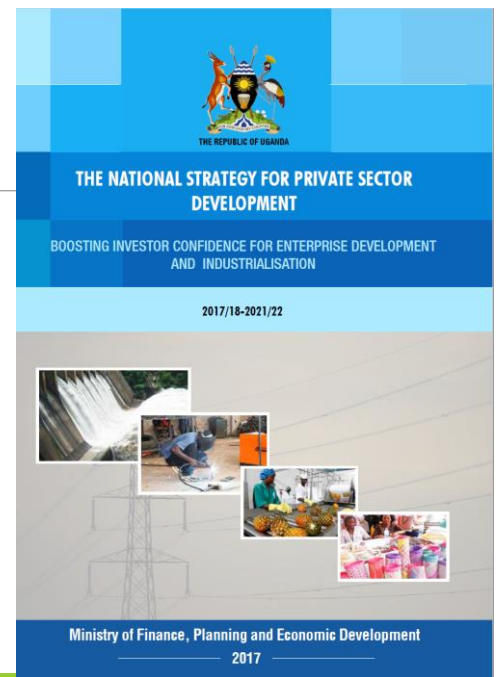
- Evaluation needs to be more timely
- Consider likely future effects
- Formative and developmental evaluation approaches can have value
- Strengthen focus on use at project & program levels

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## Case study

- Uganda's National Strategy for Private Sector Development
- NSPSD envisioned to foster creation of a competitive and developing private sector as a means of promoting inclusive growth for sustainable economic development.
- Footprint evaluation was a component of the overall evaluations, addressing 'cross-cutting environmental issues'



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## Important learning from the case study

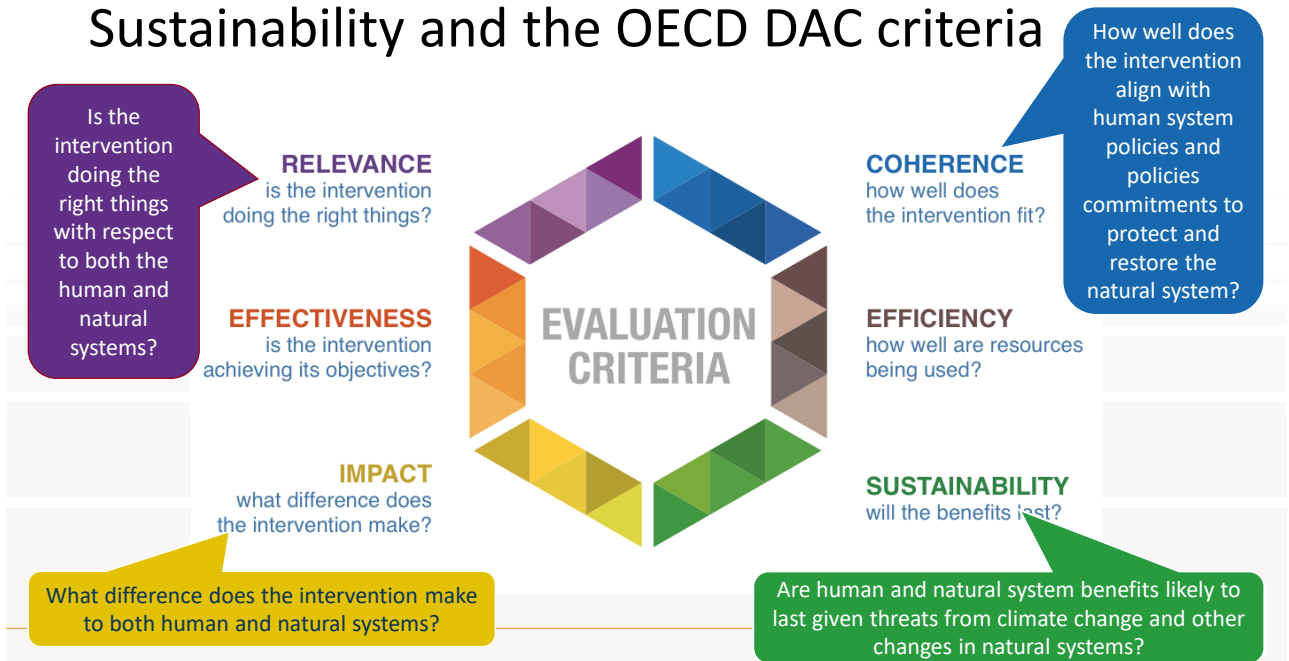
- It was feasible and efficacious to include an assessment of environmental impacts in the evaluation.
- Reconstructed theory of change was necessary
- OECD DAC criteria can be used to get environmental sustainability onto the evaluation agenda.
- Publicly available information is high value
- Important to understand geography of the locale (GIS can be scaled and valuable)
- Expertise (boundary spanner important) needed to identify and explore a range of possible environmental impacts.
- Secondary data is valuable, especially when primary data collection is not possible or is limited.
- National environmental commitments can legitimize the focus on environmental impacts.

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# Sustainability and the OECD DAC criteria



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[Overview](#) | [Methods and processes](#) | [Approaches](#) | [Themes](#) | [Resource library](#)

## Key Evaluation Questions guide Footprint Evaluations

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### Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) to guide Footprint Evaluations

The key evaluation questions (KEQs) are designed to support the inclusion of environmental sustainability by embedding consideration of the environment in each evaluation question rather than adding environmental considerations as a standalone question.

#### Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) to guide Footprint Evaluations

Jane Davidson and Andy Rowe  
DRAFT v2 – April 29, 2021

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| Contents                            | 2 |
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| KEQ 1: Relevance & Coherence        | 3 |
| KEQ 2: Design & Adaptation          | 3 |
| KEQ 3: Implementation               | 4 |
| KEQ 4: Outcomes & Impacts           | 4 |
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| KEQ 7: Overall Value                | 5 |
| Glossary                            | 6 |
| Other key concepts                  | 6 |

Source: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/resources/key-evaluation-questions-keqs-guide-footprint-evaluations>

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Quick explainer of  
what's included  
under outcomes  
and impacts

**KEQ 4.**  
How good,  
valuable, and  
important are  
the outcomes  
and impacts?

Subquestions to  
consider under  
this KEQ

Outcomes and impacts include **changes contributed to or prevented by the evaluand** across their relevant temporal scales – and their shelf life (sustainability).

This **includes effects on** the human system as well as **the natural environment** – all affected subgroups, communities, organisations, society, the economy, and the natural systems within which they exist – both intended and unintended, for both the target population/environment and anyone or anything else substantially impacted.

**How substantially did the evaluand contribute to (or adversely impact) the most important strengths, needs, and aspirations of both human and natural systems – particularly of the most critical and/or threatened parts of the natural system** and those who had been most marginalized, oppressed, and/or least well served in the human system?

How appropriately does the evaluand **value, privilege, protect, or exploit different parts of the relevant human and natural systems** (e.g., different groups of people, different parts of the ecosystem)?

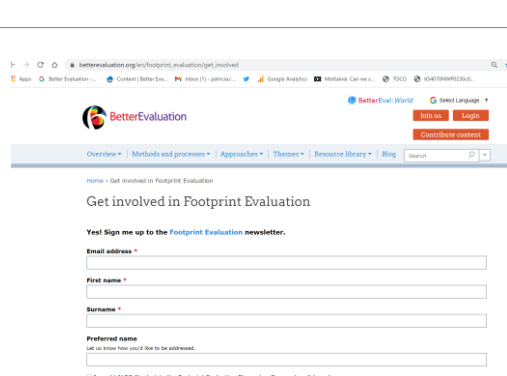
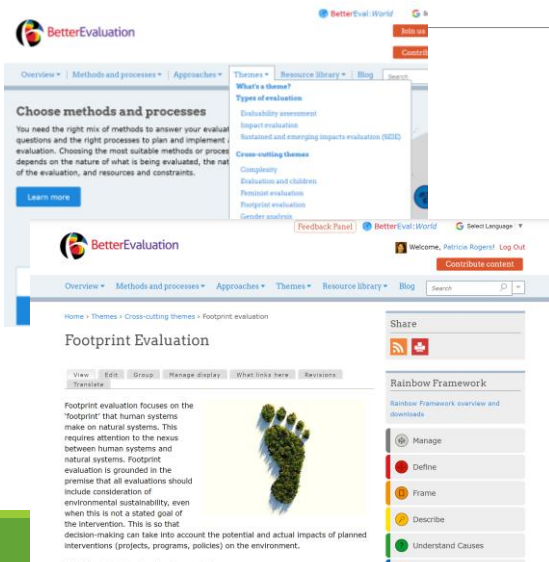
How well did the evaluand contribute to or achieve the **needed systemic and structural changes**, including processes and capacities, so that **root causes are addressed (not just symptoms) and results sustained**?

Source: <https://www.betterevaluation.org/resources/key-evaluation-questions-keqs-guide-footprint-evaluations>

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VISIT the thematic  
page for resources

JOIN the community  
of practice



[https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/footprint\\_evaluation](https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/themes/footprint_evaluation)

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# Footprint Evaluation next steps

## CORE WORK

- Develop some necessary methods & tools including:
  - making the case for including consideration of environmental sustainability in all evaluations
  - glossary, key concepts needed to understand implications for natural systems
  - practical ways to incorporate environment in evaluation designs, plans and management
  - Important tools such as the typology, checklist
- Curate resources – examples, guidance
- Support, learn from and with community of practice

## COLLABORATE WITH SPECIFIC ORGANISATIONS

- Introductory professional development for staff
- Identification of potential pilot projects
- Support for implementation of pilots (coaching, technical advice, documentation)
- Review of pilots, planning upscaling
- Support for upscaling including advice for training, policies, guidance

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