

# Interview



## Interview with Adeline Sibanda, former President of AfrEA

**IDEV:** The 9<sup>th</sup> AfrEA International Conference was themed “Accelerating Africa’s Development: Strengthening National Evaluation Ecosystems”, with a special presidential strand of plenaries, roundtables and paper presentations on “Realizing the Vision of Made in Africa Evaluation”. What for you were some of the most pertinent discussions at the conference?

**Adeline Sibanda:** The Presidential strand aimed to proactively shape a compelling and important dialogue and engagement around Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) and South-to-South collaboration in Evaluation (S2SE). The session included internationally acclaimed scholars in African studies and culture who were new to evaluation but provided the cultural grounding and evaluators who have pioneered the MAE discourse.

The MAE promotes Africa-led and Africa-rooted evaluations. MAE champions that African’s development should mainly be spearheaded by Africans using Afrocentric paradigms or worldviews and African philosophies, ways of knowing and working, and their interaction over time with the evolving African contexts. This implies that efforts to embed

African ways of knowing, methodologies and approaches in the evaluation practice should be continually pursued.

The following were the key messages from the Presidential strand:

- The vast majority of development investments, evaluation theories, and practices worldwide are based on the worldviews and values, authority and resource systems of powerful institutions, primarily in the Global North. Decisions about what is evaluated, how, and for whom, remain largely the prerogative of the Global North despite impressive indigenous knowledge assets and capacities in the Global South.
- Evaluation is about power, the powerful make the decisions on the above questions.
- Indigenous knowledge is critical. Need to reach out to indigenous voices and ways of knowing.
- Every evaluator should recognize a paradigm that articulates the needs and priorities of those whose knowledge systems have been marginalized. ►



- ▶ It comes out of the history of those who have been subjugated. It is an inclusive paradigm on how to bring Western knowledge and local knowledge together in order to create an evaluation process or methodology that will be responsive to the needs of the communities.
- There is a need to generate more scholarships around indigenous methodologies and practices in evaluation.
- Funders can and should try to reverse some of these asymmetries, notably by:
  - Providing funds in a sustainable manner;
  - Positioning Global South evaluators as team leaders; and
  - Providing capacity building of evaluators at different levels.
- Africa, unlike the rest of the colonial world, has some resilient knowledge and epistemologies that survived the epistemicides of modernity or coloniality. These can serve as material resources for developing another evaluation language. This can begin with a glossary of Afrocentric terms to be used when doing evaluation as we cannot develop an alternative without a new vocabulary.

**IDEV:** The AfrEA Conference also demonstrated an engaged and dynamic African evaluation community, with Ministries of M&E being set up, national evaluation policies being adopted, and laws on evaluation being proposed. What is the vision for “Made in Africa” evaluation and how does the dynamism of the evaluation ecosphere in Africa contribute to this vision?

**Adeline Sibanda:** It is important to ensure that when we talk about evaluation, we look at the whole evaluation ecosystem,

this means government ministries, parliamentarians, civil society, private sector, communities as well as the evaluators and the broader system they interact with.

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## ***“The Made in Africa Evaluation promotes Africa-led and Africa-rooted evaluations”.***

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The overarching aim of MAE is to elevate the influence of Africa-rooted methods, theories and philosophies in global evaluation and development, particularly evaluations meant to benefit Africa. Implementation of MAE involves:

1. Research to inventory the extent of scholarships in African rooted evaluation approaches, and to support new efforts.
2. Articulating, building and making visible and accessible the scholarships, methods and approaches that underpin MAE.
3. Promoting adaptation of existing evaluation tools, instruments, strategies and theory, as well as model adjustment to ensure relevancy to African settings.
4. The development of African rooted evaluation practice, theory and methodologies emanating from local cultures, indigenous knowledge systems, African philosophies and African paradigms.
5. Capacity building of African policy analysts, researchers and evaluators to ensure the use of these methods and approaches in Africa and globally.

**IDEV:** What contribution do you see that “Made in Africa” evaluation can make towards accelerating the achievements ▶

► of the SDGs and in particular Africa's Agenda 2063?

**Adeline Sibanda:** MAE can accelerate Africa's development by empowering Africans to drive both the Agenda 2030 and the Agenda 2063. It is important to ensure that evaluations are country-led and that African governments take the responsibility to evaluate their development plans, policies and programs before the end of each cycle. The evidence from the evaluation should be used to inform the new development strategies or policies. This presupposes, of course, that there are set targets and indicators and baselines in order to measure progress. Parliamentarians should demand evidence and use the evidence in all their three roles.

**IDEV:** At the 2019 Conference, AfrEA celebrated its 20th birthday, as your two-year term as Chair came to a close. What were the greatest achievements of AfrEA during this time and what is next for Adeline?

**Adeline Sibanda:** It is always best to leave others to evaluate your performance. I am glad that I was able to serve Africa through AfrEA and I believe the new President Rosetti Nabbumba Nayenga will take AfrEA to the next level.

*"The overarching aim of MAE is to elevate the influence of Africa-rooted methods, theories and philosophies in global evaluation and development, particularly evaluations meant to benefit Africa".*

I am going back to consultancy and running my other businesses. I am looking forward to getting my hands dirty again and getting back to evaluation.

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Author's profile

**Adeline Sibanda** is the founder and Managing Director of ADESIM Developments (formerly known as Troparg Consultancy Services). Adeline has 27 years of experience in strategy, program design, planning, monitoring and evaluation, research, gender and development. She is passionate about professional development, including entrepreneurship development, and has worked in over 20 sub-Saharan African countries with clients such as the World Bank, the African Development Bank, USAID, UNDP, UNFPA, UN WOMEN, WFP, USAID, OXFAM, CIDA, Family Health International, Higher Life Foundation, among others.



She is the President of the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE), and Co-Chair of EvalPartners and Past President of AfrEA.

Adeline has been raising awareness about and advocating for the Made in Africa Evaluation—an AfrEA initiative promoting evaluation practice rooted in African contexts and priorities—as well as the South-South Cooperation in Evaluation, an initiative by five regional evaluation associations from the Global South.