

# Unpacking African-Led Evaluation Through the Lens of Collaborative Auto-Ethnography

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# Outline

**Introduction and rationale**

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**The case for African-led evaluation**

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**Methodology – collaborative  
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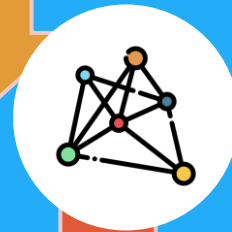
**Findings, Conclusions and  
way forward**

# Introduction and rationale

**External influence:** Dominance of externally-driven evaluations in Africa – reinforcing external controls and priorities



**Western Models Dominate:** Prevailing evaluation methods are shaped by Western logics and rarely account for local cultural norms, languages, and lived realities




**African-Led Evaluation:** Calls for a shift to African-owned evaluation approaches that reflect local contexts, values, and priorities.



Purpose of our paper is a contribution to the Made-in-Africa Evaluation narrative - evaluations through African lenses, values, and knowledge systems.

# Methodology

**Collaborative Autoethnography:** qualitative research approach that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography, which allows researchers to explore personal experiences within a wider cultural, social, and political context (Ellis & Bochner 2000).



A self-reflective, experiential method where African evaluators examined evaluation practices in Africa.

Examined their own roles and experiences in evaluations

Examined evaluation and wider cultural, political and social meanings and understandings



# Collaborative auto-ethnography – how it was applied

7 African evaluators (also authors), with experience across 5 African countries + UK & Australia

Conducted **5** rounds of data collection (1 per week)

- Questions explored Indigenous vs African-led evaluation, perceptions of quality, comparative outcomes, etc.

Blend of individual reflection and group discussions

Used tools like image elicitation, member checking, and peer debriefing

Thematic analysis done independently and collaboratively

# Why this method?



Elevates the  
**voices of African evaluators**



Aligns with **indigenous methodologies** –  
self-determination, cultural protocols, and  
community engagement (Chilisa, 2020)



Encourages **critical self-reflection** to unpack  
complexities of African-led evaluation

# Findings





# Unpacking African-led evaluation

African-led evaluation is a complex, evolving concept. It goes beyond the identity or nationality of the evaluator and includes the extent of influence, decision-making power, and contextual grounding of the evaluation process.

- Like a palm tree in a biodiverse ecosystem, African-led evaluation flourishes when
- it is interconnected with local communities, knowledge systems, and cultural practices.

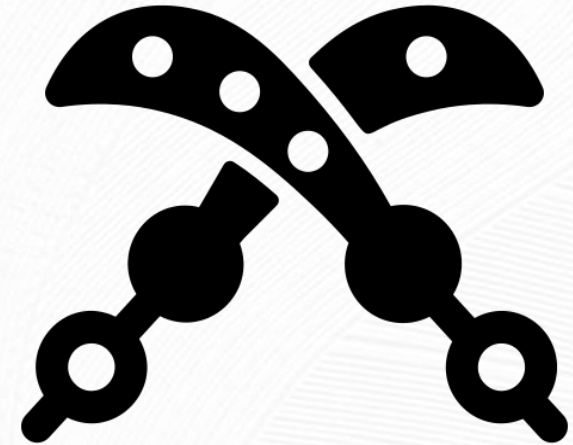




African leadership does not guarantee cultural relevance or use of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)

- Evaluators may be African by identity but still apply Western-centric frameworks.

The concept of “local” is fluid, defined by language, cultural alignment, and community perception.



# African-led evaluation and indigenous ways of knowing

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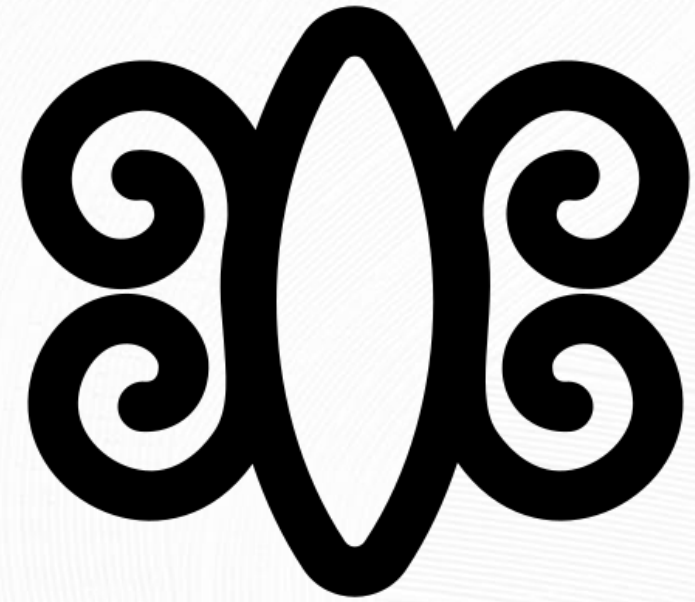
- African-led evaluation and the use of indigenous ways of knowing are not synonymous. One can exist without the other, though their integration often enhances relevance and authenticity.
- African-led evaluation refers to the leadership and control of the evaluation, while indigenous ways of knowing describes the epistemological foundations and methodological approaches used.
  - Indigenous ways of knowing include storytelling, symbolic interaction, lived experience, and spiritual practices.
  - Non-African evaluators can apply IKS if guided by local collaborators.
  - African evaluators may default to Western tools unless intentionally grounded in local epistemologies.





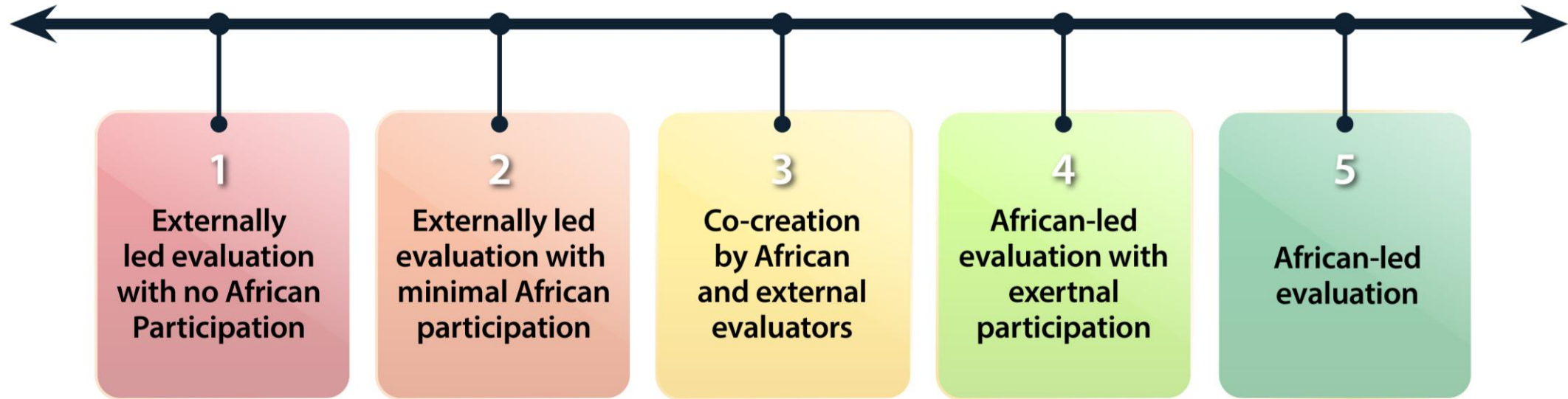
# Markers of African led evaluation

1. Use of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) (e.g., integrating storytelling, local symbols etc.)
2. Inclusion of intervention populations in evaluation design
3. Methods and definition of concepts; Adapting tools to local meanings (e.g., reliable income, success etc.)
4. Adoption and use of appropriate local and cultural context in evaluation (e.g., language, dressing, greeting, questioning, etc.”)





# Spectrum of African Participation in Evaluations



The 'African-led-ness' of evaluations is multidimensional and influenced by factors including the purpose, sponsorship, leadership, methodology, and adaptation.

# The value of African-led evaluations

When African evaluators lead, evaluations are more likely to be contextually grounded, culturally sensitive, making it more relevant, credible, and action-oriented.

- Greater trust and openness from communities
- Richer, more nuanced data
- Increased ownership and uptake of findings
- Potential to integrate IKS and local priorities

# Conclusions and way forward





African-led evaluation must reflect values, context, and systems



Indigenous ways enrich evaluation methodologies



Need for collaborative models, not antagonistic ones



Policy: Institutionalise evaluation, invest in African capacity



Research: Empirical studies on impact of African-led approaches

# Thank You

