INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN EVALUATION PRACTICE

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What are Indigenous Knowledge Systems and what is their role in Made In Africa Evaluation practice?

- Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) refers to **evaluation that is rooted in Africa and or led by Africans for African contexts**.

- It emphasizes the importance of:
  - African expertise,
  - priorities and experiences,
  - African values,
  - perspectives – African ways of knowing, doing, and being,
  - philosophies and **Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)**

  in contributing to the global pool of evaluation theory and practice.

- With roots in generations of experience, IKS includes storytelling, communal decision-making, reflection, rituals, oral histories, songs, proverbs, ecological observation, etc.

- IKS are dynamic and evolving - providing unlimited opportunities for learning, co-creating with communities for accountability and growth just like formal evaluations.

  ... And yet, they are often missing in our project design and assessment frameworks!

- In Ghana, an example is "***nkɔsoɔ***", a process of evaluating progress through communal dialogue, use of proverbs, folklore, and land-based wisdom passed through generations of families and clans. PDA will share more.

- In Cameroun, **Tori Dey** (Storytelling) is used by eBaSE for Participatory Evaluation in communities, with children, and with other vulnerable groups like Internally Displaced Persons.

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Why Tori Dey?
African Principles in Evaluation

- Storytellers are knowledge keepers (like researchers)
- **Core Values**: Trust, Ubuntu (humanity, community), people-centered approaches
- *"Knowledge is not complete until it reaches the people."*
- **Purpose**: Complement quantitative methods

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Guide to Participatory Storytelling – Using Diaries

- **Stories are recounted in "Dear Diary" style -- First person sharing of:**
  - Experiences with **phenomenon / problem / issue** in question
  - Experiences with **intervention** in question
  - Experiences with **outcomes of interest** to participants and researcher
  - Documenting date and exposure to intervention (or not)
- Tracking progress of stories (*are we having a good flow of stories or not? Why?*)

Stories are recounted in "Dear Diary" style

- *"Today when I entered the classroom, **my friends were very receptive**. They supported me with food and a pen. They asked if I was ok and if I needed anything more."*

- *"Today the **teacher told us that 'one hand no dey tie bundle'** and that we must be supportive to our friends. I no longer worry about the war."*

- *"Today, a classmate attacked me and called me 'amba'. I was*

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Stories can be collected in various ways:

- *By writings from participants*

- *By audio recordings*

- *Teachers or parents can assist children to write in their diaries – in which case they will use the third person, e.g. "Today, Manka was excited to be in class"*

Story Fidelity

1. TRUE (true to events, facts, details as they occurred, without distortion)
2. ALTERNATIVE TRUE (info that is not match facts or reality, affected by misinformation or personal interpretations that are not factual)
3. FALSE (info that is not true, factually inaccurate, deliberately misleading)

Story Types

1. RED: Non-aligned with intended outcomes (negative, challenging experiences, struggles, trauma, etc.
2. GREEN: aligned with intended outcomes (positive experiences, community growth, support, unity, etc.)
3. GREY: unclear (not well defined, confused, unclear experiences, in process of behaviour change, etc.

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Applying Made In Africa Evaluation Principles to Tori Dey / Storytelling

Principle	Description	Application in Storytelling
Ubuntu (Humanity & Relationality)	Knowledge is collective and relational rather than individualistic.	Storytelling should be **community-driven**, with collective participation in both **narration and evaluation**.
Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)	Oral traditions, proverbs, and myths are valid sources of knowledge.	Incorporate **proverbs, folktales, and oral histories** as core storytelling techniques.
Decolonization of Evaluation	Moves away from Western-centric indicators and methods.	Use **story-based impact assessment** instead of rigid statistical measures.
Contextual Relevance	Evaluations should reflect local values, languages, and cultural realities.	Tailor storytelling to **specific linguistic and cultural contexts**.
Participation & Co-Creation	Research should involve communities in both design and implementation.	Engage local storytellers, **elders, and marginalized voices** in creating and validating narratives.
Transformational Change	Evaluation should measure **impact beyond numbers**, focusing on lived experiences.	Use storytelling to track **personal and collective transformation**.

(Sources: AfrEA, 2019; Chilisa, 2012; Tukundane & Chilisa, 2021)

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Some Challenges, Practical and Ethical Considerations when Evaluating Programs in Indigenous Communities

- Decolonializing evaluation and using tested standards, evaluation tools and methods
- Openness/participation vrs conflicting interests
- Time, language and other resource constraints
- Oral tradition and documentation for

- Co-creating vrs standardization

- Accountability to donors vrs adaptive, transformational community learning

- Learning about inclusion, gender and intersectionality at all levels including the household, community, national, regional and

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What policies and institutional supports are needed to mainstream IKS in national and regional evaluation agendas?

- Promote concepts or perspectives that are rooted in African thinking and philosophy - participation, *ubuntu*.

- On international evaluation teams, Africans must change the Terms of Reference (TOR) to reflect African thinking, other dimensions of IKS, and the participation of local people.

- Current Western evaluation needs to be contextualised to make it more suitable to African conditions, cultures and institutions.

- Use AI and social media to cross the digital divide and

2. African Evaluation Principles and AI Integration

Table 1: How AI Enhances ETD while Aligning with African Evaluation Principles

African Evaluation Principle	Relevance to ETD	How AI Can Enhance It
Orality and Storytelling	Relies on African oral storytelling as primary data	AI-powered **Speech-to-Text** can document and preserve oral histories.
Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)	Uses folktales, proverbs, and community wisdom for evaluation	AI-powered **NLP and sentiment analysis** can detect patterns in traditional knowledge.
Decolonizing Evaluation	Moves away from Western quantitative frameworks	AI-driven **qualitative storytelling dashboards** can present findings interactively.
Community Participation	Encourages community-driven data collection	AI-powered **chatbots and mobile platforms** can collect real-time stories.
Transformational Impact	Focuses on lived experiences rather than numbers	AI-powered **narrative analytics** can track behavioral and emotional changes over time.

➢**Nye tsumi oo**

➢**Nangode**

➢**Midaase**

➢**Nye yiwala don**

➢**Akpe na wo**

➢**Asante**