



**Development Ethics Toolkit:**

# **Project Evaluation Tool: Methodology**

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**The Project Evaluation Team**

# Introduction

The Development Ethics Toolkit maintains a database of case studies that illustrate instances of ethical development and maldevelopment across various regions. Each case study included in this database receives a letter grade—from A (highest) to F (lowest)—reflecting its overall success in promoting ethical development within its target region. To ensure the ethical implications of each case study is evaluated efficiently, consistently, and accurately, the Project Evaluation Team created an internal evaluation metric specifically designed for the Toolkit. This metric provides a holistic assessment, allowing evaluators to examine case studies through a bird-eyes lens.

The purpose of this evaluation metric is twofold: to ensure consistency and transparency. First, it establishes a standardized scoring system that guarantees consistency across evaluations of multiple case studies, ensuring that every case study is judged by comparable criteria. Second, it makes the evaluative process itself transparent and replicable, enabling scorers, researchers, and external users of the Toolkit to understand how each grade was produced. The following write-up outlines the methodology behind this internal evaluation metric, describing the theories that inform it, the structure of the scoring system, and the reasoning guiding its use in assigning scores to the Toolkit’s case study database.

# Background

Traditional metrics of international development have relied on monetary indicators, such as GDP and income growth (Frediani, 2010; Sen, 1999; UNDP, 1990; OECD, 2013). However, since the 1980s, new schools of thought in developmental economics emerged highlighting the necessity of including non-monetary measurements. Amartya Sen presented the concept of poverty as the deprivation of multiple freedoms and capabilities (Sen, 1999). Similarly, Martha Nussbaum highlighted the need to consider the structural mechanisms which may be driving an individual or nation’s stunted prosperity, which can be due to non-economic institutions but rather ones that are political and social (Nussbaum, 2009). Such scholars allowed for the rethinking of international development through a holistic approach rather than one simply focused on maximizing monetary growth. As a result, additional indicators to successful development were considered, such as health, education, and living standards along with subjective values of human well-being and happiness (UNDP, 2025; Sen, 1999).

From such advancements in development theory, a new field of ethical development was born. The Routledge Handbook of Worthwhile Development by Jay Drydyk and Lori Keleher highlights a specific framework of ethical development that emerged during this period. Drydyk and Keleher present a series of seven core values that define ethical development, outlining the essential goals that development should advance: well-being, equity, empowerment, sustainability, human rights, cultural freedom, and responsible government conduct (Drydyk & Keleher, 2019).

## Evaluation Procedure

The Toolkit utilizes this contemporary framework for assessing the success of international development case studies, focusing on how effectively they promoted ethical growth across a vast series of monetary and non-monetary dimensions. The Toolkit's internal scoring tool is grounded on the "Values of Worthwhile Development" articulated by Jay Drydyk and Lori Keleher. Case studies are assessed according to how well they fulfill the specific ethical goals associated with the values relevant to that specific project, program, or policy. For example, if a case study focused on improving environmental sustainability, then it would be evaluated on how well it met the goals outlined in the value of sustainability. This is to ensure that each case study is fairly evaluated only against the values that are relevant to the case study's intended and realized outcomes.

To guide users in evaluating how well a case study aligns with its relevant Values of Worthwhile Development, the internal evaluation tool provides a set of indicators per each Value of Worthwhile Development, as shown in Table 1.

*Table 1: Indicators for the Values of Worthwhile Development:*

<i>Well-Being</i>	Readily Accessible Access To Essential goods (Water, Food, Sanitation) Readily Accessible Access To Institutionalized Goods (Healthcare, Education, Sanitation) Accessible Income Self-Reported Happiness Access to Individual Agency and Autonomy
<i>Equity</i>	Equal Access to Education Equal Access to Healthcare Equal access to housing Equal access to political participation Equal access to social participation
<i>Empowerment</i>	Political Representation Transparent Information Flow Freedom to make decisions without coercion Self-reported autonomy Government Frameworks for protection of Rights
<i>Sustainability</i>	Presence of CO2 Emissions Thresholds Efforts to Preserve Biodiversity and Ecosystems Sustainable Food Production Conservative Natural Resource Usage Integration of Renewable Resources
<i>Human Rights</i>	Core set of freedoms guaranteed regardless of characteristics or status Others have obligations and duties to uphold the human right to life Right to standard level of living, health, and education Protections against discrimination Adherence to International Human Rights Treaties
<i>Cultural Freedoms</i>	Empowering individuals to freely participate in the development process Protect and promote human rights Promote the freedom to enjoy one's culture in a way consistent with human rights Ability to participate in cultural practices Promote the protection of minority cultures against wholesale destruction
<i>Responsibility</i>	Giving and Receiving Bilateral and Multilateral Aid Limited distortion of policies by high level leaders at the cost of public good Limited abuse of power by mid-level leaders in interactions with citizens Accountable use of public accommodations Transparent administrative proceedings

Each case study will be scored on how many of the above indicators for each relevant Value of Worthwhile Development were successfully fulfilled in the given project, program, or policy. Then, depending on the number of indicators checked off, the case study will be given a

score per each relevant Value of Worthwhile Development, as according to the rubric shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Scoring Rubric:

A-Superior	B-Sufficient	C-Developing	F- Failure
5 Indicators Checked	4 Indicators Checked	2-3 Indicators Checked	0-1 Indicators Checked

A score of F indicates a complete failure in addressing the goals of the relevant Value of Worthwhile Development, while a score of A indicates an extraordinary consideration of such ethical goals.

## Evaluation Rationales

The indicators for each Value of Worthwhile Development (see Table 1) were drawn from two primary sources: The Routledge Handbook of Worthwhile Development and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Relevant SDG targets were matched to their corresponding Value of Worthwhile Development and incorporated into the indicator list, if it was not already covered by Jay Drydyk and Lori Keleher's work. This process ensured that the evaluation tool included a sufficient number of meaningful indicators while also aligning the framework with widely recognized standards for sustainable and ethical development.

The scoring procedure was similarly informed by established evaluation practices used by international development organizations and research institutions. For instance, Freedom House, which assesses the quality of democracy worldwide, employs a similar method in which each principle of democracy being measured is evaluated through a set of indicators, and scores are based on how many of those indicators a country meets in a given year (Freedom House, 2025). This model offers a clear, replicable structure for transforming qualitative information into systematic, comparable assessments, which was adopted by the Toolkit to score its database of case studies.

## Conclusion

Taken together, this evaluation methodology enables the Toolkit to assess development projects, programs, and policies from a holistic, bird's-eye view. By grounding the scoring method in Jay Drydyk and Lori Keleher's Values of Worthwhile Development and operationalizing those values through a transparent set of indicators, this approach aims to

evaluate development beyond simple monetary, output-based assessments. Instead, it intends to examine the larger ethical implications of each case study, such as its contributions (or harm) to well-being, equity, empowerment, sustainability, human rights, cultural freedom, and responsible governance. This holistic evaluation procedure ensures that case studies are assessed in proportion to their intended and realized outcomes, with scores reflecting not only what development achieved materially, but also how it shaped the capabilities, opportunities, and lived experiences of targeted individuals and communities.

### ***References:***

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