REPORT: SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA PRACTITIONERS WORKSHOP ON EVALUATIVE THINKING AND EVALUATION USE

I. OVERVIEW

From December 10-12, 2013, InterAction – in partnership with the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) and the CLEAR Initiative’s center in Anglophone Africa – held a workshop on evaluative thinking and evaluation use. The objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Deepen participants’ knowledge and skills related to promoting evaluative thinking in their organizations and integrating M&E into the program and project cycle;
2. Deepen participants’ knowledge and skills related to promoting the use of evaluation findings within their organizations to improve development outcomes; and
3. Build or strengthen a network among participants to increase the ongoing exchange of technical assistance, experiences and ideas.

The workshop took place in Accra, Ghana, at the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA). In all, 44 participants from 17 organizations and from 13 countries in sub-Saharan Africa attended the workshop. Most of these were in-country monitoring and evaluation (M&E) staff of InterAction members. This does not include representatives from the three organizations that organized the workshop (six in total), or two workshop speakers/presenters (Sulley Gariba, Senior Policy Coordinator & Evaluation Specialist in the Office of the President in Ghana, and El Hadji Gueye, Coordinator of the CLEAR Initiative’s Francophone Africa Center).

Over three days, participants were: introduced to the concept of evaluative thinking and invited to share their own perspectives; exposed to the experiences of more than 10 organizations through presentations; asked to consider the various factors that enable evaluative thinking at the enabling environment, organizational, and individual level; and, on the final day, asked to come up with a list of next steps to embed evaluative thinking within their organizations. Participants heard presentations from each other and from expert speakers, and participated in several small group discussions organized by country and by organization. The purpose of these group discussions was not only to encourage greater exchange within and among organizations, but also to provide participants with more opportunities to get to know each other and thus help build this network.

While more than 80% of participants that completed a feedback form said the workshop was useful, only 60% said they better understood evaluative thinking and 57% that they were better prepared to integrate evaluative thinking within their organizations. In part, this is understandable. As noted below, evaluative thinking is a relatively new concept still under development, and one of the purposes of this workshop was to have practitioners working in sub-Saharan Africa help shape it. Nonetheless, this feedback points to the need to provide participants with a more concrete framework on evaluative thinking, as well as practical tools or approaches for actually “doing” evaluative thinking. The evaluative thinking study InterAction and the CLEAR Anglophone Africa center are collaborating on is meant to be such a contribution.
II. WORKSHOP DETAILS
The concept and practice of evaluative thinking is still evolving. This workshop was designed to not only introduce participants to evaluative thinking, but also to allow them to shape the concept, drawing on their own experiences as practitioners. It was also intended to promote learning within and across organizations. To encourage this learning and exchange, the workshop used a variety of formats: expert speakers, round robin presentations, panel presentations, and small group discussions in both organization and country groups. With all of this input as background, on the final day participants were asked to come up with concrete actions they could take to promote evaluative thinking within their organizations.

This section presents highlights from the various sessions that took place throughout the three days of the workshop (see workshop agenda, attached, for more details). The workshop presentations were shared with participants after the workshop and have also been made available on InterAction’s website at http://www.interaction.org/work/sub-saharan-practitioner-workshop-evaluative-thinking-and-evaluation-use.

DAY 1
Overview of Evaluative Thinking & Introduction to Evaluative Thinking Case Studies
The first day of the workshop began with a brief presentation on evaluative thinking by Carlisle Levine, InterAction’s Senior Evaluation Advisor (consultant). The definition of evaluative thinking presented was:

*Evaluative thinking is a type of systematic reflective practice aimed at improving performance. It involves: identifying assumptions; posing thoughtful questions; pursuing deeper understanding through evidence gathering, reflection and perspective taking; and making informed decisions in preparation for action.*

An important part of this session was a discussion of the difference between evaluative thinking and evaluation use, concepts which often get conflated. While the two are closely related, one key difference is that evaluative thinking is an ongoing process, while the use of evaluation findings may be more of a discrete event. Evaluative thinking also involves constantly questioning assumptions, asking whether the questions we are trying to answer are the right ones, or if the indicators we are measuring are telling us all that we need to know. One participant shared his experience of a project in which the indicators were going in the right direction, but the project was nonetheless falling short on its objective. As one participant noted, evaluative thinking is about “looking beyond pre-set objectives.” Another described evaluative thinking as “taking apart, analyzing deeply.”

There was some debate about the term “evaluative thinking” itself. Some asked whether it was not just another word for learning or monitoring, while others noted that there is no direct translation in their language (in French, for example, evaluative thinking would be translated as a “culture of evaluation”). Alternative terms proposed included analytical thinking, or reflective thinking or practice. In the end, however, there seemed to be consensus that the word “evaluative” was important, as it brings in the concept of values, which inform judgments.

Small Group Discussion – Organization Groups
Participants were then asked to get in groups by organization and discuss five questions:

1. What are some issues in your organization that reflective practice might help to address?
Participants felt evaluative thinking could help address a number of issues in their organizations. More than one organization said evaluative thinking could:

- Enhance learning (e.g., improve the “disconnect between investment in evaluations and organizational learning”; “Generation of knowledge and promoting learning (explicit knowledge)”);
- Improve the sustainability of projects and programs;
- Encourage community participation in M&E processes and therefore increase ownership by participants;
- Promote greater accountability to beneficiaries;
- Improve project management or the effectiveness of interventions;
- Lead to a greater prioritization of evaluation.

Participants in one group said evaluative thinking could help in the identification of unintended outcomes, and provide information on how the organization affected, and was affected by, the external environment. Another thought evaluative thinking might reduce the emphasis on the use of quantitative methods, which “give the numbers/proportions, but not the reasons behind” what occurred.

2. What would success look like if you did reflective practice well in your organization?

The responses to this question largely echoed the responses above: better programs, more sustainable changes, greater learning, improved participation, increased ownership, etc. In some cases, however, the responses introduced new elements. For example, programs would be more successful because evaluative thinking would make the organization more adaptable, or because evidence-based decisionmaking would become more common. Evaluative thinking would not only encourage greater community participation in M&E, but would actually help make M&E more relevant to stakeholders. It could also help build trust and common understanding with program participants and other stakeholders, ensuring everyone is working towards the same goal. One organization said that a measure of success would be increased funding from donors, presumably because the organization would have better evidence of its effectiveness.

Some organizations approached this question in terms of what would make evaluative thinking itself successful (rather than in terms of the outcomes evaluative thinking could help deliver). Here, typical responses included availability of funding for evaluative thinking, as well as policies and/or strategies that encourage reflection and learning.

3. Who are the people who (would) benefit from it?

4. Who are the actors that (would) make that possible?

The same actors were named in responses to both of these questions: participants/communities, donors, partners (including local government), and the organization’s staff. Program managers and senior leadership in particular were frequently listed as actors key to the success of evaluative thinking. Communities and program participants were listed as key actors by about half of the organization groups.

5. What needs to change in your organization or what does your organization already do well in order to promote reflective practice?

Most groups focused their discussion on the things that need to change within their organizations. While responses across groups varied, a common response was the need to use evaluation findings. Other responses included: the allocation of appropriate resources for M&E
systems; M&E policies and strategies; training for staff (with some group specifically noting that evaluative thinking must be the responsibility of all staff, not just those officially responsible for M&E); greater community participation in program design, implementation and evaluation, and more broadly in decision-making; and a change in attitudes or organizational culture. Of the groups that included information on what their organizations are already doing well, responses included things such as program review meetings, the establishment of program quality and learning units, and the use of learning platforms.

**Evaluative Thinking Case Studies**

In the afternoon, participants heard presentations on the case studies that will be part of the evaluative thinking study in a round robin format. Each presenter had about 15 minutes to present their case to a small group of participants sitting at their table, and then 15 minutes to answer questions and/or receive feedback. Once the 30 minutes were up, presenters moved to the next table to repeat the process a second, and then a third time. Presenting the cases in this format allowed presenters to interact with many more people than would typically be possible in a traditional panel presentation. This input was intended to help presenters further develop their case study for the evaluative thinking study.

**Evaluative Thinking Case Studies**

- Morrish Humphrey Ojok, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, AMREF Uganda
- Theophile Twahirwa, Program Quality and Learning Manager, CARE Rwanda
- Anley Mihret, JEEP M&E Coordinator, CRS Ethiopia
- Munirat Tawiah, Senior M&E Officer, Global Communities Ghana
- Julius Batemba, Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Manager, Plan Uganda
- Mercy Chabu Ngoma, Plan Zambia

**Plenary Presentation: Evaluative Thinking – Challenging Norms and Charting New Paths**

The first day concluded with a presentation from Samuel Braimah, AfrEA’s Executive Director. In his presentation, titled “Evaluative Thinking: Challenging Norms and Charting New Paths,” Dr. Braimah revisited the definitions of evaluative thinking shared earlier in the day and highlighted some of the key aspects of evaluative thinking. These included the need to think of evaluative thinking as: a constant ongoing process; a practice (something that becomes normal); an attitude (being open to questioning and learning); a belief; and concrete actions (such as posing questions, engaging in reflection, etc.). He also emphasized that evaluative thinking should result in action, saying that any evaluative thinking process that does not start from the perspective of action is not worthwhile.

Dr. Braimah challenged participants to push back against some of the constraints to evaluative thinking: time pressures, lack of resources, or the absence of donor requirements on evaluation. He also urged workshop participants to commit to becoming evaluative thinkers, and to encourage the individuals and communities with which they work to become evaluative thinkers as well, noting that “unless ‘beneficiaries’ develop the practice of asking critical questions that will solicit answers affecting their lives, they will always be spectators in their own development.” He said beneficiaries must be able to articulate what they see as positive change, and identified “stakeholder confusion,” or confusion about who should be driving the development process (donors, implementers, beneficiaries or evaluators) as part of the problem. The link between evaluative thinking and participatory M&E approaches emerged as one of the major themes of the workshop.
Wrap-up
The discussions on this first day laid the framework for the rest of the workshop. Some of the highlights identified by participants at the end of the day were:

**Key principles of evaluative thinking:**
- Evaluative thinking needs to be embedded in programs and organizations from the beginning, but need to leave the door open to flexibility.
- Evaluative thinking should involve a wide range of stakeholders, but not be overly broad: the priority should be on including those that can impact the change you want to make.
- Donors’ interests should not overtake beneficiaries’ interests.
- Evaluative thinking requires action.
- Evaluative thinking involves asking probing questions: it is “the art of asking questions.”
- A culture of evaluative thinking must be developed at the organizational level to have an impact.

**DAY 2**

**Discussion in Country Groups**
On the morning of the second day, participants were asked to come together in country groups to facilitate sharing across organizations. In order to build on the discussion from the first day, the groups were asked to consider what the enabling factors for evaluative thinking were at the external or enabling environment level, at the organization level, and at the individual level. Below are some of the factors identified at each level:

**External driving factors/Enabling environment**
- National or regional evaluation associations or other forums committed to evaluative thinking
- Knowledge hubs that produce literature on evaluative thinking and well-trained resource persons, as well as groups that can provide capacity building support
- Existence of global evaluation and other related standards
- Partnerships/collaborations among CSOs and/or among CSOs and other actors (e.g., government)
- Government policies supportive of M&E (including political will for the use of data)
- Donors committed to and supportive of evaluative thinking
- Donor demand for sustainability, impact and accountability

**Organization Level**
- Supportive organizational culture, values or philosophy
- Leadership/senior management support for M&E
- Champions of evaluative thinking
- Systems, structures, strategies and policies that support evaluative thinking (including HR policies that value M&E competencies and that prioritize staff development)
- Dedicated unit, staff and budget for M&E and evaluative thinking (including at regional and country levels)
- Incentives that promote learning (e.g., reward system for innovation and documentation)
- Focus on the interests of target groups / accountability to communities, and a culture that encourages the participation of these groups
- Qualified M&E staff
- Platforms for learning and information sharing
- Development of simple processes that facilitate evaluative thinking
- Tolerance for experimentation and failure
**Individual Level**
- Access to training or learning materials to help develop key skills (including on participatory methodologies)
- Individual commitment to evaluative thinking (“positive attitude,” “curiosity,” “motivation,” “willingness”)
- Participation in relevant networks (such as evaluation associations or working groups)
- Access to mentors
- Incorporation of evaluative thinking into individual performance plans

**Participant Presentations**
Most of the second day was dedicated to presentations from participants. The presentations were divided into two tracks: one on participatory monitoring and evaluation, and another on examples of evaluation use.

**Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation**
- Morrish Humphrey Ojok, Monitoring and Evaluation Manager, AMREF Uganda
- Jacques Hlaibi Ahmed, Regional M&E Manager, West Africa Regional Office, Lutheran World Relief
- Abdirizak Osman, Mercy Corps Somalia
- Emmyson Gatave, Quality Assurance Coordinator, Plan International Rwanda
- Emmanuel Mkandawire, Quality Effectiveness Manager, Plan International Zambia

The presentations on participatory M&E were meant to show how communities could be involved in or contribute to evaluative thinking processes. Highlights from this group of presentations included:
- For some organizations, the decision to adopt participatory M&E approaches stemmed from a desire to align with the principles of the organization, as well as from a realization that they were not learning all that they needed to know from other methods.
- It is critical to dispel the idea that communities are not capable of doing M&E – organizations must become better at recognizing, and building on, the capacity that exists. Evaluation should not just be “something that happens to participants.” As one participant put it in the day’s wrap-up, “M&E should be for all, not just the elite.” Furthermore, if communities are empowered to measure change, they can push an organization to practice evaluative thinking.
- In designing participatory M&E processes, one must take into account questions of power and fear. One presenter recommended doing an M&E client mapping to identify which stakeholders would participate in each event and to ensure that “big talkers” or more powerful individuals do not take over the process.
- Participatory M&E systems must be simple and flexible so they can be adapted based on participants’ feedback.
- Staff need to be trained in participatory methods so that they can facilitate evaluative reflection by communities. Fear that participants will say “bad things” about them can be an obstacle to getting program staff on board.
- While there are clearly benefits to participatory M&E, it is important to acknowledge that it can be difficult and time-consuming, as well as costly.
- Donor demands for quick results can be a challenge to using participatory M&E approaches. Conversely, donor flexibility and willingness to support experimentation in M&E can facilitate the development and adoption of participatory M&E.
As mentioned earlier, there is a difference between evaluative thinking and evaluation use. Evaluation use can be considered a manifestation of evaluative thinking. Some of the insights shared in these presentations on evaluation use included:

- Evaluation dissemination products should be tailored to different audiences in order to encourage use.
- Increased use of information stimulates greater demand for data.
- Timeliness is an important aspect of data quality, as it ensures the information is still relevant to decision-making.
- Making changes to a project should not always be taken as a sign of poor planning; it can be a sign of adaptability, flexibility and learning.

**Plenary Presentation – Evaluative Thinking: Reflections from Ghana**

The second day of the workshop included a presentation by Dr. Sulley Gariba, Senior Policy Coordinator and Evaluation Specialist in the Office of the President in Ghana, who spoke about evaluative thinking from an African perspective. Like Dr. Braimah, he pointed out that the demand for evaluation often comes from donors, and observed that the instruments of evaluation are often also donor-led. He told workshop participants that they should not just “download” expertise, but also contribute to the development of Africa-rooted evaluative thinking and practice, and associated standards, theory, methods, indicators and tools. Similarly, Dr. Gariba called attention to the need to look at the values that underpin evaluation results, saying that Western cultures might give more importance to material objects while African and other communities may place more value on relationships, for example.

Dr. Gariba also talked to participants about evaluative thinking within government, and how civil society can effectively engage with government around evaluation and issues of accountability. He noted that citizen demands for accountability tend to focus on failures of government. He also observed that while NGOs have become sophisticated in developing tools for capturing citizen feedback and voice, the state’s ability to respond has not kept pace. To avoid harming their relationship with government, Dr. Gariba suggested that civil society should co-construct a framework for assessing results and determining what will count as credible evidence (sometimes, he said, people assume that all evaluations and other sources of evidence are credible, when that is not the case). He also said organizations must be careful about what they call failure, noting that there are different types of failure: conceptual failure, implementation failure, or partnership failure. It is therefore important to ask: did we do the right things, as well as did we do things right?
DAY 3

Open Space Topical Discussions
The first half of the final day of the workshop was left open so that participants could delve more deeply into the issues they felt were most important. Following the open space technology approach\(^1\), participants were asked to propose topics, which were then assigned a time and a room. Everyone was free to choose what session they would like to attend, or to arrange their own side meetings.

The topics proposed included:
- African rooted evaluative thinking! What could it look like?
- Practical approaches to incorporating evaluating thinking into our work
- Telling the story of evaluative thinking
- How do we evaluate girls at risk projects?
- How can evaluative thinking contribute to the sustainability of our programs?
- A look/share at Yes Youth Can project implementation and evaluative thinking role/linkage led by Winrock International Kenya

Participants also had the choice to attend a data quality and use “training of trainers” session, in which the International Rescue Committee presented the training it uses with its own staff and partners. The training modules used by the International Rescue Committee were shared with participants after the workshop for use within their own organizations. This training was one of the most popular sessions of the morning. The link to evaluative thinking is clear: if organizations rely on faulty data, they may come to the wrong conclusions and take the wrong actions.

Civil Society Engagement in CLEAR
Given that representatives from the two CLEAR centers in Africa were present at the workshop, a short session was dedicated to giving participants an overview of the centers’ work and asking for their suggestions on how the centers could improve their collaboration with civil society. Based on the country in which they worked or supported, participants attended either the session with the CLEAR Anglophone Africa center, led by its director, Stephen Porter, or the session with the CLEAR Francophone Africa center, led by its coordinator, Dr. El Hadji Gueye.

CLEAR Anglophone Africa: Mr. Porter explained that CLEAR exists because, while there is much greater demand for evaluation to inform policymaking, there is still insufficient M&E capacity. The role of CLEAR is to develop M&E capacity, embedded in the context and responsive to it. In the Anglophone Africa center in particular, the focus is on building government capacity to do evaluation, and to improve decision-making in a way that makes governments more responsive to the demands of citizens. The center is also trying to get governments to take greater ownership of evaluation, and reduce the extent to which evaluations in the region are donor-led. While the focus of the Anglophone Africa center is on government, the group explored how CLEAR AA could work with NGOs. Possibilities included better sharing of data between governments and NGOs; NGO participation in the networks of exchange CLEAR AA is working to establish; and NGOs contributing to the documentation of learning, potentially through national evaluation associations. At least one participant noted that a challenge to encouraging greater collaboration between NGOs and governments is the lack of trust between the two parties.

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\(^1\) To learn more about this approach, visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology).
**CLEAR Francophone Africa:** Dr. El Hadji Gueye began by sharing with participants the findings of a study conducted on the state of M&E in Benin, Mauritania and Senegal, including among NGOs. While the state of M&E varied among the countries, Dr. Gueye observed that there are still few providers of evaluation, that there tends to be a poor understanding of the value that evaluation can bring, and that organizations are not investing sufficient resources in M&E. He explained what CLEAR Francophone Africa plans to do to address these gaps, including through training and technical support. Participants asked Dr. Gueye to share the Center’s plan of activities, and mentioned that there is a divide in the region between U.S. and European NGOs. European NGOs, they noted, are much better able to access evaluation resources than U.S. NGOs, pointing to the need to make more materials available in French.

**Next Steps: Discussion in Organizational Groups**
In the last session of the workshop, participants were asked to come together in their original organizational groups to discuss what they could do to promote evaluative thinking within their organization. They were asked to consider what they could do as individuals, as well as what could be done at the organizational level. Each group was then asked to share sample actions in plenary, and to post their next steps around the room so that everyone could see the full list of proposed actions.

Examples of next steps identified include:
- Share information about the workshop and the workshop materials with other staff (e.g., other M&E staff, technical teams, program staff, etc.), and partners
- Read more of the existing literature on evaluative thinking
- Join national evaluation association or professional bodies in evaluation
- Become champions of evaluative thinking within the organization, and advocate for greater use of evidence in decision-making
- Sensitize senior management to the importance of evaluative thinking
- Provide staff with training and tools on evaluative thinking
- Implement the data quality training
- Review M&E systems to ensure they reflect the “ideals of evaluative thinking”
- Integrate evaluative thinking into organizational policies, strategies and/or guidelines (e.g., M&E policy, strategic plans at the organizational and country program level, M&E strategy, etc.)
- Integrate evaluative thinking into existing processes, such as planning processes, evaluations, country office peer reviews or regular program reviews (“a new design that digs deeper”)
- Incorporate evaluative thinking into job descriptions and consultant terms of reference (TORs)
- Establish or strengthen M&E capacity at the country office level (as opposed to just the program or project level), and related, encourage greater synergy and exchange across regions, departments or programs (as participants noted: “M&E activities are project based.” / “There is an existing space for change to enhance the idea of evaluative thinking within the entire organization.”)
- Set up an evaluative thinking team (as part of M&E), or assign evaluative thinking focal persons at the country level
- Promote a learning agenda and experimentation within program design
- Organize periodic critical learning/reflection events to make sure objectives are being met
- Improve the documentation and dissemination of lessons learned, best practices and/or failures, including by publishing research externally

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2 Several participants said their organizations were in the process of developing or finalizing M&E or country accountability strategies, for examples, and said they would seek to ensure that evaluative thinking was reflected in those strategies.
• Promote evaluative thinking among peer organizations and partners
• Establish communities of practice or learning platforms on evaluative thinking
• Use evaluative thinking as a basis for assessing the organization’s resource allocation and decision-making processes

Some of these next steps can be undertaken by individuals on their own (e.g., joining an evaluation association or sharing materials from the workshop). Others, participants noted, will require external support. This is particularly true of trainings and materials on evaluative thinking to support capacity building, or inter-organizational learning platforms that allow individuals to share best practices or experiences with each other. These requests for support were echoed in the feedback form participants were asked to complete at the end of the workshop (see section below).

III. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participants were asked to complete a feedback form at the end of the workshop. About 86 percent (38/44) did so. Of the participants who provided feedback, more than 80 percent said the workshop was useful. The most highly rated sessions were the presentations from expert speakers (Dr. Samuel Braimah and Dr. Sulley Gariba) and the various opportunities to learn from fellow workshop participants (e.g., the small group discussions, informal networking and participant presentations). This echoes InterAction’s experience with previous workshops: consistently, workshop participants talk about how much they value talking to and learning from their peers.

That said, some of the feedback points to the need to provide participants with a more concrete framework on evaluative thinking, as well as practical tools or approaches for actually “doing” evaluative thinking. In the Next Steps section, we explain what InterAction plans to do in this regard.

The charts and quotes below provide additional information on participants’ feedback.

**Overall, did you find this workshop useful? (percent, n=38)**

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<thead>
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<th>Yes</th>
<th>84.2%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<tr>
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**Did the workshop help you better understand evaluative thinking? (percent, n=37)**

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<tr>
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<th>84.2%</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
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<td>No</td>
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Did the workshop better prepare you to integrate evaluative thinking in your organization? (percent, n=37)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
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Please rate the following workshop activities:

- **Opening session and introduction to evaluative thinking**: Very Useful - 43.2%, Useful - 56.8%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **Participant presentations**: Very Useful - 59.5%, Useful - 40.5%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **Speakers (Dr. Sulley Gariba and Dr. Samuel Braimah)**: Very Useful - 43.2%, Useful - 56.8%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **Discussion with CLEAR Initiative**: Very Useful - 30.5%, Useful - 69.5%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **Small group discussion (country/organizational groups)**: Very Useful - 43.2%, Useful - 56.8%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **End of day and final workshop wrap-up sessions**: Very Useful - 43.2%, Useful - 56.8%, A Little Useful - N/A
- **Informal networking with participants**: Very Useful - 43.2%, Useful - 56.8%, A Little Useful - N/A

Legend:
- Very Useful
- Useful
- A Little Useful
- Not Useful
- N/A
What did you like most about the workshop? What did you like the least?
Echoing the responses to the previous question, more than half of respondents (20/38) said that what they liked most was the opportunity to learn from others: “learning from each other was most important,” “group work and presentations have helped me to see the experience of others,” “gave me the chance to meet with practitioners from different countries and contexts, to share experience.” A number of responses also mentioned the speaker presentations. In terms of what they liked least, about a quarter of respondents (9/38) pointed to problems related to the facilitation of the workshop. Some respondents felt that the workshop needed to be more organized or structured, others that some of the small group discussions would have benefitted from more clear guidance.

What were some of the key points you learned about evaluative thinking and evaluation use during the workshop?

The responses to this question fell into five broad categories:

- **Evaluative thinking as a process:** As the word cloud above shows, the word “process” came up in a significant number of responses. Respondents indicated that they had learned that that evaluative thinking is an ongoing process, and “not a one time event.” Several respondents noted that evaluative thinking must be part of the entire program cycle, from design, to implementation, to monitoring and evaluation, done “from the start” and not treated as “an afterthought.”

- **Characteristics of evaluative thinking:** In answering this question, several respondents shared thoughts on the characteristics of evaluative thinking, in part reflecting the discussion about the definition of evaluative thinking. “Analysis, questioning the assumptions”; “way to improve quality, learning”; “the art of asking questions, probing to gain a deeper understanding of the context” were some of the key points about evaluative thinking shared by participants. A key take-away point for one respondent was that evaluative thinking “adds more value to traditional M&E and evaluating by making reflection alive and systematic,” and “making evaluation a useful experience [rather] than an event” a key point for another. Several respondents noted that evaluative thinking needed to involve all staff or be “everyone’s job in the organization,” highlighting that evaluative thinking is intimately linked to organizational culture.

- **Evaluative thinking should result in action:** More than 20% of the responses related to the idea that the ultimate aim of evaluative thinking is action, informing decisions to improve practice and therefore outcomes. As one respondent put it, “ET must lead/end with action.”

- **Evaluative thinking requires the involvement of multiple stakeholders:** Respondents repeatedly emphasized the need to involve all stakeholders as a key point. This includes “beneficiaries” and partners, as well as donors and an organization’s staff.

- **Africa-rooted evaluation:** Inspired by the speaker presentations, about 15% of respondents mentioned “Africa-rooted evaluation” as something they learned about in the workshop. Here, respondents mentioned the need to “incorporate African perspectives in evaluations,” or to acknowledge African values.
In what ways, if any, will you be able to apply this learning in your practice?
The responses to this question are largely the same as the next steps participants identified in their organization group, and which were described in the previous section. Generally speaking, respondents said they would seek to integrate evaluative thinking into their own practice, share information on evaluative thinking with their peers and colleagues (including senior management), and build the capacity of staff. Several respondents also said that they would involve beneficiaries/partner communities in evaluative thinking processes going forward.

If you hope to share new knowledge or ideas with your organization, do you need any support in doing so? If yes, please describe.
The top request for support – cited by more than half of respondents – was additional materials on evaluative thinking. This includes tools and literature on evaluative thinking, as well as materials to support training within participants’ organizations. The second largest request – cited by about a quarter of respondents – was for technical support, including suggestions for additional training, a follow-up workshop, or an “e-learning course to enlarge the community of evaluative thinking.” Finally, some respondents requested a mechanism or platform to facilitate information sharing and continued exchanges with peers.