

# Evaluation of national sustainable development policies *what is it about and why should countries bother?*

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# What is evaluation?

***Evaluation is related but not identical to research***

Evaluation is related, but not identical, to research in the social and natural sciences. **Research examines the origins, causes and extent of**, as well as potential remedies to, social and environmental problems. Good **evaluation makes use of research** as an evidence to develop reasoned judgements.



# What is evaluation?

***Evaluation is related but not identical to monitoring***

Monitoring is a management tool **concerned with tracking ongoing progress** in programme implementation, in outputs (were target numbers for participants reached?) and in outcomes. Evaluation makes use of monitoring but is **primarily concerned with how well** implementation, outputs and development outcomes were achieved, as well as with determining long-term development.



# What is evaluation?

***Evaluation is a process to define value, worth and merit***

Evaluation combines evidence with sound ways of thinking about value-based criteria, or sometimes principles. Essentially, it is critical thinking. **It aims for reasoned judgments of the merit, worth or significance of policies, programmes, strategies and systems.**



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## *Assessing the value of policies*

Evaluation can help to assess sectoral, thematic and holistic policies developed by national governments **by examining whether a problem was correctly identified** in the first instance, **whether intended effects were achieved** and whether **unintended effects** (both positive and negative) **occurred**.



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## ***What are valuable policies to achieve sustainable development?***

Evaluating sustainable development eventually means **assessing the value of policies in integrating the three dimensions of sustainability**: economic, social, and environmental. It means going beyond establishing causal relationships between a policy and its intended effects, **to evaluate also their interrelated effects and trade - offs**



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## ***Establishing criteria of value in light of interrelated effects***

The first challenge relates to the choice of the evaluand, and the establishment of evaluative criteria. Evaluation can make use of research and should not only ask: what has changed? but also why is a policy relevant to the three dimensions? How does it affect sustainable use of resources, environmental effects and human development?



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## ***Evaluating policies with a sustainable development lens***

Policies can be evaluated in light of their value in terms of promoting the sustainable use of resources. Key questions are: what are the effects, spill-over and trade offs generated by a policy? What is its impact beyond the national boundaries of a country? How does it affect the achievement or non achievement of different and sometimes conflicting national priorities?



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## *Evaluating policies with a transformative development lens*

Policies can be assessed in light of their value for transformative development, which relates to **strategic changes** through the institutionalisation of rules, regulations and practices that lead to **large scale, sustained impacts in systems** to accelerate or shift the development trajectory of a country.



# Evaluation and sustainable development

## ***Key questions for evaluating sustainable development with a transformative lens***

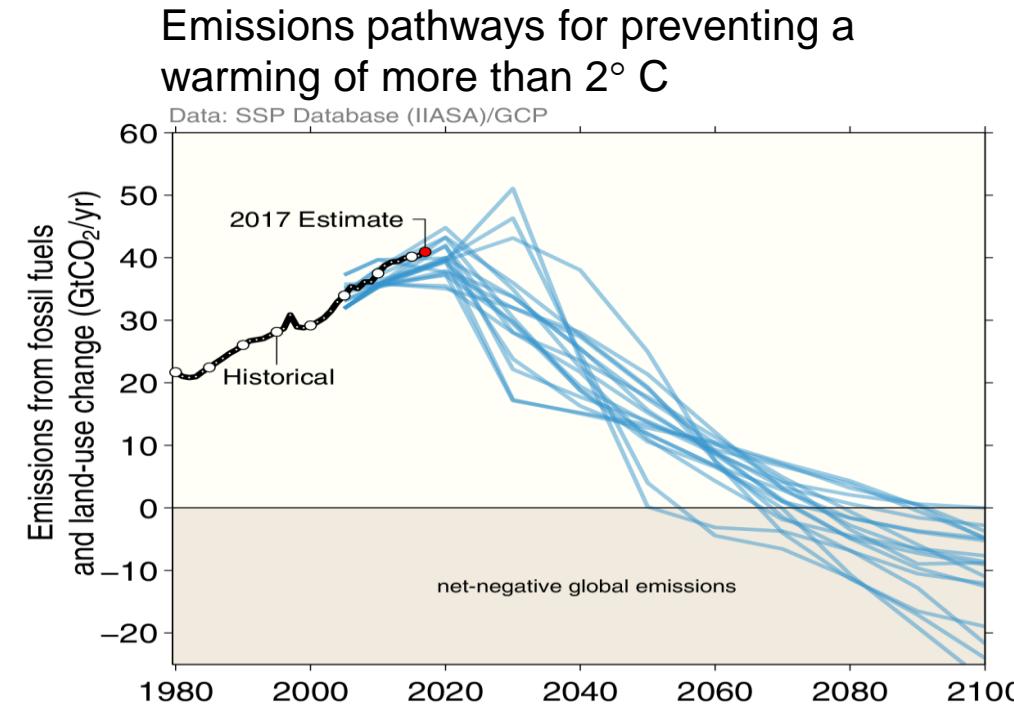
- **How innovative is a policy** in conceptualising and defining problems and potential solutions?
- **Are the policy design and institutional reforms** focused on **integration** across social, economic and environmental sectors?
- **Are they likely to change social structures and norms** that shape behaviours of people and organisations that promote and sustain patterns of stratification and unsustainable use of resources?

# Evaluation and sustainable development

## *When is a transformative development lens appropriate?*

An example:

The warmer the world becomes, the greater the likelihood of triggering feedback process that will further accelerate warming. To avoid reaching such tipping point, temperature must stay at 1.5. this is possible only if we transform our economies

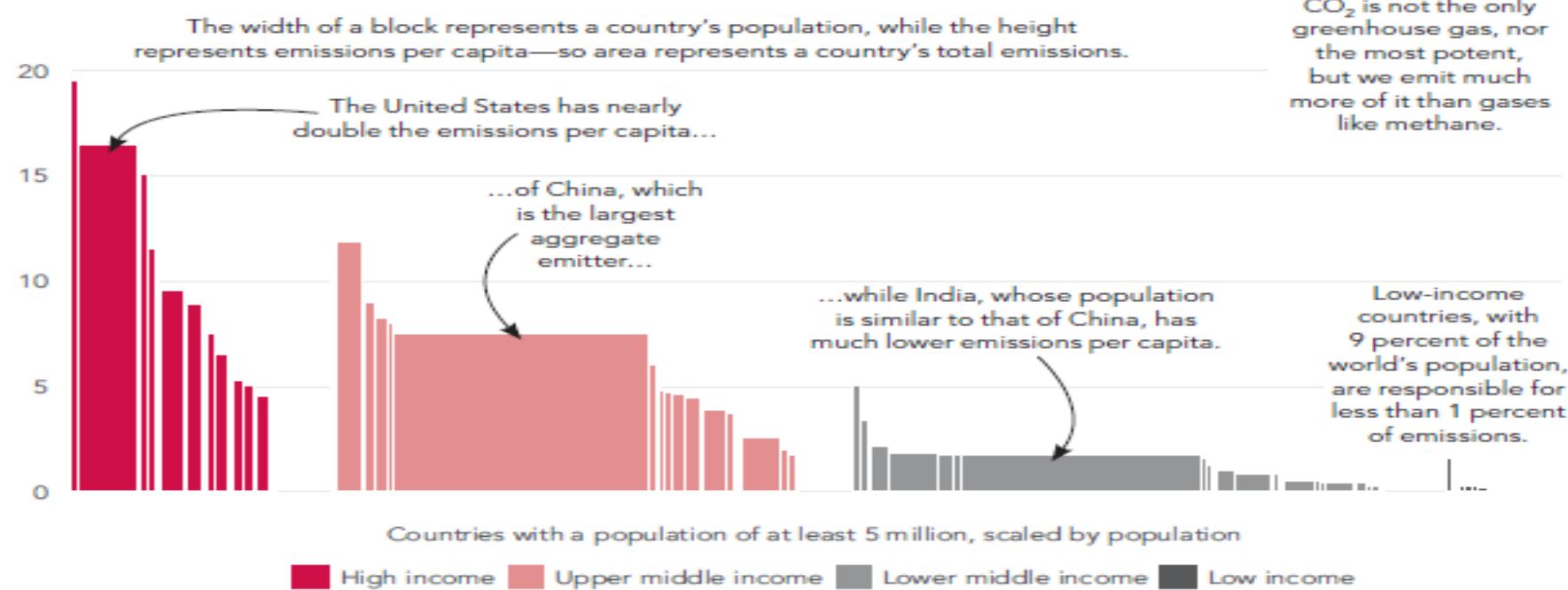


# Evaluation and sustainable development

## ***Which countries should bother about transformative development?***

**Climate change is caused by this atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> and other greenhouse gases. Emissions per capita vary across and within income groups.**

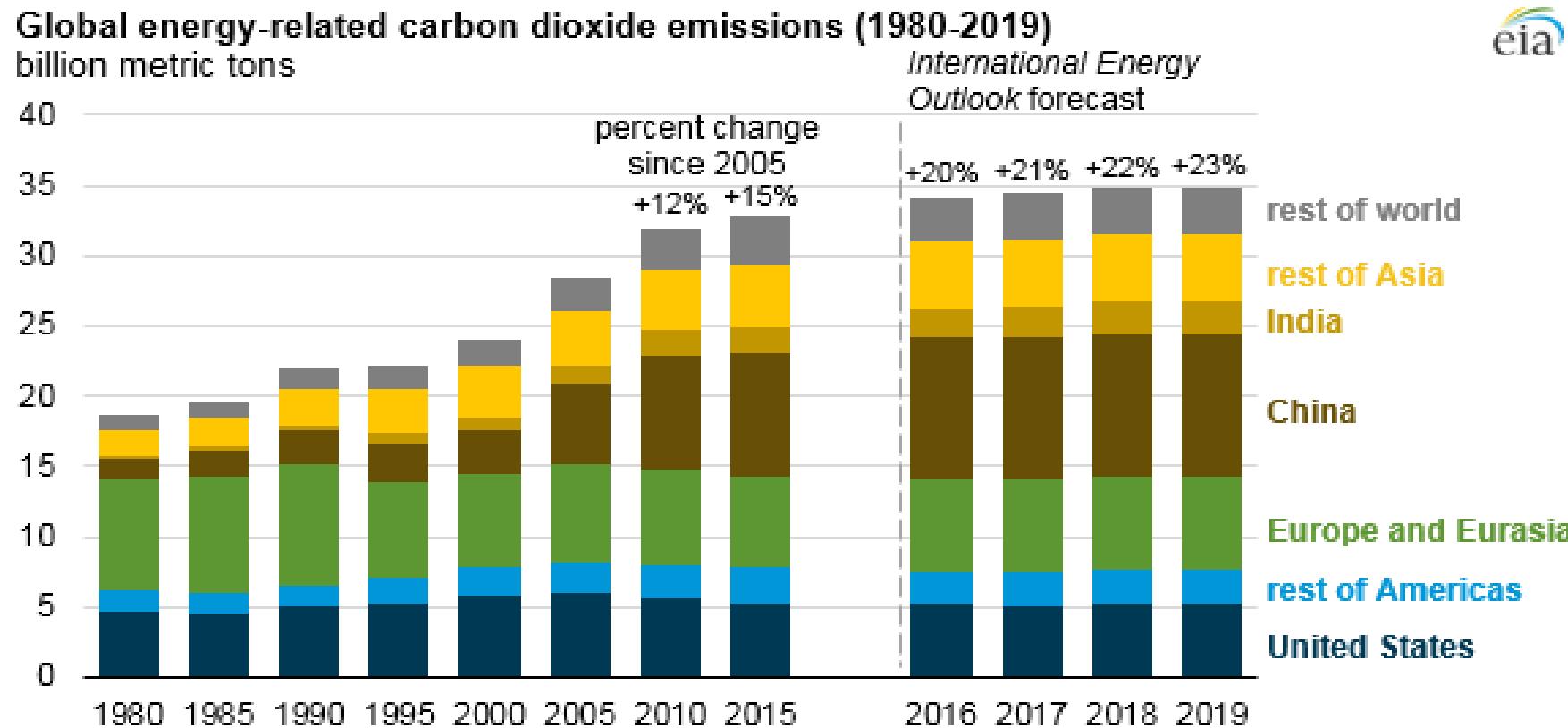
CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, by country and income group, 2014 (metric tons per capita)



Source: Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Center. World Development Indicators (EN.ATM.CO2E.KT; SP.POP.TOTL).

# Evaluation and sustainable development

***Which countries should bother about transformative development?***



# *How can evaluation support sustainable and/or transformative development?*

# Evaluation and sustainable development



Countries can take a strategic and systematic approach by simultaneously **embedding evaluation into national policies and development plans in light of their commitments towards sustainable development.**

In this way, countries can work towards assessing whether their national plans and policies will deliver **sustainable and/or transformative change.**

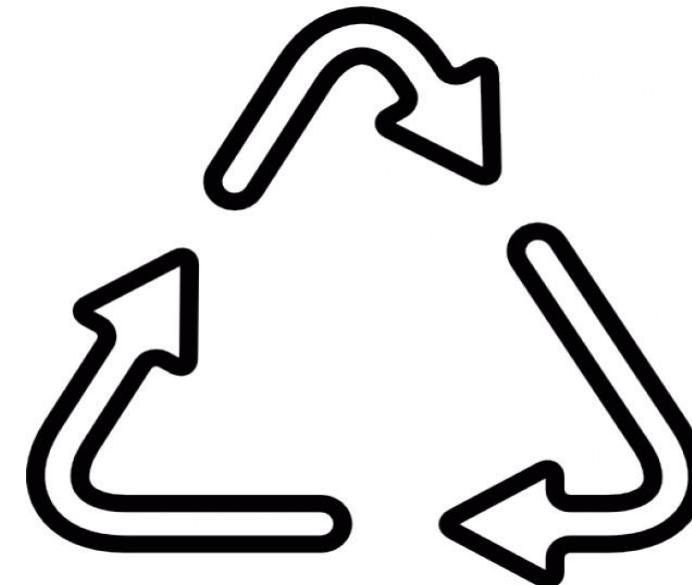


# Evaluation for transformative change

## *How evaluation can support transformative change?*

Evaluation can and must play a role by:

- a) Enabling the **identification and prioritisation** of problems hampering transformation.
- b) **Assessing** the worth, value and merit of **national and sub-national policies and plans** aiming to address those problems.
- c) Providing ongoing **recommendations about effective approaches to achieve** transformation and **systemic change**.



# Evaluation for transformative change

*Evaluation to set national priorities: a practice to focus on what matters*

**Using evaluation to set national priorities for sustainable development.** Evaluation could help decision makers at different stages of the policy cycle, including agenda setting and prioritisation. Evaluative processes can help to understand countries' needs by engaging both decision makers (commonly in power) and agents who are out of power in identifying critical problems hindering sustainable development.



# Evaluation for transformative change

*Evaluation to assess the value of policies and plans in light of SD: a strategic exercise*

**Conducting evaluation as a strategic exercise to assess the value of policies and plans for transformative development.**

Countries could benefit from a more pragmatic approach to follow-up and review of the SDGs by using evaluation as a strategic exercise to assess policies and plans in terms of their value for transformative development.



# Evaluation for transformative change

*Evaluation to involve multiple stakeholders in identifying, prioritising and assessing critical problems*

A more participatory process can help countries identify which are the most pressing social, environmental and economic problems, and how they provide direction on where to focus their energies. Participatory approaches in evaluation also help to take into account multiple views and value frameworks in the assessment of benefits and challenges created by different national and sub-national policies and plans.



# *What is changing for evaluators?*

# Transformative change for evaluators



***Focus on new objects of evaluation: going beyond intended outcomes of single policies and programmes***

Evaluating transformative development implies looking at other aspects such as:

- ✓ coordination, coherence and interlinking;
- ✓ Risks associated with trade-offs
- ✓ Involvement of multiple stakeholding parties in planning and implementation
- ✓ National strategies for facilitating innovation
- ✓ Harmonisation of economic opportunities



# Transformative change for evaluators



*Integrating evaluation with the work of other professionals and citizens*

**Evaluators cannot work in isolation** — they must coordinate their work and objectives with that of development planners, policy analysts, social researchers, specialists on culture, organisational development specialists, and urban and rural planners, among others.



# Transformative change for evaluators



*Adopting integrated approaches to better understand what has happened and what may happen*

**National evaluation strategies should adopt integrated approaches to evaluation** — that is, combining foresight or scenario modelling, monitoring, implementation analysis, economic evaluation and goal-achievement or outcome-oriented evaluation.



# Summing up

**Yes, we can**

*if countries take a more strategic and systemic approach to evaluation by embedding it into national policies and development plans, evaluation can be an effective tool for spurring country-level sustainable and transformative development.*

