INCLUSIVE SYSTEMIC EVALUATION FOR
GENDER EQUALITY, ENVIRONMENTS AND MARGINALIZED VOICES

ISE4GEMs: A new approach for the SDG era

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A new approach for the SDG era

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FOREWORD

Systems thinking is an innovative approach that can expand our awareness of global challenges to better respond to the circular nature of the world we live in. Global development is now recognized by the 2030 Agenda as being characterized by multiple interconnected and indivisible realities as expressed in the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With this understanding there is a need to think and act beyond one area of expertise or mandate to understand how the actions of our work contribute to the SDG goals and objectives. Systems thinking can help us in this endeavour.

With SDGs in mind, the UN Women Independent Evaluation Service initiated the development of a new evaluation approach entitled, *Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices* (ISE4GEMs). The Guide is underpinned by inclusive systemic thinking and organizes evaluative practice to capture the intersectional linkages that

shape the lives of human and environmental systems. This publication was developed with support from the Australian Government's Endeavour Fellowship programme; James Cook University, Australia, and the Centre for Systems Studies at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom.

This Guide is meant to facilitate evaluation practitioners in applying the ISE4GEMs approach by providing both concept and practical tools. I encourage practitioners and learners alike to use this Guide to further strengthen their knowledge on systemic thinking and to use it to conduct inclusive evaluations.

Finally, I would like to thank the co-authors of the approach and this Guide for this timely contribution to evaluation.

Sincerely,

Verasak Liengsririwat

Director a.i., Independent Evaluation and Audit Services

AUTHOR'S PROLOGUE

At present, there are significant changes underway in terms of our external world. Climate change has contributed to creating very real environmental, humanitarian and security crises, with more of the same expected in years to come. Economic and social policies are contributing to increasing inequalities, including gender inequalities, leaving some of the most vulnerable groups behind. The rapid advance of information and communications technologies are also creating both new opportunities as well as risks and challenges. These are just a few of many concurrent and overlapping changes happening at the global level, with other changes happening specific to regions, countries, communities and individuals.

The change and the complexity of the contexts within which we work is not new. These changes are part of a continuum that has likely existed since the beginning of time. What is new is our improved understanding of how this complexity may complicate those things that we have long considered to be more straightforward than they actually are including international development interventions.

The practice of evaluation is also ever evolving to improve quality and relevance in response to the changes in our external world to meet the demand for new learning, thinking and understanding. Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices (hereon referred to as ISE4GEMs) is being introduced in thisdocument as a new evaluation approach that hopes to contribute to this ongoing evolution. It puts forward an innovative systemic evaluation practice that addresses complexity and prioritizes issues within these three pressing domains for sustainable development: gender equality, environments and marginalized voices (GEMs).

Part A of this document introduces the theo- retical concepts that underpin the ISE4GEMs. Practitioners will be best able to understand and apply the approach if they have a basic understanding of these key concepts. **Chapter 1** presents ISE4GEMs and some ideas of when and how it might be used. **Chapter 2** introduces the core concepts of systems thinking: interrelationships, perspectives and boundaries. **Chapter 3** provides an explanation of the three intersectional dimensions prioritized through the GEMs framework. **Chapter 4** brings systemic evaluation practice and intersectional analysis with the other elements (systemic theory of change [SToC], ethics, validity and rigour, participatory and transdisciplinary methods, and capacity development) that together define the ISE4GEMs approach.

Part B provides hands-on guidance and tools for practitioners to adapt and implement the ISE4GEMs approach. **Chapter 5** covers planning, design and the development of the Boundary Story. **Chapter 6** focuses on how to conduct an evaluation deploying transdisciplinary methods for data collection and ethical safeguards. **Chapter 7** adviseson how to conduct systemic triangulation to arrive at evaluation results and develop an SToC. **Chapter 8** includes an overview of the capacity development opportunities throughout the evaluation process for social change, and suggests some relevant communication and dissemination methods.

The publication concludes with an **Authors' Afterword**, followed by **Annexes** that include a **glossary of key terms**, the full set of **tools** referred to in **Part B**, and a complete **reference list**.

Last, but not least, the process to develop this approach and Guide has been a profoundand enjoyable professional and personal experience. We wish to thank our Advisory Group, peer reviewers, family and friends who have enthusiastically supported our efforts and provided sage advice and guidance throughout the process, adding to the rich- ness of our combined learning experience. This guidance is not able to be comprehensive given the complexity of achieving sustainable development. We see this ISE4GEMs Guide as a beginning and plan to continue to use and learn from this approach to further deepen our understanding of how to be part of, and contribute to, building a world that works for everyone.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GEMs	Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices
GIA	Gender Impact Assessment
ISE4GEMs	Inclusive Systemic Evaluation for Gender Equality, Environments and Marginalized Voices
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SToC	Systemic Theory of Change
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

CONTENTS

Part A
ISE4GEMs
PRACTITIONER
THEORY

Introduction
PAGE 10

Systems thinking
PAGE 16

The GEMs framework
PAGE 30

ISE4GEMs approach and the SToC
PAGE 39

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