

A Synthesis Paper on the Made in Africa Evaluation Concept

Commissioned by  
African Evaluation Association  
(AfrEA)

By

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31<sup>st</sup> August 2015 Final Draft

### **Acknowledgement**

This synthesis paper was commissioned by AfrEA and sponsored by Bill Gates. AfrEA wishes to express their gratitude to Bill Gates and to the following evaluators who generously spend their time responding to the interview guide:

1. Elvis Fraser, USA.
2. Samuel Braimah, Ghana
3. Nermine Wally, Egypt
4. Debazou Y Yantio, Ivory Coast
5. Donna Mertens, USA
6. Motheo Koitsewe, South Africa
7. Michael Quinn Patton, USA
8. Zenda Ofir, South Africa
9. Ndeye Fatou Diop Samb, Senegal
10. Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall
11. Adam Suleiman, Senegal
12. Moctar Sow, Senegal.

The synthesis paper was enriched by the insightful reviews from the following:

1. Zenda Ofir
2. Samuel Braimah
3. Elvis Fraser
13. Oumoul Khayri Ba Tall
4. Adam Suleiman,

We also wish to thank the following people who organised the interviews, meeting and transcribed the interviews:

1. Elisabeth Krymaloski - UK
2. Holly-Jane Howell - UK
3. Yvonne Pinto - UK
4. Marina Sekgwa – Botswana
5. Bramwell Koyabe - Botswana

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## **A Synthesis Paper on the Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) Concept**

### **Rationale for an MAE**

The African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) seeks to promote high quality evaluation led by, and rooted in Africa, including evaluation theory and practice that is relevant and responsive to African contexts and needs. In pursuit of this objective, a discourse on the concept of a Made in Africa Evaluation (MAE) is surfacing principally through conferences, academic reports, international literature and grey literature. Although this conversation around MAE has been going for several years, currently, there is lack of consensus among key actors and within the various AfrEA boards on what MAE is, can be and can do. On a recent (AfrEA) conference (2013) in Yaounde and the South African Monitoring Evaluation Association (SAMEA) (2013), for example, it was noticeable that there was a plethora of perspectives on what MAE is and is not. The lack of consensus and understanding stems in part from insufficient engagement by key AfrEA and other potential thought leaders with what has already been done, both in Africa and elsewhere on cultural competence in evaluation. There is also no comprehensive review of what MAE has meant to those who have applied it, nor is there a documentation of practical examples of how the concept has been applied or what it means in practice. This paper is a response to AfrEA's call for a synthesis paper to bring together the disparate literature and voices on what defines the MAE concept both in theory and practice. The synthesis paper marks the beginning of a process of more clearly articulating, building and making visible and accessible the scholarship that underpin MAE.

### **Why is this work important to Africa and AfrEA in particular?**

The intended work and effort of this project is designed to reach a broader community of evaluation and policy stakeholders in Africa. AfrEA will be the vehicle to translate and transfer this evaluation work to the whole continent. AfrEA is at a critical juncture in its evolution when it needs to clearly demonstrate the value it offers to its members and to the evaluation field in Africa and in general. While the AfrEA bi-annual conference provides AfrEA with visibility and is the primary mechanism for convening stakeholders in African evaluation, AfrEA is not known for providing thought leadership in evaluation. Solidifying the scholarship around MAE has the potential to elevate AfrEA's role as a thought leader. The effort will allow AfrEA to bring together high-level thinkers and key partners organisations that can contribute to the development of the scholarship around MAE. The resulting written knowledge products from this effort will help to brand AfrEA as an important contributor to the evaluation discourse in Africa.

AfrEA's initiative to facilitate scholarship on a MAE is in line with what other leading profession association such as (AEA) American Evaluation Association (AEA) Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation ((ANZEA) and the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES). These association continue to push the boundaries of evaluation to include the voices of formally colonised and marginalised groups.

## Terms of Reference

The synthesis investigates SWOT principles about the MAE concept:

**Strengths:** What are the origins of MAE? Where is the consensus on what MAE means and what is that consensus? How has this developed over time? Which organisations and individuals have most contributed to this consensus?

**Weaknesses:** Where is there a discord in the discussion around MAE? Are there aspects of it that have received little attention? Are there aspects in need of clarification or redefinition?

**Opportunities:** How has the MAE concept worked in practice and what direction is it taking now? What exemplary work and scholarship illustrates MAE? How has it responded to feedback or changing circumstances? How is the wider evaluation field evolving and where could the MAE concept fit into this changed field. What schools of thought, theoretical tradition, concepts and ideas have informed the MAE conversation?

**Threats:** What challenges and barriers to success lie ahead for the MAE concept? What are the primary criticisms the concept faces and how can it adapt in response?

## Approach

A skype inception with key staff from AfrEA finalised the scope of work, identified documents required for the study and facilitated contact details of, and introductions to the key informants for interviews. Eight evaluators, three from the USA and five from the rest of Africa responded to a structured interview e-questionnaire. In addition, two former AFR EA Presidents and the current AfrEA President were interviewed through Skype. Follow up interviews were conducted with two evaluation practitioners. A document review and analysis of the AfrEA conference proceedings, (2007, 2013) the Bellagio conference (2012) proceedings and the Paris Declaration (2012) was conducted. A review of literature on African rooted paradigms, world-views and philosophies that articulate African culture, history and belief systems was also conducted. There was also a search and a review of exemplary work and scholarship that illustrates MAE approaches.

## Analysis

A document analysis of the AfrEA Conference Proceedings, (2007, 2013) the Bellagio Conference proceedings (2012) and the Paris Declaration (2012) was conducted to provide evidence on the chronology of events that shape the discourse on MAE and the organisations and individuals that drive the course. Interview data from key informants was combined with information from 4<sup>th</sup> AfrEA (2007) the Bellagio conference (2012) proceedings and the Paris Declaration (2012) and analysed to establish current thinking on what MAE means and if there is a consensus on what it means. A content analysis of evaluation literature and literature on African rooted paradigms, world-views and philosophies that articulate African culture, history and belief systems was conducted to: 1) place the discourse on a MAE within the international discourse on culturally competence in evaluation; 2) trace the genesis of evaluation in Africa; 3) reveal the African rooted paradigms, world-views and philosophies that articulate African

culture, history and belief systems and 4) provide exemplary work and scholarship that illustrates a MAE.

## Outline of the Paper

This paper commences with a discussion of the genesis of evaluation in Africa followed by a discussion of discourses in evaluation and its characteristics and decolonisation and indigenisation discourses. A discussion of the genesis of evaluation in Africa is necessary to clearly situate the MAE discussion within a historical paradigm that moves from post-colonial evaluation architecture to indigenisation and emerging forms of evaluation derived from the realities, ways of knowing and value system of Africans. The meaning of the MAE concept is discussed in terms of what drives it, its content and the forms it takes. Three MAE approaches that emerged from a synthesis of the literature and the interviews are discussed: 1) The Least Indigenised approaches; 2) The Adaptation Evaluation approaches and 3) The Relational Evaluation approaches. African paradigms, world views and philosophies that inform the Relational evaluation approaches are discussed. Exemplary evaluation work and scholarship emanating from these world-views, that shows the potential to evolve into evaluation tools and theory and practice coming from Africa is also discussed. The paper ends with a synthesis organised around the SWOT analysis under the following headings: Strength: Consensus on what MAE means: Opportunities: MAE and the International Evaluation Field and Threats and Weaknesses of a MAE concept. The paper concludes with the presentation of an African Evaluation Metaphor tree. To ground MAE in more practical application, questions that still need to be answered, and some practical tools or products that might be developed to operationalize MAE are presented.

## The Genesis and Evolution of the MAE Idea

The origin of the MAE can be traced back to the beginning of the re-invention period in the 1990's that was characterized by African resistance to the universalization of Euro-American thought and in particular the resistance by researchers, policy analysts and evaluators to evaluation practice dominated by external evaluators who often times were ignorant of the context and culture within which evaluation was conducted and focused on program evaluation outcomes as defined by the sponsors at the expense of the beneficiaries views on what counted as valuable program outcomes. In response to this colonial evaluation there was a call for local researchers to conduct independent policy evaluation research (Cloete Fanie 2014). Organisations such as SADCC, CODESRIA, SAPES, AEC and OSSREA developed independent local capacity that engaged in policy evaluation. UN program sponsors, for instance, UNICEF created evaluation networks to enhance capacity building for UNICEF and other evaluators (Cloete Fanie 2014). The emphasis in these early initiatives on evaluation in Africa was on building capacity of Africans to carryout evaluation and on creating a network of evaluators.

In the late 1990's there was a shift towards making evaluation cultural appropriate. For instance, (Odhan 2000) noted that Africa was dependent on North America and European literature for

criteria or standards for evaluating the success of programs and that these did not always reflect the African realities. Augmenting this view, Kate and Patel (2000) called for ‘evaluation thinking for a better Africa’ and creating ‘a common vision’ of evaluation in Africa.

### **The Made in Africa evaluation concept**

The closest to a concept of a made in Africa Evaluation can be traced back to the 2007, 17th – 19th January 4<sup>th</sup>AfrEA Conference in Niamey, Niger. At this conference there was a special stream to discuss the topic: *Making Evaluation our Own: Strengthening the Foundation for Africa Rooted and Africa Led Monitoring and Evaluation* organised by Zenda Ofir, Sulley Gariba and Oumol Tall. Michael Patton and Sulley Gariba fielded the key note that launched the Making Evaluation Our Own Concept. The introductory session set the scene for the day’s discussions by considering:

- i) *The African Evaluation Challenge* (Dr Zenda Ofir, South Africa);
- ii) *The Trends, Shaping M&E in the Developing World* (Prof Robert Picciotto, UK);
- iii) *The African Mosaic and Global Interactions: The Multiple Roles of and Approaches to Evaluation* (Prof Michael Patton & Prof Donna Mertens USA).

The last two presentations explained, among others, the theoretical underpinnings of evaluation as it is practiced in the world today.

The second session focused on evaluation methodologies used internationally and the variety of paradigms related to evidence in evaluation. This session was a panel discussion led by Jim Rugh, Bill Savedoff, Rob van den Bert, Fred Carden, Nancy MacPherson and Ross Conner. The final session led by Bagele Chilisa, considered some possibilities for developing an evaluation culture rooted in Africa. In this session some examples of how the African culture lends itself to evaluation were given. In addition some examples that demonstrated that the currently used evaluation methodologies could be enriched if it considered African worldviews were given. The stream was funded by NORAD. NORAD also offered to fund an evaluation that could be used as a test case for an African rooted approach.

At the end of the plenary, three broad challenges facing evaluation in Africa were noted as follows: cultural and contextual relevance of evaluations; Appropriateness of evaluation methodologies and approaches and ethics and values in evaluation.

### **Cultural and contextual relevance of evaluations**

The conference reiterated concerns raised earlier by researchers policy analysts and evaluators that much of the evaluation practice in Africa is based on external values and contexts, is donor driven and the accountability mechanisms tend to be directed towards recipients of aid rather than both recipients and the providers of aid (Report on the Special Stream at the 4<sup>th</sup>AfrEA Conference Jan 17-19 2.007).

### **Ethics, attribution and power relations**

Evaluation must contribute to development in Africa by addressing challenges related to country ownership; the macro-micro disconnect; attribution; ethics and values; and power-



relations; Independence versus dependence evaluations and transactional/commercial versus development focus.

### **Paradigms and methodologies in evaluation**

There is need to re-examine our own preconceived assumptions; underpinning values, paradigms (e.g. transformative v/s pragmatic); what is acknowledged as being evidence; and by whom, before we can select any particular methodology/approach.

### **Resolutions passed**

AfrEA further passed the following resolutions:

- African evaluation standards and practices should be based on African values and world views
- The existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa.
- There is a need to foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

To enable the implementation of this resolution, it was recommended that AfrEA consider the following:

- AfrEA guides and supports the development of African guidelines to operationalize the African evaluation standards and; in doing so, ensure that both the standards and operational guidelines are based on the existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews;
- AfrEA works with its networks to support and develop institutions, such as Universities, to enable them to establish evaluation as a profession and meta discipline within Africa;
- AfrEA identifies mechanisms in which African evaluation practitioners can be mentored and supported by experience African evaluation professionals;
- AfrEA engages with funding agencies to explore opportunities for developing and adopting evaluation methodologies and practices that are based on African values and worldviews and advocate for their inclusion in future evaluations;
- AfrEA encourages and supports knowledge generated from evaluation practice within Africa to be published and profiled in scholarly publications. This may include:
  - Supporting the inclusion of peer reviewed publications on African evaluation in international journal on evaluation (for example, the publication of a special issue on African evaluation)
  - The development of scholarly publications specially related to evaluation theories and practices in Africa (e.g. a journal of the AfrEA). (Making Evaluation our Own – Report on the Special Stream at the 4thAfrEA Conference Jan 17-19 2.007).

One of the key resolutions passed by AfrEA that should guide our understanding of an MAE was that the existing body of knowledge on African values and worldviews should be central to

guiding and shaping evaluation in Africa and that AfrEA should foster and develop the intellectual leadership and capacity within Africa and ensure that it plays a greater role in guiding and developing evaluation theories and practices.

## **African Thought Leaders Forum on Evaluation and Development**

In 2012 CLEAR organised an African Thought Leaders Forum on Evaluation and Development. The Forum that took place in Bellagio, Italy was coordinated by Zenda Ofir, Stephen Porter and Keron Crawley. The forum brought African thought leaders from across Africa and had the following objectives:

- To discuss the most important development challenges in Africa over the next ten years, their implications for development theory and practice and how they relate to global trends.
- To debate the status quo of evaluation in Africa, the forces that are driving it, innovations in the field of evaluation that have the potential to make it more useful and how they relate to global trends.
- To debate what is meant by African rooted and African driven evaluation, important examples, that are informed by such an approach and the contribution of the approach to evaluation practice.

## **Papers presented**

The following papers were presented:

Robin Moore and Zenda Ofir: Contemporary Development Challenges for Africa and their Implications for Evaluation.

Bagele Chilisa and Malunga, C. Malunga: Made in Africa Evaluation: Uncovering African Roots in Evaluation Theory and Practice.

Boureima Gado, Jennifer Mutua and Nermine Wally: Institutionalisation of Evaluation In Africa: The Role of AfrEA

The discussions and the papers presented were the second attempt to define an MAE. Three main ideas distilled from the papers were as follows:

- Evaluation should draw from African Worldviews to inform practice that contribute to the development of the wellbeing of individuals their relatives others and the environment around them.
- For effective development Africans have to play a greater role in the evolution of evaluation theory and practice on the continent.
- Evaluation has a potential to contribute significantly to the lives of African people. African evaluation should therefore not be the sole responsibility of managers, evaluation specialists and scholars – but a way of life for its citizens.

## **Resolution passed**

The following were proposed at the forum:

1. Developing capacities for innovation in African evaluation, while respecting the principles of capacity development as an endogenous process. Such strategies can be based, among others, on government goals for evaluation that go beyond responsiveness to challenges, to determining accountability for value for money, with key goals that include
  - Governance and accountability to citizens and to those who provide support
  - The development of learning nations and groups for informed reflection, innovation and change
  - Stimulation of African thought leadership in evaluation, in particular through analytically oriented institutions (research and evaluation centers; universities) to enhance their role as independent evaluation institutions, centers of expertise and think tanks on evaluation
  - Knowledge development and contributions to global knowledge.
2. Expanding the pool of evaluation knowledge generation from within Africa could include the following specific actions:
  - Generate, compile and classify a transparent repository of knowledge on African evaluations
  - Map capacity building initiatives in evaluation in Africa
  - Move the compiled repositories and maps to the wider African public
  - Gauge demand from specialist universities, think tanks and evaluation projects to partner in order to generate original knowledge, by drawing lessons learnt and best practices on the theory, perception and application of Africa-rooted evaluation
  - Document and disseminate results in of strategies to improve the status of evaluation and capacities on the continent
  - Document and disseminate the approaches and results of research into evaluation theory and practices done on the continent.
3. Catalyzing a strong, movement towards ‘thought leadership’ that can enhance the evaluation profession in Africa, and support development policy and strategy:

African evaluators and other stakeholders need to commit to advancing monitoring and evaluation theory and practice. More specifically, they need to engage better with

- Key frameworks, policies and strategies at national and regional levels;
- International aid and other global policy and regimes that influence African development;
- The diversity of new actors and development funding modalities;
- The beliefs-and value-laden nature of both development and evaluation;
- Evaluation theory and practices rooted in Africa. (Bellagio Conference Proceedings 2012, pps 13-14).

A valuable contribution to MAE also came from the first handbook and only book on evaluation coming from Africa edited by Cloete, Rabie and De Koning.

## **Situating MAE in evaluation debates**

To adequately capture the voices on what MAE is and can be, the paper first engages with international discourse on evaluation and its characteristics. Furthermore discourses on decolonisation and indigenisation are interrogated to locate African voices within debate on

culturally responsive, indigenous and post-colonial approaches that expand ways to work in diverse evaluation settings.

### **Evaluation and social science methodology**

Our understanding of a Made in Africa Evaluation must begin with a clear stance of what evaluation is. Evaluation has its roots in social science methodology, with social science research emphasizing the development of new knowledge while evaluation focuses on determining the worth or merits of programs and utilization of evaluation findings to improve policies, programs, services and to inform developmental change in general. In that context research methodology paradigms that are applicable in social science research are also relevant to evaluation (Mertens and Wilson 2012). Research paradigms communicate philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (Ontology) what counts as knowledge (Epistemology) and values (Axiology). These assumptions inform the realities that we see, how we see them, how we interpret them and how we communicate them. Evaluation theory and practice is thus also premised upon philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, ways of knowing and value systems.

The dominant research paradigms have been critiqued for constructing all human experience including that of Africans through Western hegemony and ideology (Patience Elabor-Idemodue 2002 Scheurich 1997) and for '*seeing the world in one colour*' (Guba and Lincoln 2005). In response the formerly colonized of the world including Africans, Indigenous people of Canada, Australia, Asia and North America are exploring ways to decolonize, indigenize and imagine knowledge theory and practice in every academic discipline that is inclusive of other world views and paradigms that are otherwise missing in the literature. There are paradigmatic groupings that are arguing for distinct characteristics, for example, of Western, Asian, Latin America and African world-views. Any characterisation of MAE approaches should include the articulation of African world views and paradigms and the philosophical assumptions that inform ways of perceiving reality, ways of knowing, value systems, methodologies upon which it is premised and its application in a real world evaluation. The assumption is that the paradigms and world views inform what realities get evaluated, how they are evaluated, communicated and how recommendations are utilized. It should be noted, however, that African world views and philosophies value integration of knowledge systems. For instance, Western participative paradigms, for example, post modern, developmental and constructivist paradigms have been combined with African paradigms (Muwanga-Zake 2009) to contextualise realities evaluated in Africa.

### **Evaluation as a discipline**

Evaluation has also been defined as a discipline with a history and rules that guide its scope, purpose and application to real world situations. Said (1993) reminds us that most traditional discipline as we know them today including evaluation originated in the West, and that the rules on what counts as legitimate knowledge were couched in the history, philosophies and culture of the West. These traditional disciplines are grounded in cultural worldviews which are either antagonistic to other knowledge systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge system (Smith 1999). More serious still, the world is experiencing the globalisation of knowledge that has become a systematic process through which the West reaffirms its power as a centre of legitimate knowledge (Smith 1999:62). In this context, at the centre of the African and other non-westerners debate on evaluation as a discipline are the following questions:

1. Who sets the evaluation agenda?
2. What is the agenda?
3. When does evaluation start?
4. What can be evaluated?
5. Who are the evaluation actors/stakeholders and what roles do they play?
6. Who decide what is evaluated and how it is evaluated?
7. What are the methods that can be used to evaluate?
8. How are the finding interpreted?
9. How are the results communicated?
10. How are the results used?

This set of questions determine what evaluation is and different responses will give different types of evaluation frameworks, models and methodologies. It follows therefore that a MAE may be different from other schools of thought or models of evaluation elsewhere, depending on the responses to the above questions.

### **Evaluation and development**

Well-performed evaluation is expected to inform development planning and outcome. The challenge is that blind reliance on Eurocentric models, strategies and techniques often lead to inadequate assessments, wrong prescriptions and flat evaluation models (Jeng 2012). More serious still, the bulk of evaluation in Africa is on aid programmes or philanthropic interventions (Zenda Ofir 2012). Aid programs and philanthropic efforts are often small scale projects that do not necessarily translate into successful scalable national development programmes. A MAE can be an attempt to articulate an evaluation theory and practice that defines an evaluation agenda that prioritises evaluation for development supported by evaluation frameworks and techniques that are rooted in African worldviews, African development, Africa's vision and models of poverty reduction that go beyond poverty reduction schemes and Africa's models which show respect for human dignity.

### **Evaluation politics and values**

Because of the political context in which it is conducted, evaluation requires management, group processes and political manoeuvring that are not always presenting research. An evaluation process assumes, a theory of change, that guide the acquisition and management of resources that are required to achieve the program or policy goals and an understanding of how the political context can influence the assumed theory of change. How does evaluation, for example, draw on indigenous knowledge to inform a theory of change? There are narratives of projects that were located in what communities regarded as sacred places and could not be utilized because their existence violated community values. Failure of such projects is often blamed on the backwardness of African traditions and beliefs systems, clearly showing that the program theory of change was premised on a Western model that could only see and interpret the world with a universal Western lens. The HIV/AIDS epidemic, the Ebola in West Africa demonstrate that the respect for traditions such as how one treats life and death and the connection to those who have passed on is a big driver of behaviours (excerpts from an interviewee script). At the start of the epidemic in Botswana caregivers of HIV/AIDS patients would not wear hand gloves during routine caring of their loved ones because to them that was an indication that they did not want to

connect directly with their loved ones. In West Africa in some of the countries affected by Ebola, people attended funerals and performed the expected rituals even after warnings that it would expose them to mortal danger. A MAE makes connection with an evaluation theory of change that is informed by worldviews that see inter-connectedness between the people and the environment, is rational and at the same time mystical and spiritual. In 2000, 70% of the population in Africa relied on agriculture (Du Plessis, 2001). This dependency continues to sustain a close relationship between the people, land and nature in general. The relationship has informed a worldview that values interconnectedness of the living and the non-living, nature and the environment and the co-existence of the spiritual, the mystical and the rational. But parallel to this worldview is the acquired set of Western values with their emphasis on individuality and a rational world. Thus when we talk of Africa we are talking of a continent where:

Age-old traditions of social responsibility co-exist with horrific brutality, people move with ease between the rational and the mystical, the modern and the ancient as Africa exists simultaneously in two worlds that inter-weave without becoming one (Du Plessis 2001).

The argument further vindicates the Bellagio Leaders Forum (2012) idea that evaluation should focus on the contribution of development to the world being of individuals, their relatives, others and the environment upon which they depend.

### **Decolonisation and indigenisation discourses**

The decolonisation discourses enable scholars to locate African voices in the debate on culturally relevant evaluation approaches. Decolonisation of evaluation can be viewed as the restructuring of power relations in the globally construction of evaluation knowledge production, such that the African people can actively participate in the construction of what is evaluated, when it is evaluated, by whom and with what methodologies. A decolonized MAE approach is thus African-people centred, values culturally relevant and indigenised evaluation processes and methodologies predominantly informed by African worldviews and paradigms. It articulates African resistance to blind borrowing of western values and standards to evaluate program in Africa; calls for capacity building of African policy analysts, researchers and evaluators to enable them to carry out their own evaluation; promotes adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments, strategies and theory and model adjustment to ensure relevancy to African settings and the development of novel evaluation practice, theory and methodologies emanating from local cultures, indigenous knowledge systems, African philosophies and African paradigms. The decolonisation process can include the setting up of evaluation review boards, evaluation policies and evaluation ethics that valorise African values and the use of African local languages to recover, revitalise and validate indigenous knowledge and cultures that communicate African lived experiences and realities. A decolonisation approach will thus entail an indigenisation process along a continuum scale that ranges from the least indigenised to the evaluation approaches that are predominantly informed by African world views.



## **Towards the Meaning and Practice of MAE**

The paper brings together discussions and resolutions from AfrEA Conference Proceedings (2007, 2013) Bellagio Conference (2012) the international debates on evaluation and its characteristics, the decolonisation and indigenisation discourses and views from twelve evaluators, to map out the meaning, purpose, content and methodology of a MAE.

### **Purpose and Content of MAE**

There is consensus that a MAE should challenge

- The current practice of designing evaluation tools without paying attention to context that is prevalent worldwide and to take the lead in recognising the African diversity that manifest itself in different cultures, religions, languages, histories, gender, ethnicity and so on.
- The extractive nature of evaluation of current evaluation practice that leaves participants wondering what exactly the community is getting out of the evaluation
- Evaluation that show wonderful successes of projects while the reality is completely different
- Marginalisation of African data collection methods such as storytelling, folk lores, music, dance, oral traditions and the use of African languages

The MAE content and or agenda should include the development of specific evaluation strategies that account for the local context that define locally sound and relevant development success measures. Evaluation should be a tool for development. MAE should address the disconnect between the way in which we think development works and the way we evaluate. That requires that evaluators become more explicit about African people's values and beliefs about development in Africa and to bring back the development discourse to evaluation when success measures are determined and reports are written and findings disseminated. These views are fundamental in addressing the questions on what MAE evaluation is, its agenda and who sets it. One reviewer had this to say:

If the development approach is re-oriented so that community partners understand that the resources no longer belong to the “donor” but to them (the community partners), a new dynamic to evaluation will emerge. If the elements of Evaluative Thinking are employed at the beginning of the intervention to build an evaluation component into the intervention and community partners are given the responsibility of deciding what success means to them, we will begin to see indicators that development practitioners never thought about. In Africa, communities will defend what they own and have, but follow with scepticism what experts think they own.

Another dominant view is that MAE should be viewed as a trans-disciplinary concept that draws knowledge from African history, Anthropology, Political Science, Sociology, African Philosophy, African Oral Literature and African Indigenous Knowledge Systems. This is necessary to support and evaluation theory of change that capture the interconnection between the people and their environment and value systems that promote partnerships of knowledge systems. A MAE thus needs to engage African Thought Leaders from multiple disciplines and multiple knowledge systems.

## Methodology of MAE

There is a consensus that a MAE methodology should arise from the multiple world views of African people and African paradigms that inform assumption about the nature of reality, knowledge and values. Commenting on the methodologies of a MAE, one interview had this to say:

We need to ask ourselves fundamental questions about African paradigm because evaluation is about values and what we evaluate and what is evaluated depends on the realities that is seen and what is considered as valuable knowledge and for whom the knowledge is valuable.

There is also a consensus that participatory methodologies are congruent with African world views and value systems. Participatory methods are ideal because of the complexity of development challenges in Africa and the diversity that comes with location, ethnicity, gender and so on. A participatory methodology in the context of evaluation for development in Africa does not only mean asking people what they want at the end of the evaluation, but how they want to be involved from the start. The question of when does evaluation start and who are the evaluation actors is thus fundamental in applying a MAE. Participation in a MAE different from the most commonly agreed meaning in which participation is defined in terms of involving stakeholders. The participatory methods in a MAE, thus, includes capacity building of participants as co-evaluators to promote evaluation as a way of life for all Africans. One interviewee described a participatory MAE approach they used as follows:

I try to involve as many stakeholders as possible, including the beneficiaries in the process. I start off with inception training to share the objectives, interests and evaluation questions with them. After that, I collect information with them using qualitative tools (photos, cards, more speaking than written, drawings); I involve them in the analysis as well to get their judgement and opinion on the programme that is being evaluated. I then review my conclusion with them to validate the assessment.

The interviewee observes that the challenge with using the approach is that evaluation commissioners will not always agree on the degree of involvement of beneficiaries in the evaluation process. In the end, beneficiaries are discouraged when their recommendations and concerns are not addressed after the evaluation. For MAE approaches to be executed, there is need therefore for partnerships between commissioners of evaluation and AfrEA. AfrEA will need to partner with evaluation commissioners if this challenge is to be addressed.

## Who are the evaluation actors?

The dominant view is that MAE is Africa centred Africa-centric and Africa lead. Its main goal is to interrogate what evaluation can do in Africa and how it can do it to better Africa. Africa led does not necessarily mean the evaluators have to be only Africans and professionals, for not all African evaluation professionals may subscribe to the values of the MAE. It therefore doesn't matter who is doing the evaluation, who works in it, who can contribute to it. What matters is pursuing a MAE evaluation agenda, with evaluation methodologies that involve Africans from the start of the programme, are inclusive of all knowledge system while at the same time placing African worldviews, paradigms and philosophies at the centre of evaluation theory and practice. It is a practice that evaluates the realities that are valuable, to produce knowledge that is valuable and relevant to the development of the well-being of individuals, their relatives, others and the



environment around them. In this way, African communities rather than evaluation experts play a critical role in solving their own problems while the evaluation expert facilitates the uncovering of localised evaluation approaches and tools and ensuring their visibility in international discourses on evaluation.

Using the discourses on decolonisation and indigenisation three main approaches that evolve from the evaluation practice in Africa are discussed: Least indigenised evaluation approaches; adaptation evaluation approaches and African-relational based evaluation approaches.

### **Least indigenised approach**

The majority of interviewees described a MAE as evaluation done in Africa and context specific to African communities. Evaluation in the least indigenised approach is dominated by Western evaluation theory and practice. There is, for instance, emphasis on translating evaluation instruments to local languages and indigenising techniques of gathering data without addressing fundamental questions on world views that can inform evaluation theory and practice coming from Africa. Critiquing this approach (Chilisa, B. and Malunga, C. 2012) asserts that the approaches are mere modifications of Northern rooted and driven practices that do not go deep enough to qualify as African rooted and African driven. The critique raises the question of how much is sufficient indigenisation? What are the standards for a sufficiently indigenised evaluation practice? Indeed some indigenised evaluation approaches add no value to the quality of the practice and may even bring harm to programs and recipients. A study by Aliu Mohammed Nurudeen (2012) to examine various participatory tools and methods of development evaluation used by the Centre for Development of People (CEDEP) in Northern Ghana to outline the extent to which CEDEP ensures beneficiaries and stakeholders involvement in development evaluation revealed cosmetic contextualization that failed to make the evaluation of outcomes relevant to the beneficiaries. The indigenisation entailed factoring the beneficiaries' views on sacred issues such as sacred grooves, gods' and taboos in the program. Participatory research tools including dream mapping, and community meetings were used to create a picture of the type of development intervention the communities required. The evaluation of the intervention was, however, done by external agencies contracted by the donors to evaluate predetermined objectives using a predetermined standard for the measure of success and failure and requiring all stakeholders to adhere to that standard. This is clearly an example of the least indigenised evaluation approach

### **Adaptation evaluation approaches**

One approach to indigenisation of evaluation is characterized by adaptation of evaluation instruments to make them contextual relevant, adaptation of Western based evaluation models, theory and practice, to make them cultural appropriate and involving local stakeholders and African evaluators in evaluation process as part of the strategy to ensure that the evaluation is African driven and rooted in African values. The adaptation of Western evaluation approaches is a good practice that is supported by African value systems. In Botswana the practicing of borrowing knowledge from others is reflected in the proverb, *Dilo makwati di kwatabololwa mo go ba bangwe* (we learn from one another). It is necessary for evaluators to borrow from their indigenous knowledge systems that promote learning from one another to celebrate the

adaptation of the accumulated western theory and practice on evaluation to serve the needs of Africans. We live in a global village. No one can exist alone. Carden et al (2012) adds that from these adaptation practices can emerge made in Africa evaluation theories and practices. The African Peer Review Mechanism is presented as a good example of an adapted evaluation approach that was indigenously developed and evolved from Africa. They define it as a specific set of procedures for country self-assessment around governance and human rights. The procedure was adapted from OECD Peer Review Mechanism and developed by NEPAD. It is driven by African researchers and policy makers and leads to African-based assessments. The fundamental that the adaptation approach does not adequately address the strategies of involving local stakeholders from the study.

Traore from West Africa (2012) describes a decolonization and indigenization evaluation approach that has potential for developing into evaluation tools or a theory of evaluation coming from Africa. He describes an evaluation strategy he calls Community Talk to Reach Consensus. In this strategy, there are three ways of reaching consensus in a community. The *palabre* system where several meetings are held with indigenous knowledge holders, members of the public and the evaluator; a *palabre* system based on a public discussion shed called *toguna* and lastly reaching consensus by asking the views of indigenous experts. Another strategy on community talk to reach consensus, called *lekgotla* is practiced by researchers and evaluators in Southern Africa. These approaches have the potential to be developed into evaluation tools to serve the same purposes that evaluation tools such as brainstorming, forced field analysis, etc., serve.

### **African-relational based evaluation approaches.**

Five of the respondents and four former AfrEA Presidents interviewed seemingly coming from an Africanisation stance, invariably argue for African evaluators '*to think out of the box to decide how they want to reshape evaluation that respondents to African context*', to imagine '*originating or developing completely new evaluation practices from within the continent*', and '*uncovering practices that could inform the evolution of evaluation in the rest of the world*' in addition to the adaptation of Western-based evaluation theory and practice. They argue that the diversity within Africa is not against what Africa would do, it is about what Africa can do to accommodate and understand that diversity and how we can promote evaluation around that diversity. There is, it is argued, something that is '*generically African*' and if there is something we can call African we have to find out how that '*thing impacts on evaluation*'. Just as we can talk of Euro-American methodologies or Euro-Western paradigms so we can talk generically about African rooted and African worldviews and paradigms.

The growing literature on paradigmatic groupings, for example, an Eastern paradigm of evaluation (Russon 2008) Kauppa Maori theory based evaluation (Kerry 2012) Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson 2008), postcolonial indigenous research paradigms (Chilisa 2012) and reference to Euro-American paradigms lend support to attempts to debate and make concrete a made in Africa evaluation that is informed and driven by African philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values in evaluation. Interviewees conceded that Africa needs to engage in basic fundamental questions about African paradigms that would drive a MAE. One interviewee had this to say:

*‘Africans have to think what it means to be an African, and how that can shape the way evaluation is carried out in Africa. Africans have to imagine what evaluation would have looked like if it had originated as a concept in Africa by Africans for Africa. ‘*

From the literature reviewed, there are emerging African-relational evaluation approaches that are informed by post-colonial indigenous paradigms (Chilisa 2012) African world views( Carroll 2008),the afrocentric world views and ubuntu philosophy (Asante 1988, 1990, Riviere 2001, Mkabela 2005, Muwanga-Zake’s 2009) ethnophilosophy (Emaglat 2001, Chilisa 2005, Easton 2010; Chilisa and Malunga, C. 2012). These philosophies, world views and paradigms have in common relational ways of perceiving reality and of being, ways of knowing and value systems that sum up an African relational paradigm. A claim to an African relational evaluation paradigm have to make clear the philosophical assumptions that form the basis for program evaluation intent, motivation for the evaluation, expected outcomes, choice of methodology, methods and evaluation strategies or design and interpretation and dissemination of evaluation findings. What follows is a discussion on African paradigms and philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, knowledge and values that inform African-based relational evaluation approaches.

## **African Paradigms and Evaluation Practice**

### **The Afrocentric paradigm**

Afrocentricity is a paradigm whose origin is attributed to Asante’s work Afrocentricity (1988), The Afrocentric idea (1987), and Kemet, Afrocentricity and Knowledge (1990). It places the African ways of perceiving reality, ways of knowing and value systems on equitable footing with other scholarly examinations of human experience. It is an African centred world-view that establishes a conceptual framework for how the world is seen and understood. It is culturally specific and draws on African philosophical and theoretical assumptions and serves Africans just as classical Greek civilization serves as a reference point for Europe (Diop 1978). Drawing from The Afrocentric paradigm, Asante 1990 came up with three basic beliefs that guide the research process. Riviere 2001, has summarized these as follows:

- Researchers and evaluators must hold themselves responsible for uncovering, hidden, subtle, racist theories that may be embedded in current methodologies
- Researchers must work to legitimise the centrality of African ideals, values as valid frame of reference for inquiry, acquiring and examining data
- Maintain inquiry rooted in strict interpretation of place.

(Reveiere 2001), argues that the insistence on a clear definition of space is the central distinguishing characteristic. An afrocentric inquiry must be executed from a clearly defined Afrocentric place, must include a clear description of this location (Reveiere 2001) and a focus on Africa as the cultural centre for the study of African experiences and an interpretation of data from an African perspective. Afrocentrists argue for pluralism in philosophical views without hierarchy (Mkabela 2005 and requires respect for all cultural centres thus ensuring that the diversity that is characteristic of Africa is accommodated.

## Culture and the afrocentric method

The Nile Valley Civilization is considered to be the geographic and historical foundation of cultural commonalities derived and shared among the continent's approximately 6,000 tribes and countless descendants (Ramsey 2006). Karenga and Caruthers (1986), Asante 1987, 1990 extracted from the Nile Valley Civilization *Ma'at* and *Nommo* as the two principles intrinsic to African cultures. *Ma'at* is the quest for justice, truth and harmony and in the context of research and evaluation refers to interrogating the manner in which the research or evaluation process is in harmony with the culture of the people and pursues issues of truth and justice. *Nommo* describes the creation of knowledge as a vehicle for improvement in human life and human relations (Reviere 2001:711). Seven cardinal virtues namely truth, justice, rightness, propriety, harmony, order, balance and reciprocity are derived from *Ma'at* and *Nommo*. These, it is argued should provide a code of conduct and a standard of aspiration for ethical and moral behaviour.

## African Relational Evaluation Paradigm

There is in addition to the Afrocentric paradigm a growing body of literature that articulates post colonial indigenous relational paradigms and an African world view (Goduka 2000, Carroll 2008, Chilisa 2012) that are based on relational ways of perceiving reality, (ontology), ways of knowing (epistemology) and value systems (axiology). I invoke this literature to make claim for an African Relational Evaluation Paradigm with clear assumptions about relational ontologies, epistemologies, and value systems.

### Relational ontology

Among the Bantu people there is recognition of an I/We relationship as opposed to the I/You which emphasises the individual at the expense of the majority. This principle is captured under the philosophy of *Ubuntu*. An *Ubuntu* philosophy expresses an ontology that addresses relations among people, relations with the living and the non-living, and a spiritual existence that promotes love and harmony among peoples and communities (Chilisa 2005, 2012). This African way of perceiving reality comes out more clearly when addressing the nature of being. The common answer on what is being comes out in the abadage I am because we are, I am a person through other persons I am we; I am because we are; we are because I am, I am in you, you are in me. The 'we' includes the living and the non-living thus an African reality includes a spiritual and a material existence (Carroll 2008). African ontology recognises peoples' relations to the cosmos, an interdependent interconnectedness that promotes peace, love and harmony. The implication for evaluation research methodology is that all areas of culture, living experience and indigenous knowledge systems must be used to conceptualise the realities to be evaluated and to come up with techniques through which these realities can be known.

### Relational epistemology

A relational epistemology draws our attention to relational forms of knowing as opposed to the Euro-Western theories on ways of knowing that emphasise individual descriptions of knowing (Thayer Bacon 2003). Knowing is something that is socially constructed by people who have relationships and connections with each other, with the environment, the spirits of the ancestors

and the living and the non-living. The African epistemology is oriented towards an Affect-Symbolic-Imagery such that an affective oriented evaluator studies reality through the interaction of affect and symbolic imagery (Carroll 2008). Emphasis is on the use of words, gestures, dance, song, rhythm well-established general beliefs, concepts, and theories of particular people, which are stored in their language, practices, rituals, proverbs, revered traditions, myths and folktales to access or convey meaning (Carroll 2008, Chilisa 2012). These modes of knowing are the basis for the choice of methods for accessing a reality that has a connection with the knower and a means of verification of this reality.

### Relational axiology

Axiology refers to the nature of values and attempts to answer the question what do we value. The value system of most African societies is built around respect for others and oneself. This respect is built around the concept '*humanness or personhood*' (Segobye 2000:3) or respect. A relational axiology that is embedded in the Ubuntu relational ontology principles of (1) I am we, I am because we are: (2) relations of people with the living and the non-living; and (3) spirituality, love, harmony and community building (Chilisa 2012). There are emphases on values grounded in cooperation, collective responsibilities, cooperation and interdependence and interpersonal relationships among people as the highest value (Carroll 2008). From these principles, an ethical framework emerges with emphasises on accountable responsibilities of researchers and evaluators and respectful relationships between the researchers and evaluators, and the participants that take account of the participants web of relationships with the living and the non-living. These value orientations also influence the evaluation theory of change, criteria or standards, indicators of success or failure of projects and conclusions about the worth or merit of programs, policies or projects.

### Other philosophies

Ethno-philosophy, philosophic sagacity, national ideological philosophy, African logic and teleology are additional aspects of African world-views that can enrich the articulation of a relational evaluation paradigm and its methodologies.

**Ethno-philosophy:** It has been described as a system of thought that articulates analysis and attempt to understand the collective worldviews of diverse African peoples as a unified form of knowledge (Emagalit, 2001; Chilisa 2005). According to this philosophy knowledge are the experiences of the people encoded in their language, folklore, stories, songs, culture, values and experiences. The language, stories, songs and folklore are the banks where the knowledge is stored, and can be retrieved to inform theory and practice in evaluation for example. Easton (2012), for instance, has originated ways to contextualise five common evaluation concepts based on proverbs. Community spirit, cooperation, collectiveness, democracy and consensus building are the values espoused through this philosophy (Chilisa 2005).

**Nationalistic-ideological philosophy:** This is a political philosophy represented through the thinking of Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Leopold Senghor and Thabo Mbeki and more visible through the African renaissance and Africanisation concepts. The African renaissance is supposed to have originated from Mbeki's declaration in 1998 'I am an African' (Nabudere 2002) and also expressed through nationalist movements such as Pan Africanism and Black Consciousness (Prah 1999, Mamdani 1999). African renaissance has been defined as a re-

awakening of mind that is driven by ‘*an African intelligentsia that includes all those who drive creative thought and frame debates, whether in the arts or culture, whether in philosophical or social thought*’ (Mamdani (1999:130). It is a search for identity, a redefinition and re-evaluation of the self and of Africa in the context of a globalising world. Makogoba, Shope and Mazwani, 1999 have defined as:

*The African Renaissance as a unique opportunity for Africans to define ourselves and our agenda according to our own realities and taking into account the realities of those around us. It’s about Africans being agents of history and master of our destiny, Africa is in a transformation mode. The renaissance is about Africa reflection and African redefinition.*

Along with the African renaissance concept is the Africanisation concept which refers to ‘*a process of placing the African worldview at the centre of analysis*’ (Teffo, 2000: 107). It can be viewed as an empowerment tool directed towards the mental decolonisation, liberation and emancipation of Africans, so that they do not see themselves only as objects of research and consumers or borrowers of knowledge, but also as producers of knowledge capable of theorising about the production of knowledge in ways embedded in the cultures and experiences of the African peoples (Chilisa 2005).

**African Teleology:** A sense of directedness towards definite ends and definite purpose which in turn compels commitment to a given goal. The implication for evaluation is that the evaluation inquiry must question the relevance and functionality of a program, project or policy.

**African Logic:** The emphasis is on a diunital logic as opposed to the either/or logic common in Euro-American thought.

## **African-rooted Evaluation Methodologies and Approaches in Theory and Practice**

The Afrocentric and relational paradigms and their philosophical assumptions about a relational ontology, epistemology and axiology, African teleology and logic drive the evaluation methodology while the Nationalistic-ideological philosophy empower African to theorise, name and label MAE approaches that identify how the unique realities, ways of knowing and value systems, cultures and traditions of Africa determine how evaluation agendas are set, how evaluation interfaces with Africa’s development agenda, what gets evaluated, what methodologies are used, findings interpreted and results used.

### **Illustrations of African-Relational based Evaluation approaches**

There are emerging African driven evaluation methodologies some which, provide methodological questions to engage with during the research and evaluation process (Carroll 2008), while others illustrate the application of the Afrocentric paradigm to contextualize evaluation practice (Muwanga-Zake’s study 2009) and others theorize evaluation models based on ethnophilosophy (Easton 2010; Malunga, C. 2012); and ethics principles based on the Afrocentric paradigm (Mkabela 2005) and Ubuntu philosophy (Riviere 2001). A common feature of these practices is that they are built on the relational ways of perceiving reality and ways of



knowing. Elsewhere (Chilisa and Malunga, C. 2012) it was noted that relational evaluation approaches can be drawn from the everyday practices of the majority of African communities on greeting, from the Southern African axiom *nthunthune banwe* “a person is because of others”, and the ethnophilosophy with a focus on values drawn from indigenous knowledge systems. In most African communities, for example, evaluation of wellness of one another involves, a person asking the other about their wellness, the wellness of their children and those related to them including non-living things. Relational evaluation approaches valorise an evaluation inquiry that is evident in the everyday evaluation of wellness as it comes out through the way people greet each other. The I/We relationship with its emphasis on a connection of human-beings to non-living things reminds us that evaluation of projects from the African perspective should include a holistic approach that links the project to the sustainability of the environment. Evaluation of development programs in Africa is about the contribution of projects to the quality and wellbeing of the people and from the everyday practice of the Africans, the wellbeing of relatives and those around including things is as important as one’s wellbeing. Thus an African will usually say they are not that well because a relative is not well. These practices show potential of evolving into unique evaluation inquiry and or theory of evaluation and practice coming out of Africa. What follows is an illustration of evaluation practice that either shows potential into developing into an evaluation theory or it’s already an evaluation theory.

### **Evaluation methodology Based on African World Views**

Paradigms, influence the way knowledge is studied and interpreted (Merten 2012, Guba and Lincoln 2005, Creswell 2012). A paradigm sets down the basis for program evaluation intent, motivation for the evaluation, expected outcomes, choice of methodology, methods and evaluation strategies or design and interpretation and dissemination of evaluation findings. Carroll (2008), has proposed research methodology questions based on an African world view that can be adapted to evaluation inquiry as follows:

- How does the evaluation inquiry reflect the interdependent and interconnected nature of the universe?
- How does the evaluation inquiry compensate for the spiritual and material nature of reality?
- How does the evaluation inquiry reflect the communal nature of African people?
- How does the evaluation inquiry access the non-material reality?
- How does the evaluation inquiry reflect the both/and logic?
- How does the evaluation inquiry advance the interests of the African community?
- How does the evaluation inquiry contribute to the liberation of the African people?

Clearly, an evaluator that is guided by these questions develops an evaluation methodology, strategy and methods that are unique to the African world-view that Carroll articulates. The questions reveal an evaluation strategy that is relational.

### **Evaluation Process Based on the Afrocentric paradigm**

Muwanga-Zake’s study (2009), illustrates an evaluation practice informed by the Afrocentric paradigm and Ubuntu philosophy. In this study, the Afrocentric paradigm and Ubuntu philosophy were combined with aspects of Western participative paradigms namely post-modern, developmental and constructivist evaluation paradigms to evaluate a computer

educational program for teachers in South Africa. The study is discussed under critical questions that evaluators with a MAE in mind need to address.

### Setting the evaluation agenda

Muwanga-Zake (2009) engaged with the decolonization of evaluation research by moving the focus from external determined program goals and objectives of the computer program to a focus on the agenda of the people namely the teachers valued needs and priorities to be met by the program. For the teachers, a computer program would be a priority if it contributed to poverty alleviation and if it contributed towards learning leading to employment of learners. Using *Ubuntu* elements of collaboration, togetherness, cooperation and consensus building, teachers were involved in the planning and execution of the evaluation. *Ubuntu* was used to inform a strategy of gaining access and achieving rapport with the participants. The strategy to gain entry into the research site is described as follows:

Greet *Bantu*, sit with them, understand their needs, and if possible eat with them. In short become a *Muntu* for full co-operation of Bantu in research (Muwanga-Zake 2009:418).

Becoming a Muntu is described as a method that involves evaluators being transformed and submitting themselves to Ubuntu. It is *Ubuntu*, for instance to share with participants one's family, history, clan and totem and the participants depth of knowledge of the evaluator determines the quantity and quality of indigenous knowledge accessed (Muwanga-Zake 2009:418). Through the application of *Ubuntu* and the I/We relationship with emphasis on inclusiveness, a non-Muntu through transformation can become a *Muntu*. A *Muntu* evaluator can go through complete transformation by embracing generic African values and moving further to embrace the ethno philosophy dominant in a particular location.

### Values, validity and Ubuntu

Muwanga-Zake (2009) takes concepts of validity discussed in the literature Le compete et al 1993 Heron 1996, and shows their application in the evaluation process from a *buntu* perspective.

**Technical Validity:** Fit between research questions, data collection procedures, interpretation of data and reporting. The evaluator and the teachers engaged in a discourse analysis of *Ubuntu*, that is understanding, for example, gestures, glances, thoughts, values, emotions and attitudes and translating research questions between local languages and English.

**Psychosocial Validity:** The practice in the way the evaluation is carried out. *Ubuntu* social norms in gaining entry to a site and creating rapport were followed

**Value Validity:** The contribution of research and intervention to personal and social transformation. The teachers' valued needs were prioritized and teachers were trained in evaluation skills and became co-evaluators. The teachers utilized the evaluation findings.

**Fairness:** Obtaining voice/a balanced representation of the multiple voices of all stakeholders. It was also an *Ubuntu* principle to recognise, the elderly, spiritual leaders, chiefs and other leadership around the school including those who were not participants.



## Using Proverbs and Metaphors as Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks in Evaluation

There is an argument that language, proverbs, metaphors, folklores, stories, songs artefacts, oral traditions contain African literature, concepts and theories that African scholars can draw upon to originate or develop completely new evaluation practices from within the continent (Chilisa and Malunga, C. 2012, Easton 2012). Easton (2012), has originated ways to contextualise five common evaluation concepts based on proverbs used in Nigeria, East Africa and Senegal as follows:

**Assessment measurement and performance:** Proverbs in this category illustrate the setting of standards and making comparisons to judge the merit or worth or directly measuring and providing empirical proof.

**Inquiry, causal analysis and discernment:** In this category the proverbs emphasise the importance of understanding the roots cause of behaviour so that social reality can be seen from varying view points.

**Transparency, Responsibility and Governance:** Proverbs in this category emphasise the importance of transparency, accountability and good governance

**Stakeholder involvement, collective effort and political discretion:** Given the political nature of evaluation, there are always issues of stakeholder involvement that requires collective responsibility to achieve desired results. Proverbs in this category frame dialogues essential for beneficiaries and stakeholder participation in a program.

**Planning, foresight and capacity building:** The proverbs in this category emphasise the need for new planning efforts, improved results and capacity building in a healthy cycle of program improvement.

Easton (2012) notes that in his evaluation practice, proverbs were an integral part of the discussions in all the evaluation stages. The proverbs helped to ‘*embody a mind-set and establish a climate for an unprecedented level of stakeholder buy in*’. Proverbs thus play three roles: 1) They serve as a reminder of the cultural context in which the evaluation occurs and the meaning conveyed by the culture; 2) They can provide critical guidance for probing motives behind actions and behaviours and 3) They can mobilize local stakeholders to actively engage with the evaluation thus promoting local ownership of the program. Easton has provided a proverb-based strategy to engage in relational evaluation inquiry. Evaluation in Africa can explore the use of a proverb-based evaluation strategy in varying contexts within the continent.

## The Ideal Community Development Evaluation Framework

Malunga, C. 2012 articulates an ideal community development evaluation framework based on five interrelated and complementary ubuntu principles whose meanings are reinforced through proverbs and the lighting the fire proverb. The five principles are as follows

1. Sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges – *ants united can carry a dead elephant to their cave; a rooster may belong to one household but when it crows, it crows for the whole household. A lit candle loses nothing by lighting another candle.*
2. The importance of people and relationships over things – *it is better to be surrounded by people than by things.*

3. Participatory decision making and leadership – *Taking action based on one person's views is like provoking wasps in a nest; no matter how blunt, a machete should never be held by a mad person.*
4. Loyalty – *the river that forgets its source will soon dry up.*
5. Reconciliation as the goal for conflict management and resolution – *those who live in peace work for it.*

According to Malunga, C. (2012) the five principles describe the ideal community and they result in concrete material, social and spiritual benefits. African societies used these as a basis for their assessment of community/societal progress.

Using the five principles, Malunga, C. and Joshua Mutikusya developed indicators to measure progress on an initiative aimed at addressing the critical shortage of water in the Utooni, Machakos area. The key indicators included the following:

- How well the people worked together – how each group or individuals: men, women, youths etc. were contributing to the initiative?
- How was the initiative affecting relationships positively or negatively
- How well shared were the decision making and leadership in the initiative and what were their effects on the people and the initiative?
- How well was the initiative building on the sense of self-esteem, solidarity and loyalty to the community?  
What conflicts were arising from within the community and with which outsiders and how well were these handled in the interest of the progress of the initiative.

Malunga, C. notes that though running contrary to most contemporary 'targets and numbers' driven evaluation process, a recent evaluation showed that the initiative has:

- Constructed 1,500 sand dams at an equivalent cost of Kshs 1,738,928,304 with a total value of water in each sand dam estimated at Kshs 10,000,000. The average number of beneficiaries per sand dam is 1,000.
- The total terrace dug by the initiative to manage erosion is estimated at 1.5 million meters.
- A decreased distance to get water (one way) from an average of 10 km to one km.
- Decreased time to get water from an average of 12 hours to one hour.
- Significant increase in number of farmers planting trees, digging terraces, planting indigenous drought resistant crops, practicing no till and zero grazing; and
- Significant increase in the variety and yield of the food being produced

The evaluation practice was also referred to as '*lighting a fire*' based on the African proverb: *a people who cannot light their own fire are easy to defeat*. In practice this meant regular meetings of all stakeholders to review and discuss the progress of the initiative based on the five key indicators above inspired and driven by their definition of development – a better characterized by children living better lives than their parents. Malunga, C.'s evaluation strategy is similar to Scriven's goal-free evaluation whose main objective is to free the evaluator from evaluating predetermined objectives that may not necessarily be meaningful to program recipients.

## Discord on a MAE

### The Naming

From an analysis of the interview data and the literature, there was a minority voice that argue that it is unrealistic to name an evaluation MAE. Yantio (2012) observes as follows:

*Being indigenous to Cameroon and Africa, I don't feel that what I do as a researcher is any different from what other researchers in other settings in the developed and the developing world do. I believe that it is a false idea to use a specific name to characterise the research that indigenous researchers carry out, except to say that their research is contextualised.*

One interviewee responded as follows:

*.....there is no such thing as MAE, there is just evaluation carried out in a specific local context. There is just good evaluation that include elements of a certain context....not necessarily a Made in Africa evaluation, just good evaluation that takes context into account'.*

Scholars expressing this view are dominated by the fear that African perspectives may be defined in terms of the exotic, not taken up seriously and suffer marginalisation from the international evaluation discourse. This fear is unfounded because the international community of scholars is calling upon African scholars, Indigenous scholars and all those whose knowledge systems have suffered marginalisation to contribute to the discourse on global knowledge production. Some interviewee felt that the denial of the pursuit for a MAE by some African scholars could be a reflection of colonized minds that value unidirectional borrowing of knowledge from the West; and a 'captive mind' (Alatas 2004) that is prone to uncritical imitation of Western research paradigms.

### MAE and the diversity in Africa

Evaluation practice from the no MAE perspective is also dominated by the argument that Africa is too diverse to constitute a monolithic worldview. Can we, claim a history of evaluation and a value system that is generic to Africans and therefore important for evaluation in Africa? Are there African specific practices or models for evaluation in Africa? One out of seven respondents to a questionnaire on views about a MAE, when asked what are your views on an MAE informed by an African world view, had this to say:

*'Africa is too diverse to constitute a monolithic worldview in my opinion. There is no American approach to evaluation, or Canadian, or European approach, or Australian approach. Diversity is manifest in all aspects of evaluation I see no value in trying to treat African as a monolithic perspective. Each local context in Africa should be honoured and valued, that is the key point, but not some mythical generic or archetypal African perspective. It doesn't exist. Don't force it. It's not useful'*

There is generally an agreement that evaluation in Africa should be contextualised to make it culturally appropriate and relevant to the needs of Africans. The debate seems to be whether scholars can originate evaluation practices and theories rooted in African world-views and paradigms and indeed if African paradigms exist. While it may be true that there is no American approach to evaluation, or Canadian, or European approach, or Australian approach, it is common knowledge that the evaluation tree metaphor (Carden F. and Alkin M. 2012) illustrates evaluation models emanating from American and other Euro-Western histories and cultures. Take, for example, Michael Patton's utilisation-focussed evaluation model or Tyler's objective oriented evaluation model. These models originated in the USA and are classified as intellectual property of scholars in the USA. Mertens and Wilson (2012) further situate the Tylerian evaluation models in the post-positivist paradigm while Patton's utilisation focused evaluation fits into the pragmatic paradigm, all classified as Euro-Western paradigms. Carden F. and Alkin M. (2012) go further to note the absence of evaluation theorists coming from Low and Middle Income countries and from Africa in the evaluation tree metaphor and urges evaluators from Low and Middle Income countries and from Africa to build evaluation by originating evaluation practice and potentially theories rooted in their locations. The view is however important in making it clear that the MAE is about approaches, strategies and models of evaluation emanating from evaluation practice in Africa. MAE is not a one lens approach, but an attempt to make visible, multiple evaluation approaches informed by the diversities coming out of Africa.

### **Not all evaluation should be MAE**

There was also a minority view that not all evaluations should invoke the MAE principles. One interviewee had this to say:

MAE should be something that we may invoke to do some evaluations for some reason, but it should not be a process that we should mainstream or apply across board. We shouldn't say that any evaluation that takes place in Africa should be MAE. I do not see it like that. I think that we will continue to do evaluation traditionally; donors would like to do evaluations for their reasons.

This view defeats the international call for evaluators to pay attention to the role of culture in evaluation and the pursuit of culturally responsive, indigenous and postcolonial approaches that expand ways to work in diverse evaluation settings with tools and methods that expand the range and depth of approaches in the field. The MAE does not sum up one approach but shows MAE along a continuum that ranges from the least contextualised evaluation approaches to approaches that are dominated by Africans world views.

## **A Synthesis of the Paper Using the SWOT Principles**

### **Strengths: Consensus on what MAE means**

The dominant view on the discourse is that MAE is an attempt to identify and articulate how African culture, history, belief systems and contexts contribute to evaluation theory, practice and methods. The contribution should include a deliberate effort at originating or developing completely new evaluation practices from within '*the continent*', and '*uncovering practices that could inform the evolution of evaluation in the rest of the world*'. MAE is an evolving trans-

disciplinary concept that borrows from philosophers, researchers, policy analysts, development practitioners, linguists, evaluators, administrators, indigenous knowledge holders, Western and non-Western literature to make explicit an evaluation practice that is rooted in African cultures, development agenda philosophies, worldviews and paradigm. The MAE has become a concept that embraces African resistance to blind borrowing of western values and standards to evaluate program in Africa; capacity building of African policy analysts, researchers and evaluators to carry out their own evaluation; adaptation of evaluation tools, instruments, strategies and theory and model adjustment and the development of evaluation practice, theory and methodologies emanating from local cultures, indigenous knowledge systems, African philosophies and African paradigms. MAE is a practice that has no boundaries between Africa and those from the rest of the world. It has no boundaries between knowledge systems thus it can be integrated or predominately African driven. It promotes global partnerships of knowledge systems and of evaluation actors and stakeholders. It seeks to stamp out decontextualized evaluation, while at the same time creating new African informed evaluation strategies. In its most advanced form it is predominantly informed by African worldviews and African evaluation paradigms.

Attempts at applying a MAE concepts fall along a continuum scale that ranges from the least indigenised evaluation approaches to evaluation approaches predominantly African-centred and informed by African-based world views. The major strength in the MAE discourse is in the relational based evaluation approaches. In this approach, evaluators are guided by African world views, paradigms and philosophy to guide the evaluation intent, motivation for the evaluation, expected outcomes, choice of methodology, methods and evaluation strategies or design and interpretation and dissemination of evaluation findings. These approaches can inform the articulation and growth in practice and application of a MAE. Following are the core elements in a MAE:

#### **What is the evaluation agenda**

1. Using evaluation as a tool for development that contributes to the well being of individuals, their relatives, others and the environment to which they are connected.

#### **Who sets the evaluation agenda**

2. Africans to play a greater role in solving their own problems.

#### **Methodology**

3. Adopting an evaluation methodologies informed by ethno philosophy, the Afrocentric paradigms, African paradigms and their philosophical assumptions about the nature of relational ontologies, epistemologies and values
4. Holistic construction of evaluation knowledge to produce evidence
5. Listening to metaphors on the environment that has relationship to the project
6. Valuing community knowledge and using it as a basis for further improvement and sustainability of projects .
7. Using both community set standards, stakeholders standards and donors' standards to evaluate worth and merit. (Integrated approach)

## Values

8. Emphasis on belongingness, togetherness, interdependence, relationships, collectiveness love, and harmony to build community relationships and to inform evaluation intent, motive and methodology.
9. Core values based on an I/We relationship
  - Value validity
  - Fairness
  - Reflexivity based on an I/we relationship
  - Community as knowers and community as evaluators
  - Evaluators and funding agents establishing long lasting relationships with communities

## Opportunities: MAE and the International Evaluation Field

The Eastern paradigm of evaluation (Russon 2008) Kauppa Maori theory based evaluation (Kerry 2012) Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson 2008), postcolonial indigenous research paradigms Chilisa 2012) give credibility to African theorising about a MAE. The existence of abundant literature on African philosophies (Chukwudieze 1997, Oruka, H. 1998). Kaphagawani 2000, Emagalit, 2001) African paradigms and world-views (Asante 1988, Carroll 2008, Chilisa 2012) is already informing evaluation practice in Africa and can go a long way in shaping new evaluation models and practices coming out of Africa. The pursuit of a MAE has been a joint venture between evaluators in Africa and those from the rest of the world. It has also been the product of a partnership between global partners such as NORRAD, KELLOG, Bill Gates and AfrEA. These partnerships create an enable environment to further develop a MAE.

Table 1 is a summary of some of the African theorists.

Theorists	Core elements in the approach
Asante (1988) The Afrocentric Paradigm	The Afrocentric Paradigm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researchers and evaluators must hold themselves responsible for uncovering, hidden, subtle, racist theories that may be embedded in current methodologies</li> <li>• Researchers must work to legitimise the centrality of African ideals, values as valid frame of reference for inquiry, acquiring and examining data</li> <li>• Maintain inquiry rooted in strict interpretation of place.</li> </ul>
Muwanga-Zake J. W. F. (2009) Discourse: Studies in the cultural politics of	Ubuntu philosophy Afrocentric paradigm

education: Building bridges across knowledge systems: Ubuntu and participative research paradigms in Bantu communities.	Mixed methods approaches
Easton P. B. (2012) Identifying the evaluative impulse in local culture: Insights from West African proverbs.	<p>five common evaluation concepts based on proverbs used in Nigeria, East Africa and Senegal as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment measurement and performance</li> <li>• Inquiry, causal analysis and discernment</li> <li>• Transparency, Responsibility and Governance</li> <li>• Stakeholder involvement, collective effort and political discretion:</li> <li>• Planning, foresight and capacity building</li> </ul>
Carroll K. K. (2008) Africana studies and research methodology: Revisiting the centrality of Afrikan worldview.	<p>Afrikan world view framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afrikan cosmology</li> <li>• Afrikan ontology</li> <li>• Afrikan axiology</li> <li>• Afrikan epistemology</li> <li>• Afrikan ideology</li> <li>• African Teleology</li> <li>• African Logic</li> </ul>
Chilisa & Malunga, C. (2012) Made in Africa Evaluation: Uncovering African Roots in Evaluation Theory and Practice.	<p>The Ideal Community Development Evaluation Framework built on five Ubuntu principles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing and collective ownership of opportunities, responsibilities and challenges</li> <li>• The importance of people and relationships over things</li> <li>• Participatory decision making and leadership</li> <li>• Loyalty</li> <li>• Reconciliation as the goal for conflict management and resolution</li> </ul>
Chilisa B. (2012) Indigenous Research Methodologies, Thousand Oaks, Sage.	<p>Relational Evaluation built on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relational ontology</li> <li>• Relational Epistemology</li> <li>• Relational axiology</li> </ul>

## Weaknesses

The major weakness of the MAE is in the least indigenised approach. Most efforts at contextualisation in this approach lack a framework, methodology or strategy that guide how the contextualisation is to be carried out and what it seeks to achieve. This is an area that requires



immediate attention if the contextualisation in the decolonisation and indigenous approach is to address the needs of Africans. The African evaluation tree metaphor as shown does not reveal any African theorists in the least indigenised approach simply because hardly any strategies are discussed on how the contextualisation is to be achieved. In the adaptive evaluation approach, the African Peer Review Mechanism is not attributed to any one theorist. It is however encouraging to note that there are adapted evaluation methodologies that show potential to evolve into unique theory and practice. To further guide the decolonisation and indigenisation approach, evaluators can borrow from the evaluation inquiry questions adapted from Carroll (2008).

## **Threats**

There is a misconception that MAE is a concept developed by Africans to be used by African evaluators in Africa only. This perception can destroy the two way dialogue between African evaluators from the rest of the world and global partners. A clear articulation of a MAE serves to challenge these misconceptions. There is also a misconception that a MAE is a one approach that fits all occasions. Clearly it is a concept on the making with possibilities of many evaluation models, frameworks, theories and evaluation paradigms. There is also a misconception that the development of a MAE is the sole responsibility of AfrEA. What is clear is that AfrEA can only be a facilitator, while the rest of Africa takes responsibility for initiating and owning and using new products and tools that showcase MAE in practice.

## **The Way Forward**

### **The African evaluation tree metaphor**

Drawing from Cardin et al's evaluation tree metaphor, Chilisa and Malunga, C. (2012), made claim to an African evaluation tree metaphor that show visibility of African scholars' attempts at decolonising, indigenising and envisioning new evaluation tools and practices. In this report the evaluation tree metaphor is revisited and four branches are shown as follows:

The least indigenised approach branch: Contextualisation of evaluation in this branch is dominated by a focus on methods, mainly translation of evaluation instruments tools to local languages and use of evaluation results by commissioners of evaluation.

The adaptive evaluation branch: It is dominated by a focus on integrative methods and use of evaluation results by evaluation commissioners.

The relational evaluation branch: It has a focus on integrative methods, use of evaluation results by both participants in the evaluation and commissioners of evaluation. There is also emphasis in valuing participants' realities, knowledge systems and value systems.

The development evaluation branch: It has a focus on integrating evaluation methodologies driven by African worldviews and paradigms with African paradigms on development. There is focus on use of evaluation results by both participants in the evaluation and commissioners of evaluation and on valuing participants' realities, knowledge systems and value systems.



The evaluation thought leaders need to continuously review the tree to make visible African thought that influence evaluation.

### **An African relational evaluation paradigm**

There is need to interrogate African literature on philosophies and worldviews to make clear the assumptions of an African relational evaluation paradigm.

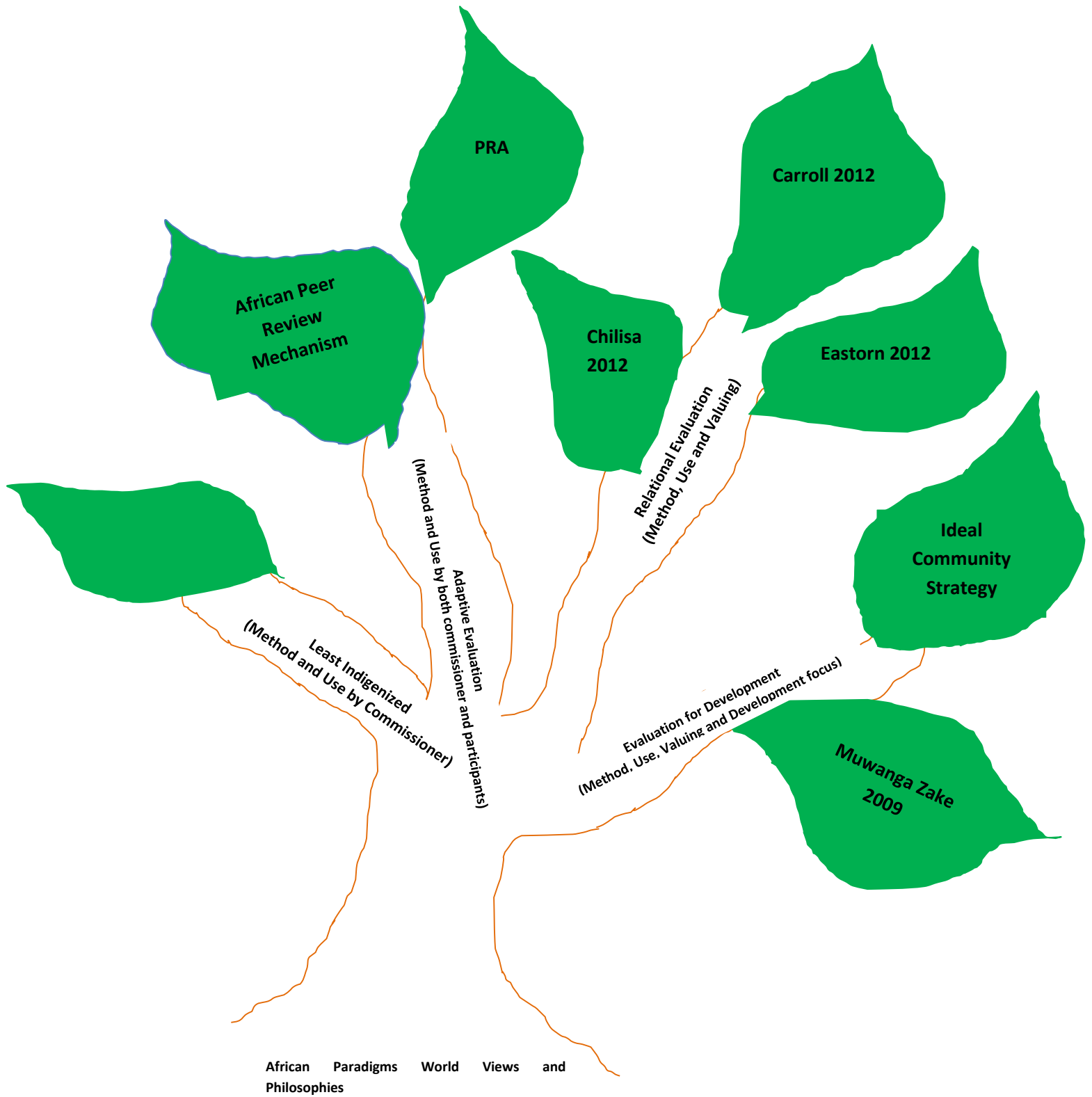
### **Creating relevant actors, partners and platforms**

1. Create a team to promote MAE
2. Establish research groups on MAE and publish scientific articles and results of assessments that use MAE
3. Organise international conferences and seminars on MAE and fund presentations to international organisation of papers on MAE
4. Fund research on MAE and evaluation that may be used as a test case for MAE
5. Create partnerships to fund African academic institution to engage with evaluation that is inclusive of MAE
6. Create course/curriculum on MAE and fund short courses on evaluation
7. Develop strategies to influence African governments to create evaluation that is linked to development
8. Create strategies for MAE to influence national and regional evaluation policies
9. Set up evaluation review boards
10. Review AfrEA guidelines in the light of the MAE approach
11. AfrEA should engage other African organisations such as the OAU, SADC, CODESRIA etc. and global partners.
12. AfrEA should develop strategies to strengthen its governance to enable engagement with partners.

It remains for the African evaluation thought leaders to draw other products and tools that can drive a MAE.



## African Evaluation Tree Metaphor



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