

# IOCE EvalPartners profile survey of Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs)

## I. Basic profile information

1. Name and acronym of organization (VOPE)	<b>Evaluators Network of the Middle East and North Africa (EvalMENA)</b>
2. Geographic scope of organization	Regional: <b>Middle East and North Africa</b>
3. Contact Details	<p>Name of main contact person: Ziad Moussa  E-address: <a href="mailto:info@evalmena.org">info@evalmena.org</a>  Postal address: c/o Environment and Sustainable Unit, American University of Beirut (AUB-FAFS/ESDU), Bliss Street, Hamra, Beirut, LEBANON  Telephone: +961 3 885512  VOPE website URL: <a href="http://www.evalmena.org">www.evalmena.org</a></p>
4. Current membership – numbers of individuals, by their affiliation (if known; please at least give total)	<b>Total membership:</b> 87 members (April 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2012)
5. Year VOPE was founded	2011
6. Current status (identify which)	Charter and bylaws to be adopted in the second General Assembly (July 2012)
7. Information about <b>growth</b> : evolution of the number of members or financial resources in the last 5 years.	<p>The foundations for EvalMENA were laid through three successive research and development (R&amp;D) collaborations between the International Development and Research Centre (IDRC-Canada) to the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit of the American University of Beirut (AUB-ESDU)</p> <p>The first grant on “Exploring the Applicability of Outcome Mapping in MENA” (2007-2008) brought together the first nucleus of MENA evaluators around the contextualization of Outcome Mapping. Several members of this initial nucleus are still the backbone of the group. IOCE Board Member Doha Abdel Hamid and IDEAS Board Member Ziad Moussa were part of this group</p> <p>The second grant on “Catalyzing Evaluative thinking in MENA” (2009-2010) led to the establishment of the list serve and catalyzed the emergence of national groups of evaluators. Nermine Wally was sponsored to attend AfrEA 5 through the project before being elected President in AfrEA 6.</p> <p>The third grant on “Mainstreaming Evaluation Theory and Practice in the MENA region” (2011 – 2013) served as a true catalyst for the emergence of EvalMENA in its actual composition where one of the desired outcomes of the project is to favour the emergence of a regional evaluators platform. Recently elected IDEAS Board Member Osama Obeidat is part of this group.</p>
8. Purpose and mission of VOPE	<p>The <b>Vision</b> of EvalMENA is to see development actions (projects, programs, R&amp;D activities, ..) performing better because well evaluated. Perceived as true change agents, MENA evaluators – both women and men- are actively sought after and are playing a major role in the research and development initiatives, projects and programs in the Region.</p> <p>EvalMENA has itself as the "reference" in terms of M&amp;E in the region, and is playing an important role in producing and disseminating publications. Evaluation importance is acknowledged by development</p>

	<p>agencies and public authorities of the different countries of the region; it is well-founded in the public discourse in favour of enhancing transparency and accountability of developmental actions.</p> <p>The <b>Mission</b> of the project is to see that a critical mass of qualified and internationally-acknowledged evaluators, speaking a common language, has been institutionalized in the region. MENA evaluators are constantly communicating to generate and share knowledge on aspects related to their profession and potentially are working to establish a regional association/society which strives to position MENA on the global evaluation map. They are continuously advocating the importance and necessity of evaluation in sustainable human development in order to improve the way development research and practice is perceived and executed in the MENA region</p>
<p><b>9. Current strategy and emphasis</b></p>	<p>The medium term <b>strategy</b> of EvalMENA is to systematically support both the demand and supply side of development evaluation in the MENA region by catalyzing new thinking and adapting innovative approaches inspired from the global trends and advances in the field, yet tailored to the MENA context.</p> <p>The emphasis for 2011-2012 is four-fold:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To consolidate the existing virtual exchange platform of evaluators in MENA (<a href="http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet">http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet</a>) and facilitate a dynamic, insightful and professional exchange among members</li> <li>2. To develop the capacities of MENA evaluators (supply side) by exposing them to state-of-the-art evaluation paradigms and techniques, more particularly Utilisation Focused Evaluation, Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change.</li> <li>3. To work on increasing “indigenous demand” for learning-based and positive accountability evaluation by targeting policy makers, especially at the medium to high executive level, and in close partnership and coordination with other concerned stakeholders (agencies and donors, civil society, the private sector, academia and evaluation professional organizations) and beyond the classical paradigm of aid effectiveness.</li> <li>4. To increase the available body of knowledge on evaluation in Arabic language through the production of policy briefs, research papers, case studies, methodological innovations and others. The material which will be produced could either engage original research or summarize/synthesise existing paradigms tools and approaches on evaluation that are available in other languages and will be posted on <a href="http://www.evalmena.org">www.evalmena.org</a></li> <li>5. To increase the visibility of MENA evaluation community by encouraging the participation in international evaluation forums and events, and by linking this participation with the production of scientific evidence (papers, case studies, publications in journals, etc....</li> </ol>
<p><b>10.Organizational capacity:</b> Please describe your governance structure, leadership, services provided, finances, human resources, linkages with other organizations, etc.</p>	<p>Since EvalMENA is using the logistical support and funding of AUB-ESDU, facilitation and financial support are provided by ES DU through finding from IDRC.</p> <p>The governance model is very horizontal and consensual, as all major issues are put to consultation and voting. In the first phases of the project participants used to be fully subsidized but since 2011 most of them are contributing their flight costs to attend the meetings.</p>

<b>11.Means of communication with members</b> , e.g. newsletter, listserv, publication, website	There are three main means of communication: The D-group <a href="http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet">http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet</a> with 700 active discussion threads between January 2011 and march 2012 The portal <a href="http://www.evalmena.org">www.evalmena.org</a>
<b>12.Past events</b> (e.g. during past year)	Participation in IDEAS GA in Jordan (April 2011) First General Assembly in Beirut (June 2011) Seminar with IOCE on the EvalMENA experience (November 2011) Participation in AfrEA 6 in Accra (January 2012) Participation in NONIE 2012 (April 2012)
<b>13.Forthcoming key events/conferences</b> – dates, location	Second General Assembly to discuss and adopt charter and bylaws (July 2012) Collaboration with EvalPartners and possibly hosting a joint event (also July 2012)
<b>14.Name and e-address of person submitting this information</b>	Ziad Moussa <a href="mailto:ziadmoussa@yahoo.com">ziadmoussa@yahoo.com</a> , <a href="mailto:info@evalmena.org">info@evalmena.org</a>
<b>15.Date of this update</b>	April 27 <sup>th</sup> 2012

## II. Experience with Evaluation Capacity Building

<p><b>1. Background:</b> Please provide a brief history of the formation of this organization (VOPE).</p> <p>1.1 Who were/are the key players?</p> <p>1.2 How many members do you have on your governing board/ committee?</p> <p>1.3 What are the main existing strengths that your VOPE is trying to capitalize on?</p> <p>1.4 What are the main challenges that your VOPE is trying to address?</p>	<p><b>1.1 Brief Background</b></p> <p>In January 2007, the Environment and Sustainable Development Unit (ESDU) of the American University of Beirut with financial and technical support by the Evaluation Unit at IDRC launched a two years program aiming primarily at exploring the adaptability of Outcome Mapping (OM) to the MENA region and at contextualizing and “Arabizing” OM if deemed useful and necessary. This effort brought together around 30 participants from different backgrounds (researchers, development practitioners, program managers, international organizations staff, independent consultants, etc...) and from 7 MENA countries. The kick—off workshop organized by the project in Beirut during May 2007 was the first of its kind in the region where evaluators met to discuss evaluation-related issues (apart from the informal caucuses of MENA evaluators at the margin of major evaluation events (IDEAS, AfrEA, etc...)). The project also included a set of capacity development and KM/KS activities as well as the first “MENA Outcome Mapping Users Workshop” which was organized in Cairo in April 2008. The two workshops led to a full contextual Arabization of Outcome Mapping and the release of the Arabic version of the book “Outcome Mapping: Building Reflection into Development Programs” in December 2009.</p> <p>Building-up on the results of these two workshops, a team of “champions” from the previous project together with a group of new participants identified through a competitive application process were invited to attend the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the African Evaluation Association (AfREA) which was held in Cairo in April 2009. This same group convened for two additional days following the end of AfREA in order to set the guiding principles on how to further improve the evaluation capacity in MENA. Based on these guiding principles, IDRC approved an R&amp;D grant for 2011-2013 entitled “Mainstreaming Evaluation Theory and Practice in the MENA region”. The project works with an ever-growing group of Development Evaluation Practitioners from a wide spectrum of MENA countries on enhancing both the demand and the supply side of development evaluation in MENA by catalyzing new thinking, adapting innovative approaches and lobbying for evaluation.</p> <p><b>1.2 Governing Board</b></p> <p>The coordinator of the project “Mainstreaming Evaluation Theory and Practice in the MENA region” currently acts as the facilitator of the network. Governance is very horizontal and all major decisions are debated and approved via the D-group. The second General Assembly</p>
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	<p>in July 2012 will debate the charter and the governance model of the group.</p> <p><b>1.3 Main existing strengths</b>  The “Arab Spring” gave a significant boost to evaluative and critical thinking in MENA which was otherwise subdued for well over 30 years as all Arab states (with the notable exception of Lebanon) had turned into “Presidential Monarchies”.  The interest and motivation of the group, the diverse regional representation and the gender balance (which is not obvious at all in MENA) all constitute our key strengths</p> <p><b>1.4 Main challenges addressed</b>  One of the main challenges is the “Blond(e) with blue eyes evaluator” syndrome which portrays evaluation in MENA as the sole responsibility of “foreigners” and as purely external exercise.  Another main challenge is to learn from mistakes. Due to its heavy implications on the Israeli-Arab conflict, the water sector in MENA has been one of the heaviest recipients of development aid in the world, almost as much as food security in sub-Saharan Africa. But still, the situation all projects and programs keep repeating over and over the same mistakes, and there are very scarce utilization-driven evaluations that shed light on what to improve in the sector or how to break the vicious cycle of failed projects.</p>
<p><b>2. Organizational motivation:</b>  What were/are the driving forces of the VOPE and its historical development?</p>	<p>One of the main organizational motivations is the absence of a regional umbrella that can put MENA on the global evaluation map, despite the presence of clear individual potential.  Another main reason prior to the Arab Spring was that to use the regional dimension to overcome difficulties at the national level (the word “change” in Tunisia for example was banned from use, we had to change the title of a conference we held there in 2009 from “evaluation for change” to “evaluation for improvement”</p>
<p><b>3. Evaluation Capacity Building:</b> What has your VOPE done to promote evaluation (M&amp;E) capacity?</p>	<p>Capacity building is at they core of our strategy. We offer every year high quality training to our participants (Sarah Earl on Developmental Evaluation, Ricardo Wilson-Grau on evaluation and complexity, Patricia Rogers on Better Evaluation, Terry Smutylo on Outcome Mapping, and the list goes long.  When it is not possible to organize our own capacity building event, we would piggy-back on the setup offered by conferences (for example Jess Dart and Robert Chambers in AfrEA 5)</p>
<p><b>4. Context / target entities:</b>  More specifically, who are the persons or institutions your organization seeks to influence (to strengthen evaluation capacity)? For example:</p> <p>4.1 Technical capacities to <i>supply</i> quality evaluations, partnering with experts, local universities or others to provide training for members, etc.;</p> <p>4.2 Strengthening VOPE organizational capacity itself;</p> <p>4.3 Enhancing the enabling environment for evaluation, including strengthening the <i>demand</i> for and use of evaluations by policy makers;</p> <p>4.4 Influencing governmental policies related to evaluation, evaluation designs and implementation of M&amp;E systems, etc.</p>	<p>EvalMENA is closely associated with the American University of Beirut, the oldest and most respected university in the entire MENA region</p> <p><b>4.1 Supply side</b>  We offer our in-house, EvalMENA sponsored trainings, and we encourage our members to participate in conferences, foras and platforms (until June 2013, any member who gets a paper accepted at a major international conference gets a full scholarship to travel and present it)</p> <p><b>4.2 Organizational Capacity</b>  We privileged since 2007 in our organizational model a slow incremental growth, until we reached the needed critical mass in 2011 that enabled us to step forward with the network.  IDRC’s support was instrumental as it enabled us to build our capacities, to meet, to publish, to network and much more. IDRC just provided funding and strategic advice, while for the rest it has been the work of the members</p> <p><b>4.3 Enabling environment</b>  One of our key objectives is to build the demand side as well. Although we have not been particularly active in outreach, there has been proposals for partnership and for tapping on the resources of the network from the Council of Europe, UNDP and Middle East Initiative of</p>

	<p>the US Ministry of Foreign Affairs</p> <p><b>4.4 Influencing governmental policies on evaluation</b>  This has been a core element in our workplan for 2011-2014 but we are finding a lot of difficulties in articulating it, probably because most governments of the region are still in a democratic transition mode, but also because international organizations in the region and more specifically the UN organizations are still playing the “old game” (doing business as usual and turning a deaf ear to the demands for evaluation-based decisions, more transparency in programming and in sharing results, etc...</p>
<p><b>5. Public accountability:</b> Is your VOPE helping to strengthen oversight and transparency of government programs? If so, in what ways? Can you share any success stories of evaluators or others promoting public accountability?</p>	<p>From a medium term angle, this should become a major aspect of our work, especially that the Moroccan Evaluation Association (AME) has a pioneer experience in this regard.  We are preparing grounds for a future work on public accountability through two R&amp;D initiatives which we strive to accomplish before June 2013:  Baseline studies on how M&amp;E is perceived and practiced in 4 MENA countries (Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia)  An outcome harvesting approach to donor support in favor of the Arab spring taking 9 Egyptian CSOs who are benefiting from external grants as a model</p>
<p><b>6. More specifically, what are some of the key themes for which you advocate?</b> For example, are you promoting issues related to cultural sensitivity, equity, social justice, empowerment, transformation, gender, environment, poverty? If so, please describe or attach relevant documents.</p>	<p>Our focus for 2011-2013 has been to advance in the 5 strategic areas we chose to focus on. These areas are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To consolidate the existing virtual exchange platform of evaluators in MENA (<a href="http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet">http://dgroups.org/dgroups/evalmenanet</a>) and facilitate a dynamic, insightful and professional exchange among members</li> <li>2. To develop the capacities of MENA evaluators (supply side) by exposing them to state-of-the-art evaluation paradigms and techniques, more particularly Utilisation Focused Evaluation, Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change.</li> <li>3. To work on increasing “indigenous demand” for learning-based and positive accountability evaluation by targeting policy makers, especially at the medium to high executive level, and in close partnership and coordination with other concerned stakeholders (agencies and donors, civil society, the private sector, academia and evaluation professional organizations) and beyond the classical paradigm of aid effectiveness.</li> <li>4. To increase the available body of knowledge on evaluation in Arabic language through the production of policy briefs, research papers, case studies, methodological innovations and others. The material which will be produced could either engage original research or summarize/synthesise existing paradigms tools and approaches on evaluation that are available in other languages and will be posted on <a href="http://www.evalmena.org">www.evalmena.org</a></li> <li>5. To increase the visibility of MENA evaluation community by encouraging the participation in international evaluation forums and events, and by linking this participation with the production of scientific evidence (papers, case studies, publications in journals, etc....</li> </ol>
<p><b>7. Methods:</b> Experiences in strengthening skills of individual members, by (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• organizing workshops led by local experts;</li> <li>• organizing webinars with international speakers;</li> <li>• designing and delivering e-learning programmes;</li> <li>• administering mentoring programmes; etc.</li> </ul>	<p>So far we have been relying on high quality training offered by international experts (S. Earl, T. Smutylo, P. Rogers, R. Wilson-Grau, etc...) in addition to peer counseling and coaching through the D-Group.</p> <p>We also implemented together with IOCE a webinar on the regional experience of EvalMENA and we will implement with the “I-scale” initiate a webinar series on the added value of networks.</p>
<p><b>8. Standards:</b> Has your VOPE</p>	<p>We did not get to that point yet, though we broadly adhere to the</p>

developed professional standards/ ethical codes/ competencies (or adheres to those developed by others)? If so, please provide documentation.	principles put forward by IOCE.
<b>9. Job opportunities:</b> Do you share employment/ consultancy opportunities with evaluators on your database?	Yes, a lot. In fact the D-group has become a major hub for posting job opportunities (which are often cross-referrals by network members themselves). We were also approached by the US State Department ☺ through their MEPI initiative, UNDP's New York evaluation office and the Council of Europe
<b>10. Progress and results:</b> What progress has been achieved so far in any of the above or other domains? What are expected and unexpected results achieved?	We have been quite successful in positioning MENA on the global evaluation map (2 IDEAS Board Members, an AfrEA president and Board member and a special seat within the IOCE Board within just 15 months). We can claim also that we have catalyzed a broad interest and healthy active discussions around development evaluation in MENA We are still struggling to develop our own R&D path and to achieve a more direct and clear link with policy makers.
<b>11. Lessons learned:</b> Recommendations/ tips to others for good practices on how to organize and sustain VOPEs like yours.	A major lesson is that a network cannot be imposed and needs time to take shape and find direction. Building collective ownership is also a process that takes time (and a lot of conflict resolution ☺) but leads to spectacular results in the end. The national vs. regional discourse should be also approached with a lot of vision and diplomacy as a regional association gives more weight to the national ones combined but risks at the same time to steal the limelight from national associations
<b>12. Next steps:</b> What does your organization plan to do next?	We have a general assembly in July 2012 (which is still made possible through the support of IDRC together with a final conference). We have also a lot of expectations from EvalPartners
<b>13. Willing to share with other VOPEs?</b> For example, would you be interested in forming peer-to-peer partnerships with one or more other VOPEs to share lessons learned, advise each other? If so, describe what you would be willing to share / advice you would seek.	Definitely we are interested by this peer-to-peer partnership approach. We can share the hands-on insights of our progressive experience in establishing a working model for a regional evaluation association, what works and what doesn't, how to constantly stimulate members interest and build ownership, etc...  We would seek advice from other regional associations on best practices, possibilities of securing additional funding, some administrative aspects (employment, taxes, articles of incorporation, etc...)
<b>14. Suggestions:</b> What ideas do you have for what should be included in activities of the EvalPartners Initiative?	The way the concept is presented is needs-driven and should generate a lot of meaningful interactions. It would have been optimal if the process also included some demand-driven funding for pilot activities, but this should be normally compensated by the development of joint proposals at some point.
<b>15. Want to be actively involved?</b> Does your VOPE want to be actively involved in EvalPartners? If so, in what ways?	As indicated previously, EvalMENA has a lot of expectations from EvalPartners and is ready to collaborate fully. We are proposing to host in MENA an EvalPartners event