

EES Pre-Conf Workshop on PIALA



Course Title

Elevating the transformative power of evaluation through Collaborative Action, Thinking, and Practice with [PIALA](#).

Facilitators

- [Adinda Van Hemelrijck](#), lead facilitator and presenter (Collaborative Impact, adinda@collabimpact.org)
- [Jeremy Holland](#), lead facilitator and presenter (Collaborative Impact, jeremy@collabimpact.org)
- [Allan Mua Illuingworth](#), co-facilitator and presenter (Mua'akia Consulting, allanmi@muaakia.com)
- [Andre Ling](#), co-facilitator and presenter (Collaborative Impact, andre@collabimpact.org)
- [Nicola Gordiano](#), co-facilitator (Collaborative Impact, nicola@collabimpact.org)

Participants

Between 15 and 50 participants.

The workshop methodology will build on interactive learning and dialogue, for which we hope to have a good mix of participants at intermediate-advanced levels, including:

- **Professionals** who design and conduct impact evaluations and seek to do this in a way that fosters collaboration for sustainable development;
- **Managers** who produce the terms of reference for evaluations and use the results for decision-making and designing or adapting strategies;
- **Commissioners** who manage evaluation funds and assess the value-for-money of proposals crossing their desks.

Prerequisites:

- General understanding of existing approaches and methodologies for assessing outcomes and impacts (incl. Theory-Based, Realist, Developmental, Transformative).
- Familiarity with: Theory of Change, mixed methods, participatory methods, complex systems thinking, politics and use of evidence.
- Familiarity with: international principles and guidelines on evaluation ethics, participation and evidence use (e.g. the [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#) and the [CEDIL Guidance on Stakeholder Engagement and Evidence Use](#))

Abstract

Rationale

The urgent need for a transformative approach to evaluation in international development has never been more pronounced than in the face of our current global polycrisis. Threats such as climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, conflict, societal fragmentation, digital exclusion, and socioeconomic inequality are propelling a shift away from traditional, linear, siloed and extractive development models toward more systemic, generative, and collaborative approaches. How can the field of evaluation support this paradigm shift? And how can a [Participatory Impact Assessment and Learning Approach \(PIALA\)](#) help evaluation practitioners and users navigate and shape the new paradigm?

Purpose

The purpose of this workshop is to create a space where evaluation professionals, managers and commissioners together can explore how to utilise a [Participatory Impact Assessment and Learning Approach \(PIALA\)](#) to frame, design and implement evaluations as rigorous, collaborative and empowering processes.

Content

PIALA offers a systemic and participatory framework for collaboratively designing and implementing evaluations of programmes and strategies aimed at achieving transformative change in complex environments. By embracing pluralism and inclusive rigour, the approach underscores the three conference themes —the necessity of collaborative action, thinking and practice in evaluation— to help build a more sustainable and fairer world. Drawing on the realist, developmental and transformative research and evaluation traditions, it offers a tested model for integrating diverse methodologies to rigorously assess non-linear contribution to impact and facilitate learning with partners and stakeholders around how multiple interventions and influences interact and combine to generate impactful and sustainable outcomes.

The workshop's content is designed to delve deep into these themes, starting from the foundational principles of PIALA to its application in real-world scenarios. Participants will engage in a dynamic learning environment where they can actively explore, apply, and debate the tenets of PIALA. Plenary sessions featuring expert presentations on various aspects of PIALA will alternate with breakout sessions that encourage participants to explore the art, challenges, and benefits of collaborative evaluation drawing on their own experiences. This format aims to cultivate peer learning and enhance the skills necessary for framing, designing and implementing evaluations that are not only rigorous and feasible but also deeply collaborative and empowering.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, participants will:

- Understand the concept of PIALA and its practical applications.
- Be equipped to apply its principles, elements and standards to enable collaborative action (involving different user perspectives in decision making), collaborative thinking (combining multiple methodologies, knowledge types, and ways of knowing and valuing), and collaborative practice (enabling inter/trans-disciplinary engagements aimed at achieving collective impact).
- Recognise both the benefits and the challenges of using PIALA to elevate the learning potential and transformative power of evaluation through collaborative action, thinking and practice.

Interactive Delivery Methods and Activities

As collaboration takes centre stage in the EES Biennial, our workshop approach will leverage deeply collaborative methods, also used to facilitate stakeholder engagements in PIALA-inspired design and sensemaking processes. Through peer learning drawing on interactive and experiential models (such as the constructivist 5E's model of Roger Bybee and the experiential 4MAT model of Bernice McCarthy), the workshop will foster an environment of shared learning and mutual understanding.

Indicative Schedule

The workshop encompasses a comprehensive exploration of the PIALA framework, emphasising collaborative evaluation action, thinking and practice.

The morning starts with an interactive session on exploring the different dimensions of participatory evaluation as a way of introduction, followed by an overview presentation of the PIALA framework. In breakout teams, participants inquire into the application of the framework to design decisions in real-world cases by balancing rigour, inclusiveness, and feasibility. Plenary discussions facilitate sharing insights on the challenges and art of collaborative action (i.e. involving different user perspectives in decision making).

The afternoon sessions feature plenary panel presentations by invited experts, followed by a fishbowl-type discussion on the benefits and challenges of participatory mixed-methods evaluation that draws on collaborative thinking (i.e. combining multiple methodologies, knowledge types, and ways of knowing and valuing), and collaborative practice (i.e. enabling inter/trans-disciplinary engagements aimed at achieving collective impact). Breakout teams delve into the complexities of integrating different paradigms and ways of knowing and valuing. The workshop concludes with a plenary discussion on team work insights, followed by a wrap-up and evaluation.

Throughout, emphasis is placed on fostering inclusive, rigorous, and collaborative evaluation practices.

Following presentations are tentatively planned at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions:

- [Adinda Van Hemelrijck](#): Presentation on the PIALA framework (morning session).
- [Jeremy Holland](#): Presentation on PIALA-based 'Collaborative Thinking' in using Participatory Statistics and Story-Based methods as part of PIALA-based mixed designs integrating different paradigms for data gathering and analysis (afternoon panel).
- [Allan Mua Illingworth](#): Presentation on the use of local or indigenous approaches as 'Collaborative Thinking' and 'Collaborative Practice' in a PIALA-based mixed design (afternoon panel).
- [Andre Ling](#): Presentation on PIALA-based 'Collaborative Action' and 'Collaborative Practice' in the co-design and -piloting of a utilisation-focused Measurement & Learning Framework for Collaborative Learning Networks (CLNs) aimed at health systems reform (afternoon panel).

Readings and Handout materials

Handouts during the workshop

Participants will receive various handout materials during the workshop, such as: breakout team assignments and case studies; the PIALA principles, standards, and design sliders; an overview of impact evaluation approaches.

Preparatory readings

Website links to some essential preparatory readings will be provided when the workshop is announced on the EES Biennial website. These will include:

- The [PIALA webpage](#).
- Chapter 4 about 'inclusive rigour' and PIALA in: Chambers R. (2017). [Can we know better?](#) Practical Action.
- Mertens D. (2016). [Assumptions at the philosophical and programmatic levels in evaluation](#). In: Evaluation and Program Planning (59).
- Heinemann E, Van Hemelrijck A, and Guijt I. (2017). [Getting the most out of impact evaluation for learning, reporting and influence](#). IFAD.
- The [UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation](#).
- The [CEDIL Guidance on Stakeholder Engagement and Evidence Use](#).