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Six Transformative African Rooted Evaluation Frameworks and Tools

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FRAMEWORK REPORT

Six Transformative African Rooted Evaluation Frameworks and Tools

By

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3. People, Environment, Place, Space and Time Framework

Introduction

The use of Evaluation frameworks and tools that were developed from the global North without paying attention to the context, culture, values, historical experiences and African knowledge systems has led to evaluation findings that proclaim success while on the ground there is minimal success. The trend can be explained by the marginalisation and exclusion of world views, philosophies and paradigms from the global South in the production of evaluation planning and practice in preference for trial and tested frameworks and tools from the Global North. In addition, minimal participation of communities in designing their development projects is contributing to unsustainable development projects. The African Evaluation Association has called for the integration of African world views, philosophies and indigenous knowledge in evaluation theory and practice to make evaluation responsive to the context, culture, needs and priorities of the communities.

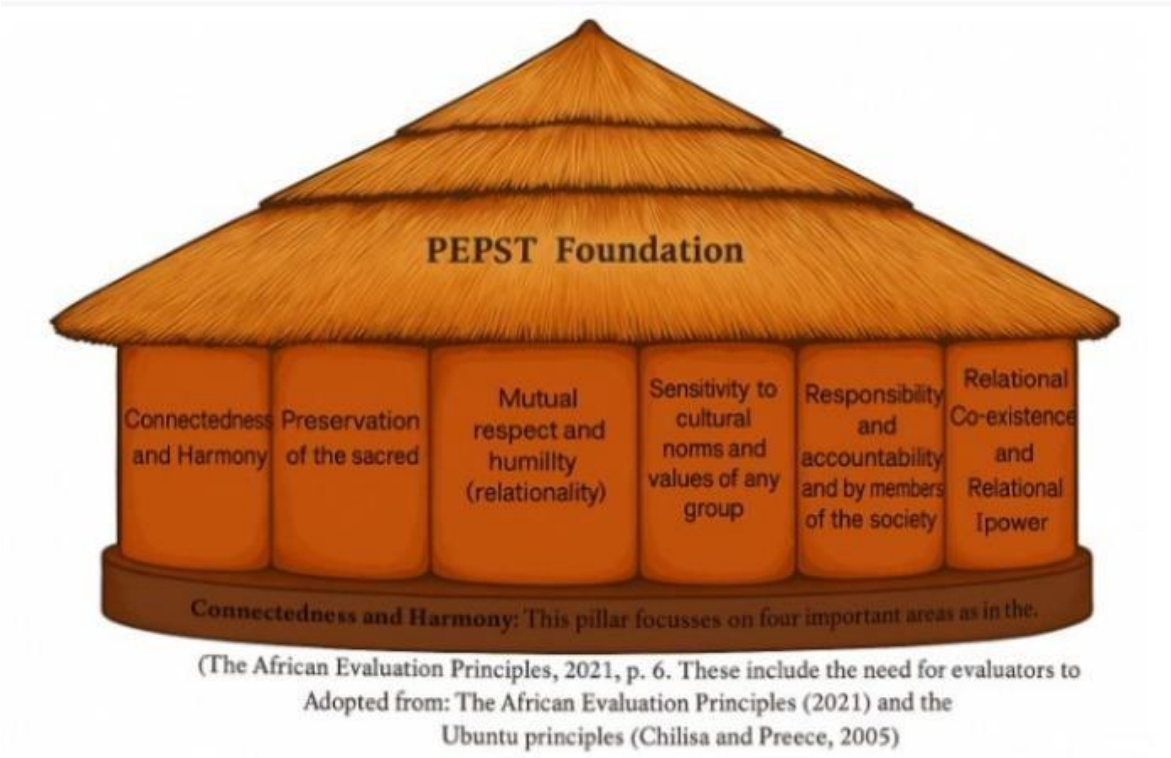
A number of African indigenous world views have been articulated for example, a postcolonial indigenous paradigm (Chilisa 2011), the Afrocentric Paradigm (Asante 1990), Afrikana Centred world view Caroll (2008). One common thread in these paradigms is the recognition of the central role played by the Ubuntu philosophy in informing theory and practice in research and evaluation. Ubuntu recognizes the peoples' connection with each other and with the environment, the importance of relationships and the interdependence and co-existence of people with nature in a spiritual world. This perspective is in line with systems thinking. The PEPST is a holistic view of how the people, environment, place space and time are all part of a system that explain how context matters in evaluation. The framework addresses the need for the recognition of relational co-existence and relational power, as well as the importance of a holistic approach to context and relationship building grounded in indigenous languages, histories, metaphors, philosophies, and the spiritual world throughout the planning and evaluation process. The framework enables evaluators to explore interconnections between communities' experiences with their environment, the sacred and practical aspect of evaluation process, and to recognize that knowledge is not an individual construction and cognitive achievement but rather a collective output constructed through interactions of people with each other and with their environment.

What is the PEPST Context Responsive Framework

The PEPST Context Responsive framework is an African-rooted, people centred and context-centred evaluation tool that promotes a holistic approach to contextualizing project planning and evaluation, moving evaluation towards systems thinking and building futures. Context is the interconnectedness and relationship of people with one another and with the environment. The value of collective responsibility and co-creation of knowledge through interactions with one another in a spiritual world is central to the meaning of context. Spirituality refers to the worldview that the living and the non-living, that is, the human beings and all nature, are related. The environment, that is, the stars, mountains, forests, rivers, etc, are alive; they can see, feel, and communicate not with words but with signs. Thus, farmers can read signs of the environment to predict rainfall. The people, therefore, must respect and nurture the environment. From this worldview, is derived the concept of environmental justice. and environmental responsibility.

The framework is grounded on: 1) Connectedness and Harmony, 2) Preservation of the sacred, 3) Mutual respect and humility (relationality,4) Sensitivity to cultural norms and values of any group, 5) Responsibility and accountability to and by members of the society and 6) Relational coexistence. The People, Environment, Place Space, and Time are a system of relationships that cannot be isolated from one another. The framework offers an integrated approach to evaluation that requires understanding how projects operate within a larger system of people who have a relationship with each other and the environment, and exist in a complex social, cultural, and political context. Figure 1 shows the PEPST foundation.

Figure 1: PEPST Foundation

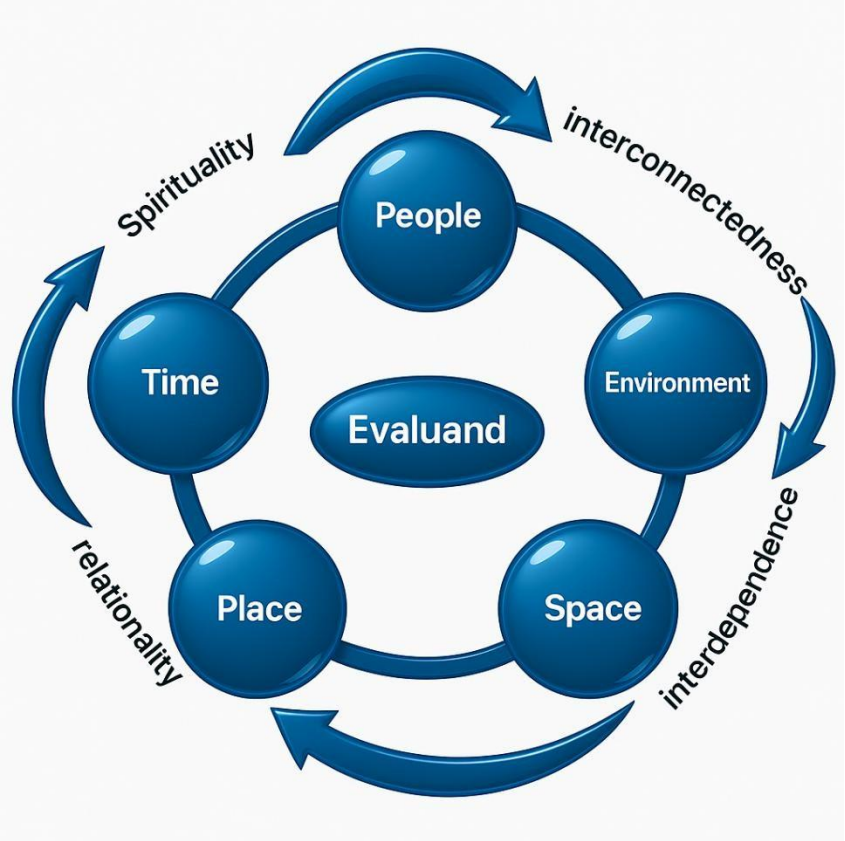


(The African Evaluation Principles, 2021, p. 6. These include the need for evaluators to
Adopted from: The African Evaluation Principles (2021) and the
Ubuntu principles (Chilisa and Preece, 2005)

In addition, the framework invites evaluators to value, revitalize and restore the history and culture of communities, and listen and learn how communities define success and measure it. Communities and evaluators document the uniqueness of indigenous research and evaluation tools and frameworks, indigenous local knowledge, and the importance of using them in evaluations they conduct. It allows the broadening of the literature base, to include the largely unwritten texts of the formerly colonized and historically disadvantaged people so that no knowledge is left behind that can contribute to the completeness of research and evaluation inquiry. The framework aids in framing evaluation intended goal and objectives, evaluation criteria, questions and processes that reflect the development contexts, priorities community needs including alignment with Agenda 2063 of the African Union which requires community participation and ownership of development projects to enable their sustainability. It prioritizes relationship building and respect for others that include the human and non-human. The five elements, **People, the Environment, Place, Space, and Time**, guide

the planning and evaluation process. The interconnectedness of these five elements— people, place, environment, space, and time underscores the importance of adopting a holistic context-first systems approach to planning and evaluation practice. Figure 2 illustrates the elements under the influence of an interconnectedness, interdependent, relational and spiritual world.

Figure 2: An Interconnected, Interdependent, Relational, and Spiritual Context



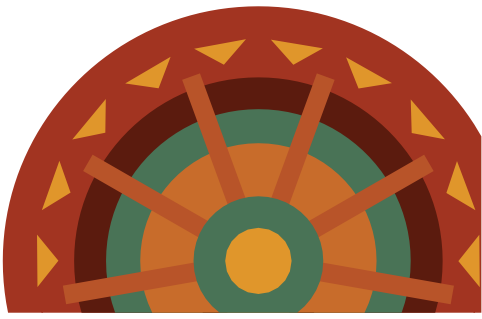
Contribution to the Field

The PEPST Context Responsive framework is a departure from evaluation practice that focuses on time-bound, predetermined objectives as the main measures of success. The framework alludes that success of the project depends to some extent on how the project implementers work with communities to 1) continuously adapt projects, 2) integrate local indigenous knowledge with expert science knowledge, 3) respond to specific places, and communities, thus responding to local environments and cultural practice and 4) adopts systems thinking where context is the interconnectedness of people, the environment, place space and time and how that impact on projects.

The tool makes the adaptation and integration of local indigenous knowledge in a project that is part of a larger system, an important contributor to the success of the project to measure. The tool shifts community participation from only extracting information from them to valorising and revitalizing indigenous local knowledge that contributes to project success and sustainability. The assumption is that the success of the project depends to some extent on how the project implementers work with communities to continuously adapt projects and integrate local indigenous knowledge within a larger system of social and cultural, political and environmental relationships.

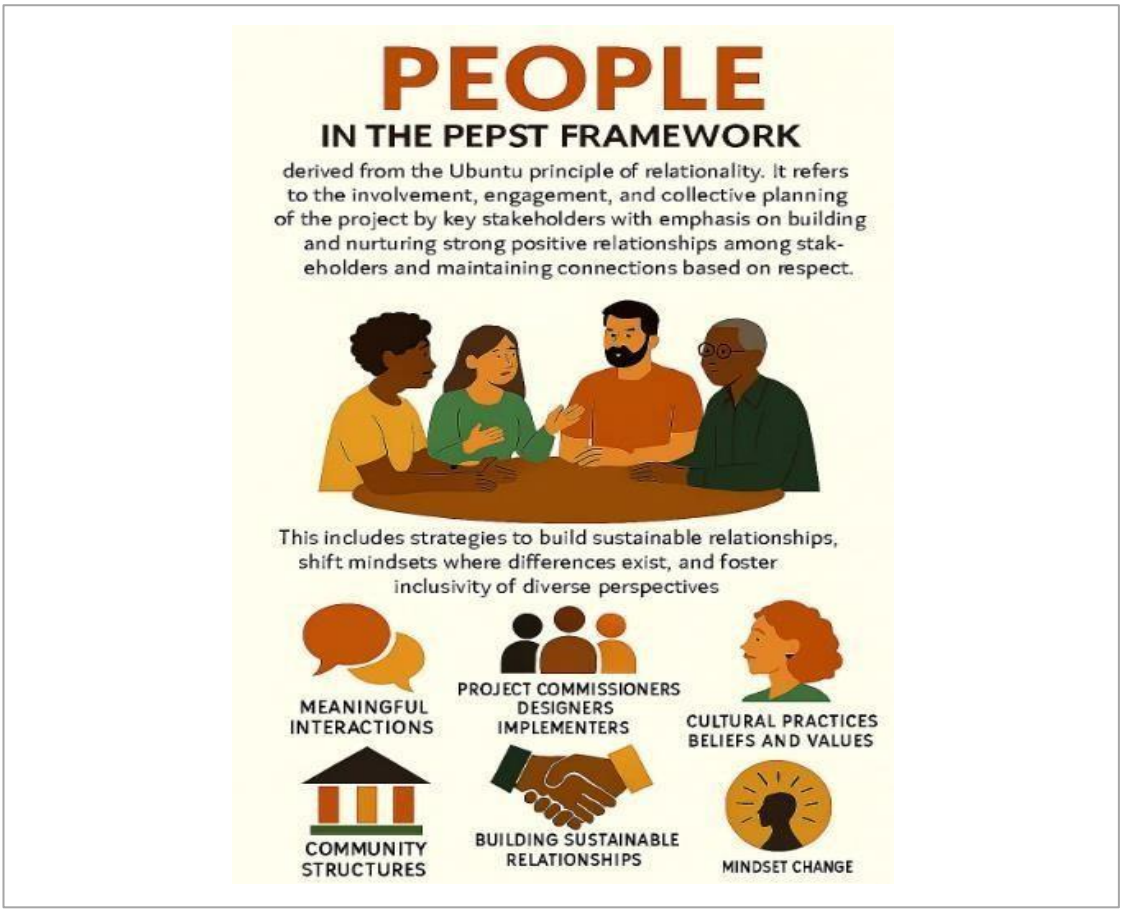
It is also assumed that, in order to bring about transformative change, evaluation should include measurement of 1) strategies for changing mindsets, 2) building relationships, 3) community adaptive and innovative strategies, 4) addressing power asymmetries, and 5) envisioning the future. This process is critical for people-centred solutions to societal challenges. The process contributes to shifting mindsets, strengthening relationships, incorporating community strength, resilience, and innovativeness, redressing power imbalances, and co-imagining the future. The process contributes towards a holistic judgement of how the project worked and how it can be improved, given the context within which it is implemented.

The PEPST tool creates space for evaluators to valorise African indigenous knowledge and to create pathways that promote the integration of knowledge systems. The tool if applied, has the ability to bring all stakeholders, such as the target population, community leaders, government officials, implementers, and funders, together to collaboratively co-create, conceptualize and define the intended purpose of an intervention or project within a context of **the interconnectedness of people with the environment, place, space and time**. This includes jointly co-creating the project theory of change and indicators of success. Using the PEPST framework ensures that projects are contextualised, transformative, relevant, and culturally responsive to the needs and aspirations of the target population and are part of a larger system. Revitalizing traditional knowledge, promoting cultural preservation and assessment for inclusive localized and sustainable solutions are measures of success counted in the PEPST context responsive evaluation. The framework can be applied to guide project initiation, design, implementation, monitoring and impact evaluation in the context of a larger system dominated by interconnectedness, interdependence relationality and the value of building relationships and building futures.



It does not replace existing tools but is complementary as it brings new dimensions based on the Ubuntu philosophy with its emphasis on interconnectedness, interdependence, relationship building, sustainability, respect for nature and long-term well-being of the communities and the environment.

Description of each Element



People

There is emphasis on the importance of interactions and conversations between project commissioners, designers, implementers, relevant community structures, and intended project beneficiaries. These initial conversations must recognize that people bring their unique cultural practices, beliefs, and values, which can significantly influence how they understand the problem to be addressed by the project, how it will be implemented, and what its success indicators should be. This part of the tool can be used to evaluate stakeholder participation. Participation measures include inclusive participation, strategies and activities to build sustainable relationships, change of mindsets where there are differences, and create inclusivity of diverse perspectives. When this construct is applied, evaluators can address the question: Who designed this project? Who implemented it? Who owns it? The following questions can guide project planning but can also be used to make judgements about community participation and the resultant expected outcomes.

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be co-created to address the questions.

1. Who are the stakeholders and what are their roles and responsibilities?
2. Are there are strategies to facilitate communication, engagement, and relationship building among stakeholders and how do these impact the success of the project?
3. Are there strategies to address the change of mindsets where stakeholders have different perspectives and how do this impact project success?
4. How has stakeholder participation influenced adaptation of the project?

Environment

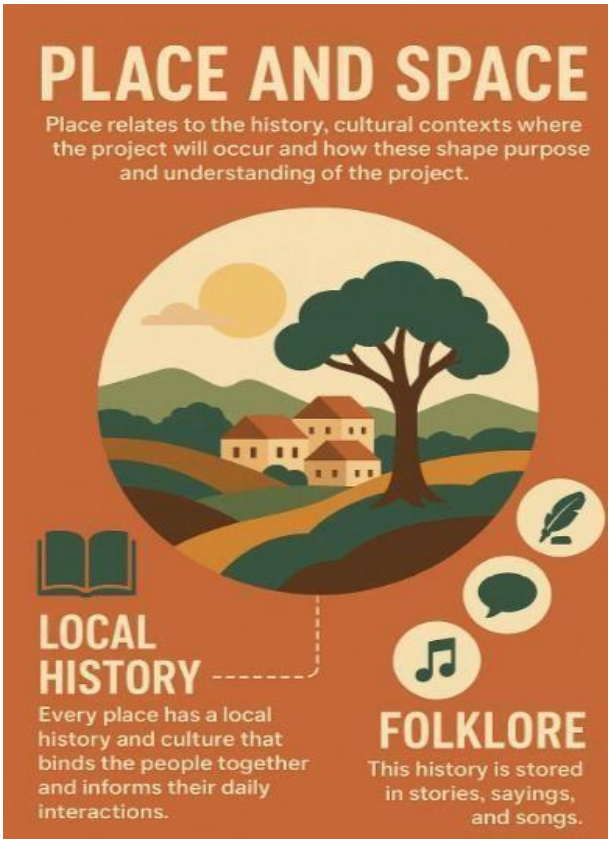
The second component namely, 'environment', relates to the enabling environment necessary for the success of the project. An enabling environment includes government policies, gender policies, the socio-cultural norms, and beliefs that can inform collective understanding of the problem to be addressed, environmental responsibility and the use of technology. Environmental responsibility requires an ethical obligation by project designers and project recipients to make conscious efforts to minimize harm to the environment by ensuring that project activities do not damage the environment. In line with the Ubuntu principle of respect for one another and for the environment, the projects and interventions should do no harm to the people and to the environment. The focus of the evaluation is on the resources and the implementation process, environmental impediments to project outcomes and impact and project activities that might hurt the environment. While this aspect of the framework can be used for project planning, for example, ensuring that the project resources are aligned with government policies, national development plans and government development priorities and social policies, it is highly recommended for judging the project inputs and the implementation process.

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be co-created to address the following:

1. Cultural practices that impacted on implementation, output and outcome.
2. Gender norms that impacted on implementation, output, and outcome.
3. Policies that affected implementation.
4. Activities that addressed mindsets for optimal project outcomes, continuity, and sustainability of project outcomes.
5. Activities that have the potential to damage the environment or community relations.
6. Overall implementation success and impact on project outcomes.

Place and Space

This aspect of the tool is a continuation of judgement on the planning and implementation process with emphasis on inclusivity and integration of local indigenous science with other knowledge systems for localized solutions, expansion, growth and forward looking. It makes judgement on adaptation of the project to local contexts and the resultant outcomes.



Place relates to the history and cultural contexts where the project will occur and how these shapes the purpose and understanding of the project. Every place has a local history and culture that binds the people together and informs their daily interactions. This history is stored in the folklores, the stories, sayings, and songs. Space relates to beliefs about the physical space of project activities that may have a positive or negative impact on the project. People have connections with their land and space, and there may be areas or spaces where it would be against community practice to locate a project.

Under Place and space, the evaluator moves away from the practice that programmes have to be implemented as planned to accommodate adaptation of the project to the context and community needs and community participation. The focus is on adaptation and improvement on design and implementation as the project progresses. It is about identifying areas where changes or improvements in project implementation and outcomes have occurred in response to the

project's location, the cultural practices of the people, and their needs and priorities. The main evaluation question is on the extent to which the project is compatible with the needs, priorities of the people, the synergy of the project with place and space and the adaptations in design and implementation that are a response to place, space and the future.

Quantitative and qualitative methods can be co-created to address the following:

1. History of the place that informs the choice of projects.
2. Information on the place and space that can facilitate or hinder the implementation, success, and outcome of the project.
3. Community resources and assets that the projects leverage on.
4. How the project leverages on community indigenous science, resources and assets to inform project design and implementation.
5. Project responsiveness to community context and needs.
6. Community indicators of success.
7. Community strategies for sustainability of outcome.

Time

Time means looking back at the past, engaging in the present, and looking forward to the future. The success of projects activities is measured against observed time patterns. Time focuses on understanding the rituals, beliefs, and symbolism associated with time and project activities, and thinking about how the past has informed the present and a vision for the future. The time of the year, month, and day can inform routine activities, ultimately project outcomes and impact are assessed by comparing the past with the present and envisioning the future. In alignment with relationality and connections, success is measured at individual, family and community levels.

The evaluator co-creates with the multiple stakeholders' tools to address the following:

1. Compare what was at the start with what is. Here, evaluators may assess progress using project goals and objectives according to the project design.
2. Responsiveness to the changing environment: Measure changes, improvements, adaptations that were made during implementation, the strategies, and outcomes. Specific places, communities and cultural practices may have required adaptation of the project. Local indigenous science may have been integrated in the design for innovative implementation and project outcomes. The assumption is that the project implemented may not necessarily be the same as the program as planned.
3. Individual and family success stories using community methods.
4. Measure systems-level impact, for example, community agency, collaborative partnership, local participation and ownership, social cohesion, and strengthening of local capacity.
5. Dreams for the future.

This last aspect is ideal for summative evaluation. It can be used for midterm reviews or project end of the circle. It combines implementation measures under environment and Place and Space and make judgment on how they impacted outcomes. It makes a judgment on value added to the community by judging success at the individual, family, and community levels and prospects for the future. The table below is a step-by-step assessment tool.

Table 1: Step-by-step PEPST assessment tool

	Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
		PEOPLE		
1	Emphasis under People is to ensure that the project builds and nurtures positive relationships and maintain connections based on respect for between ALL stakeholders. Purpose is for ALL stakeholders to fully co-create and come up with strategies for interactions and hold initial conversations between and intended project planning and evaluation with emphasis on beneficiaries.	***Initiation*** This is a very critical stage for a sustainable community project. To promote collective planning and evaluation that involve all stakeholders, ensure there are continuous engagements between all stakeholders (community members, direct project beneficiaries, other relevant community structures, project commissioners, designers, implementer.	1. Level at which communities as important project beneficiaries, were involved at the initiation. 2. Engagement of all stakeholders and how participation of all stakeholders is inclusive. 3. Assess whether project activities will: a) build sustainable relationships, b) change of mindsets where there are differences, c) Whether activities embrace diverse perspectives for all stakeholders.	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.
		Implementation Ensure that ALL stakeholders, Community leaders, other community structures are involved during the implementation of the projects These will lead to multi-directional borrowing and lending of knowledge	1. Assess whether project implementation participation strategies and activities will a) build sustainable relationships, b) have changed the mindsets where of ALL stakeholders where there were any differences and, c) whether the project implementation pparticipation strategies and activities created any inclusive of diverse perspectives.	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.

Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
	between project recipients and community leaders and knowledge holders leading strong partnership, relationship building and success of the project.	2. Assess whether All stakeholder community structures were involved in the implementation of the project. 3. Assess how holding regular conversations between important role players contributed to the success of the projects.	
	Impact	Assesses whether: 1. Stakeholders that were involved in the project and what were their roles and responsibilities how did they promote relationship building and how did these add values in the success of the project? 2. Are there alternative strategies that could have facilitated better communication, engagement, and relationship building among stakeholders and how do these impact the success of the project. 3. Assess whether they are any strategies to address the change of mindsets where stakeholders have different perspectives and how do this impact project success. 4. Assess how have community participation influenced success adaptation of the project.	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.

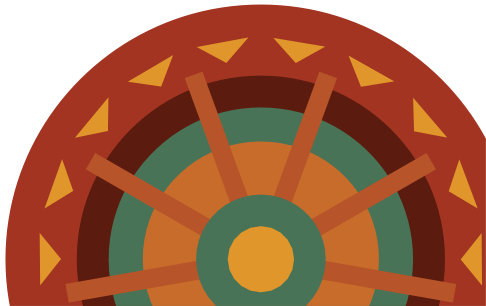
	Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
			ENVIROMENT	
2	The focus is on the resources and implementation process that focus on environmental impediments that promote project outcomes and impact and project activities that might hurt the environment in the future. Therefore, the purpose here is for project stakeholder to collectively engage and co-create strategies that lead to the success of the project. These must co-create strategies that address the influence the government policies, gender policies, historical issues, cultural practices, use of technology, norms, and beliefs that can inform collective understanding of the problem to be addressed. Focus must be on how stakeholders can map out how relationship with the ecosystem that can impact on project success	***Initiation*** Stakeholders must collectively engage to understand cultural practices, gender norms, government policies may affect the implementation, output and outcome of projects and activities that address mindsets for optimal project outcomes, continuity, and sustainability.	1. Asses which environmental impediments may affect the success of the project and strategies address such at the initiation stage. 2. Assess how co-created stakeholder strategies that lead to the success of the project	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.

Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
	Implementation	Assess how the integration of local indigenous knowledge with expert knowledge from the project implementers, cultural sensitivity, and respect for community values, may lead to the success of the implementation process	
	Impact	Measure the following indicators. 1. Cultural practices that may have impacted on implementation, output and outcome. 2. Gender norms that impacted on implementation, output, and outcome 3. Policies that affected implementation activities that addressed mindsets for optimal project outcomes, continuity, and sustainability of project outcomes. 4. Activities that may have led potential to damage the environment or community relations in the future. 5. Overall implementation success and impact on project outcomes.	

	Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
			PLACE/SPACE	
3	Under Place/Space stakeholders must work together to consider cultural beliefs about place and space and how these can inform location, type and choice of project and the implementation process. It is important for stakeholder to consider community resources and assets that the projects can leverage on and the general project oppressiveness to community needs. Consider traditional spaces for dialogue that can create safe places for communities to share their perspectives, using their preferred modes of communication that include songs, proverbs, riddles,	**Initiation**	1. Assess the History of the place that will inform the choice of projects. 2. Collect information on the place and space that can facilitate or hinder the implementation, success, and outcome of the project.	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.

	Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
	storytelling, and rituals.			
		Implementation	1. Assess for community resources and assets that the projects leverage on. 2. How the project leverages on community indigenous science, resources and assets to inform project design and implementation.	
		Impact	Assess whether the Project responds to the community context and needs. Whether Community indicators of success were realized Community strategies for sustainability of outcome were accomplished.	
			TIME	
4	For **Time** it is important for ALL stakeholder to understand the rituals, beliefs, and symbolism associated with time and project activities, and thinking about how the past has informed the present and a vision for the future.	**Initiation** At project initiation stakeholders must consider the time of the year, month, and day can inform routine activities, ultimately project outcomes and impact. Assessed by comparing the past with the present and envisioning the future. In alignment with rationality and connections project outcome is measured at individual, family community and environment levels.	Measure whether to community rituals, beliefs, and symbolism associated with time and project activities were considered and agreed upon between ALL stakeholders at the initiation of the project.	Data collection through quantitative and or qualitative methods/ These must be co-created with by All stakeholders.

	Purpose	Stages of Application	Measurement Indicators	Data Collection Method
		Implementation	Assess what was at the start of the project with what is by assessing progress using project goals and objectives according to the project design. Measure changes, improvements, adaptations that were made during implementation, the strategies, and outcomes. Specific places, communities and cultural practices may have required adaptation of the project. Assess whether. Local indigenous science has been integrated in the design for innovative implementation and project outcomes.	
		Impact	Measure systems-level impact, for example, community agency, collaborative partnership, local participation and ownership, social cohesion, and strengthening of local capacity.	



Conclusion

PEPST offers a systems thinking approach to evaluation derived from African indigenous perspectives on relational co-existence, the importance of building relationships with people and with nature, and the belief that knowledge is a product of relationships and is co-created through dynamic interactions. The elements People, Environment, Place, Space, and Time denote a set of relationships that define context. Thus, PEPST is a context-responsive evaluation that offers practical steps to holistically contextualize the evaluation of projects from initiation throughout design, implementation, and impact evaluation.

PEPST informs a transformative project cycle that begins with co-creation of project objectives, implementation strategies and impact evaluation methodologies. The framework places value on strategies to build relationships, changing mindsets, mobilizing community resources, building community trust and local ownership of the project.

The implementation stage is a problem-solving endeavour where the implementation strategies, project objectives are adapted to respond to the realities on the ground for continuous adaptation of the plans and strategies. Responding to the flow of time, the stakeholders meet to capture and forecast the future, leading to additional adaptation of the project that speaks to project sustainability. Impact evaluation eventually looks at how the project was adapted, the implementation process, the vision for the future, project outcomes and success as defined by the communities (see figure below).