EVANGELIA BERDOU

Senior independent MEL expert specialising in high-impact stakeholder-centred, learning-oriented systems and outputs

EXPERTISE

Substantial expertise (**> 15 years**) in **MEL** and applied research in international development, **designing**, **implementing**, **leading**, **managing** and **quality assuring** the successful delivery of a significant number of studies and evaluations for the **British Government** (FCDO, Defra, DFID), **WHO**, **UNICEF**, **UNFPA, World Bank, Sida** and the **European Commission**. Noted for creating **engaging products**, **services**, and processes that cater to the **immediate** and **long-term learning needs** of **diverse stakeholders**, supporting **accountability** and **adaptive management** including through responsible use of AI.

SECTORS

Multisectoral experience: led and delivered studies and MEL for **environmental conservation/restoration**, in support of **livelihoods** and **poverty reduction**, **health** (incl. SRHR and implementation research), **inclusive governance**, **citizen voice**, **transparency** and **accountability** (esp. for improved access to public services), **evidence uptake** and knowledge to policy translation, **ICTs and human development**, **capacity building**, peer-to-peer collaboration, open source and **open data**. Evangelia has a strong track record of designing **integrated monitoring systems** that streamline analyses and **create opportunities for learning** for **complex**, multi-country **portfolio** programmes.

METHODOLOGIES

Experienced in the design and application of a range of M&E approaches, including **theory-based** methods, **results frameworks** (inc. logframes), **outcome harvesting** and **mapping**, **portfolio syntheses**, and **most significant change**. Evangelia has applied these approaches in the context of **realist**, **developmental**, **utilisation-focused**, **process** and **impact** evaluations. She is a strong proponent of **mixed-methods** research and designs that leverage **passive, routine programme data** and vetted **secondary information sources**. She is especially proficient in **qualitative** data collection and analyses (individual semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FGD), and ethnographic observations), as well as in **survey design** and **quantitative** analysis (**descriptive, inferential, multivariate** statistics). One of her strengths is the ability to combine **data science techniques** (e.g., text analysis, automating data cleaning and wrangling and social media analytics) with **information visualisation**, informed by social science and MEL, and guided by **design thinking** and a deep understanding of requirements of aid professionals.

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- **QDAS**: MAXQDA, NVivo, Atlas
- Business Intelligence: Microsoft **Power BI** (advanced) and **Tableau** (intermediate)
- Graphic Design: **Adobe InDesign** and **Illustrator** (intermediate)
- Data science: **R**, (advanced), **Python** (beginner)
- **Generative AI: prompt engineering** for ChatGPT and other LLMs, design and deployment of **custom AI agents** using ChatGPT and open models, **Retrieval-Augmented Generation** (**RAG**) pipeline design using **local LLMs** (e.g. via Ollama), proficient in **Midjourney** for AI-generated **image creation and iteration**, **ethical** guidance and training content development for **responsible AI** use in **MEL**.

COUNTRY EXPERIENCE

Belgium, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Kenya, Malaysia, Tanzania, UAE, Uganda, UK, Zambia.

CONTACT DETAILS

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- https://www.linkedin.com/in/evangeliaberdou/
- Brighton , UK
- Greek citizenship, UK permanent residency status

EDUCATION

PhD | Media & Communications, London School of Economics and Political Science

MSc | New Media, Information and Society, LSE

BA (hons) | Mass Media and Communication, Panteion University Athens, Greece

LANGUAGES

Greek (native speaker)

English (fluently)

French (basic)

Valerie McDonnel–Leonach, Experienced MEL Team Leader and Expert

I had the pleasure of working with Evangelia on the Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) grants programme funded by the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and administered by NIRAS. My role on the programme was MEL Director and Evangelia's was the Learning and Systems Lead. Evangelia made a very strong and valuable contribution to the setting up of the programme and operationalisation of its monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. She designed the Monitoring and Learning (MEL) framework and created bespoke, efficient and useful data collection and analysis tools. She built impressive, interactive Power BI dashboards, which have proven to be excellent analytical tools for the grant administrators team and client to use to better understand and analyse applications to the programme, as well as to manage the portfolio of supported grants. Evangelia is a clear communicator and very professional; she is an asset to any team..

PROJECT EXPERIENCE

Ocean Community Empowerment and Nature (OCEAN) Programme | DEFRA | Multi-country

Oct 2023 — May 2025 • **Learning and Systems Lead** • **Senior Consultant** • **NIRAS**

OCEAN is a competitive grants programme within the Blue Planet Fund (BPF) – the UK's £500 million initiative to protect the marine environment and reduce poverty in coastal communities across developing countries. As Learning and Systems Lead, Evangelia designed the programme's monitoring and learning framework and developed bespoke data collection and analysis tools to meet complex reporting and learning needs. Monitoring leveraged passive data sources—including metadata from Flexi-Grant (the programme's application platform) and engagement metrics from the OCEAN website, YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, and other channels—enabling reporting with minimal ovehead. Evangelia built and deployed two interactive Power BI dashboards (an application tracker and a comms/engagement tracker), refreshed monthly and used regularly by grant administration staff, the OCEAN Defra policy team, and the independent evaluator. The dashboards significantly reduced reporting preparation time and enhanced learning by enabling staff to conduct their own analyses. The dashboards provided a shared, data-driven foundation for performance tracking, and supported adaptive decision-making including refinements to grant criteria and outreach strategies.

Accelerating Vulnerability and Wellbeing Monitoring | UNICEF | Zambia

May 2011 — Aug 2012 • **Team Leader & Principal Investigator (PI)** • **Research Fellow** • **Institute of Development Studies (IDS)**

Evangelia led a team of UK-based software developers and Zambian researchers to design and pilot a cloud-based survey data collection software and hardware solution and visualisation framework to accelerate the process of getting data collected ready for analysis. The study also explored how community members can be involved in the analysis. The project built on the methodology of the 'Monitoring Shifting Vulnerabilities in the Context of Economic Crisis' programme, a two-year action research project funded by UNICEF which sought to understand the changes that people make in their lives to secure a livelihood and wellbeing in the face of the effects of unfolding economic shocks. Although the original programme adopted an innovative methodology which centred on people's wellbeing and involved communities to define what matters most to them, the turnaround for data processing and analysis was not fast enough to support communities and local national officials to respond appropriately to emerging threats. The pilot demonstrated that there are significant gains to be made from the mobile data collection tool that was developed in getting data ready for analysis. The project team succeeded in delivering a well-functioning software and hardware system within a short timeframe. Local researchers appreciated the portability and functionality of the tablet PC and RuralNet staff found it relatively easy to set up and manage the ODK-based survey questionnaire. The visualisation framework demonstrated the feasibility of automating certain aspects of the analysis by generating tables and graphs for predefined variables.

Mediating Voices: Can open data initiatives improve the livelihoods of young people in poor communities? | DFID | Kenya

Oct — Feb 2011 • **Team Leader & PI** • **Research Fellow** • **IDS**

Map Kibera was launched in 2009 by Erica Hagen and Mikel Maron, in response to the near-total absence of reliable public information about Kibera—one of Nairobi's, and Africa's, largest informal settlements. At the time, Kibera was either depicted as a forest or omitted entirely from official and commercial maps, reflecting its marginalisation and the lack of recognition by authorities and mainstream media. Evangelia led a DFID-funded

study in collaboration with Map Kibera founders and participants to investigate the potential and risks of open data and participatory digital platforms in marginalised urban settings. Evangelia conducted in-depth interviews and participant observation over a three-week period in Kibera, focusing on how local youth navigated the tensions between ideals of openness and the realities of precarious work, community politics, and uneven digital access. She also coordinated and captured lessons from the action research component of the project that involved contributions from Dr. Samuel Musyoki, a seasoned participatory researcher and facilitator, and Aptivate, a UK based software development firm which supported the broader objective of integrating technical with participatory practice. The research uncovered practical and ethical challenges around governing information commons in informal settlements and provided insights into how participatory development and open source practices can be meaningfully aligned.

Personas and Care Pathways of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Survivors | UNFPA | Malaysia

May — Oc 2023 • Research Consultant • International Institute for Global Health (IIGH)

Evangelia collaborated with IIGH to investigate how GBV survivors in Malaysia navigate public care pathways, specifically the One-Stop Crisis Centres (OSCC), which were established to address the multifaceted needs of survivors in an integrated manner. The study examined barriers to access and the influence of intersecting factors—such as gender, poverty, ethnicity, marital status, and migration status—on women's experiences with support services. The final report offered recommendations for strengthening the health system's response to GBV in Malaysia. Evangelia employed an innovative methodology using the Personas and Pathways approach, adapted from user experience design. She synthesised findings from eleven semi-structured interviews with GBV survivors and peer-reviewed literature to develop five fictional, yet evidence-based, personal narratives that illustrate the complex realities of accessing and experiencing care. The image on the left depicts the GBV survivors' experience of the care pathways that Evangelia illustrated. This approach combines rigorous research with visual and storytelling techniques to enhance the usability and uptake of the findings. The report was featured in Malaysian media and highlighted by organisations working on women's issues.

Implementation Research Training Framework | WHO-TDR | Multi-country

May 2020 — Feb 2021 • Research Consultant • IIGH

Implementation research (IR) is a field of health research focusing on translating research findings and proven interventions into routine practice, ensuring that what is known to work actually benefits populations at scale. The Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR), hosted by WHO, is a global leader in supporting and advancing IR, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICS). In addition to funding IR projects, TDR has invested significantly in developing resources such as its flagship massive open online course (MOOC) on IR, that are freely accessible to health professionals in LMICs. In collaboration with the client and IIGH, Evangelia developed a framework to guide the next phase of TDR's strategy for IR capacity strengthening. The framework drew on empirical evidence, expert input, and consultations with a range of stakeholders in the IR training space, and offered practical recommendations for improving IR capacity-building efforts in LMICs.

Understanding the Impact, Enablers and Barriers Faced by Health Professionals in Online Implementation Research Course | WHO-TDR | Multi-country

Mar 2021 — Apr 2022 • Research Consultant • IIGH

Evangelia led an evaluation into the usefulness, and the barries and enablers to learning for participants from LMICS in TDR's online course on implementation research. The course which was originally designed for public health researchers has been running since

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_____ GENDER, HEALTH

RIGHTS, INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE, CITIZEN VOICE

2018, includes contibutions from leading health experts and practitioners and has been translated into Spanish, French, Russian and Chinese. Evangelia combined survey data conducted by a previous study with insights from semi-structured individual qualitative interviews to examine two four learning outcomes dependent on whether participants completed the course and found the skills and knowledge gained applicable in their everyday practice. Evangelia synthesised findings into four learner personas (see screenshot on the left) which greatly added to their dissemination and update.

Mapping implementation research trends in WHO regions with text mining | WHO-TDR | Multi-country

Mar 2020 — Feb 2021 • **Research Consultant** • **IIGH**

Evangelia contributed to a methodology for mining and visualising information from research proposals submitted as part of the requirements for WHO-TDR's MOOC on implementation research. The project sought to identify emerging needs in implementation research as defined by health professionals in lower and middle-income countries. The results of the analysis were presented using interactive maps and dashboards. An early version of the methodology can be found here.

Women in Open Source Development Communities | DIAL | Multi-country

May — Sep 2018 • **Research Consultant** • **IDS**

Evangelia co-led a multi-country study commissioned by the Digital Impact Alliance (DIAL) to investigate the barriers and enablers of women's participation in open source software (OSS) communities, with a focus on the humanitarian and development sectors. The project adopted a critical gender and intersectional lens and drew on extensive interviews with women OSS contributors and institutional stakeholders across Africa, South and Southeast Asia, Europe and North America. Evangelia conducted interviews with women contributors, over half of which were carried out in person in Nairobi, Kenya. The final report includes actionable recommendations for donors, employers, and OSS communities, highlighting the importance of safe learning spaces, inclusive workplace norms, and gender-aware funding criteria.

Final Evaluation of the Next Generation Media Programme | RNW | Multi-country

Oct 2020 — Jun 2021 • **Team Leader & PI** • **Data Yarns Research**

RNW Media's Next Generation Programme was an ambitious four-year (2017–2020) multi-country initiative funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support youth-led digital media platforms in advancing inclusive governance and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in restrictive environments. Building on lessons from the mid-term evaluation, Evangelia led the final evaluation, which examined projects in Egypt, Yemen, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Libya, Jordan, Syria, and China. As with the midline, she applied theory-of-change and realist evaluation approaches to assess NGP's relevance, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. The evidence base was organised around country case studies and included focus group discussions, individual interviews, online surveys with youth audiences, routine programme data, and digital analytics. As a final evaluation, greater emphasis was placed on NGP's contribution to civil society and media ecosystems, as well as RNW Media's internal transformation. The evaluation found that NGP platforms created trusted, safe digital spaces for youth, though challenges remained in reaching marginalised groups and influencing decision-makers. The grant also enabled RNW Media to strengthen its organisational capacity, with several country teams successfully transitioning into independent local entities.
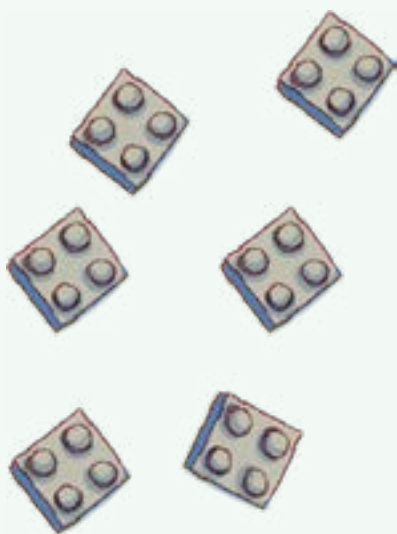
Mid-term Evaluation of the Next Generation Programme (NGP) | RNW Media | Multi-country

May — Oct 2019 • Team Leader & PI • Data Yarns Research

Leading a small team of researchers, Evangelia combined theory-of-change and realist evaluation approaches to assess NGP against four DAC criteria—relevance, effectiveness, sustainability and impact. The mid-term evaluation focused on user engagement, platform safety, content appropriateness, operational resilience, and pathways to influence. Evangelia led fieldwork in Egypt and Yemen and contributed to cross-case analysis of 11 country platforms (Egypt, Yemen, Burundi, DRC, Mali, Libya, Jordan, Syria, and China). The evidence base comprised FGDs and individual interviews, data from online surveys with the target audience, routine programme data and digital analytics. For the impact assessment, outcomes harvested by the RNW Media PMEL team (Hilversum) were selected and examined during fieldwork. The evaluation found strong evidence of local relevance, innovative editorial and moderation strategies for safeguarding users, and adaptive models for navigating restricted civic space. It also identified gaps in reaching more diverse audiences, strengthening links to policy influence, and integrating security provisions for in-country staff. The findings informed RNW Media's strategy and policies for the programme's second phase.

Crowdsourcing Intermediaries for Improved Public Service Delivery | Making All Voices Count (MAVC) | Multi-country

May 2014 — Nov 2017 • PI • Research Fellow • IDS

Evangelia conducted a study for the MAVC programme on the role of crowdsourcing intermediaries in technology-enabled transparency and accountability (T&A) initiatives. Crowdsourcing intermediaries are actors who collect and analyse citizen feedback using digital tools, and use it to support positive change. Using a novel conceptual framework that combined networked gatekeeping theory with social accountability perspectives, the study explored how intermediaries mediate citizen voice through the design and implementation of digital platforms. The research involved content analysis of 20 crowdsourcing initiative websites and case studies across South Africa, India, and Kenya. Research findings revealed significant variations in how intermediaries manage data, engage citizens, and position themselves in relation to the state and civil society. Key findings highlighted tensions between transparency ideals and data practices, and the need to hold intermediaries themselves accountable to the citizens they aim to represent.

Evaluation of UNICEF's U-Report platform | World Bank | Uganda

May 2014 — Nov 2017 • PI • Research Fellow • IDS

Evangelia led an independent evaluation of UNICEF Uganda's U-Report, a large-scale crowdsourcing platform aimed at amplifying youth voices, improving access to life-saving information, and strengthening accountability through SMS-based polling. The study combined quantitative and qualitative methods including two large-scale surveys of U-Reporters, twenty semi-structured individual interviews with male and female U-Reporters from rural and urban locations, and analysis of platform data. U-Report survey results were compared with those from comparable age groups from a national representative household survey and relevant datasets from the Ugandan Bureau of statistics. The evaluation examined who participates in U-Report and why, how U-Report data compares to traditional survey data and its measurable impact on public debate and youth engagement. Findings highlighted the value for real-time feedback and civic dialogue, but also raised concerns around representativeness, inclusiveness, and impact pathways. The study recommended strategies to deepen engagement, reach marginalised groups, and improve data validity.

OPEN DATA & OPEN ACCESS

Evaluation Framework for Digital Citizen Engagement | World Bank | Multi-country

May 2014 — Nov 2017 • **Co-author** • **Research Fellow** • **IDS**

Evangelia co-authored a practical guide on evaluating Digital Citizen Engagement (DCE) for the World Bank's Governance Global Practice. Developed collaboratively with Aptivate, IDS and ICA:UK, the guide responded to the growing demand for rigorous, context-sensitive approaches to assess digital participation initiatives. Drawing on lessons from field evaluations from Brazil, Uganda, Kenya, and Cameroon, the team developed a life-cycle evaluation approach underpinned by five analytical lenses—objective, control, participation, technology, and effects. The guide provides adaptable tools, real-world examples, and practical guidance to help development practitioners assess the relevance, inclusiveness, and impact of digital tools in citizen-state engagement.

Evaluation of the Global Partnership for Sustainanable Develpment Data (GPSDD) | itad & GPSDD secretariat | Multi-country

May 2018 — Feb 2021 • **Research Consultant** • **itad**

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD) was established in 2015 to mobilize the data revolution in support of both monitoring and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This theory-based, mixed-methods evaluation led by itad, sought to evaluate GSDD's progress against their 2019–2023 strategy, focusing on relevance, effectiveness, outcomes, and organisational efficiency. The itad team applied contribution analysis, outcome harvesting, and a 7S organisational capacity framework to explore GPSDD's influence across national and global data ecosystems. The team gathered evidence through 60+ semi-structured interviews, an online partner survey (covering over 80 stakeholders), a review of key programmatic documents and logframe data, and targeted case studies on country and thematic initiatives. As a member of the evaluation team, Evangelia was involved in data collection and analyses and advised on the characted and evolution of open data ecosystem for SDGs.

Evaluation Framework of Open Data on Nutrition and Agriculture | Global Open Data for Agriculture and Nutrition (GODAN) Programme | Multi-country

May 2018 — Feb 2021 • **Research Consultant** • **Wagenigen environmental research, ALTERRA**

GODAN Action was a three-and-a-half-year programme within the broader GODAN initiative funded by DFID, designed to enable data users, producers, and intermediaries to engage effectively with open data in agriculture and nutrition, thereby increasing its availability, accessibility, and impact. Evangelia designed an evaluation framework for understanding the contribution of open data to development outcomes that accounted for both technical and socio-political dimensions of open data. The framework was informed by two case studies on open data on weather and nutrition. The evaluation framework was based on combined qualitative Key Informant Interviews (KIIS), a capacity needs survey, and a political economy of the nutritiom and weather open data econsystems The framework highlights the critical role of intermediaries, the challenges of aligning open data with local information needs, and the skills and trust-building required to translate open data into policy-relevant insights.

DIGITAL AND AI FOR MEL: SYSTEMS & CAPACITY BUILDING

Digital & AI Systems & Capacity Bulding for MEL | **NIRAS** | **Internal**

Oct 2023 — May 2025 • Digital strategy implementation co-lead • Senior Consultant NIRAS

As co-lead for digital strategy implementation at NIRAS, Evangelia designed and managed an internal helpdesk to streamline the integration of innovative digital solutions across the company's service offerings. A key focus of her role, exemplified by her work on the OCEAN programme, was developing monitoring systems for fund management and complex evaluations that combined digital tools and AI with rigorous methodological approaches. During her tenure, Evangelia also authored guidelines on the ethical and appropriate use of AI in monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) practices and created tailored AI training resources for MEL colleagues. Additionally, she advanced internal knowledge management by designing a new SharePoint team site that curated and contextualized dispersed resources, embedding interactive Power BI dashboards to provide up-to-date visualizations of staff resourcing and availability.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Oct 2023 — Apr 2025: **Senior Consultant** • **NIRAS International Consulting, UK**

Sep 2017 — Oct 2023: **Independent Research Consultant** • **Data Yarns Research Limited (owner), UK**

Dec 2008 — Mar 2017: **Research Fellow** • **Institute of Development Studies, UK**

Sep 2007 — Oct 2008: **Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Postdoctoral Fellow** • **Science and Technology Policy Research (SPRU), University of Sussex, UK**

SELECT PUBLICATIONS

Mukherjee, Aparna, Berdou, Evangelia, & Abreu-Lopes, Claudia. (2025). Portraits and Journeys of Gender-Based Violence Survivors across Malaysia's One-Stop Crisis Centres. UNFPA, UNU-IIGH.

Penkunas, M. J., Shiau, Y.C., Rhule, E.L., Berdou, E. and Allotey P. (2021). Designing the next Generation of Implementation Research Training for Learners in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. Globalization and Health 17, no. 1: 63. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-021-00714-3

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Lucas, H., Batchelor, S. J., and Berdou, E. (2013). Real-Time Monitoring and the New Information Technologies. IDS Bulletin 44(2): 31-39

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Berdou, E., D. Chiwele Kaputo, N. Whitestone, and E. Aguilar-Nova (2012). New Technologies in the Service of Vulnerability and Wellbeing Monitoring. Final Report for UNICEF-Zambia. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies

Berdou, E. (2011). Reimagining Participation: Opportunities and Challenges of the Open Source Model of Collaboration for Development Thinking and Practice IDS Bulletin 42(5): 104-8.

Berdou, E. (2011). Organization in Open Source Communities: At the Crossroads of the Gift and Market Economies. New York: Routledge

Berdou, E. (2011). Mediating Voices, Communicating Realities: Using Information Crowdsourcing Tools, Open Data Initiatives and Digital Media to Support and Protect the Vulnerable. Final Project Report, DFID project no PO 40035949

Mansell, R., and E. Berdou (2010). Political Economy, the Internet and Free/open Source Software Development. In the International Handbook for Internet Research, edited by M. Allen, J. Hunsinger, and L. Klastrup: 341-61. London; New York: Springer