

In Practice

Using evidence through diagnostic studies of national evaluation capacity to open debate on the value of evaluation¹

SENEGAL: In 2006, the Senegalese Evaluation Association (SenEval) undertook a diagnostic study of evaluation capacities entitled “Evaluation as a Democratic Requirement”, with the support of the International Organization for the Francophonie and technical back up from Professor Frederic Varone. The study presents the stated practice of evaluation in Senegal. Through a documentation review, survey and semi-directive interviews, the study shows a “mature” evaluation practice, with more than 90 evaluation cases reported on. It also tried to assess the quality of evaluation practice in Senegal through the meta-evaluation of two evaluations, using the AfrEA (African Evaluation Association) Evaluation Standards. Overall, certain deficiencies were detected in the management of evaluations. There was a much stronger focus on the control and financial accountability aspects than on the promotion of learning. The diagnostic study further attempted to define a clear institutional framework to promote an evaluation culture on the basis of an analysis of the existing institutional environment, semi-directive interviews with key stakeholders and the elaboration of scenarios for the development of an evaluation capacity development plan. The participatory process of undertaking the diagnostic study helped to raise the process issue with a number of stakeholders, highlighting the need to form partnerships for advocacy as well as to create evidence to support such advocacy.

SenEval has since then advocated for the institutionalization of evaluation, targeting principally the Presidency of the Republic, the Delegation for the Reform of State and Technical Assistance (DREAT), the General Directorate of Planning of the Ministry of Economy and Finances, and the Government Inspection Office (*Inspection Générale d’Etat*). The technical challenges attached to institutionalization and the high stakes have been frequent themes of SenEval meetings. This long running advocacy coupled with specific advice from influential members of SenEval has contributed to the government’s decision to establish in the President’s Office a Commission for the Evaluation and Monitoring of Public Policies and Programmes. SenEval aims to get involved in the process of institutionalization initiated by this decision.

NIGER: The increasing interest in the monitoring and evaluation of policies and development programmes and in results-based management led Réseau Nigérien de Suivi Evaluation (ReNSE) in Niger, among other countries from the sub-region, to participate in 2006 in a diagnostic study of national evaluation capacity. The results of the study showed that evaluation in Niger is mainly considered to be a statutory obligation, partly driven by the technical and financial partners involved. The study revealed the increasing importance given to the development of evaluation in Niger and highlighted that the decentralization of evaluation practices, the reinforced anchoring of evaluation functions in institutions, and the development of training and the professionalization of evaluation were the main strategies to be considered for the development of evaluation capacity of Niger. This diagnostic of evaluation capacity sparked a debate around building a culture of evaluation in Niger.

To continue such discussion among key stakeholders, ReNSE has organized several events over the years such as a workshop on good practices in monitoring and evaluation in Niger (2010); Reflection Days on the contribution of civil society to the development of the evaluation culture in Niger (2011); (High-level) training in the evaluation of development policies and programmes (2012); the first Nigerian Days of Evaluation on the theme “The institutionalization of evaluation in Niger for sustainable development” (2012). These events were organized in cooperation with the Government, UN agencies and technical institutions.

¹ UNICEF, EvalPartners, IOCE in partnership with Cooperacion Espanola, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, UNEG, UNWomen. (2013). *Voluntary Organizations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs): Learning from Africa, Americas, Asia, Australasia, Europe and Middle East*, available at http://www.mymande.org/voluntary_organizations_for_professional_evaluation