

Communique from the Fifth Edition of the Beninese Evaluation Days, August 2018

Final Communication

Cotonou, Benin

The fifth edition of the Beninese Evaluation Days (JBE) took place from 06 to 08 August 2018, at the Benin Marina Hotel in Cotonou, under the patronage of the Minister of State, Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic of Benin, Mr Pascal Irénée KOUPAKI.

This international meeting is now a tradition since 2010, are held biennially and regularly. The national evaluation community and those of the countries represented in this edition welcome the strong political will of the Beninese authorities. They also thanked all the Technical and Financial Partners who support Benin in the development of the evaluation process. These include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the TWENDE MBELE Program and the International Initiative for Impact Assessment (3IE).

The fifth edition of the JBE brought together about 300 participants from Benin, Africa and the world, including practitioners, researchers, specialists and professionals from the evaluation of public administration, institutions of the Republic, communities, local authorities, universities, professional organizations and civil society organizations.

Participants welcomed the presence of international experts from South Africa, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Togo, India, United States and Canada.

As was the case for the last four editions, the event started with four training modules related to the central theme entitled "Evaluation to promote a development administration", which focused on:

- Commissioning and management of evaluations in the public sector (Terms of Reference and quality assurance of evaluations)
- What evaluation methods can be used for non-state actors?
- Introduction to commissioning, leading and conducting an impact assessment
- Gender-sensitive assessments.

The participants appreciated the richness of the technical information conveyed and the perspectives offered by the latter in terms of the change to be induced in evaluative practice.

The opening ceremony was enhanced by the presence of the Minister of State, Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic of Benin, Mr. Pascal Irénée KOUPAKI, the UNDP Resident Representative in Benin, the representative of the International Initiative for the Impact Assessment (3ie), and the representative of the West African Development Bank (BOAD).

The official opening of the fifth edition was preceded by an inaugural presentation which focused on "evaluation, a lever for promoting a development administration". Based on the theoretical underpinnings of the evaluation, this presentation indicated ways to improve the quality of evaluative

practices, to make evaluation a lever for the performance of the public administration, with a view to providing quality services to the people.

The work of the conference was devoted to the presentation of papers followed by debates. This work was structured around three round tables, namely:

- Round table n ° 1: "Evidence and decision-making process: progress made in Benin and elsewhere";
- Round table n ° 2: "Promotion of the culture of monitoring and evaluation in the management of the development process";
- Round table n ° 3: "Evaluation, a tool for improving the quality of public services provided to the population".

The first roundtable presented the efforts of countries and institutions in using evidence for decision-making, with an emphasis on the prerequisites of: institutionalising evaluation and systematising evaluative practice. Particular emphasis was placed on mechanisms for allocating budgetary resources based on monitoring and evaluation data.

The introductory paper of this roundtable reviewed the state of demand and the use of public sector evaluation in Benin and identified the perspectives that will enable the function to contribute to the construction of a development administration.

The first panel allowed peer-learning for capitalisation of knowledge and experiences at the country level. The presentations took stock of the institutionalisation of the function in Benin, Guinea, Morocco and Niger for better prospects. They offered the participants the opportunity to discuss the flagship actions that will definitely establish the institutional stability of the function.

Like the first panel, the second allowed participants to address issues related to the systematisation of evaluative practice in their respective countries. Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Niger, Uganda and the WACIE countries shared their experiences on these issues.

In the third panel, presenters discussed mechanisms to develop synergies in the monitoring evaluation system and the budgeting process. The work of this panel helped to feed the reflections on the development of such a mechanism in Benin.

The rooting of the evaluative culture calls for the strengthening of the national monitoring and evaluation system, so as to universalise evaluative practice in all areas of the public service and the use of its tools by all actors and institutions. The use of monitoring and evaluation results in the management of the development process provides policy makers and managers with evidence to improve the design and implementation of policies, programs and programs. This is why the promotion of a culture of monitoring and evaluation in the management of the development process was chosen as the theme of the second round table.

The objective of this second roundtable was first of all to sensitise the participants to the understanding of the issues and challenges mentioned above, and specifically, to get them to discuss the methodological approaches for managing findings from evaluations, and evaluation cooperation as a strategy for the promotion of an evaluative culture.

Following the introductory paper that highlighted the issues and challenges of embedding an evaluative culture, the discussions during the fourth panel focused on the communication,

dissemination of evaluation results, and monitoring the use of evaluation results as well as knowledge management. The West African Development Bank shared its way of doing things in these fields with Benin and Mauritania. It shows that institutionalisation is the fundamental key to effective management of evaluation results.

The fifth panel brought into focus the programs of cooperation in evaluation, Twende Mbele and WACIE with their various partners, as well as the regional initiatives on evaluation conduct promoted by UEMOA and BOAD. The role of these cooperative initiatives in promoting the evaluative culture was also presented and discussed.

In the hope that evaluation contributes to changing the living conditions of the populations, it should be first and foremost of good quality so that it leads to a credible judgment and that its recommendations are relevant and operationalization.

To achieve this, it is important that the culture of performance is progressively rooted in the administrative sphere and that accountability to stakeholders is at the heart of the management of the development process. Hence the main objective of the third roundtable, which was to get the participants to understand the mechanisms by which evaluation can constitute an instrument for improving the quality of public services provided to the population through, on the one hand, tools for improving management performance and secondly, accountability.

The introductory paper on "Performance Culture and Accountability to Enhance the Impact of Public Action" highlighted the issues of accountability and citizen participation that need to be associated with performance culture in the public service.

In this vein, the sixth panel was devoted to the development of tools for monitoring and evaluating public service management performance at the level of institutions, public enterprises and local authorities.

Finally, the seventh and last panel of the conference was devoted to the role of evaluation in the context of accountability, with a view to improving the quality of public services. The specific roles and responsibilities of the State actors (Government, Parliament, Territorial Communities) and non-state actors (NGOs, the press in particular) were elaborated.

At the end of the three days of exchanges and discussions, the participants of the fifth edition of the Beninese Evaluation Days welcome the progress made on the African continent in general, and in Benin in particular, in terms of the progressive embedding of the practice and culture of evaluation.

Specifically, Benin was commended for the provision of a national methodological guide for evaluation. However, the conference regrets that the development and adoption of the evaluation law recommended four years earlier in the third edition have not made any significant progress. This law, for the participants of the fifth edition, should ensure the institutional anchoring of the evaluation function and its independence, and include binding provisions for the rooting of the evaluative culture especially at the level of local authorities.

In addition, participants recommended:

- The consolidation of achievements of institutionalisation of evaluation for a better management of the results of evaluation, in particular follow-up on effective implementation of the resulting recommendations;
- The consolidation of the evaluation database already established in Benin, in order to make it reliable and easily updatable, to facilitate work and research in evaluation;
- The encouragement of local authorities to set up local evaluation offices for municipalities or municipal policies;
- The impetus for creating a local governance index;
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms to synergise the monitoring-evaluation system and the budgeting process;
- Strengthening of knowledge management and evidence capitalisation mechanisms resulting from evaluations for better formulation of public policies;
- Strengthening collaboration with networks of university researchers (planners, statisticians, sociologists, political scientists, economists, etc.) in public policies so that a working paper is produced on the analysis of public policies and on the evaluation function;
- The creation of a scientific centre for evaluation within the University, supported by the publication of a scientific journal in electronic form, to disseminate good evaluation practices at the state and sub-state level and to highlight harmful practices;
- Strengthening the training of evaluation practitioners commonly referred to as consultants and the certification or accreditation of evaluators or evaluators' offices, based on skills and experience;
- The systematisation of the use of public action instruments (IPA) to materialise evaluation results as much as possible;
- The systematisation of a human rights-based and gender-sensitive evaluation approach and methods of data collection and analysis;
- Availability of Public Policies Evaluation and Government Action Analysis Office of a Directory of Indicators / Indices in areas such as economy, health, education, agriculture, water, sanitation, etc., in order to feed the analysis variables of public programs and to make their rigorous evaluation easier.

Done at Cotonou on 08 August 2018

The conference organisers