



**TWENDE MBELE**

BRIEF

# DIAGNOSTIC STUDY OF THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS (CSOs)

IN THE FIELD OF MONITORING AND  
EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES



BUREAU DE L'ÉVALUATION  
DES POLITIQUES PUBLIQUES

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to strengthen national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems for better governance in Africa, the Twende Mbele program has prioritised strengthening collaboration between governments and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in its partner countries. CSOs can collaborate with governments in the conduct of evaluations, participate in the development and implementation of policies and programs and have information systems that generate evidence that is useful for decision-making and governance.

In Benin, the National Evaluation Policy (NEP) defined the role and place of civil society in the national evaluation system. The NEP stipulates that civil society organisations must be involved in the conduct of evaluations. They must be consulted during the process and contribute to the reliability of the evaluation work through their knowledge and expertise in the fields concerned. They will be chosen on the basis of their representativeness and their importance in the sectors concerned.

In many African countries, we see that CSOs play a crucial role in improving the production and use of evaluation data. Therefore, a framework for sharing and learning between governments and CSOs should make it possible to strengthen the implementation, sustainability and impact of national evaluation systems (NES), thus contributing to the achievement of one of the main objectives of Twende Mbele.

It is within this framework that Twende Mbele and CLEAR AA developed the project *Strengthening the participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in National Evaluation Systems*. In 2018, Twende Mbele partner countries undertook diagnostics of the CSO landscape and began piloting projects to strengthen collaboration. This brief represents a summary of the results of an initial scoping study on the collaboration between CSOs and the Government in Benin, which will lead to the design of a pilot project aim at both building capacity for collaboration and a sustainable framework for collaboration in the NES.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this study is to carry out an inventory of collaboration between the government and CSOs in monitoring and evaluation and to propose the modalities and strategies for better collaboration in Benin. Specifically:

- to identify current practices in Benin on how civil society works with government in using M&E to strengthen government performance;
- to define a model of collaboration between the State and CSOs;
- to identify areas where collaboration between the state and CSOs would improve government performance and / or accountability;
- to make recommendations for strengthening the participation of CSOs in Benin's NES, and strengthening the government's capacity to better use the evidence produced by CSOs in reform processes and / or in the implementation of policies.

### **METHODOLOGY FOR CONDUCTING THE STUDY**

The study was carried out in 2020 by a team lead by the Office for the Evaluation of Public Policies and Analysis of Government Action (BEPPAAG), according to the steps described below.

1. Framing session
2. Literature review
3. Data collection and analysis
4. Consideration of the preliminary report
5. Validation workshop

## **2. FOUNDATIONS OF STATE-CSO COLLABORATION AND NATIONAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

In Benin, the advent of democracy in 1990 laid the foundations for participatory governance that involves civil society, which is reinforced through the Constitution of the Republic of Benin. Thus, the State of Benin recognizes CSOs as non-state actors playing a critical role in development. It also recognises its duty of accountability and transparency towards citizens on behalf of the government.



Freedom of association and expression is therefore reaffirmed to promote the development of civil society and a better contribution to development objectives at the national level.

As a stakeholder in international agreements and participatory governance arrangements, civil society is taken into account in the national development agenda. The 2016-2021 Government Action Program (PAG) clearly distinguishes civil society as a component that must participate in the mechanism for monitoring and evaluating public governance.

The NEP is also explicit on the need for the participation of CSOs. As such, civil society are involved as actors in the Institutional Framework for the Evaluation of Public Policies (CIEPP) and is represented within the National Evaluation Council (CNE) which is the highest body at the national level responsible for advising the Government in terms of monitoring and evaluation of public policies and ensuring compliance with norms and standards in the

field. However, to date a systematic approach to working closely with CSOs beyond the structures outlined above, has not materialised. As part of the diagnostic, the team sought out examples of where collaboration has been successful in order to learn from this experience when designing the pilot project.

### 3. FOCUS ON EXPERIENCES OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION MECHANISMS

#### 3.1 COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY: EXPERIENCE OF MAEP AND PASCIB

In 2008, non-state actors under the leadership of National Platform of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers of Benin (PNOPPA) and Benin Civil Society Actors Platform (PASCiB) played a key role in the process of revising the Strategic Plan for the Revival of the Agricultural Sector, the first version of which did not meet the expectations of all stakeholders. As in the past, Ministry of Agriculture staff took the lead and set-up a technical committee that developed a new version of the Strategic Plan for the Development of the Agricultural Sector (PSDSA), which was discussed at a validation workshop. The reactions of the various actors present at this validation revealed the non-involvement of non-state actors in the process and the inadequacy of the policy with the needs of producers in the field. With the support of development partners, PNOPPA and PASCiB therefore proposed a new, inclusive institutional framework in which civil society actors play decisive roles (particularly in terms of advocacy, technical inputs and / or representation). Thus, the revision of the PSDSA not only introduced a formal role for non-state actors but also initiated a process of improving the quality of the production and use of evidence.



Thanks to this experience of reviewing the PSDSA, the demand for evidence around the needs of producers and the realities on the ground has increased, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of public action. This experience created an environment in which the development of public policies is no longer the sole responsibility of state actors.

Today, non-state actors are present in the National Council for Orientation and Monitoring of the Agricultural Sector (CNOS) and in the institutional framework of the Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries (MAEP). They represent the citizen control body in the PPBSE chain of the ministry. A budget line has been established by the State for citizen control activities carried out by Non-State Actor (ANE).

#### 3.2 COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY: EXPERIENCE OF THE 'DECISION-MAKING PARTICIPATION' PROJECT

The 'Decision-making participation' project was born from the desire of civil society actors (Social Change Benin, PASCiB and West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)) to improve the participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the development, monitoring and to the evaluation of public policies. It is inspired by the experience of the MAEP and the PASCiB and aims to achieve the establishment of formal institutional frameworks for State-CSO dialogue in the water, energy, health and education.



The experience of the consortium, with Social Change Benin (CSB) as leader, is essentially based on the interest of civil society in contributing to the effective realisation of certain fundamental rights for sustainable human development. This is why the water, energy, health and education sectors, in particular nursery and primary education, have been chosen as a priority. The interests of civil society through this consortium clearly sets out citizen's ambition to support the Government in fully achieving the SDGs.

The first stage of this project consisted of setting-up a data reporting system with locally acting CSOs. These organisations, identified by the House of Civil Society (MdSC) work, benefited from capacity building on citizen assessment tools drawn from the Human Rights-Based Approach and Management Based on Development Results in order to produce collection tools adapted to each of the four sectors concerned.

The second stage was the adoption of projects by the target CSOs, at the rate of 48 in total, ie 12 per sector, with the assurance of departmental coverage for the four sectors. Once this step had been taken, the said CSOs organised - with the technical support of the consortium - the community verification by department to assess the effectiveness of the public services planned through the criteria of availability, accessibility, acceptability and adaptability, where appropriate.

The third stage was the consolidation of the data from the community verification with the targeted public services offer, namely the Ministries, the Agencies and the State corporations. These actors had the opportunity, in the presence of the accountability demand actors represented by the consortium and some target CSOs, to confirm, flatten or refute the data resulting from said community verification. The validation of the sector reviews resulting from the process followed the same process to validate the co-construction approach dear to civil society.

Finally, the consortium led by Social Change Benin (CSB) made available a *Guide for State-CSO dialogue* in which the issues and postures necessary for a fruitful dialogue in the context of social, budgetary, judicial, accountability were explained.

## 4. DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND CSOS IN THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES

### 4.1 STRENGTHS FOR COLLABORATION

The environment of collaboration between the State and CSOs in Benin presents several strengths that can foster collaboration. These include:

1. the existence of a regulatory and legal framework which forms and frames the collaboration between the State and CSOs in Benin.
2. the practice of monitoring and evaluating public policies is developed both on the part of the State and on the side of CSOs. State structures regularly carry out monitoring and evaluation activities of the public policies that they implement and civil society, for its part, produces alternative reports for citizen control of public action.
3. the existence of formal and functional collaboration mechanisms bringing together state structures and CSOs in certain sectors.

#### **4.2 WEAKNESSES OF COLLABORATION**

It is necessary to underline the weak predisposition of certain State institutions to collaborate with CSOs. The latter have not yet become aware of the challenges associated with such a collaboration. On the civil society side, the difficulties in accessing information on public governance continues to be a hinderance to both collaboration and the work of CSOs. Despite advocacy and lobbying, systematic access to information is not yet a reality in Benin. The law on access to information is blocked at the level of parliament and is slow to be voted on. Besides the difficulties of access to information, there is the question of resources for the functioning of CSOs. The financing of CSOs remains a major problem which hinders the development of CSO activities. There is no systematic mechanism for financing civil society by the state. This situation opens the way for the risk of politicisation of CSOs. Added to this is the non-professionalisation of several CSOs, thus hampering the general credibility of civil society.

#### **4.3 OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION**

However, opportunities for collaboration are fostered by the existence of international agreements that recommend that governments involve civil society in public governance is a factor that CSOs can refer to for advocacy and lobbying. The support of the Technical and Financial Partner (PTF)s for the actors of the civil society is a factor which should also be underlined. In addition, it should be noted that the experience of the 'Decision-making Participation' project piloted by the PASCiB-WANEP-CSB consortium in collaboration with the of Development and Coordination of Government Action (MDCAG) provides the opportunity for the establishment of an institutional mechanism for collaboration in the sectors of water, energy, health and education like the agricultural sector with the PASCiB and the MAEP. The analysis suggests a rather favourable environment for collaboration between the State and CSOs. However, certain factors such as funding for CSO activities can pose a serious threat to this collaboration in the event that current funding sources no longer exist.

## **5. MODEL OF COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND CSOS**

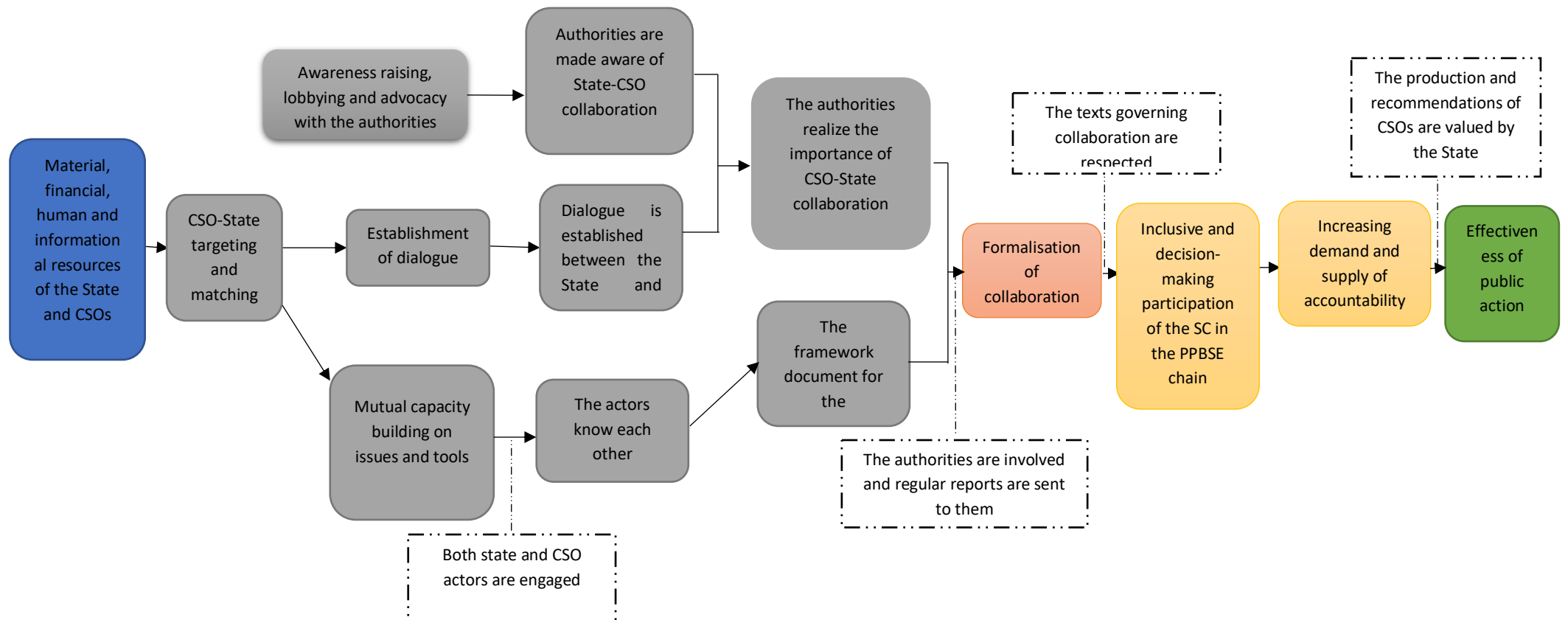
Collaboration between the State and civil society organisations requires a systematic and adaptive approach and methodology. From the successful experience of collaboration between MAEP and PASCiB, as well as that of the CSB consortium, five determinants of collaboration emerged:

- i. establishment of inclusive and continuous dialogue between state and non-state actors ;
- ii. harmonization of development visions and approaches ;
- iii. awareness of the importance of collaboration between the state and CSOs;
- iv. inclusive participation of NSAs in the management of public policies ;
- v. formalization of the collaboration.

## 6. STATE-CSO COLLABORATION THEORY OF CHANGE

The theory of change diagram below assumes the presence of two categories of actors (State and civil society) who share the same ambition to improve the effectiveness of public action through a synergy of actions and collaboration between them. To achieve this, the two sectors have at their disposal the human, financial, material and information resources of the State and CSOs. These resources constitute inputs on which they will rely to carry out activities which will produce results with a view to achieving the final desired impact, which is the effectiveness of public action.

Representation of the theory of change of the State-CSO collaboration mechanism in terms of monitoring and evaluation



## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The diagnostic analysis of the collaboration between the State and CSOs in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies made it possible to identify several points of weakness as well as threats. The recommendations below are formulated around these weaknesses and threats.

**Table 7: Summary of recommendations**

<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Responsible (s) (Institution (s) to which the recommendation is addressed)</b>
Sensitise government officials on the importance of collaboration between government and CSOs.	All Ministries and Institutions of the Republic
Vote for the law on access to public information in the Republic of Benin (The bill is pending in the National Assembly).	National Assembly
Continue to support the professionalisation of CSOs.	CSO
Identify mechanisms for systematic financing of CSOs by the State.	All ministries and CSOs



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TWENDE MBELE is a multi-country peer-learning partnership centred on country government priorities for building national evaluation systems in an effort to improve government performance and accountability to citizens.

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