



Algeria – Mainstreaming Evaluation in UNDP Planning: The Experience of Algeria

SANA AL-ATTAR

Head of Programme Support Unit, UNDP Algeria

CRISTINA AMARAL

UN Resident Coordinator and
UNDP Resident Representative in Algeria

MOHAMED BOUCHAROUR

Evaluator, President of the National Algerian
Evaluation Network since April 2016

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This paper was drafted by Cristina Amaral, Sana Al-Attar and Mohamed Bouchakour. Substantive inputs and editorial support were also provided by Randa Aboul-Hosn and Katharina Meyer-Siepp. Special thanks go to Tewfik Benderra who also contributed to this paper.

INTRODUCTION

Algeria is an upper middle-income country that has engaged for the past decade in major economic development projects and social policies in health, education and employment. It allocates 12 percent of GDP annually to social policies.⁶⁹ It is among the top 10 countries⁷⁰ reporting the highest increase in the Human Development Index (HDI) between 1970 and 2010, with a score of 0.736 in 2014⁷¹.

The country is also on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The National Growth Plan (2005-2009) and targeted programmes for the most vulnerable areas (Highlands and Southern region) reduced further territorial and economic inequalities, exclusion and poverty⁷² and led to a significant drop in the overall unemploy-

69 Government of Algeria. 2014. 'Rapport National de la République Algérienne Démocratique Populaire Beijing +20', p. 12.

70 Communiqué from the Council of Ministers on 24 May 2010.

71 UNDP, 2015. Human Development Report. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/2015-report>

72 'Rapport National de la République Algérienne Démocratique Populaire Beijing +20', p. 13.

ment rate from 29.5 percent in 2000 to 10.6 percent in 2014.⁷³ Given these significant prerequisites, Algeria has now shifted to sustaining these efforts by improving public governance and the quality of social services. Recognizing the importance of evaluations in improving public governance and the quality of public services, Algeria has committed to evaluating systematically development policies and programmes.⁷⁴

The technical support provided by UNDP therefore had to be redefined to better respond to the national context, to be aligned with government development priorities and to provide high-value technical expertise.

This paper seeks to explain UNDP's approach in Algeria towards promoting a culture of management for achieving development results by using evaluation to close the gap between policies and local realities and to move towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First, it will provide an overview of Algeria's experience with regard to evaluation and the challenges ahead. Second, it will describe how UNDP's approach created awareness in the Algerian Government on how to use evaluation and national data to steer the development agenda. Finally, it will argue on important links with the SDGs.

THE ALGERIAN CONTEXT: EVALUATION FROM A TECHNICAL REQUIREMENT TO A STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE

Evaluation is an integral part of the programme and project cycles of Algerian public institutions. The first major government initiative dates back to the late 1970s when it reviewed the results of development policies implemented since the country's independence in 1962. This first major national assessment and evaluation of policies was conducted in 1979 and culminated in the redesigning of economic policies and sectoral programmes as of 1980. It led to the first generation of reforms and the first Five Year Plan (1980-1984), which aimed to consolidate the achievements and address shortcomings.

Following the economic and social impact of the fall in oil prices in 1986 and subsequent social protests in October 1988, Algeria resolved to reassess and evaluate its development policies. This resulted in a second generation of economic and institutional reforms, which also included the evaluation of the consequences of the debt crisis that broke out in the early 1990s. Moreover, the 1994-1998 Structural Adjustment Plans and their consequences on the national economy were also a determining moment for Algeria to evaluate its development policies.

In the early 2000s, Algeria was recovering from an exceptionally tragic and violent decade and aspired to start a real process to address its economic and social challenges. A UNDP-supported national conference on the fight against poverty and exclusion was held in October 2000 with the aim of designing a national strategy. The conference placed evaluation of public policies at the centre of national debates and agreed to synchronize

73 Government of Algeria. 2014. National Statistics Office. Survey no.671. April 2014.

74 Government of Algeria. 2014. 'Government Action Plan for the implementation of the President's Programme'. May 2014.

its recommendations with the MDGs. UNDP also supported the production of the annual National Human Development Reports (NHDRs), which became a key reference for national institutions to evaluate their activities and make informed decisions.

In addition, tripartite meetings between the Government, the General Union of Algerian Workers and the private sector in early 2000 advanced assessment practices through social dialogue. During 2013-2015, the Government extended the tripartite format to additional stakeholders such as organizations, associations and think tanks and organized direct consultations on thematic issues. A series of national conferences in 2014 and 2015 opened discussions on evaluation of national policies/strategies in such areas as industry, health, education, youth and foreign trade. These meetings resulted in a series of findings and recommendations, some of which began to be implemented.

The practice of evaluation in Algeria has, therefore, progressed beyond doing an inventory of achievements to becoming a strategic tool to guide policymakers with adjusting national policies. Thus, the Government recently decided to evaluate its programmes in a more formal and systematic manner, and to undertake periodic evaluations of public measures and policies. This strategic objective was reiterated during the launch of the Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Programme of the President of the Republic, adopted by the National Assembly in May 2014. This action plan puts evaluation of development programmes at the centre of public action.

UNDP and the United Nations System in Algeria⁷⁵ commissioned a study on the current capacities of the national statistics systems and their readiness to contribute to SDG indicators. The study revealed a number of challenges that need to be addressed to effectively promote a culture of evaluation and results-based management in Algeria, namely:

- generalize ex-ante evaluation, in addition to the ex-post evaluation to foster a culture of prospective planning;
- disseminate and generalize result-based management (financial and other) that remain limited in the national context;
- establish concrete indicators and targets in development policies and programmes as a precondition for effective monitoring mechanisms and ultimately allowing to evaluate policies/programmes;
- review the national statistics system;
- promote stakeholders' participation and consultation in evaluation to measure the impact of policies on their living conditions; and
- promote the practice of evaluation as a profession with ethical standards and promote the use of internationally recognized working methods.

75 Nacerddine, H. 2015. 'Etude comparative entre le nouveau cadre statistique des Objectifs du Développement Durable et le cadre national en Algérie, système des Nations Unies, Algérie.

UNDP'S ROLE IN CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR MANAGEMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT RESULTS

In the past decade, UNDP supported strengthening national capacities for development and achieving the MDGs. It emphasized assessment of development results and creating a culture of evaluation. To this end, it embedded results-based management as its programmes and projects approach and improved its evidence and data collection. UNDP spearheaded and mainstreamed the assessment of development results through its Independent Evaluation Office (IEO).

In 2005, the UNDP Executive Board adopted new Financial Regulations and Rules to strengthen UNDP's accountability towards its host countries. In 2006, UNDP's Executive Board approved the UNDP Evaluation Policy and conducted an independent evaluation of its results-based management processes in 2007. This evaluation showed persistent weaknesses in demonstrating results in programme implementation and particularly at the outcome level⁷⁶. Therefore, UNDP's 2008-2011 Strategic Plan put greater emphasis on achieving measurable results in improving people lives and effectively contributing to attaining the MDGs. The monitoring and evaluation tools were revised and systematically integrated into programme implementation at the country level. UNDP resolved to further promote a culture of results and evaluation in its work and support governments in strengthening their capacities in this regard. This resulted in a shift of paradigm from results-based management to managing for developments result. These efforts coincided with a global economic crisis, where resources for development were significantly cut, and therefore putting increased pressure on achieving more with fewer resources.

UNDP APPROACH IN ALGERIA: PROMOTING A CULTURE OF EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

In 2014, the IEO conducted an Assessment of Development Results (ADR) of UNDP's programme in Algeria for the period 2009-2013. The ADR analysed the contribution of UNDP to development results. While some positive results were achieved in specific areas for the 2012-2014 cycle, the ADR noted that UNDP's interventions were scattered and needed to be more focused and strategic.⁷⁷

These recommendations and lessons learned allowed a rethinking of the strategic positioning of UNDP in Algeria, especially since it coincided with the preparations for a new programme cycle (2016-2020) namely the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the UNDP Country Programme Document (CPD). Subsequently, UNDP designed an innovative integrated programme for 2016-2020 that aims at providing high-value technical support in key catalytic areas to strategically contribute to the country's development agenda.

Furthermore, this process of independently assessing development results was received positively by national counterparts and gave further credibility to UNDP with national

76 UNDP. 2009. 'Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results'.

77 UNDP IEO. 2015. Assessment of Development Results: Algeria.

authorities. In fact, by conducting a self-evaluation and acknowledging its results, UNDP increased its credibility vis-à-vis its counterparts. By doing so, UNDP demonstrated its commitment to improving planning, monitoring and evaluation processes and achieve measurable results and support countries adequately. The involvement of key government institutions in the ADR process has contributed to building trust with national counterparts and allowed to better inform them on UNDP management processes.

Furthermore, the Algerian Government was associated with responding to the ADR recommendations in particular in those areas pertaining to determining UNDP role and contribution to the development agenda. Since it occurred prior to the UNDAF and CPD planning processes, it set the grounds for an informed and evidence-based discussion. Combined with the Common Country Assessment⁷⁸, the Algerian Government and UNDP were able to clearly determine the technical expertise and assistance needed and design a new country programme for 2016-2020.

Before that, between 2009 and 2012, UNDP in Algeria provided technical expertise for public policies and evaluation for improving “knowledge of the social and economic processes and the capacity for evaluating and monitoring public policies”. To this end, a few strategic projects were implemented on monitoring and evaluation, in particular to support the National Economic and Social Council in conducting the national HDRs, designing the fight against poverty and exclusion strategy, (including a poverty mapping survey). In addition, UNDP supported the implementation of the integrated rural development strategy, ultimately aiming at building national capacities to achieve sustainable human development in support of the MDGs.

As mentioned, these valid attempts to work upstream were scattered and not systematic. The ADR highlighted that these interventions, although relevant, were less effective due to the absence of a strategic approach, making it difficult to measure results.

Hence, in addressing the current planning cycle, the UNDP country office used the evaluation recommendations in choosing areas of focus, integrating a systemic approach to building national evaluation capacities and establishing feedback loops between an upstream contribution to sectoral strategies and a downstream application of these policies to local development solutions. It also contributed to the UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017 that reaffirmed the organization’s commitment to better monitor its contribution to development results.

The 2016-2020 UNDP Country Programme for Algeria is therefore aligned with national priorities, with UNDP 2014-2020 Strategic Plan and contributed to achieving the 2016-2020 UNDAF. It focuses on (i) providing high value-added technical expertise in key catalytic areas at the national level; while (ii) demonstrating specific development results in pilot projects at the local level. Moreover, the CPD aims at promoting a culture of evidence-based policymaking and results-based management stemming from specific pilot experiences at the local

78 Context analysis of key development challenges in a given country aiming at supporting the planning process of UN agencies with government.

level. To this end, the CPD was structured around two pillars: support to targeted sectoral policy/strategy formulation and operationalization of these policies/strategies in targeted municipalities. UNDP's approach in Algeria aims to close the gap between policies and local realities through:

- intersectoral coordination/coherence between central/local levels when designing and implementing public policies/strategies;
- citizens' engagement in policy design and implementation;
- strengthening the planning, budgeting and monitoring capacities of local authorities;
- developing innovative partnerships with private sector and civil society organizations at the local level;
- improving evidence-based policymaking and links with national priorities.

Most importantly, UNDP Algeria identified a dedicated output to strengthening evaluation capacities and results in its Country Programme 2016-2020. In this cycle, UNDP will strengthen capacities for evaluating development policies in order to ensure adequate targeting of the most vulnerable populations by capitalizing on the support for sectoral strategies and their implementation at the local level. In parallel, data collection and statistics capacities will be strengthened to update the poverty map and subsequently help to inform public decision-making.

In fact, UNDP's ability to monitor the achievements of results depends on the existence and reliability of national sources. Despite efforts made to define specific measurable indicators at the programme/project levels, assessing the overall developments results and UNDP contribution to achieving these results remains limited. Hence, a specific output on this aspect in the CPD is necessary to ensure a common understanding with the Government on the need to strengthening data collection and national evaluation capacities to rely on strong evidence to assess development results.

From this perspective, UNDP is developing a specific programme for strengthening national evaluation capacities. Its aims at (i) mainstreaming evaluation in all UNDP interventions, (ii) building public institutions' capacities and supporting the emergence of a pool of independent national expertise within a national Algerian Network of Evaluators to provide expertise to the government on how to plan and design its evaluation policies. This support is governed by the United Nations General Assembly resolution 69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level and call for national and international stakeholders, to support efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation, in accordance with their national policies and priorities.

The launching of this approach coincides with the International Year for Evaluation and the launching of the SDGs, which has raised questions on how evaluation can become a tool towards achieving these goals.

NEXT STEPS: MOVING TOWARDS THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Evaluations can be an important tool to help governments to integrate the SDGs into the national development agenda as well as a means to translate these global targets into national policies. UNDP can provide technical assistance in the initial stages of selecting and refining indicators and help design evaluations that would verify the relevance of the SDGs indicators to national contexts.

During the post-2015 consultations on “the World We Want”, an Algerian national consultation took place with actors of civil society. UNDP organized with the Algerian National Economic and Social Council an international symposium. It brought together the National Social and Economic Councils of the Sahelian, North Africa Region, international and national experts to discuss the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs and encouraged rethinking the Human Development Reports, its indicators and methodology with the view of making recommendations on the future goals.

This was followed, during the first half of 2015, by a second phase of national consultations that gathered representatives from the civil society and the Government to reflect on the means to improve data for indicators, and made concrete recommendations on the potential linkages between the future SDGs, national indicators and statistical systems as well as other sources of data. They made recommendations and identified opportunities and challenges on how these indicators could feed in the evaluation of development policies.

These processes and consultations set the ground for determining how evaluation may contribute to SDGs localization in national development agendas. In fact, the definition of SDG’s indicators will heavily rely on national statistics systems and will require adaptation of data collection methodology and processing. UNDP experience in designing HDR, national livelihood based surveys and measuring progress against MDGs can support governments in designing national systems to that help measure progress on implementing the SDGs.

In Algeria, there is a national statistics law and an abundance of administrative statistics regularly collected by various government institutions. However, there is no systemic approach and data streams are poorly interconnected. Their quality control is weak which undermines reliability and use in particular at the international level as already mentioned above.

In its previous cycle, UNDP provided technical support to producing the national HDR and to capture ‘human development indicators’ at subnational level. It provided support to establish a system of territorial monitoring for public policies, and addressing the challenges of obtaining good disaggregated data that could effectively measure the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of development policies in people’s lives. It is worth noting that the perceptions from civil society and ad hoc inquiries quite often did not concur with conclusions drawn from official statistics and this gap was also a consequence of a poorly connected system. In fact, it appears that statistical monitoring and reporting are important but insufficient for providing decision-makers with opportunities for learning, accountability and informed decision-making.

Algeria, like many other middle-income countries, felt the need to improve its management of data and reporting to international systems. The National Human Development

Reports presented this opportunity, establishing the links between the international processes and standards, and the national appropriation of those processes during the MDGs implementation was a key issue to address.

UNDP's experience and good practices in terms of methodological approach and build-up of both, national capacities and national processes, could provide support to governments in this regard. Over time, national and international indicators should converge as countries are in the process of refining their own systems to produce reliable and timely indicators and internalize evaluation of their development policies and into their administrative practices. Providing technical support for designing these methodologies are a practical guide for countries to identify gaps and needs to develop robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and this may lead to changes in approaches to development policies evaluation.

Another area of UNDP's work is to encourage countries to join the data revolution and take advantage of information and communication technologies, largest data flows that come with meta data, and UN corporate systems to innovate surveys methodologies and open data sources to analyse development gains and trends.

One concrete example and interesting case study on which UNDP draws lessons, for the next phase of the support, is the process of production of NHDR.

Historically the cooperation between UNDP and Algeria on NHDR had two phases. Up to 2005 the National Economic and Social Council produced its own reports using its own methodology that was geared towards an internal product presenting a socio-economic analysis at a time when policies were centrally planned as part of a socialist centralized economy.

After 2005, UNDP cooperated with the Government on the HDR. UNDP trained national staff on HDR methodology and was able to support the production of national reports according to international standards and introduce new thematics such as poverty, and contribute with technical expertise to improve Algeria's self-evaluation within the African Peer Review Mechanism. Beyond the specific technical support provided, UNDP contribution allowed to reassess and re-examine composite indicators and how best to capture local realities. Furthermore, the Algerian National Economic and Social Council initiated a regional platform to engage in a peer dialogue on these matters.

Algeria produced its first HDR in 2006 with the support of UNDP. UNDP contributes with technical expertise for producing HDRs on methodology, international standards, indexes and measurement tools across the world. Algeria attributes high importance to its ranking and HDR classification, and the HDR process has been boosting the National Economic and Social Council capacities and helped it to set its own HDR instruments in view of contributing to the international debate in this regard; and capture the impact of Algeria development policies on peoples' lives. This process pointed to its development weaknesses, providing opportunities to inform policymakers and trigger adequate policy interventions.

One issue that was raised during national consultation on the HDR was the discrepancies between the international statistics data and classification and national data, with a strong perception from authorities that international indexes did not fairly reflect the country's human development achievements and trends. It was a very useful two-way interaction: first, the international forum strengthened national capacities' and, second, as these

capacities evolve they create increasing demand for a more interactive international process to rank countries and define indexes that would take into account the country views. This led UNDP and National Economic and Social Council to organize a symposium⁷⁹ on how to move forward with the SDGs and the transition between MDGs and SDGs.

The conclusions of this symposium pointed to the relevance of Algeria's own experience in terms of human development indicators at subnational level with the aim to establish a territorial monitoring system for public development policies. Also, the symposium highlighted the importance of intersectorality of the MDGs and SDGs and the need to encourage trans-sectoral indicators and start a reflection on how policies influence each other and contribute to development. Links between measurements of education and health policies needed to be strengthened to assess for instance trans-generational poverty. This raised the question of which health and education indicators would be relevant and how these could be cross-referenced. These elements highlighted the need for an integrated local development policy, which is currently being developed as part of the state apparatus modernization process.

Another strong recommendation that came out of the consultations concerned the data revolution with a specific focus on collecting and making available transparent and disaggregated data and how open access of data could allow for partnerships with academia and civil society to build credible indicators, and establish the monitoring system that will supply evidence to the evaluation processes.

Today Algeria is at its sixth NHDR produced almost autonomously where UNDP role is limited to quality control for conformity to international standards. This led not only to changes in the Algerian approach but also encouraged national experts to contribute to the international debate on the HDR methodology.

The lessons learned drawn from this experience will support the implementation of the new country programme, notably to establish the links between evaluations, data collection and analysis as part of the 'data revolution' that will come with the universality of the SDGs. The transition phase from MDGs to SDGs will require a multistakeholder consultation on strengthening data collection mechanisms. In addition, developing the appropriate evaluation tools and national capacities in this regard emerged as a key priority. It also initiated a discussion on establishing a centre of excellence on evaluation in Algeria in the framework of the SDGs and post-2015 development agenda.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The UNDP assessment process of development results, conducted by the IEO, has allowed UNDP Algeria to engage with Government on redefining the role and contribution to the national development agenda. This process was used as a good practice to create awareness at the country level regarding planning, monitoring and evaluating development results.

79 High Level Symposium on Human Development and Societies' Well-being in the post-2015 Perspective, 23 June 2014.

Therefore, the UNDP 2016-2020 Country Programme focuses on upstream strategic policy advice in parallel to promoting local development solutions to achieve catalytic development results. Putting data based analysis and evaluation at the centre of this programme will allow UNDP to provide technical expertise on how to institutionalize these mechanisms in planning and implementing development policies while reinforcing national capacities in this regard. Furthermore, UNDP's role is to ensure support to Government in localizing SDGs in national policies and ensuring that monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are designed to assess progress against these goals taking into account the context specific needs.

REFERENCES

- Government of Algeria. 2014. 'Government Action Plan for the Implementation of the President's Programme'. May 2014. Available at: <<http://www.mf-ctrf.gov.dz/presse/planaction2014fr.pdf>>.
- Government of Algeria. 2014. Ministère de la Solidarité Nationale de la Famille et de la Condition de la Femme. 'Rapport National de la République Algérienne Démocratique Populaire Beijing +20'. p. 12. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/csw/59/national_reviews/algeria_review_beijing20.ashx?v=1&d=20140917T100717>.
- Government of Algeria. 2014. National Statistics Office, Survey no. 671. April 2014.
- Nacerddine, H. 2015. 'Étude comparative entre le nouveau cadre statistique des Objectifs du Développement Durable et le cadre national en Algérie'. Système des Nations Unies. Algérie.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2009. *Handbook on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluating for Development Results*. Available at: <<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/handbook/documents/english/pme-handbook.pdf>>.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2010. 'Rapport sur le développement humain 2010 – La vraie richesse des nations: Les chemins du développement humain'.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2015. 'Algeria Country Programme Document 2016-2020'. Available at: <http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=DP/DCP/DZA/3>.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Independent Evaluation Office. 2015. 'Assessment of Development Results (ADR), Algeria, 2015'. Available at: <<http://web.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/adr/algeria.shtml>>.