



# Tunisia – Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes

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## INTRODUCTION

After the revolution of 17 December 2010–14 January 2011 and the promulgation of the new constitution in 2014, Tunisia is becoming more demanding of accountability and transparency in the management and use of public funding.

In an increasingly participatory and consensual decision-making process, evaluation becomes a pertinent tool for the authorities. It facilitates communication with citizens by ensuring mutual understanding of problems and possible solutions through an evidence-based approach. Institutionalization of evaluation thus becomes a guarantor of fair, inclusive and sustainable governance and a prerequisite for the political, economic and social transition's success.

The question, therefore, is whether the process of institutionalizing evaluation in Tunisia has benefited from the new political context. To answer this question, an attempt is made here to examine the current situation of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Tunisia by identifying its strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and challenges ahead. Then recommendations are made on ways of resolving the inadequacies while using lessons learned and opportunities available at the national and international level to better institutionalize supply, demand and use of evaluation.

## CURRENT SITUATION – A FAVOURABLE CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

**The new Constitution:** In order to comply with the principles of neutrality, transparency, integrity, efficiency and accountability enshrined in Article 15 of Tunisia's new Constitution, promulgated on 27 January 2014, the public administration is constitutionally oriented towards the use of evaluation as an instrument for measuring the impact of policies on the living standards and quality of life of citizens.

Under Article 139 of the Constitution, local authorities are invited to “adopt the mechanisms of participatory democracy and the principles of open government in order to guarantee the widest possible participation of citizens and civil society in the preparation of development and land use plans and the monitoring of their implementation, in accordance with the law.”

## CONSTITUTIONAL REGULATORY BODIES

**The body in charge of good governance and the fight against corruption:** Article 130 entrusted this independent constitutional body of democratic regulation with “taking part in the policies of good governance, preventing and fighting against corruption, ... monitoring the implementation of these policies, promoting the culture of good governance and the fight against corruption and strengthening the principles of transparency, integrity and accountability.”

**The body in charge of sustainable development and the rights of future generations:** According to Article 129 of the Tunisian Constitution, this body shall be consulted on draft laws related to economic, social and environmental issues and on development planning.

## INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FACILITATING THE EVALUATION OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

**Budget Management by Objectives (BMO):** By substituting a results-based approach with a resources-based one, BMO seeks to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public action as well as its transparency by combining a system of budget management by programme and public management by performance.

This reform was implemented in 2007 with the introduction of objectives and numerical indicators outlining the expected impacts on public spending. The aim was to: i) rationalize public spending, making it transparent and improving output; ii) better allocate resources according to guidelines and agreed priorities; iii) strengthen medium-term expenditure planning; iv) improve the effectiveness of public actions; v) support the expected pace of development within the framework of economic and financial equilibrium; vi) increase the readability of budget objectives.

By developing a results culture, BMO will facilitate the evaluation of public policies and programmes and evidence-based reforms.

## COMPUTER SYSTEM FOR MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC PROJECTS

A computer-based application created in 2014 makes it possible to plan, monitor and evaluate all the operations relating to a public project or programme. Currently being tested in four ministries, this system will be rolled out to all government bodies. The project action plan includes the production of graphics based on geographic localization data.

## CURRENT MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

In Tunisia, evaluation is often entrusted to institutional actors who can guarantee quality, such as the Court of Auditors (*Cour des comptes*), the general audit bodies (*corps des*

*contrôleurs*), specialized research centres or institutes, or departments within cross-sectoral or sectoral ministries. The following sections give an indicative but not exhaustive list of the main stakeholders involved in the monitoring and evaluation of public policies, programmes and projects.

**At the legislative level: Assembly of the People's Representatives:** The Assembly of the People's Representatives controls the action of the Executive by exercising its legislative and budgetary functions, authorizing the public expenditure and income needed for policy implementation. Within the framework of the fiscal reform (BMO), Parliament will be better informed on the costs and benefits of Government policies and will better judge the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of programmes and projects.

During the celebration of the International Year of Evaluation 2015, Tunisian parliamentarians took part in the launch of the Global Parliamentary Forum for Evaluation (GPFE). A Tunisian parliamentary committee for the evaluation of public policies was launched as part of the Fifth EvalMENA Evaluation Conference and General Assembly held in Tunis (12-14 May 2016).

**At the judicial level – The Court of Auditors (*Cour des comptes*):** In addition to its traditional duties of monitoring public accountants and auditing public finances and government bodies, the Court is authorized to:

- Evaluate the results of the economic and financial assistance that state bodies provide to associations, mutual bodies, companies and private organizations.
- Evaluate the management of the State, the local municipalities, public establishments and enterprises, as well as all bodies in which the State, the local municipalities, public establishments and enterprises hold an equity interest “to verify the extent to which it meets good governance requirements, notably with regards to the respect of principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as well as the demands of sustainable development (Art. 19 bis)”. Within this framework, the court has carried out a number of programme evaluation missions, notably including the national programme of urban parks, and the internship initiation to professional life (SIVP) programme.

## AT THE LEVEL OF THE GENERAL AUDIT BODIES

### **The general audit office for public services (*Contrôle Général des Services Publics (CGSP)*):**

Reporting to the Prime Minister, the CGSP is a supreme oversight body with horizontal competency, authorized to monitor public administration departments as a whole, including bodies that directly or indirectly receive public funds or contributions. The CGSP carried out also some evaluation missions such as: i) evaluation of adult education programme (2006); ii) evaluation of national scientific research programme; iii) evaluation of public policy on professional training, and iv) evaluation of national observatories. According to Decree No. 2013-3232 of 12 August 2013 on the organization of the general audit office for public services, the CGSP: i) evaluates national programmes and public policies using participative evaluation, with the aim of consolidating the openness of the structures by evaluating their environment and improving their relationship with their users; ii) is mandated to

evaluate projects and programmes financed within the framework of external cooperation; iii) includes an evaluation department and an audit and evaluation department for projects funded by external financing institutions.

**The general audit office of Finance (*Contrôle Général des Finances (CGF)*)**, under the authority of the Finance Minister, is in charge of auditing and compliance-checking of public departments and bodies. It also evaluates public projects and programmes with the aim of assessing the performance of the various participants as well as the impacts that were generated. In 2015, the CGF carried out 23 micro-evaluations within the framework of the Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfer (HACT) in order to assist the United Nations agencies (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA) in performing risk assessments and identifying the capacity-building needed to implement their programmes.

### AT THE LEVEL OF THE CENTRAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

At the central level, monitoring and evaluation is generally carried out by the departments in charge of studies, planning and statistics. Other relatively recent structures also evaluate in a cross-cutting or sectoral manner, namely:

**The general monitoring body for public programmes (*Instance générale de suivi des programmes publics*)**: This is a public body endowed with a legal personality and financial independence, created within the Presidency of the Government. It has particular responsibility for: i) helping to formulate public programmes in collaboration with the relevant bodies in charge of planning, programming and the design of performance-contracts and programme-contracts at a central, regional and local level; ii) establishing performance indicators and mechanisms for monitoring implementation, with the participation of the bodies in question; iii) monitoring the implementation of public programmes in coordination with the parties in question with reference to the agreed performance indicators and monitoring mechanisms; iv) collecting data relating to public programmes and analysing it, drawing on a specific database; v) carrying out research and studies in the area of implementing public programmes and policies and evaluating them according to international standards, vi) contributing to the dissemination of an evaluation culture in the public sector; vii) creating partnerships with similar foreign organizations.

**Other divisions directly reporting to the Presidency of the Government**: i) The division in charge of governance and the fight against corruption, which is notably mandated to design, monitor and evaluate the SDG on governance (Goal 16); ii) the department for reforms and administrative forecasting which played an active role in the international conference on National Evaluation Capacities, organized by the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office and held in Bangkok from 26-30 October 2015; iii) the unit in charge of monitoring productivity systems in and the performance of public establishments and enterprises.

**Divisions reporting to the Ministry of Development and International Cooperation (MDCI)**: i) the Monitoring and Evaluation Division in charge of drawing up M&E methodology and tools, coordinating M&E of policies and programmes, drawing conclusions and findings and passing them on to the relevant departments; ii) the Forecasting Division, in

charge of drawing up economic forecasts and development programmes for the medium to long term, within the framework of the development plan and the short-term perspectives and policies, as part of the economic budget, and then to monitor their implementation. It is also in charge of studying, evaluating and proposing macroeconomic policies, taking into account the evolution of the economic climate and structural economic and social policies.

**At the level of certain sectoral ministries:** i) The evaluation and audit department within the General Directorate of Public Medical Infrastructures (*Direction Générale des Structures Sanitaires Publiques*) of the Health Ministry; ii) The National Authority for Evaluation, Quality Assurance and Accreditation (*Instance Nationale de l'Évaluation, de l'Assurance Qualité et de l'Accréditation*) within the Ministry of higher education and scientific research in charge of evaluation and accreditation of higher education and research establishments and training programmes; iii) national observatories such as the national employment and qualifications observatory (ONEQ), reporting to the Ministry for Employment, which is in charge of monitoring the employment situation in companies through the use of suitable surveys. It designs and develops employment databases and evaluates programmes and tools to find positions for the unemployed. The observatory carries out evaluation studies, such as this one relating to the monitoring and evaluation of active employment policies: *'Suivi et Évaluation des Politiques Actives d'Emploi'*, October 2013.

## AT THE LEVEL OF SCHOOLS, INSTITUTES AND RESEARCH CENTRES

**The National School of Administration (*Ecole Nationale d'Administration*):** Created in 1949 and 'Tunisified' in 1956, the ENA trains high level civil servants in subjects including: i) designing and evaluating public programmes; ii) planning, strategic monitoring and administrative forecasting; iii) results-based management and budget management by objectives; iv) effective and quality public management; v) administrative leadership. The ENA also organizes: i) studies and academic research in the areas mentioned above via its Centre for Research and Administration Studies (*Centre de Recherches et d'Études Administratives*); ii) conferences, workshops and study visits via the International Academy of Good Governance and the Administration Leadership Institute seeking to modernize Tunisian administration and develop its working methods. As part of the International Year of Evaluation, the ENA worked with Sciences Po Toulouse to carry out intensive training in November 2015 on the subject of "evaluating public policies" and a brainstorming workshop in December 2015 entitled "towards a system for evaluating public policies". ENA hosted also from 16 to 27 May 2016, for the first time in Tunisia, the International Programme for Development Evaluation Training (PIFED: French version of IPDET).

**The Centre for Social Research and Studies (*Centre de recherches et d'études sociales (CRES)*):** created by Law No. 96-50 of 20 June 1996, the CRES saw its designation modified and its duties widened after the revolution, allowing it to address the new social demands of the country via the proposal of reforms and alternative policies based on the scientific evaluation of current social transfers that could attenuate social tensions and reduce poverty and inequalities to low levels. Within this framework, the CRES worked with the African Development Bank to produce: i) a study evaluating the performance of social assistance

programmes in Tunisia, in order to optimize targeting of poor populations and slow the progression of the informal sector (March 2015); ii) an analysis of the impact of food subsidies and the social assistance programmes on poor and vulnerable populations (June 2013). In addition, within the framework of the International Year of Evaluation, the CRES developed South-South partnerships in the area of evaluating social policies and poverty measurements with the Observatoire National du Développement Humain (Morocco), and the Mexican national council for the evaluation of Social Development Policies (CONEVAL-Mexico) in order to strengthen sharing of experiences and best practices in this area between Mexico, Tunisia and Morocco.

**The Institut Tunisien de la Compétitivité et des Etudes Quantitatives (ITCEQ)** is a Centre for Economic, Social and Competitiveness Studies, created in 1973 to: i) carry out economic, social and competitiveness studies at the macro-economic, sectoral and regional levels, examining the impact of policies and economic and social reforms on development, ii) organize surveys of competitiveness in business and the business climate; iii) draw up techniques, indicators and databases and develop the models needed to carry out the studies. ITCEQ carried out i) a number of studies evaluating employment policies and the upgrading programme (February 2010), ii) A workshop entitled "Evaluating economic policies in Tunisia" (June 2015).

**ITES (Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies):** A public institution acting under the trusteeship of the Presidency of the Republic in accordance with the law of 25 October 1993, the ITES is in charge of short- and long-term research, studies and analysis on all the questions relating to events and development at a national and international level.

**Arab Institute of Business Managers (Institut Arabe des Chefs d'Entreprises (IACE)):** An independent international think tank (created in 1984) which occasionally carries out evaluation of economic and social policies. As a local partner of the World Economic Forum, it participates in the evaluation of the business climate and the general economic context in Tunisia. In the 2nd edition of the Tunisia Economic Forum organized on 7 April 2016, IACE focused on "Public Policy Evaluation: Methods and Results" and launched a new book about public policy evaluation in Tunisia "évaluation des politiques publiques en Tunisie" emphasizing on methods of evaluation for each phase of the policy cycle, either ex ante, ex post, or in progress, and take as case analysis public employment policies, the new investment code and banking reform.

## AT THE LEVEL OF CIVIL SOCIETY: RÉSEAU TUNISIEN DE L'ÉVALUATION

**The Réseau Tunisien d'Évaluation (RTE)** is a Tunisian association created on 24 June 2014 (*Journal Officiel de la République Tunisienne* No. 75 of 24 June 2014) which seeks to: i) promote an evaluation culture with state institutions and civil society, and institutionalize it as good governance practice; ii) encourage the adoption of accountability, transparency and effectiveness in development actions for the success of the democratic process and the access of all Tunisians to sustainable and fair development.

In accordance with its 2015-2019 strategic plan, RTE works in three areas: 1) Institutionalization of evaluation: i) advocating for the creation of new evaluation mechanisms, both at

the government and Parliamentary level; ii) adoption of a legal framework to govern evaluation practices and integrate them into the processes for managing and implementing public policies. 2) Promotion of an evaluation culture: i) raising awareness among civil society so that they can exercise their right to participate in the evaluation process at all territorial levels; ii) capacity-building of public actors and civil society with regards to planning, monitoring and evaluation of public actions. 3) Knowledge production, knowledge management and knowledge sharing: i) encourage the use of knowledge and data generated by evaluations in the public policy management process; ii) bring the scientific community together to produce and manage national knowledge about evaluation.

A network of individuals today, the RTE expects to become a network of associations forming a single point of contact for evaluation in the country.

## THE CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN

Despite the existence of a constitutional framework enshrining the principles of accountability and good governance, political will in favour of the evaluation of public policies and a rich institutional and human potential, many challenges need to be met if a coherent, efficient and sustainable national monitoring and evaluation system is to be institutionalized.

- Firstly, confusion is often observed in the understanding and use of the concepts of monitoring, evaluation, oversight and audit, with a predominance of the functions of oversight and audit.
- Poor understanding of 'who does what' in terms of monitoring and evaluation and the lack of a national multidimensional monitoring and evaluation system.
- Absence of a formal coordination platform between the various stakeholders in charge of planning, monitoring and evaluation.
- Poor consolidation at the organizational level of the monitoring and evaluation function within ministries.
- Departments in charge of monitoring and evaluation, whether "de facto or by rights", often do not have specific budgets for carrying out monitoring and evaluation.
- In terms of knowledge management: poor sharing and usage of evaluation results.
- Evaluations of development programmes and projects are mainly controlled by donors within the framework of budget support or development assistance projects or programmes. Few evaluations have been ordered by the Parliament, which has the mandate to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of public policies and programmes by controlling government action.
- In terms of training: with the exception of a few modules and intensive classes on the evaluation of public policies as part of the higher programmes of the ENA, there is almost total non-existence at a national level of specific evaluation training programmes (master's degrees or others).

- Contextual challenges relating to the context of democratic transition, marked by a risk of institutional instability and changes in the order of national priorities.
- Structural challenges mainly linked to the resistance of certain organizations to change for better accountability and more transparency especially when they perceived it as a threat.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO BE SEIZED

There is a favourable international context for evaluation, mainly as a result of: i) the UN Resolution on Evaluation adopted on 12 December 2014; ii) the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020, launched on 25 November 2015 at the Nepalese parliament in Kathmandu, as part of the celebration of the International Year of Evaluation; iii) a very active international movement within the international evaluation community, under the leadership of EvalPartners; iv) a number of new networks created by EvalPartners with the aim of furthering the implementation of the Global Evaluation Agenda, including EvalGender+, EvalYouth, EvalSDGs, EvalIndigenous; v) creation of the Global Parliamentarians Forum for development evaluation; and vi) important partnership and fundraising opportunities with donors and UN agencies.

Nationally, there is a conducive context marked by: i) a favourable constitutional framework for evaluation, enshrining the principles of accountability and good governance; ii) a context of democratic transition that encourages evaluation and accountability; iii) government commitment to institutional reforms and its growing interest in the evaluation of public policies in order to better address disparities and the inequalities and create a new economic and social model that is inclusive and equitable; iv) the existence of institutional potential and qualified human resources on which Tunisia can capitalize in order to better institutionalize the supply, demand and use of evaluation; v) the strong commitment of citizens and the vibrant dynamism of civil society thanks to the freedoms acquired since the revolution, which generate hope with regard to the pressures that civil society organizations are gradually exercising on political leaders and the managers of development programmes for more accountability, transparency and good governance.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking into account the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges identified in the current M&E landscape in Tunisia, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Produce a map of the stakeholders interested and implicated in the evaluation of public policies in Tunisia as well as a literature review of evaluations that have been carried out, clarifying the concepts and terminology by identifying: i) evaluation of other feedback practices such as monitoring, control and audit; ii) supply and demand capacities for monitoring and evaluation (M&E), i.e. the technical capacities of those providing M&E information and the capacities to request, assimilate and use the information generated by M&E.



2. Draw up in a participatory manner a national policy/strategy for evaluation, taking inspiration from the strategic axes of the Global Evaluation Agenda 2016-2020 in order to take advantage of support identified by EvalPartners.
3. Put in place a formal consultation platform between the various stakeholders in charge of planning, monitoring and evaluation (TUNEVAL) by forming a working group that includes all stakeholders in the area of evaluation and development in order to identify the ways and means to: i) contextualize and adapt international SDGs to the national context by defining specific, relevant and realistic national targets according to the priorities and the initial development conditions of the country, while ensuring correspondence with the plan for 2016-2020; ii) implement a system for the monitoring and evaluation of public policies in general and its integration into the national planning process for the evaluation of SDGs in Tunisia, which will form the basis for the national SDG implementation progress reports.
4. Make it possible to evaluate public policies and programmes by: i) respecting the standards and principles of results-based management and a human-rights based approach when formulating new programmes and reforms; ii) planning the evaluation at the time the new policies or strategies are designed.
5. Build national capacity in monitoring and evaluation in particular by: i) creating a specialized professional Master's degree in evaluation in partnership with specialist international institutions; ii) strengthening the organizational and cognitive capacities of structures in charge of monitoring and evaluation; iii) advocating for an increase in evaluation budgets; iv) strengthening the role of parliamentarians in the evaluation of public policies through awareness-raising and training; v) institutionalizing an annual regional evaluation forum in Tunisia which will offer a precious and regular opportunity to share international best practices in evaluation.
6. Promote an evaluation culture to citizens and raise awareness with the public authorities on the importance of monitoring and evaluation in national planning.
7. In order to ensure greater transparency at the level of public finances and create a framework that encourages the progressive generalisation of results-based management and budget management by objectives, it is important to include in the Organic Budget Law currently being drawn up a provision stating that a tax expenditure report should be produced during the preparation of the Finance Law. This document, which includes an impact evaluation of certain tax exemptions, can: i) allow Parliamentarians to better appreciate the effectiveness of tax incentives in order to assess their efficiency in relation to the opportunity costs for the community; ii) increase accountability of tax incentives recipients with regards to achieving development objectives.