

**Country:** Cameroon

**VOPE name:** Cameroon Development Evaluation Association (CaDEA)

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**Title:** Creating the Conditions for More Effective Development Interventions in Cameroon: The Case of the Influence Path of the Cameroon Development Evaluation Association

## **Background**

The idea of Cameroon Development Evaluation Association (CaDEA) came out after the founder attended the International Program for Development Evaluation Training (IPDET) in July 2003 at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. The reasons for establishment were as Kriel (2006) put it, “To raise awareness and demand for evaluation, and build a community of evaluation stakeholders [in the country]” but also to facilitate the access of Cameroonian evaluation professionals to training opportunities available worldwide in order to strengthen their technical capacity. One big question needed an answer to proceed with the project: How to locate evaluation professionals working in Cameroon and across the globe? Lise Kriel, the then Secretary of the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) working with Zenda Ofir, President, advised to set a listserv at [www.topica.com](http://www.topica.com). The [cadea@topica.com](mailto:cadea@topica.com) was created in December 2003 by Debazou Y. Yantio, currently the “owner” of the list. In order to benefit of more management options for the listserv, a new one was set up on June 17, 2006 at [evaluationcameroon@yahoogroups.com](mailto:evaluationcameroon@yahoogroups.com) with advanced listserv features.

CaDEA was affiliated to AfrEA in 2004 and to the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation (IOCE) in 2006. The CaDEA was represented in September 2004 at the headquarters of the *Organization internationale de la francophonie* (OIF) in Paris, France, at the first meeting that establish the foundations of the *Réseau francophone de l'évaluation* (RFE), the network of French-speaking evaluators. The first face-to-face meeting of the CaDEA was surprisingly held in January 17, 2007 during the 3<sup>rd</sup> AfrEA International Biennial Conference in Niamey, Niger (out of the native Cameroon). The historic SAYO Room at the Hotel Terminus hosted this seminal gathering to prepare the official launch of the CaDEA activities. Six persons were in attendance but only five sat until the end of the meeting, namely

Diana Anteneh Amana, Pascal Souloukna, Théodore K. Yamdji, Debazou Y. Yantio, and Thaddée Yossa. This core group of founding members then gathered in turn in their private residences in Douala and Yaoundé in Cameroon. Members traveled from their home city to the host city to attend meetings, showing a strong willingness to participate and to bring the association to life.

### **Strategy and implementation**

In order to become a viable organization with the necessary capacity to take forward its agenda, the strategy of attracting more new members is among our priorities during the next 3 years. We believe that pooling the personal motivation of individual members, as experienced today, will drive the association as an organization. Sister evaluation associations were also approached to discuss plans for the adoption and adaption of their processes and software relevant for CaDEA operations. As the volume of operations grows, it is planned to hire an executive to implement on a day-to-day basis the affairs of the Association, under the supervision of the Board. This organizational model seems appropriate because the Board members are benevolent and often not available all the time to carry out the activity of the association at full satisfaction. Partnerships and availing professional management are expected to build the organizational capacity of the CaDEA which is still in its organizational infancy. Our vision of organizational capacity is more of Kriel (2006) than of recent authors in evaluation capacity building: “Organizational capacity refers to leadership, membership, services, finances, human resources, inter-organizational linkages, and the overarching organizational structures that bring these resources together”. This approach of course targets the three levels identified for action (i) enabling the evaluation environment (structural level); (ii) the individual level; and (iii) the institutional level (Heider, 2011). CaDEA has not yet defined any strategy to strengthen equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation as required in Segone’s (2010) model of developing capacities for country-led monitoring & evaluation.

### **Bottlenecks/challenges**

CaDEA faces three major challenges: (i) fragile consensus on the nature and goal of the association; (ii) diverse understanding of the situation and state of evaluation demand and supply in the country and worldwide; and (iii) insufficient commitment of the members. Engaging the association in the consulting business or not was a

critical decision to make. Reaching a consensus on that topic was not easy. We decided to be a professional organization or society, not a commercial service provider or firm, in line with the advice formulated later by Kriel (2006). This option avoids the association finding itself in conflict of interest with its members who are most of the time consultants working as individuals or firms providing private commercial services. In addition, it is argued that the Association would be independent from vested private interests and therefore pursue the public interest. The difference in evaluation experience among the membership didn't help the decision making process, including setting a strategic plan. Developing the work plan and taking on the tasks of implementation were challenged by the conflicting time schedule of the members. They couldn't spare enough time to deliver the expectations of the group.

### **Progress and results**

So far, the association has gathered 53 (Cameroonian and non-Cameroonian) members located in and out of the country, among which 27 are in good standing. Twenty-five percent are female members. Apart of this growing membership, the sense of belonging to the Association and the strong willingness to build a bright future to evaluation in the country is a (social) capital that will be much needed to move forward the evaluation promotion agenda. The CaDEA has set up an electronic listserv [evaluationcameroon@yahoogroups.com](mailto:evaluationcameroon@yahoogroups.com) that brings together new and experienced evaluators interested by the state of program evaluation in Cameroon.

The CaDEA held its 1st formal meeting on May 5, 2012 with 18 members in attendance. There were 3 major achievements: (i) adoption of the bylaws; (ii) election of the 4 board members (president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer); and (iii) adoption of the medium term (2012-2014) strategic framework. Unexpectedly, CaDEA is increasingly known in the international evaluation community as a reliable instrument of evaluation promotion and strong advocate for more policy & program effectiveness across Africa and beyond.

### **Key enabling factors**

The existence of the association was the act of few dedicated and strongly committed individuals. However, the growth of the CaDEA is the result of the

increased importance of evaluation and results-based management (RBM) in the country, and also the push or pull of the founding leaders. This move comes from a growing social demand for government to demonstrate results as well as from the demand by donors for greater accountability (Rist, Boily and Martin, 2011). It is true for Cameroon but I will argue that the latter was a stronger factor. The CaDEA listserv has been also instrumental in developing the national network and forge ties among members.

### **Innovations and lessons learned**

Always nurture the motivation of the very few that keep active with the association's matters and who usually contribute their time and resources more than others.

### **Next steps**

CaDEA intends to move beyond the seminal roles of experience sharing, mutual support and learning of organizations of evaluators (Quesnel, 2006) towards an active role in promoting and mainstreaming evaluation in development decision making in Cameroon. Over the period 2012-2014, it is expected to:

- (i) increase the membership to 50 by Dec. 2012 and to 150 by the end of 2014;
- (ii) develop strategic partnerships with national and international counterparts to (a) strengthen members' technical capacities as well as the organizational capacity of the Association; (b) increase the visibility of the Association; and (c) place members in evaluation-related vacant positions;
- (iii) concerning advocacy, (a) at least 25% of the programs and projects in pilot public administrations has enlisted or carried out program evaluations; (b) educate decision makers and program managers on the nature and benefits of evaluation; (c) collect and disseminate information on monitoring & evaluation practices in the country.

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