

Morocco: Association Marocaine de l'Evaluation (AME) = Moroccan Evaluation Association (MEA)

Moving from the inclusion of public policies on evaluation in the national constitution to the institutionalization of the function of evaluation in Morocco

By Prof. Ahmed Bencheikh, President

Background

General context

The year 2012 marked the four-year history of the Moroccan Evaluation Association (MEA). Founded in 2008, the MEA is today a dynamic and active leading association of evaluation in the Arab World.

2012 was also the year of the scalability of its activities as defined by the new Strategic Plan for 2011-2013 following the inclusion within the new Constitution of Morocco of the principle of public policies evaluation (July 2011). The MEA contributed significantly to this huge "constitutionalization" undertaking in Morocco.

The visionary ambition of its founders and its dynamism has confirmed the MEA as an important international player in evaluation. Indeed, the International Jury of the 6th Conference organized by the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) in Accra (Ghana) in January, 2012, awarded the first prize "African Development Prize" to MEA for the project "*Initiative for the institutionalization of development evaluation in Morocco: a process to build, and challenges*".

The successful record of MEA in these last four years presents new challenges and, most importantly, new responsibilities.

In addition to influencing the process of institutionalization of evaluation of public policies in Morocco, MEA has set important priorities for the three years of 2011, 2012 and 2013. Alongside the regular organization of public debates on public policy evaluation, the association puts focus on capacity building in evaluation, both at national and local levels. In addition, the MEA must also reinforce accountability (linked to responsibility), particularly through the values of transparency and accountability.

Before the creation of the evaluation association in Morocco, a number of its founding members participated in several meetings dedicated to monitoring and evaluation in the country and abroad. They participated in their capacities of either practitioners or dealing with evaluation in their occupation. Some of these, as university teachers or government civil servants, have been granted support from international organizations to attend workshops where evaluation was addressed. Besides these meetings, one of the future members, now President of the MEA, Prof. Ahmed Bencheikh, has had the chance to attend some evaluation associations workshops in Europe and Africa, particularly AfrEA where he realized among its member countries that Morocco had been absent. From that day, he decided to talk to colleagues and friends until the idea came through and the Moroccan Evaluation Association (MEA) was created.

Ten major dates (Historical development)

1995: The first World Bank Meta-evaluation

Late King Hassan II asks WB to establish a meta-evaluation of the major problems of Morocco.

2005: The report of the 50th anniversary of human development

The Report on the 50th Celebration of Moroccan Independence has explicitly noted that "Public policies of Officials and elected members have not always been evaluated, nor readjusted regarding their impact on population welfare".

2008: The Moroccan Evaluation Association was founded on 19 December 2008

Box 1: MEA mission

The mission of the Moroccan Evaluation Association is to contribute to improving public action through the promotion of the evaluation culture and its institutionalization in Morocco.

Source: MEA statutes, 2008.

A small committee of five members set up the conditions for the formal establishment of MEA in 2008: Concept paper, statutes, administrative procedures, press release, etc. The committee organized a general constituent assembly on December 19, 2008. 45 founding members attended the meeting.

2009: Towards evaluation constitutionalisation
The President of MAE had a number of interviews with some media (the press) explaining the urgent need of the evaluation constitutionalisation (inclusion of evaluation in the constitution).

2011, year of major changes

- MEA General Assembly adopted its new strategic plan (2011-2013) which established the constitutionalization of the evaluation of public policies as a strategic priority.
- Arab Spring events started in Morocco.
- The King Mohamed VI, in a historical speech, focuses on the relationship between responsibility and accountability.
- MEA presents its memorandum to the Commission for the revision of the Constitution requiring the constitutionalisation of accountability and evaluation of public policies.
- Morocco adopted the principle of evaluation of public policies in its Constitution.

Box 2: MEA commitments

- MEA is committed to promoting awareness of the determinant character of M&E in the strategies of development of public policies;
- Increasing public debate on evaluation practices and their impact on development;
- Reinforcing the evaluation community in Morocco through acquisition of specific skills in M&E;
- Advocacy on behalf of the institutionalization of the evaluation of public policies in Morocco.

Box 3: New Moroccan Constitution (2011)

« *Parliament exercises legislative power. It votes laws, controls Government action and evaluates public policies* ».

Source: Royaume du Maroc, Constitution, article 70.

May 2012

MEA organized the first of workshop in favour of members of Moroccan Parliament on the theme: "Political accountability and evaluation of public policies".

Driving forces

The creation and success of MEA were facilitated by two driving forces as described in the following categories:

External driving forces:

- The context of political reforms that Morocco knew before the death of King Hassan II and the accession of King Mohammed VI (from 1999).
- The added value concerning the creation of an NGO (among the thousands of Moroccan NGOs) dedicated to accountability and evaluation of public policies in Morocco.
- The impetus given by the "Arab Spring" in Morocco (February 20 movement) constitutional reforms helped bring the initiative of MEA in the heart of policy changes (link between responsibility and accountability).

Internal driving forces:

- The vision of the President and founding members of the MEA to launch an organization that would promote the principle of accountability in Morocco on the basis of promoting the culture of evaluation.
- The transferable skills confirmed several executive board members and several members contribute to support the MEA in its action.
- The credibility gained during the current experience of the MEA in advocating for the institutionalization of the evaluation function, including inclusion of the constitutional

principle of accountability and evaluation of public policies (Constitution of Morocco, July 1, 2011).

The key players

The founding members of MEA chose a broad representation of key players working and / or interested in evaluating in Morocco, including university professors and researchers, public administration officers, civil society/ NGOs, independent consultants, UN and international organisations.

MEA is led by a board (governing body) composed of nine elected members.

Strategy and Implementation

MEA contributes to strengthen an enabling environment for culture and practice of evaluation in Morocco

In line with Strategic Priorities 1 and 2 of MEA Action Plan 2011-2013:

SP 1: Promotion of public debate on the constitutionalization of public policies evaluation in Morocco.

SP 2: Accompanying the process of institutionalizing the function of evaluation in Parliament, in public administration and local government (Region, municipality, etc.).

Since its inception, MEA has decided to adapt its plea on the institutionalization of evaluation based on conditions in the same context of political reforms in Morocco since the 90s. To make more effective its approach, MEA is based on two types of strategies:

- *Leverage strategy* (2009-2011)
- *Focused strategy* (2011-2013)

From the leverage strategy (2009-2011)

From 2009 to 2011, MEA developed a strategy of leverage to create the conditions to positively influence the context of evaluation and accountability in Morocco. This strategy has had support its plea on the choice of the elements favourable to the development of evaluation in Morocco. Few in number, but largely significant, these elements can be summarized in the following:

- The Royal speeches on evaluation, including public policies, and other reports: Various political declarations have been announced these last years on evaluation institutionalization in Morocco, namely by King Mohammed VI. The numerous official political declarations announced by the King in his speeches, particularly on the Throne Celebration Day, underline the importance of evaluating public policies in the country and the need to set up instances and mechanisms of monitoring, control and evaluation. Besides, the Report on the 50th Celebration of Moroccan Independence explicitly noted that “Public policies of officials and elected members have not always been evaluated, nor readjusted regarding their impact on population welfare”.
- The government's position on issues of control, monitoring and evaluation: On 30 June 2008, the program action announced that the Government of Morocco “will adopt strategic planning of all its program actions (...). This strategy will be reinforced by setting mechanisms of monitoring, control and evaluation in framework of good governance”.
- The rudimentary and nascent practice of evaluation in some institutions of the Moroccan State: In fact, it is true that some measures have been taken by the government leading to institutionalize public policies evaluation as can be shown below:
 - (i) Creation of the National Evaluation Instance within the Education Higher Council;
 - (ii) Mandating the National Observatory of Human Development (ONDH) to evaluate achievements of the National Initiative of Human development (INDH);

- (iii) Establishing M&E mechanisms within certain public administrations (Social Development Agency, Ministry of Equipment and Transport, etc.).

MEA has contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for the development of the culture of evaluation based on these policies. This strategy was combined with openness of the media to communicate the actions of MEA.

Towards a focused strategy (2011-2013)

However, the engaged initiatives, for the meantime limited, do not yet allow speaking about a real structured process of evaluative functions. Among the limits, we can mention the following:

- Absence of evaluation institutional dispositions within the Prime Minister's Cabinet and the Parliament, in charge of appreciating current or emerging development sector strategies;
- Evaluation practice in Morocco has little incidence on the redefinition of public action;
- Lack of knowledge of the requirements of evaluative steps, particularly independence and credibility;
- The evaluation practice deals primarily with special projects and programs (i.e. National Initiative of Human Development, United Nations System, World Bank, etc...)
- Difficult access to data;
- Absence of scientific research in the field of public policies evaluation.

In fact, the evaluative culture in the Moroccan politico-institutional landscape is still at its beginning. Except for some sectorial mechanisms for information collection, effective evaluation works remain very rare and are not rendered public. However, this situation will certainly improve thanks to the New Constitution of July 2011 where the term of evaluation is cited nine times and appears as one of the key thematics on which the State focuses its ambitions in order to renovate public affairs management. Later on, we will see how the MEA played a significant role in advocating for the constitutionalisation of evaluation.

After inclusion of the principle of public policy evaluation in the new Constitution of Morocco, MEA has a focused strategy based on evaluation and the conditions of its implementation. MEA is aware that the new strategy of the association must be focused, that is to say long-term and adaptive, sustained efforts and significant resources. This strategy will focus on a set of complementary actions:

- The principle of mandatory evaluation of public policies of both the State and territorial communes be inscribed in the New Moroccan Constitution;
- From now to 2013, the function of monitoring and evaluation will be organized within the future Parliament, Head of Government's Cabinet and public administrations and territorial communes (within the framework of the advanced regionalization, already in place);
- During the Moroccan Evaluation Week (SME 12 October 2012) the results of the study on evaluative function in Morocco was shared with participants and guests;
- Capacities of the Association's members and key partners will be reinforced through training workshops;
- Institutional and operational capacities of MEA will be reinforced;
- The content of MEA's website is transformed into an information space for exchange and sharing on evaluation issues in Morocco and abroad;
- The Centre for Development Evaluation resources will be able to provide research services on training and capacity building, in the field of monitoring and evaluation, according to international norms of quality.

MAE actions to enhance individual capacities

<p>In line with Strategic Priorities 3 and 5 of MEA Action Plan 2011-2013: <i>SP 3: Organization of the Second Moroccan Evaluation Week (SME12, October 2012).</i></p>

SP 5: Creation of the Centre for Development Evaluation Resources (CDER/CRED) :
(i) providing evaluation training and (ii) promoting Research in Development Evaluation.

- The SME10 included training to help strengthen national capacity assessment in Morocco. Four training workshops of two days brought together about 83 participants including 34% women. International experts in monitoring and evaluation led these workshops. These included Jean Serge Quesnel, Marie Gervais, Eric Monier and Denis Paillard.
- One day was devoted to a working group on "Criteria, norms, standards and ethical considerations" This workshop brought together 28 participants including 46% women. This workshop was facilitated by Prof. Ahmed Bencheikh and Mr Hicham Ait Mansour, UNICEF M&E Officer.
- During the SME12, MEA repeated the same experience and expand training and capacity building in evaluation. A workshop for exchange and sharing focused on the topic: "What professional requirements for the practice of evaluation in Morocco?"

Strengthening equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation systems and evaluations

In line with Strategic Priorities 1 and 2 of MEA Action Plan 2011-2013:
SP2: Accompanying the process of institutionalizing the function of evaluation in Parliament, in public administration and local government (Region, municipality, etc.).
SP 3: Organization of the Second Moroccan Evaluation Week (SME12, October 2012).
SP 5: Creation of the Centre for Development Evaluation Resources (CDER/CRED) :
(i) providing evaluation training and (ii) promoting Research in Development Evaluation.

First, it is worth mentioning that MEA put parity between men and women in its statutes: "(...) *The executive board of the association is composed by promoting gender equity.*" (Article 13 of MEA statutes).

MEA has contributed to:

- MEA's participation in official steering committees and validation of evaluation of social policies in Morocco (2009, 2010);
- MEA was selected as member of the scientific committee of "International Conference of Experts on the measurement and policy approaches to improve equity for the new generation in MENA" (Rabat, Morocco, May, 2012). The MENA-UNICEF and National Observatory organized this conference for Child Rights (Rabat, Morocco).
- Prof. Ahmed Bencheikh represented MEA within this scientific committee. He presented a scientific contribution entitled: "What methodological and ethical requirements to assess equity in social policy in Morocco?" International Conference of Experts on the measurement and policy approaches to improve equity for the new generation in MENA (Skhirat, Morocco, May, 2012).
- MEA has scheduled a panel during the SME12 (October 2012) on "Gender and Evaluation".
- The equity-focused and gender-sensitive components will be integrated into regular activities of CRED and the process of institutionalization of evaluation function in Morocco.

Strengthening MEA institutional capacity

In line with Strategic Priorities 1 and 2 of MEA Action Plan 2011-2013:

SP 3: *Organization of the Second Moroccan second Evaluation Week (SME12, October 2012).*

SP4: *Reinforcement of institutional and operational capacities of the Moroccan Evaluation Association.*

SP 5: *Creation of the Centre for Development Evaluation Resources (CDER/CRED) : (i) providing evaluation training and (ii) promoting Research in Development Evaluation.*

The General Assembly (January 2011) set MEA strategic priorities for the next three years (2011-2013). This second phase of life is characterized by the association: increased resources, particularly the urgent need to strengthen its institutional capacity.

MEA is committed to strengthening institutional capacity through three complementary initiatives:

Governance and internal management of the MEA

MEA is committed to the professionalization of its management and governance of its strategic action plan for 2011-2013. This choice was imposed on MEA due to the breadth and diversity of its operations and its financial and institutional partnerships. It became therefore necessary to opt for structuring internal management and organize the roles and responsibilities of members the boards of MEA.

Three decisions were made and are being tested since the last annual general elective MEA (May 24, 2012).

1. Organization roles and responsibilities of members of the executive board by creating two committees: (i) Committee of financial and accounting organization and (ii) Committee of the administrative organization.
2. Management of strategic issues by volunteers of the executive board according to their interests and availability.
3. Management team: MAE has established a task team made up of a program coordinator and an administrative and financial assistant.

Finally, MEA prepared internal rules to be adopted at the General Assembly meeting in October 2012.

The purpose of the internal rules is to better organize the roles and responsibilities of the executive board members, relationships with members and partners, norms, and ethical standards to meet, etc.

Fundraising and institutional partnerships funds for the realization of the Action Plan (2011-2013) of MEA

The president of MEA worked strongly for raising funds to enable the association to be in condition to perform its mission and achieve its strategic priorities. Moreover, he developed relationships with several organizations dedicated institutional evaluation in the world. The following table gives an idea of the work done since 2010.

Relationships with other organizations	
Memberships	Partnerships
AfrEA: institutional member	UNICEF, Rabat, Morocco
EvalMENA: member founder	European Union, Rabat, Morocco
RFE: member founder	International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Cairo, Egypt
IOCE: member	<i>Agència Catalana de Cooperació al Desenvolupament (ACCD), Barcelona, Spain</i>

IDEAS: member	<i>Observatoire National de Développement Humain, Rabat, Morocco</i>
	<i>Observatoire National des Droits de l'Enfant, Rabat, Morocco</i>

Structuring and sustaining activities of the MEA (Training and research in development evaluation)

The establishment of the Evaluation of Development Resources Center EDRC/ *Centre de Ressources en Evaluation de Développement (CRED)* responds to the need for MEA to have a permanent structure for training and research in the field of development evaluation.

The main objectives are: (i) providing training in M&E, and managing for development results (MfDR) (ii) to help strengthen the quality of evaluation work in Morocco and (iii) promote action research on various methods and advances focused on equity-focused and gender-sensitive evaluation systems and evaluations.

Bottlenecks/challenges

Some of the key challenges that hampered our VOPE's capacity to contribute to the above strategy include the following:

1. The importance of activities and change of scale in organizing the MEA;
2. The professional work of the MEA;
3. The expectations of other actors of Moroccan society in terms of the evaluation of public policies in Morocco (Parliament, regions, civil society, women, youth, etc.);
4. The limited resources allocated for the functioning of the association.

Progress and Results:

Advocacy for the Constitutionalization of public policies and institutionalization of the function of evaluation. Since its inception, the MEA has regularly advocated for the Constitutionalization of public policies evaluation through various national and international forums. On the other hand, MEA has regularly advocated the function of evaluation and the accountability in Morocco and abroad. (See lists of activities cited above).

Documents sharing:

MEA shared its documents (Bylaws, conceptual document, strategic plan, memorandum, etc.) with others countries and networks, including Algeria, Niger, Tunisia, Senegal and Mauritania.

Support for formalisation and capacity building:

In 2010 MEA supported the (non-formal) Yemenite Evaluation Society (YES) through two actions:

- Workshop 1: Formalisation of YES (Bylaws, conceptual document, strategic plan).
- Workshop 2: Capacity building in norms and standards of evaluation.

Key Enabling Factors:

The main strengths of MEA are:

1. Leadership and the belief of some founding members of MEA.
2. The experience and commitment of the current leadership of MEA to work deeply and continuously.
3. The credibility gained by our association during the current experience in advocacy on the institutionalization of the evaluation function in Morocco.

Innovations and Lessons Learned:

1. A passion among a group of citizens engaged in the cause to be carried by the VOPE they want to develop.
2. A voluntary commitment of the founding members is essential for a successful VOPE.

3. It takes a very thorough job and methodical to ensure sustainability and continuity of VOPEs.

Next Steps:

General Meeting of MEA (January 15, 2011) brought about strategic priorities for the next three years (2011-2013).

- Accompanying the process of institutionalizing the function of evaluation in Parliament, in public administration and local government (Region, municipality, etc.).
- Reinforcement of institutional and operational capacities of the Moroccan Evaluation Association.
- Creation of the Centre for Development Evaluation Resources (CDER/CRED): (i) providing evaluation training and (ii) promoting Research in Development Evaluation.