

17. Tunisia: Developing a Monitoring and Evaluation System

GHOFRAN AJIMI

Director, General Authority for Monitoring and Evaluation of Public Policies and Programmes, Presidency of the Government

INTRODUCTION

After the adoption of the 2014 Constitution and parliamentary and presidential elections, Tunisia entered a new period in its history, that of participatory democracy. Tunisia is the sole model of its kind in the African and Arab regions. It is undergoing a remarkable evolution in various domains: the political, the economic and the social. A new political system is in place, the society is in metamorphosis and the economy is seeking to find its place. This context requires a migration towards a new method of public administration, a new Administration and even a new conception of public action ever more closely based on performance. The challenge is to regain public confidence in the State and Administration.

The 2014 Constitution strengthened the rule of law and human rights. The current political situation is characterized by political pluralism, active civil society and citizens who are both demanding and vigilant, suggesting real participation in public life. The various public authorities are now accountable to one another and to the citizenry.

Nevertheless, migration towards participatory democracy faces the challenge of finding a balance between the need to democratize the decision-making process and the scarcity of financial resources. This is a situation that is propitious towards the establishment of reforms, such as monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) enables the Government to improve its outcomes by creating a system to measure and understand its performance. This M&E system is used to measure the quantity, quality and targeting of goods and services—the outputs—that the State provides and also the results and impacts arising from these outputs. This system is also a tool for facilitating understanding of the causes of good and poor performance.⁶⁴

The practice of monitoring and evaluation does not have a long history in Tunisia; it is only in recent years that it has begun to be developed. With Tunisia's signing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the adoption on 25 September 2015 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the establishment of M&E is more and more becoming a necessity.

64 Mackay, Keith., 'Comment mettre en place des systèmes S&E pour améliorer les performances du secteur public' (Title of English edition: "How to Build M&E Systems to Support Better Government"), IEG World Bank, 2007, p 3.

Tunisia has a legal and institutional framework that is favourable to M&E, a considerable effort is being made by the General Public Programme Monitoring Body (Instance Générale de Suivi des Programmes Publiques (IGSPP)), but considerable work remains to be done.

A FAVOURABLE LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Analysis of the legal⁶⁵ and institutional frameworks confirms the migration towards new governance in Tunisia.

The legal framework

The Constitution of the Second Republic is the first reference to study. It gives us all the elements necessary for the development of new methods of governance. In its Article 12, it provides that “The State shall act to ensure social justice, sustainable development and balance between the regions, taking account of development indicators and the principle of compensatory inequalities...”. More specifically, in its Article 15 on the administration desired by the citizen, it states: “Public administration *shall be at the service of the citizen and the public good*. Its organization and operation are subject to principles of neutrality, equality and continuity of public service, in accordance with the rules of transparency, integrity, effectiveness and accountability”. Thus, public administration must adhere to the principles quoted, which are the same principles to be respected when establishing a M&E system.

It is also important to mention Government Decree 2017-394 of 29 March 2017, on the creation of a unified framework for the evaluation and management of public investment, through the activation of its monitoring and evaluation.⁶⁶ This decree also laid down “the establishment of criteria and methodologies for the ex-ante and ex-post economic, social and technical evaluation of public projects on the basis of objectively verifiable indicators for development and public investment, in addition to requests to public bodies for economic, social and technical evaluations of public projects”.⁶⁷ While the scope of this text is limited to public projects, it illustrates the public authorities’ awareness of the importance of monitoring and evaluation, an awareness that is confirmed by the institutional framework.

The institutional framework

A general overview confirms that the institutional framework is varied and evolving. Emphasis is placed on the IGSPP, which has been greatly developed since 2015.

A general overview

The current system concentrates monitoring and evaluation functions in the executive and judicial powers, but there is nothing to prevent Parliament from using M&E. With regard to

65 We are limiting ourselves here to the Constitution and a Decree published in 2016. Other texts will be mentioned as appropriate.

66 Article 1 of Decree 2017-394 of 29 March 2017.

67 Article 5 of Decree 2017-394 of 29 March 2017.

the judiciary, the Constitution grants the Court of Auditors an evaluative role, stating in Article 117 that the Court shall evaluate modes of governance. In the Executive, there are many bodies involved in monitoring and evaluation.⁶⁸

The IGSP

The IGSP is currently the only body with the sole specialization of M&E. Its creation went through three stages. In 2012, the Presidency of the Government created a monitoring and inspection unit for the implementation of government programmes.⁶⁹ Just one year later, the need for a body responsible for M&E appeared in Decree 1333 of 12 March 2013, on the creation of the IGSP. However, the actual creation of the IGSP did not take place until September 2015 with the orientation of its role towards the monitoring and evaluation of public policies. It is currently attached to the Office of the Chief of Government.

The IGSP has set itself three strategic objectives:

- Decision-making assistance for the Government: this is the ultimate objective of every evaluation exercise. Specifically, the body aims to support government decision-making on a scientific basis and using rational techniques. The Government needs to convince the various stakeholders and secure their support for implementation of its actions. Participative evaluation enables stakeholders to reach agreement on the difficulties and interests related to decision making.
- The contribution to the institutionalization of evaluation: the body works to strengthen the existing institutional framework. It seeks to support third-party evaluation and not to centralize it within itself; rather, the objective is to help the various central and regional bodies to use M&E as a routine practice. It should be noted that the results of a small diagnostic assessment carried out by IGSP confirmed that the concept of M&E existed in various bodies' organizational structures and texts, but its practice and awareness of its usefulness were limited.⁷⁰
- Improvement of administrative methods: Current administrative methods permit neither the easy establishment of the desired reforms nor achievement of the model of administration provided in Article 15 of the Constitution. At the same time, the use of M&E requires a gradual change in day-to-day management and planning to reconcile it with results-based management. Evaluation missions will make it possible to determine failings in the administration system and will present the necessary recommendations in this regard.

68 Mr. Mahmoud Ghoul gives further detail on the institutional situation in Tunisia in his article: 'le suivi et l'évaluation des politiques et programmes publics en Tunisie: Réalité et perspectives,' published on the Réseau Francophone de l'Evaluation website: <http://portail-rfe.org/node/185>.

69 www.legislation.tn.

70 Such as the ministries of education, higher education, observatories, etc.

These objectives are covered in greater detail in the IGSPS logical framework and communication plan.

The process of an evaluation exercise

As it aims for supported third-party evaluation, the IGSPS has developed the process for the conduct of an evaluation exercise. In testing, this process comprises three main phases:

The evaluation phase: This covers preparation for the evaluation mission and conduct of the evaluation through selection of the policy to evaluate, preparation of the evaluation mission order, which must be issued by the Presidency of the Government, drafting the terms of reference, creation of a Steering Committee, choosing the evaluators and validation of the deliverables. This phase is carried out jointly by the IGSPS and the sectoral structure responsible for the policy to be evaluated. The goal is to introduce bodies to evaluation and participatory work. The IGSPS role, at this level, goes no further than support and advice. It also facilitates coordination between the structural sector responsible for the policy to be evaluated and its partners. It also ensures respect for the principles of evaluation and the use of the participatory approach.

The decision-making phase: Once the evaluation has been completed, what is then needed is to implement the evaluation findings through taking the necessary decisions. The IGSPS role is more important at this level, given its institutional closeness to the decision-making centre. On the basis of the mission order, it feeds the evaluation findings up to the Head of Government. The goal is to use the evaluation as a decision-making tool and not merely to evaluate for the sake of evaluating.

The follow-up stage: Decision-making alone is not sufficient for recommendations to be put into action, especially if there are many stakeholders. For this reason, the IGSPS will ensure that the expected outcomes are secured and will support the ministry responsible for the policy evaluated.

THE EFFORTS OF THE IGSPS⁷¹

During its first two years of operation, the IGSPS made awareness and training actions a high priority. Indeed, the text establishing the IGSPS gave it the role of disseminating the culture of evaluation.

Raising awareness of M&E

As it commenced its activities in 2015, the IGSPS chose the celebration of the International Year of Evaluation as its first awareness-raising activity. More than 100 senior officials from the Government, academia, international organizations and civil society attended and confirmed the need to use evaluation in their structures.

71 IGSPS is not the only organization to be making this effort. Civil society too works a great deal on the design of public policies and has introduced an evaluation component.

In March 2016, the IGSPP organized its first international seminar on public policy evaluation mechanisms and, together with participants, developed a road map for the implementation of M&E. Attendees representing the legislature, the central and regional administrations, academia, international organizations and civil society emphasized the need to build capacity and provide reliable information, as well as the use of management by objectives.

In September 2016, the IGSPP held its second international seminar, focusing more on technical aspects of evaluation and the conduct of evaluation missions.

The IGSPP also attended events held by civil society and other administrative structures. It led a project with the International Academy for Good Governance that enabled it to take part in eight regional seminars to raise the awareness of regional stakeholders, among others, on the importance of follow-up.

Currently, the IGSPP is a member of several major project steering committees to ensure that M&E is taken into account.

These activities are carried out in parallel with training actions.

Training sessions⁷²

After having its staff attend short training sessions on evaluation of public policies, the IGSPP extended training beyond its own officials to those of other administrations through the national evaluation capacity-building programme.

This programme began in September 2016. The idea was to create an initial nucleus of evaluators in the IGSPP and the different administrative bodies. It was composed of six sessions of intensive training (theory course and practical exercises), each session lasting one week. Twenty-five young officials took part in this programme, from the central and regional administrations.

With its partners,⁷³ the IGSPP organized the international training programme in development evaluation, which was attended by 30 people from the Court of Auditors (magistrates), the *Contrôle Général des Services Publics* (public inspectors) and six ministries (managers). Results-based management and results-based budgeting were included in this programme. Thus, participants will have a university certificate from the Canadian National School of Public Administration in managing performance in the public sector.

IGSPP also led two training sessions for parliamentarians in partnership with the Parliamentary Academy.

Learning by doing

Given the importance of technical aspects of evaluation, learning by doing is an essential way of confirming theoretical knowledge. The IGSPP conducted its first evaluation exercises

72 Conducted with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Tunisia.

73 École nationale d'administration publique Canada and UNDP.

in 2017, when It carried out four functional review missions.⁷⁴ Its first order to evaluate a public policy was in the social field.⁷⁵ The mission order issued by the Presidency of the Government required that the evaluation be accompanied by a strategy for the field and an action plan, in order to comply with the process described above.

THE PATH AHEAD

Before addressing future steps, it is important to present current reforms. These have a direct and indirect impact on the implementation of M&E.

Current reforms

These are mainly administrative reforms that will enable the creation as well as the dissemination and use of information. Some of the reforms were designed before 2014 and others form part of the five-year development plan. It should be noted that this plan covers the period 2016-2020.

The reforms in the development plan are primarily focused on:

- The establishment of a mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of administrative performance;
- Development of the statistical system and dissemination of a culture of statistics;
- Development of a national E-ID (electronic citizen identification) application.

The five-year development plan is composed of five pillars that reflect the spirit of the SDGs. These are a tool for the monitoring and evaluation of the plan.⁷⁶

The reforms designed before the development plan that encourage the use of M&E are the following:

- Budget reform: the organic law of results-based budgeting has already been passed by Parliament; from now on, allocations of appropriations are conditional on the achievement of objectives;
- Interoperability of computer applications: many computer applications are in use but they cannot communicate with one another. This project will reduce transaction costs, accelerate the performance of public services and consequently offer better follow-up;
- The general roll-out of the INJEZ⁷⁷ application, currently managed by the Presidency of the Government. The purpose of this application is to ensure the monitoring and

74 Financed by the European Commission.

75 October 2017.

76 The five axes are: Governance and major reforms; From a low-cost economy to an economic hub; Human development and social inclusion; Realizing the ambitions of the regions; The green economy, driver of sustainable development.

77 "INJEZ" is an Arabic word that means "performance".

evaluation of public projects. It provides for the monitoring of physical and financial performance as described in the project's logical framework.

Further work on M&E in Tunisia

Monitoring and evaluation are not two isolated functions. They are part of an all-encompassing results-oriented cycle for public action, while the Administration is accustomed to managing by resources. Notwithstanding the efforts described above, it remains necessary to insist on the fact that this evolution requires:

- The development of a vision that will enable the State to determine its objectives and its expectations of such a system. It facilitates the coordination of reforms and optimizes their results;
- The performance of a diagnostic M&E assessment that covers every State structure to identify strengths and weaknesses;
- The development of an action plan based on a participatory approach, that the IGSP will be responsible for implementing.

These activities need to be managed at the level of the Presidency of the Government.

In parallel, it is crucial to build national capacity in results-based management, through:

- Establishment of a national strategy for capacity-building, in order to disseminate the culture of public performance to cover central and regional administrations. It is time to involve universities and specialized schools in training on this topic;
- Develop tools that are accessible to different users: procedural manuals and a conceptual framework.

CONCLUSION

Beyond the above, M&E is not the business of the State alone but is rather a joint effort by the State and its technical and financial partners, civil society, international organizations, citizens and the media. It is simultaneously the condition for and the result of the decision-making process. That is why adoption of the SDGs is an opportunity to be seized to support Tunisia in its transition.