

The potential and challenges of evaluations to positively inform reforms:

The case of Benin Agriculture Sector

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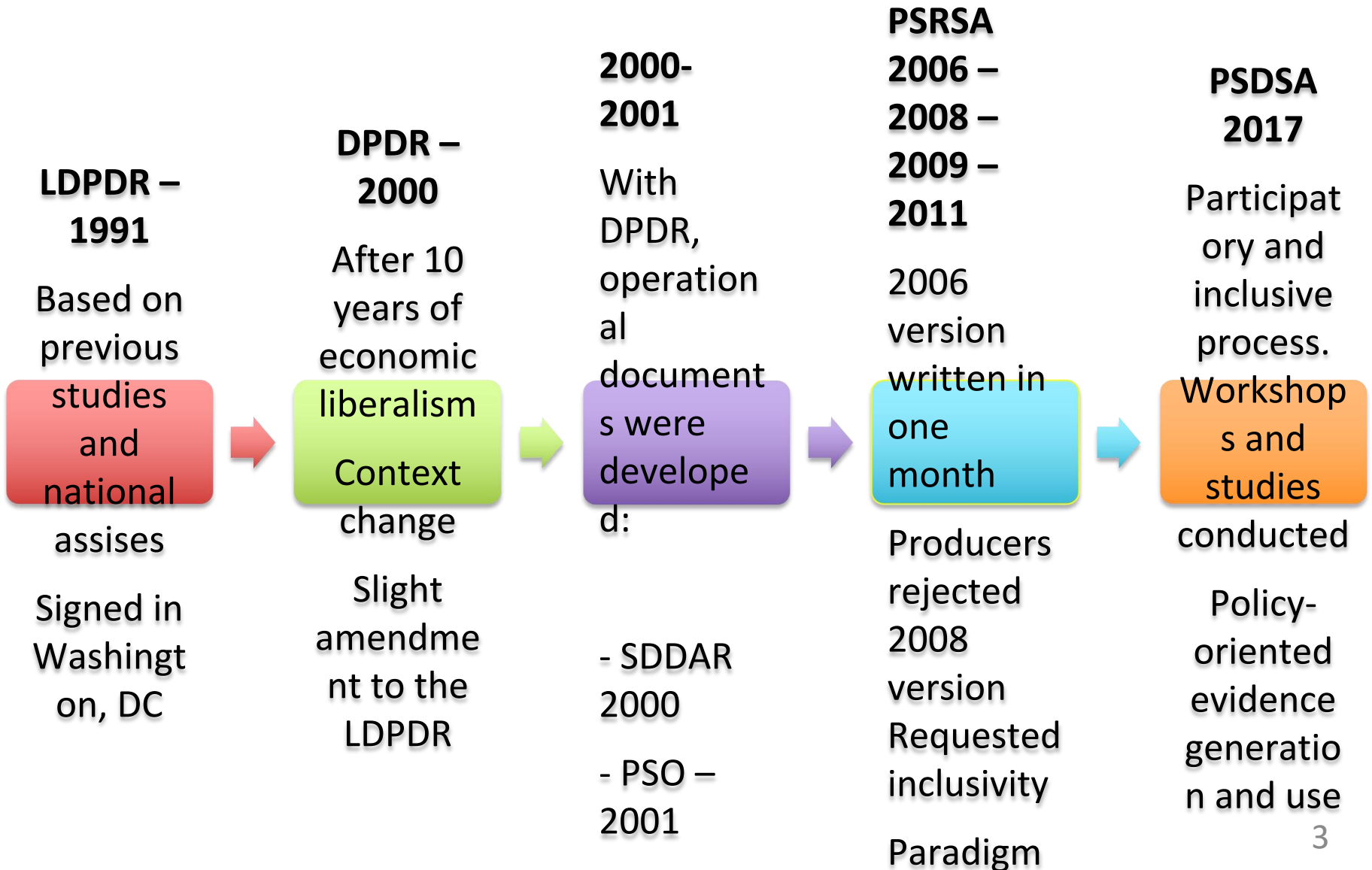
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Evaluation of Benin Agriculture Sector policy (1990-2009)

- Benin put in place a National Evaluation System since 2007 through BEPP.
- In 2009 BEPP commissioned the evaluation of the Agriculture sector policy
- The implementation of the evaluation results and recommendations was stimulated by a dynamic collaborative context (because of the subsequent increased involvement of main stakeholders based on their abilities), which enhanced evidence generation and use culture in Benin agriculture sector.

How the case evolved



Evidence generation process

- BEPP evaluations are carried out externally and monitored by a multi-stakeholder steering committee
- The evaluation was carried out by an independent service provider with the evaluation report approved in December 2009
- Results were unanimously validated by different groups of stakeholders at a three-day workshop
- The evaluation results addressed multiple challenging issues of the agriculture sector notably, the sector legislation, the revision of the current policy, access to inputs, development of result-based management tools, etc.
- In 2010, the institutional framework of the sector was restructured to actively involve civil society groups, producers' unions and agriculture chambers. Those actors took up more important roles in the implementation of the evaluation recommendations. E.g., the producers' federation became the lead for the introduction of the legislation on the agriculture sector

Use intervention: the introduction of the agriculture sector legislation

- The Farmer Memorandum (FM): the cornerstone
- The FM development process: 4 main steps
 - 22 local workshops with grassroots producers
 - 6 regional workshops with selected delegates from grassroots level
 - 8 thematic workshops with consultants, experts/specialists, producers' representatives
 - National validation workshop: orientations to draft the Farmer Memorandum
- A bill has currently been submitted to the compliance committee to require a feasibility study prior to the introduction of legislation in Parliament

Promoting a culture of use

- Involvement of producers, civil society activists, and agriculture chambers starting from 2010 democratised relevant demand, generation and has helped to lead to use of evidence
- Parliament made it mandatory that every project submitted for ratification be supported by ex-ante review
- The government decided that from FY-2019, all Public Investment Plan related projects/programmes are due to have a theory of change

Facilitators and barriers to evidence use

FACILITATORS	BARRIERS
Role of Development Partners (DPs) in funding interventions, capacity development, technical assistance, etc.	Reluctance to abandon routine practices
Government's interventions, including frequent structural reforms	Lack of or weak communication among stakeholders
The commitment of the farmer organisations and their pressure on the government	Administrative red tape
The need for more evidence to satisfy more interventions	Inadequate resources
Establishing rules in favour of evidence generation and use eg: Parliament and government requirements for evidence-based policy making	Influence of politics

Lessons for Benin and beyond...

- Evidence is best able to be used when change mechanisms are functional eg: stakeholder collaboration, demand for evidence, generation of quality evidence, opportunities for use, etc.
- The more you use evidence, the more you need it (use enhances the culture of evidence) eg: as producer took the lead on the legislation issue, they became a key evidence consumer. The same occurred with the development of production sector: maize, meat, milk, cashew, pineapple, aquaculture, etc.
- Requiring evidence as a prerequisite for projects fosters evidence generation and use
- The quality of evidence promotes demand eg the 2009 evaluation results triggered many interventions
- Evaluation capacity development is a must in order to provide human resources to meet evidence generation needs

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