

**TWENDE MBELE**

DIAGNOSTIC ON THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF EVALUATORS

in Uganda, Benin and South Africa

As more evaluations are commissioned and undertaken in African countries, it is clear that the current supply of good evaluators is constrained, with relatively small group of professional suppliers taking up most of the larger evaluation studies. As more governments demand more evaluative evidence, the number and quality of human resources required to meet this will grow. At the current level of demand, problems with the size of the pool of available evaluators, the quality of their deliverables and their ability to respond to government terms of reference (ToRs), consolidates an already skewed evaluation market.

There is, therefore, a need to expand the existing pool of evaluators, and to ensure that the representivity of evaluators in a given country system approximates that of the local population, as well as enabling emerging evaluators to enter the market with fewer restrictions. Each of the three countries covered here will benefit from further understanding of the incentives and barriers that foster a more competitive demand and supply in the evaluation market.

During 2017 and early 2018, Twende Mbele commissioned separate diagnostic studies on the supply and demand of evaluators in Uganda, Benin and South Africa. While the studies were separate, they had similar terms of reference. This policy brief provides an integrated summary of the three studies. Additional detail can be found in the country-specific diagnostic reports.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the diagnostic studies was to provide a demand and supply profile of evaluators in Uganda, Benin and South Africa. On the supply side, the main aims were to quantify the size and shape of the current country supply of evaluation consultants, including their skills levels, abilities and specialisations, and pricing. On the demand side, the main aims were to quantify the current and projected demand for evaluation services, including factors such as eligibility requirements to tender, opportunities for transformation and the sustainability and strengths and weaknesses of the market. Overall, Twende Mbele was interested to ascertain whether supply is, and will be in the future, sufficient to meet demand, and what should be done to grow local supply in the three countries.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in each of the countries consisted of:

1. literature review
2. root cause analysis
3. interviews with suppliers, clients and civil society
4. focus groups and workshops

Due to a lack of availability of data in some areas, it was not possible to answer all of the quantitative research questions. Nevertheless, in all three countries the diagnostic was able to produce a qualitative assessment of the ability of supply to meet demand, both currently and in the future. The diagnostic was also able to identify qualitative issues and insights into the research questions related to capacity and skills, representivity, accessibility, and pricing.

KEY FINDINGS

Demand side

In Benin, the demand side is 90% dominated by donors. Government demand for evaluations is relatively small and has dropped in recent years. Demand from civil society is almost non-existent.

In Uganda, there is substantial government and NGO demand in addition to donor demand. Government demand in Uganda is based on a policy requirement for all very large projects to be evaluated, and this demand is therefore fairly constant.

In South Africa, there are indications that government demand could grow rapidly over the next three years, because of a non-financial incentive that has been introduced for all national and provincial government departments to carry out evaluations of their programmes. Demand from the non-government sector is also increasing in South Africa, albeit not as fast as that of government. Non-government demand is dominated by “not-for-profits” and international private foundations rather than donor country programme requirements.

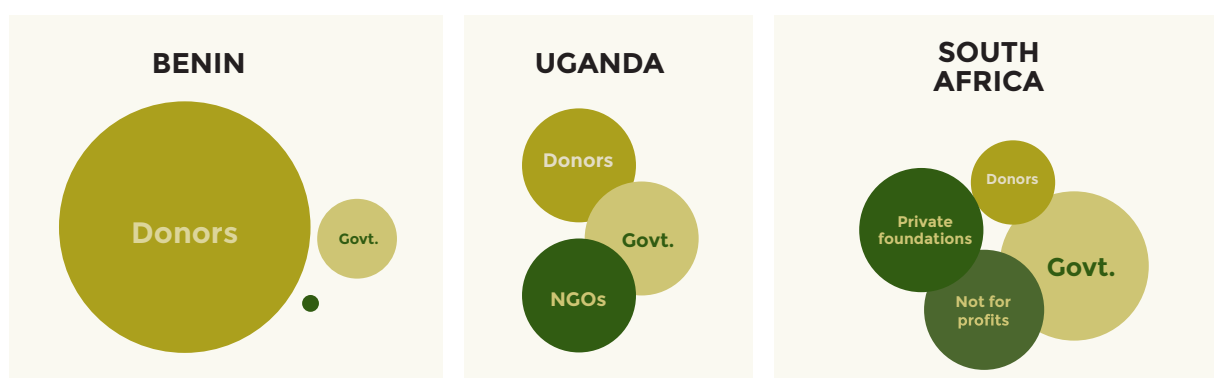


FIGURE 1: Where does demand arise?

Comparison of demand for evaluations in Benin, Uganda and South Africa

One demand-side factor that is affecting supply, is that many of the donors prefer commissioning evaluators from their countries or regions, and this leads to much of the donor-demand being met by external suppliers. For example, it was found that in Uganda, about half of the donor-led evaluations were conducted by international evaluators only, while the other half was conducted by mixed teams, i.e. international and national evaluators. The study indicates that this is a policy preference of the donors, rather than a response to a shortage of local supply with the required capacity.

Supply side

In all three countries it was not possible to quantitatively establish the size of the current country supply of evaluation consultants because there is no clear definition of what an ‘evaluation consultant’ is. Some suppliers, or potential suppliers, choose whether to do evaluations for certain clients or not, such as governments. Their availability to carry out evaluations often depends on factors such as:

- who the client is,
- the track-record of the client in terms of the way in which it manages evaluations,
- the quality of the terms of reference,
- whether the budget is realistic

In all three countries there is no comprehensive database of evaluators or evaluation consultancies. In Benin, the pool of local evaluators is largely made up of individuals. In Uganda, there is a growing number of individual consultants and consultancy organisations that have been undertaking evaluations. The universities in Uganda are endowed with highly qualified teaching and research staff, which presents good opportunities to conduct evaluations. Potential exists to build the capacities of these institutions to bridge any evaluation supply-demand gaps.

In all three countries it was possible to conclude that, to date, supply has generally been adequate to meet demand, apart for some exceptions for highly specialist evaluations. In South Africa there appears to be a real risk that supply may not be able to meet demand in the next few years, due to a projected rapid increase in government evaluations. However, this is complicated by the finding that government clients might experience an apparent lack of supply due to suppliers choosing not to work for them because their supply management is poor, rather than a real shortage of supply.

Barriers to entry

In all three countries, one of the main barriers to entry was a weaknesses in government capacity to formulate, procure and manage evaluations. In Benin and Uganda, the donor policy preference for international evaluators was also a barrier to entry for local evaluators.

Improving the representivity of supply

In Benin the pool of evaluators is almost exclusively male, while in Uganda it is largely male. In addition, in both Benin and Uganda, evaluation teams are usually led by foreign consultants. The key representivity issues in these two countries are therefore gender equity and increasing local participation.

The South African study found a higher level of participation of women in the evaluation supply market. The key representivity issue in South Africa is to increase participation of black evaluators and black-owned consultancies in the supply market.

Minimum competency requirements and professionalisation

While terms of reference for evaluations in all three countries have minimum requirements in terms of experience and qualification, there has not yet been standardisation of these requirements in any of the countries. This is partly due to a lack of consensus regarding minimum competency levels.

Training

In Benin there is relatively limited capacity for training in evaluation, but to date the country has been able to generate the skills needed to meet the demand. In Uganda there is more capacity for training in evaluation, and several evaluation capacity building initiatives or programmes have been implemented. In South Africa, while there has been an increase in the numbers of public and private tertiary education institutions offering courses or modules in M&E, there are few post-graduate courses in evaluation, and these are over-subscribed. In all three countries there is clearly a need for increased training of government officials involved in the commissioning, procurement and management of evaluations. Such training should be aimed at addressing the demand-side weaknesses identified in this diagnostic report.

Pricing

Pricing levels in Uganda and Benin appear to be similar, with average charge-out rates of approximately US\$200 to US\$300 per day, depending on qualifications, experience, and skills scarcity. In South Africa the charge-out rates are generally higher, with average charge-out rates of approximately US\$200 to US\$700, going up to US\$1 400 per day.

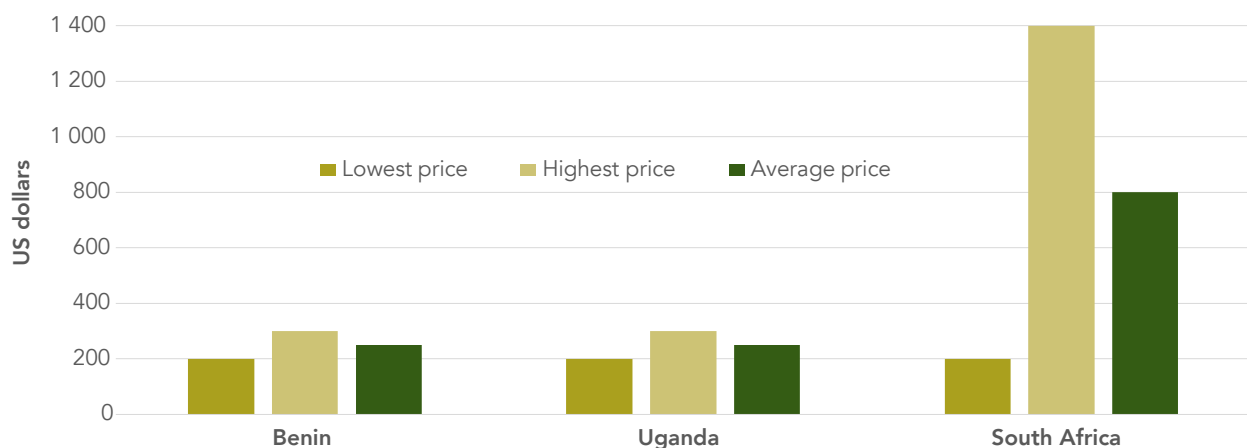


FIGURE 2: Daily rates of evaluation consultants in Benin, Uganda and South Africa

RECOMMENDATIONS

In all three countries, there needs to be an ongoing process of strengthening the culture of evaluation.

The governments of the three countries should put in place and implement plans to address the demand-side shortcomings identified in this diagnostic report. This should include:

1. Development of whole-of-government procurement strategies for evaluations. These strategies should aim to create a conducive environment for the growth of the local supply market. They could include procurement and contracting mechanisms to require the larger suppliers or international suppliers to subcontract local or emerging suppliers and to develop their capacity over a series of evaluations
2. Standardising the experience and qualification requirements in Request for Tenders (RQFs) and the method of appraising them
3. Standardising as many other parts of the evaluation process as possible
4. Possibly introducing evaluability assessments as a standard part of the evaluation process, to reduce the risk of evaluation failures and the risk of major scope changes after suppliers have been appointed
5. Training government evaluation managers to address the demand-side weaknesses.

- In the absence of consensus on minimum eligibility requirements, formal professionalisation of evaluation should not be pursued.
- More researchers in universities should be encouraged to do evaluations, to reduce the risk of supply not being able to meet demand.
- The three governments should consider identifying a category of evaluations for internal implementation. This will assist in the development of both an internal evaluative culture and internal capacity for managing evaluations.
- There should be a thorough assessment of the skills gaps (as opposed to generalisations about a lack of capacity), the results of which should be fed into the training sector in each of the three countries.
- Country evaluation associations should be asked to arrange 'match-making' sessions or mechanisms between established or international and emerging or local evaluation companies. Central government departments responsible for evaluation could also set up such match-making mechanisms, but this could be risky from a procurement point of view.

LINKAGES TO FURTHER WORK

The World Bank diagnostic in South Africa identifies the evaluation preparation phase, the procurement process, quality control during evaluations and the role of the government evaluation manager during the evaluation as areas for improvement and potential standardisation.

There may be a need to reach consensus on the minimum competency requirements required for evaluators (this might need to be differentiated between different levels of evaluators and even different types of evaluation). Without defined minimum competency requirements, it is not possible to define skills gaps and to work with the education and training sector to address the skills gaps. In September of 2016, Twende and CLEAR-AA began the initiative with higher education institutions (HEIs), public sector training institutions, government and various Voluntary Associations for Professional Evaluation (VOPEs). This initiative encourages a collaborative development and harmonisation of M&E competencies and curriculum in Africa, while aiming to bring more consistency to the standards of M&E training available on the continent.

The advantages of carrying out internal evaluations is that it would reduce the risk of supply not being able to meet demand, as well as developing an evaluative culture within government and to improving evaluation management skills. The possibility of using experienced external advisors to assist with internal evaluations could be explored. But, in instances where a number of evaluation recommendations in government are not fully implemented due to a host of constraints, and thus the opportunity for learning and improvement are lost. Research shows that rapid evaluations are a tested and reliable way of conducting credible evaluations within a short time frame and without sacrificing quality when implemented effectively. Implementation and the completion of rapid evaluations is, as inherent in its name, quick but also cost-effective. ■