Brazil - Brazilian Monitoring and Evaluation Network (BMEN)

Brazilian Monitoring and Evaluation Network: Creation, Development and Perspectives
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Background:
The Brazilian Monitoring and Evaluation Network ( Rede Brasileira de Monitoramento e Avaliação) is an initiative that continues a previous movement started in 2003. It was launched in 2008 as a chapter of the Latin America and the Caribbean Monitoring and Evaluation Network (RedLaCME), under the leadership of the João Pinheiro Foundation (JPF) - a Governmental School of the Minas Gerais State Government, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the World Bank. Its launch was a recognition of the existence of a considerable critical mass for this topic, the lack of forums to exchange and organize experiences, and the mobilizing effect of the Fourth International Conference of the Regional Network, which took place in 2008 and was hosted in Belo Horizonte. It used the gathering in Brazil of different actors in the topic to mobilize a side event during the conference, which led to the foundation of the Brazilian Network.

In addition to the JPF, the IDB, and the World Bank, various representatives of international and national institutions interested in the topic attended the inaugural meeting. These institutions included the United Nations Development Programme ( UNDP-Brazil), SEADE Foundation, the Brazilian Northeast Bank, Itaú Social Foundation, Unibanco Institute, Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hungry, The Brazilian Court of Audit (TCU), and Ceara State Planning Bureau.

In June 2009, the 1st BMEN National Conference was held also in Belo Horizonte, MG, hosted again by JPF. Nevertheless, at that time there were no implemented technological tools that allowed the realization of the core activity of any network: articulation, communication and exchange of experiences and knowledge. It was then that a new partner, the Brazilian Evaluation Agency, came to support the initiative, customizing and creating the web platform and finally providing the website of the network which was launched in June 2009. This website (http://redebrasileirademea.ning) operates as a social network. Thus began a long and patient process of animation: attraction of new members (institutions and individuals) and dissemination of information and knowledge, which became the basis of interest and articulation among them.

Some of the founding principles of the BMEN were decentralization, openness, and the low cost of implementation, as no in-kind resources were being invested. In its first year, the BMEN had more than the initial 3 institutional champions. A number of institutions, including the State Statistics and Economics Foundations, public banks, and international organizations supported the initiative. Generally speaking, the representatives of these institutions in the network, in addition to serving as focal points, also represent individuals committed to these issues in their respective institutions.

A second important principle for the network is its openness. In an effort to maximize the possibilities of co-operation among different stakeholders, the network offers membership to individuals or institutions and to other networks, which translate into the membership’s freedom (either personal, institutional, or of other networks) to maximize the possibilities of cooperation among different stakeholders.

Finally, a third and important principle was the effort to reduce losses to a minimum if the initiative failed. The initiative’s existence is justified only if it is useful and capable of

1 The authors want to thank the other Management Committee members for their comments and suggestions: Alcides Gussi, Ana Maria Alves Carneiro da Silva, Breyner Ricardo de Oliveira, Glaucia Macedo, Guilherme Pereira, Leonardo de Oliveira Santos, Lília Belluzzo, Marcos Falcão Gonçalves, Paula Montagner, Thomaz Chianca, Veronica Ferreira Machado and Victor Maia Senna Delgado

2 Based on Ning Technology
showing its value, which has happened through the growing membership, increased number of visitors, and growing engagement.

The Management Committee is actually composed of 12 members representing public and private institutions and consultants: The Northeast Brazilian Development Bank (BNB); National Institute of Metrology, Quality and Technology (INMETRO); The Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES); The Brazilian Evaluation Agency; The Data Analysis State System Foundation - SEADE (São Paulo State); The Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS); The João Pinheiro Foundation (FJP) - Minas Gerais State; The Ceara Federal University – Master in Public Policies Evaluation (MAPP/UFC); The Ouro Preto Federal University; The Office of Strategic Priorities of the State of Minas Gerais; Study Group on Organization of Research and Innovation (GEOPI) of Campinas University (UNICAMP); Rizoma Planning M&E Consultancy; and Thomaz Chianca (as an international independent consultant).

**Strategy and implementation:**
Based on the conceptual framework for national evaluation capacity development, BMEN has contributed to:

- **Strengthening an Enabling environment:** by putting together a community of 3,660 people (half of them public servants from Federal, States and Municipal governments); by creating spaces for debates; by promoting discussions about which capacities Brazil has and which ones have to be developed, by disseminating knowledge and good practices; by evolving a professional association.
- **Developing/strengthening individual capacities to conduct credible and useful evaluations, by:**

1) Promoting mini-courses and workshops (during the Annual National Seminars), as detailed below:

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3 The conceptual framework is presented in the article “Moving from policies to results by developing national capacities for country-led M&E systems”, available in the book “From policies to results. Developing national capacities for country monitoring and evaluation systems” available at [http://www.mymande.org/content/policies-results](http://www.mymande.org/content/policies-results). The article is from page 22 to 40, and the framework from pages 28-39

4 Up-to-dated in November 15, 2012
2) Disseminating all the opportunities for capacity development in Brazil and abroad: through the “Capacity Building” forum\(^5\), 41 opportunities were disseminated.

**Future Prospective:**
- A partnership with the Inter-American Institute for Economic and Social Development (INDES/IDB) and Municipal National Confederation (CNUM) is being negotiated to translate and adapt the content of the course “Management for Development Result in Sub-National Governments”\(^6\) to be offered for the public managers of municipal and state levels.
- A partnership with the EvalPartners Initiative is being negotiated to design a 10 unit e-learning course for civil society (NGOs and municipal councils).
- An articulation between several stakeholders is being made for the creation of a Regional Center for Learning on Evaluation and Results - CLEAR\(^7\) in Brazil
- The BMEN is also involved in translating selected evaluation textbooks into Portuguese

In addition to this, BMEN has promoted, since 2011, several meetings of its Management Committee to build a Strategic Plan and coordinate its Annual Seminar (the 4\(^{th}\) one was held in Rio de Janeiro between 13 and 15 of August 2012).

**Bottlenecks/challenges:**
- **To have a professional and sustainable association supporting the BMEN:** as stated in the 6\(^{th}\) Annual Meeting of the BMEN, this initiative would be very important to: advocate or support national evaluation systems and policies, define principles and standards, build a common language, influence the existence of a legislation and/or policies which institutionalize the independence, credibility and utility of evaluation; strengthen demand on how to contract evaluation studies; support capacity development initiatives; leverage a culture of M&E; and contribute to evaluative thinking.
- **Raise awareness of the parliament and the media** about the importance of bringing to society this kind of knowledge and of the public administration to incorporate these values and practice to the policy cycle.
- **Articulate the processes of Capacity Building**, making the supply correspond to the demand.

**Progress and results:**

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5 see: [http://redebrasileirademea.ning.com/group/formacao/forum](http://redebrasileirademea.ning.com/group/formacao/forum)
7 [http://www.theclearinitiative.org](http://www.theclearinitiative.org)
Four national seminars, a national journal (Brazilian M&E Journal\(^8\)), 10 one-day courses and workshops promoted during the annual seminars and the dissemination of a great deal of information, knowledge, capacity building and job opportunities in the area. Also participation by many individuals in regional networks representing the Brazilian initiative\(^9\).

**Key enabling factors:**

1) The BMEN is totally open and attracts all the stakeholders interested in monitoring and evaluation, not only public servants or evaluation experts, and also interested in all the methodological approaches.
2) It is not a formal institution, hampered by bureaucracy, but a common space where people can share information and knowledge.
3) It is politically neutral and has a diverse Management Committee, protecting it against any cooptation.

The Management Committee believes that these characteristics attract all kind of partners who have common objectives bringing legitimacy to the initiative.

**Innovations and lessons learned:**

- A network initiative has to have a champion: someone who starts and makes it sustainable.
- The use of an adequate technological platform is important, but not enough – continuous animation and communication skills are fundamental. It is also very important to promote face-to-face meetings and events.
- The best design for a network is the distributive\(^10\) (the one that allows “nodes” to relate to each other without going through a “central brain”).
- Be patient and persevering in attracting new supporters and partners: networks are long-term initiatives. A strategy to attract members and partners is very important.
- Formal leadership arrangements must be well thought out and appropriate to the objectives and activities of the network - balanced representation of all stakeholder groups in the leadership system that determines the strategic direction of the organization and succession processes.

**Next steps:** The management committee is building together a strategic plan: based on the Balanced Scorecard method. We have defined objectives for four perspectives: society, clients, internal processes and “learning and competencies”, as listed below:

1) Society’s Perspective
- Improve society’s participation in the formulation of policies, plans, programs and projects and their M&E.
- Incorporate M&E in the processes of planning and formulation of policies, programs and projects.
- Improve the quality of M&E.
- Improve communication of the results of M&E.
- Contribute to the effectiveness of policies.

2) Clients’ Perspectives
- Expand the use and interaction with the platform.
- Balance the representativeness of the Network (in terms of key actors, regions, other countries and sectors).
- Articulate and promote training for different actors (managers, evaluators, NGOs representatives, counsellors, - members or not).\(^11\)

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\(^9\) Red de Seguimiento, Evaluación y Sistematización de América Latina y el Caribe (ReLAC) and Red de Monitoreo y Evaluación en América Latina y el Caribe (RedLaCME)

\(^10\) See Paul Baran Diagram.

\(^11\)
• Improve the competencies of evaluators.

3) Processes' Perspectives
• Improve the identification and the dissemination of content (knowledge, news, events, job and training opportunities).
• Improve communication with members in order to open the Network to a wider public.
• Promote an environment of face-to-face interaction (national and / or regional).
• Manage virtual environment interaction between members.
• Support publications.
• Interact with other actors and national and international networks.

4) Learning and Competencies
• Improve management capacity: governance, strategic planning, coordination, working groups, criteria for funding and application of resources.
• Develop ability to identify demands for knowledge and offer it for the various stakeholders.
• Develop ability to animate the Network.
• Enhance leadership in the development process of the M&E area, communication skills and technology skills.

11 Capabilities to: understand evaluation, specify and contract evaluations, perform evaluations, analyze products and results, formulate indicators, commission, disseminate