Monitoring and Evaluation Systems: The Missing Strand in the African Transformational Development Agenda

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Abstract Today, monitoring and evaluation systems are structural arrangements many governments and other development agencies are building and strengthening to enhance their performance and as a way of demonstrating results to stakeholders. The systems are also used to meet internal information needs. The practice and commitment is more evident in developed than in developing countries. In many African countries, the practice and commitment towards implementing functional M & E systems is noticeably on the low side. Most M & E systems in Africa are still in their embryonic stage—not able to supply relevant information for stakeholder use. Even worse, the demand for M&E information by stakeholders, both internal and external is minimal among and across potential users in Africa. We have not seen a transformational resolve and thrive especially by governments and key development agencies to sustainably build and strengthen M & E systems in Africa. Nonetheless, for the African continent to face and resolve its several social, economic and political challenges, it is inevitable to dedicatedly engage in a transformational development agenda. Despite the gloomy M & E arrangements currently, there are notable efforts (though often fragmented) in some countries as well as in the continental and regional development blocs such as the AU, SADC, AMU, CEN-SAD, COMESA, EAC, ECCAS, ECOWAS, and the IGAD. This paper contends that commitment by African governments to building and sustaining M&E systems as an instrument of good governance should be top on the transformational development agenda—not rhetorically but pragmatically. Identified as the missing *strand*, M&E systems are deemed key to promoting and achieving the desired culture of results across the African continent. Troubled with endless and increasing reports on corruption and bad choices in development interventions due to lack of strategic prioritisation, M&E systems stand handy to offer evidence-based information to support sound decision making, policy formulation and implementation. Consequently, if Africa was not going to channel its political, organisational, human, technical, technological and financial resources towards transforming M & E in every country, the hope for a better Africa as enshrined in the continental Vision 2063 of the *Africa We Want* will remain a wish, only never to be realised. Essentially, a culture of results is something Africa and its people should cherish and pursue without thinking twice.

***Keywords:** monitoring, evaluation, M&E system, results-based management, culture of results, evidence-based, whole-of-government M&E system, results*

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1. Introduction

Tracking, measuring, learning and improving public governance and management of services and goods to benefit the majority of people engulfed in abject poverty and to sustainably grow economies is the paradox and dilemma African countries find themselves today. While it may not be contestable with regard to the worth and pragmatic opportunity systems for monitoring and evaluation would offer to the development discourse, we have seen a very slow commitment and investment in systems that help to enhance the pursuit of a culture of results across the African continent. There could be of course a handful of countries in the continent with notable effort in this direction, but the majority of them have faced this matter with mixed commitment and understanding. This article deals with the concept and practice of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and provides a comprehensive discussion of ways in which M&E could be linked to the good governance agenda as African governments seek to deliver poverty reduction programmes, projects and policies. It articulates the general overview of M&E as a contemporary phenomenon that governments globally and other development organisations have pursued rigorously in their bid to implement results-based sustainable development. Here,

the meanings of the terms 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' are defined and discussed. Further, the paper considers a historical perspective of the notion of M&E by discussing the evolution of the concepts as they are currently understood and relevant to the African development goal. At the core of the paper is the argument that Africa requires functional M&E systems in each and every member state and indeed any development agency. This will improve the quality of resource management and utilisation at all levels of development effort by governments and other stakeholders.

In addition, the paper discusses the reasons for African governments to build and sustain stronger whole-of-government M&E systems (WoGM&ES). The article amplifies reasons that successful systems for M&E are inevitable for good governance and sustainable development. Functional WoGM&ESs have been argued herein as that critical 'missing strand' to end the African development misfortunes experienced over decades of political independence—or at least to significantly contribute to that continental objective. While M&E is needed under every development institution and intervention, this article focuses on the need to institutionalise M&E in government structures and political spaces as well as in all other development agencies and stakeholders. A country and its people need to be results-oriented for it is the pragmatic way to positively impactful societies.

2. Framework of Analysis

Countries and their respective governments pursue development results meant to improve the wellbeing of their citizens. In other words, poverty reduction and sustainable development is what governments desire to attain through prudence in governance and management of public resources. To satisfy these aspirations, a number of approaches, strategies, policies, programmes, projects and more importantly systems are employed. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and the commitment to undertaking 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' functions becomes a crucial requirement by any government.

In the literature of Results-Based Management (RBM) and Managing for Development Results (MfDRs) as articulated and practiced in the global development efforts, country-led national M&E systems have been identified as necessary to help implement a results-focused good governance agenda. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Paris Declaration, Monterrey Declaration, and the recent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to mention but a few, have advocated for stronger M&E systems at country level to be used as tools of tracking performance for the purposes of accountability, feedback and learning to improve current and future development interventions.

It is for the reasons above that African governments and countries as a whole are called upon to pursue pragmatic reforms and practices to bring about functionally developed WoGM&ESs to help meet the aspirations of the people they lead and other key internal and external development stakeholders. Thus, the paper focuses on the role of M&E systems and how the functions of monitoring and evaluation can enhance how countries and governments may use them as instruments of performance tracking and learning towards alleviating poverty for their masses.

3. Research Objectives

The five objectives that guided the study included the following: (i) stating the significance of the study; (ii) discussing the notion of monitoring and evaluation; (iii) reviewing the historical perspective of monitoring and evaluation; (iv) articulating the importance of monitoring and evaluation systems, and (v) linking monitoring and evaluation systems to good governance.

3.1. Research Methodology

Methodologically, the approach used was mainly the review of relevant literature through a desk-based research process. Among the documents reviewed are national development plans, national budgets, country monitoring and evaluation policies, frameworks and implementation plans. Other documents such as conference papers, articles and reports written about M&E on Africa were also reviewed. In addition, scholarly and expert books, journal articles and research papers on international practices on M&E were equally consulted. This triangulation of data and information sources was useful to obtain dynamic information on African M&E practice—thereby making synthesis, analysis, conclusions and recommendations possible.

3.2. Limitation of the Study

The evolution of monitoring and evaluation in Africa is a contemporary phenomenon (less than three decades ago for the majority of countries). The practice of results-based management (RBM) has however been pursued at different levels and commitment by every country. This places the level of M&E adoption and implementation by countries to be at different phases. For that reason, the study was not able to find the wealth of literature from all countries on the subject matter of M&E and its practice by African countries. Thus, triangulation was used and a case was made that Africa needed to embark on a transformational development agenda for championing and investing in national systems for M&E.

3.3. Organization of the Paper

Structurally, the paper is presented in six (6) parts. First is the definition of concepts, second is the articulation of the significance of the study and a discussion on the notion of monitoring and evaluation is third. The fourth part looks at the historical perspectives of monitoring and evaluation. Before conclusion, the fifth part gives a detailed discussion on the importance of M&E systems. This is discussed with focus on African whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation systems (WoGM&ESs).

4. Definition of Key Concepts

Monitoring: 'Monitoring' refers to the continuous process of systematic collection of data on specified

indicators in order to track progress made towards planned objectives and to assess the use of resources available [1].

Evaluation: Reference [1] defines 'evaluation' as the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed development intervention, be it a project, programme or policy, to ascertain the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability.

Result: A 'result', as defined by [1], refers to changes in a way, state or condition resulting from a cause-and-effect relationship. These possible changes are at three levels of output, outcome and impact, whenever undertaking a development intervention, regardless of whether it is a project, programme or policy.

Whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system: Reference [2,3] defines a WoGM&ES as a robust system that not only provides an integrated and all-encompassing framework of M&E practices, principles and standards to be used throughout government institutional structures, but also functions as an apex-level system for information and draws from the component systems in a framework meant to deliver essential M&E products tailored to satisfy information needs of users.

Good governance: Good governance means "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" [4].

5. Significance of the Study

The question 'Why build a strengthened results-based WoGM&ES?' as a public sector management tool for Africa is crucial for several reasons. Fundamental questions to help policy and decision makers determine whether development promises were kept and outcomes achieved could be provided by a functional results-based M&E system. To demonstrate whether these improvements have occurred and the reasons that certain results have been achieved, governments and organisations use M&E systems [9,10,11].

This study is topical for all African countries and is being undertaken at a time when there is heightened interest in the assessment of government performance, locally and internationally [12,13]. Reference [14] stress that "there has been an evolution in the field of M&E involving a movement away from traditional implementation-based approaches towards new results-based approaches". The importance of national systems for M&E in helping governments to improve their service delivery to the public has been established, and an effort to link M&E to good governance practices has been made. For example, in Zambia, according to [15], that is why National Development Plans (NDPs) have detailed M&E arrangements to emphasise the linkages between the plans and the desired results. When implemented successfully, the performance of all government policies, programmes and projects would be measurable using a well-organised and functioning M&E system [16,17]. Therefore, this research study is significant at various levels of a given country's M&E system particularly at national, line ministry or sector, provincial and at decentralised district level. Also, the study provides M&E-related information

to quasi government and non-state actors such as civil society, academia, cooperating partners and research institutions. African citizens and others will utilise the findings of this research in appreciating the role of M&E in nation building and the ways in which the systems for M&E can be instrumental to the development discourse.

Consequently, the research rationale contends that in the absence of a robust and functional M&E system across any government, organisation and beyond, it is not feasible to track performance and learn lessons in future as a country. As a result, the country is more likely to spend public resources on a 'business as usual' basis, where poor accountability, corruption and bad governance prevail because a comprehensive M&E system that gives early warning signs is not in place. Table 1 demonstrates the significance of M&E in measuring development results.

Table 1. Power of measuring results

• If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure
• If you cannot see success, you cannot reward it
• If you cannot reward success, you are probably rewarding failure
• If you cannot see success, you cannot learn from it
• If you cannot recognize failure, you cannot correct it
• If you cannot demonstrate results, you cannot win public support

Source: Kusek & Rist, 2004, p. 11.

Therefore, this research study is significant and justifiable in many ways, in a summary in:

- Transforming and promoting the results culture in Africa
- Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation function at national, sector, regional and district level
- Strengthening M&E functions in other state agencies
- Strengthening M&E linkages and coordination
- Promoting good governance in public service delivery of results

6. The Notion of Monitoring and Evaluation

Today there is greater demand for M&E from many aspects of development spheres than ever before [10,18]. The push for functional M&E has been pursued mainly to achieve development results. According to [19], policy makers and M&E practitioners in developed countries and other donor agencies need to evaluate, for instance, whether enhancements are taking place as a consequence of the intervention. In addition, M&E supports stronger governance systems across all government structures, thereby enhancing accountability relationships among development stakeholders [20]. Further, when implemented successfully, M&E has the potential to build a stronger basis for achieving intended development results. Thus, M&E is considered a good tool for enhancing anti-corruption crusades in public sector institutions and bringing about a positive performance culture that promotes better policy making, national planning and budgeting processes [21,22,23].

The two notions of 'monitoring' and 'evaluation' are significantly distinct, but complementary in application.

The concepts are not synonymous, although many people use them interchangeably. Nonetheless, the intrinsic value is embedded in their differences. For monitoring, [13] contend that it is about providing information on 'where' a given development intervention is in terms of its implementation status against targets and outcomes. On the other hand, evaluation is about the 'why' of development interventions, especially whether planned targets and desired outcomes have been realised. To that extent, evaluations concern themselves with attribution and causality [24,25]. Reference [26] also asserts that monitoring entails continuously observing the progress in a given development intervention, while [27] consider it a process of tracking milestones regularly, measuring progress against expectations, and determining the purposes of compliance and improvements. Evaluations, on the other hand, are meant to systematically and objectively assess ongoing or completed development interventions, such as projects, programmes or policies, in attaining their design, implementation and results [1,28,29,30].

Therefore, evaluation results complement monitoring exercises in many ways. For example, when a monitoring system reveals that a certain intervention is off track, an appropriate evaluative information would provide clarity on the realities and trends observed through the monitoring system [13]. Table 2 presents a conceptual illustration of the complementary relationship between the functions of monitoring and that of evaluation.

Table 2. Complementary roles of monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring	Evaluation
• Clarifies programmes objectives	• Analyses why intended results were or were not achieved
• Links activities and their resources to objectives	• Assesses specific causal contributions of activities to results
• Translates objectives into performance indicators and sets targets	• Examines implementation process
• Routinely collects data on these indicators, compares actual results	• Explores unintended results
• Reports progress to managers and alerts them to problems	• Provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishment or programme potential, and offers recommendations for improvement

Source: Kusek & Rist, 2004, p. 14.

'Monitoring' refers to a process that offers management and stakeholders of any development intervention under implementation with indicator information, but also a continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators [1]. On the other hand, 'evaluation' refers to the systematic and independent assessment of a policy, programme or project that is ongoing or has already been completed. In particular, evaluations aim to meet major objectives, including determining whether a given intervention was relevant, efficient, effective, impactful and sustainable, and ultimately whether the decision-making processes incorporated lessons learned. Reference [31] view the evaluation function as the worth, value and significance of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy.

Furthermore, the functions of monitoring and evaluation are self-reinforcing. While monitoring refers to a management function that is ongoing, the notion of evaluation denotes the post-event function and gives feedback to management. Typically, when undertaking monitoring exercises, one is also carrying out some form of evaluating function because one is making an assessment about progress achieved and, based on this judgement, providing possible solutions. On the other hand, when conducting an evaluation, monitoring data are being utilised, upon which judgements are made based on the insights from the continuous process. Therefore, the complementary nature of the two concepts is not linear. Instead, the relationship is more dynamic, depending on the situation [32].

7. Historical Perspective of Monitoring and Evaluation

Historically, monitoring and evaluation can be traced to various points in the past. However, one still has to distinguish between modern-day M&E and traditional M&E, which are practised by different generations and societies as the world continues to evolve. Every society in the past seems to have implemented some form of performance-tracking system. In other words, M&E systems have always been on the development reform agenda of many governments and institutions. In giving a more distant historical perspective of the importance and usefulness of M&E practice, [13] recounted:

There is tremendous power in measuring performance. The ancient Egyptians regularly monitored their country's outputs in grain and livestock production more than 5,000 years ago. In this sense, M&E is certainly not a new phenomenon. Modern governments, too, have engaged in some form of traditional M&E over the past decades. They have sought to track over time their expenditures, revenues, staffing levels, resources, programmes and project activities, goods and services produced, and so forth.

From the days of the Ancient Egyptians, there has been a great deal of evolution in the philosophical orientation and conceptualisation of M&E. For example, in the 1960s, M&E practice underwent a substantial paradigm shift, which was predominantly quantitative in focus, reflecting the social scientific trend of the era. This domination continued in the social sciences in the 1970s, putting more emphasis on empowerment evaluation. The emphasis on empowerment approaches was based on lived experiences to represent and provide a voice to as many stakeholders as possible [33]. However, in the decades that followed, M&E methodologies shifted from an emphasis on quantitative to more participatory approaches and empowerment techniques [33,34].

The increasing demand for M&E, even in contemporary governance systems, has resulted because of the critical benefits associated with the two notions. For example, benefits such as the provision of relevant information embedded in good feedback-loop systems are what results-based M&E systems offer decision makers and other stakeholders. Many governments and organisations have tracking systems that form part of their management

toolkits: financial systems, accountability systems, and good human resource systems [31]. Earlier development management efforts lacked the feedback component, which enables the tracking of implementation consequences. In that regard, building M&E systems has leveraged decision makers in the provision of much-valued feedback on policy, programme and project performance as a basis for future improvement [35,36,37].

In addition, [14] assert that contemporary M&E systems have their roots in the Results Based Management (RBM) approach, which is a management strategy centred on performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts for a policy, programme or project. Reference [1] view M&E systems as toolkits of management meant to help institutions of development to realise intervention effectiveness through the delivery of results. Typically, RBM employs traditional tools such as strategic planning, results frameworks, monitoring, and programme evaluation to improve organisational performance [13,38]. The approach was popularised first among private sector organisations, development agencies and multilateral organisations, and later moved on to the public sector as part of reform efforts in the 1980s and 1990s. Today, most development interventions have adopted the RBM approach to inform processes such as planning, budgeting, implementation and M&E [8,33,39].

7.1. Monitoring and Evaluation Trends at Global Level

The evolution of contemporary M&E at global level could be traced back to the 1980s and later the 1990s. Globally, the desire to produce results-oriented M&E systems and frameworks emanated from the need to determine a country's progress towards its development goals. According to [40], initiatives such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper policy, and Country Assistance Strategy mushroomed, each with a focus on results. Through these initiatives, it was desired that citizens of countries should obtain accountability feedback from their governments in terms of evidence from the implementation of public development interventions, especially resource allocation and expenditure and expected results.

For these reasons, it became common in the 1990s and increasingly in the 2000s for poverty reduction strategies (PRS) to be implemented by many countries, especially among the developing ones. The PRS approach was designed to provide a strong linkage between public sector policies, support from donors and the development outcomes required for meeting the MDGs [6,22,40]. Five key principles characterised the PRS approach, namely promoting national ownership of strategies through broad-based participation of civil society, country driven; results focused and based on outcomes that would be of benefit to the poor; partnership oriented concerning coordinated participation of cooperating partners; recognising the comprehensive and multidimensional nature of poverty; and based on a long-term perspective or horizon for poverty reduction. Another prominent feature in the PRSP approach involved the recognition that the implementation of the strategy would demand close monitoring, with the national statistical office (NSO)

playing an important role. The wider role of statistics in informing the upstream undertakings of problem identification, policy design, setting quantitative targets, and allocating resources among competing priorities was inevitable [41,42]. Additionally, the PRS approach demanded that countries created, implemented and sustained viable M&E systems and arrangements, not only at national level, but at sub-national level too. However, this was an extremely challenging proposition, given the low technical capacity obtaining at lower levels in most developing countries [6,13,43,44].

This M&E evolution in the 1980s, 1990s and early 2000s escalated in 2005, when the Paris Declaration (PD) was signed by developed and developing countries, including key bilateral, multilateral, civil society and other development agencies. The declaration obligated countries and the donor community to aid effectiveness and strengthen their management approaches towards development results [4,45]. All these efforts were meant to enhance the achievement of high-level development results (that is, outcomes and impacts) as opposed to focusing on lower level processes (that is, inputs, activities or physical outputs) [46,47,48].

The PD was followed by the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), another resolve by the globe to make results orientation through functional M&E mechanisms a stamp of sound practice for good governance and sustainable development [49,50,51]. The global development agenda for both the PD and the AAA focused on aid effectiveness. The common agenda was anchored on the five principles of alignment, harmonisation, ownership, mutual accountability, and managing for results.

A more recent global effort to promote strengthened M&E was the Fourth High Level Forum (HLF4) in Busan, Korea, in 2011. Like the PD and AAA, the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation focused on aid effectiveness under the principles of ownership, focus on results, partnerships, transparency and shared responsibility. The principle of focus on results promoted working towards a sustainable impact, and adopting this as a motivating factor behind investments and efforts in the process of policy making [49,52]. These initiatives set a high tone on the global requirement for functional M&E development, strengthening and sustainability. The efforts have continued to provide a basis for enhancing M&E to even higher levels across the globe. Table 3 highlights the evolution of M&E globally.

7.2. Monitoring and Evaluation Trends in Africa

Similar to M&E trends globally, the African continent has made notable positive experiences in the spread of M&E. Generally, the emergence and growth of M&E in Africa has been gradual, to the extent that even today a number of countries are still in the initial stages of building their designated systems for M&E. For a long time in Africa, M&E was viewed as agenda driven and controlled by donors. However, this view is phasing out and countries are working towards building and sustaining their own practices and systems. Currently, many African countries have joined their counterpart countries in Latin America, including the Caribbean, and

Asia in establishing systems for M&E in pursuit of good governance and poverty reduction based on evidence [22,51,53].

In addition, although formal traces of efforts to demand results and accountability in the contemporary understanding of M&E on the African context began in the late 1980s, more evidence can be traced in late 1990s onwards. In particular, an ambitious seminar was convened in Abidjan in 1998. One of the top priorities on the agenda was to take stock of progress and M&E

capacity status in Africa in the context of public service delivery and overall performance. In fact, the 1998 conference was a follow-up to the earlier meeting of 1990 in Abidjan, Ivory Coast. Suffice to say, it was a ground-breaking event in the effort to articulate M&E in

Africa by bringing together participants from twelve African nations and 21 international donor agencies. The seminar sought to appreciate the status of M&E capacity development in Africa with a view to re-engaging in innovative ways to grow the M&E function across the continent [54,55,56].

However, other efforts in M&E had been advanced much earlier than the 1998 conference. In March 1987, OECD/DAC convened a conference in Abidjan, whose agenda was to have donors and beneficiary countries discuss the evaluation function in development. Thus, the 1987 conference birthed the 1990 and 1998 conferences, whose focus was on clarifying the needs of evaluation as considered by African member states and to explore opportunities for enhanced self-evaluation capacity [22,43].

Table 3. Summary of major global efforts towards results-based monitoring and evaluation for development (2000 to date)

Milestone	Issues of focus per milestone
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2016)	The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), otherwise known as the Global Goals, are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 goals build on the successes of the eight Millennium Development Goals, while including new areas such as climate change, economic inequality, innovation, sustainable consumption, peace and justice, among other priorities. The goals are interconnected, often the key to success involving tackling issues more commonly associated with another
Busan Declaration (2011)	In Busan, Korea, on the occasion of the Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF4, 29 November to 1 December 2011), over 3000 delegates met to review progress on implementing the principles of the Paris Declaration. They also discussed how to maintain the relevance of the aid effectiveness agenda in the context of the evolving development landscape. The forum culminated in the signing of the Busan Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation by ministers of developed and developing nations, emerging economies, providers of South-South and triangular co-operation and civil society to mark a critical turning point in development co-operation
Accra Agenda for Action (2008)	The Accra High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness set out to reform the way developed and developing countries work together, to ensure that development assistance is well spent and that it helps build sustainable economies that lift people out of poverty. Organised by OECD and the World Bank, and hosted by the Government of Ghana, the forum brought together ministers, heads of development agencies and civil society organisations from more than 100 countries. Examining the results of development aid, they examine what needs to change and how the international aid system could deliver the 'best bang for the buck'
Paris Declaration (2005)	The Paris Declaration (2005) was designed to be a practical, action-oriented roadmap to improve the quality of aid and its impact on development. At the Paris meeting, more than 100 signatories - from donor and developing-country governments, multilateral donor agencies, regional development banks and international agencies - endorsed the Declaration on Aid Effectiveness
Marrakech Memorandum (2004)	Better development results required management systems and capacities that put results at the centre of planning, implementation and evaluation
Rome Declaration (2003)	Participants committed to specific activities to enhance aid harmonisation: • Deliver assistance in accordance with partner country priorities • Amend policies, procedures, and practices to facilitate harmonisation • Implement good practice standards or principles in development assistance delivery and management • Intensify donor efforts to cooperate at the country level • Promote the benefits of harmonisation among staff • Provide support to strengthen partner country governments' leadership and ownership of development results • Streamline donor procedures and practices • Promote harmonised approaches in global and regional programmes
Millennium Development Goals (2000)	In a key effort to promote more effective development, in 2000, 189 UN member countries agreed to work toward reduction of global poverty and improved sustainable development. These global aims are reflected in the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with their 18 targets and 48 performance indicators. The MDGs provided specific, measurable targets that were gradually being adapted at the country level as the basis for country outcomes and then monitored over time to help gauge progress. In a key effort to promote more effective development, in 2000, 189 UN member countries agreed to work toward reduction of global poverty and improved sustainable development.

Source: Adapted from OECD, 2003; OECD & World Bank, 2008; OECD, 2011 & UNDP, 2015.

Conclusively, the 1998 conference, which was organised by the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and World Bank, had these key objectives, which are historic in the evolution of M&E on the African continent [22]:

• Providing an overview towards the progress made regarding the development of M&E capacities in Africa within the specific ambit of the public expenditure management framework and broadly the public sector reform regime

- Achieving a common continental position on key purposes, elements, including processes of M&E that support development
- Strengthening the M&E supply and demand sides by identifying strategies and supporting resources for building stronger M&E systems in African countries
- Promoting sharing of lessons learnt and experiences concerning M&E capacity development such as concepts, successes, challenges, and approaches
- Investing in tools for use in developing country M&E action plans and frameworks - by taking into account different circumstances in each individual country
- Creating stronger and effective country-specific and regional-collaborative integrated networks to encourage feedback and learning for all countries

In addition, the conference report indicated how participants were anxious to see African countries take a leading role in building their own sustainable systems for M&E, which would inform government resource allocations, permitting greater clarity in decision making in the planning and budgeting processes. Further, this demand for stronger M&E arrangements in Africa was not made by external stakeholders such as development partners and civil society alone, but by common citizens who perceived governance systems as being negative [22,57,58].

Bad experiences in most African governance systems included economic and political disasters, absence of a culture of accountability, lack of ownership, corruption, the poor quality of financial and other performance mechanisms, and the critical lack of M&E feedback loops to inform decision-making processes [22,40,59]. As a result of these negative perceptions, from relative obscurity the pursuit for good governance has risen to the top of Africa's development policy agenda with M&E reforms taking centre stage [43,60].

An additional critical aspect of the evolution of M&E in Africa has been the constant demand by participants and stakeholders for more conferences and increased knowledge sharing forums at continental level as well as within member countries. There was a proposal to establish platforms to be used for building the M&E capacity in countries across the continent [6,8,22]. The seminar in 2000 for instance emphasised the urgent requirement for every African country to develop a national evaluation association. Further, the conference challenged countries and development partners to explore other regional and international opportunities, especially strategic cooperation and collaborations aimed at strengthening the transformational M&E agenda in Africa [43].

The Third African Evaluation Association (AFrEA) Conference, whose theme was 'Evaluation Matters, Africa Matters, Joining Forces for Development', was held in 2004 in Cape Town, South Africa. In terms of attendance, 450 participants were brought together from 61 countries, with a large representation of members from among African governments. As part of the capacity-building initiative, this conference offered over 20 pre-conference training sessions on M&E-related capacity topics. In 2005, another development evaluation roundtable conference was held in Tunisia, which was attended by representatives from up to 21 African countries. The Third AFrEA conference was followed by two other events, one in Niamey in 2006 (AFrEAIV) and the other in Cairo in 2009 (AFrEAV). The AFrEAV event was momentous in that here, the AFrEA was formally constituted, with the potential to transform into a more vibrant African results-oriented association functioning beyond the biennial events in which it was most visible [59].

Under the AFrEA umbrella, many meetings and conferences have since been convened, all focusing on M&E evolution and strengthening in Africa. The latest, the Eighth AFrEA Conference, was held in March 2017 in Kampala, Uganda. Its aim was to encourage exchanges between academia, researchers, emerging evaluators and M&E practitioners on demand and supply of credible evaluative evidence in support of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa. The conference also built the capacity of participants in designing, managing and utilising evaluation findings to help governments achieve their national and international development agendas around the SDGs and Africa Agenda 2063 [50,61].

Therefore, the core purpose of AFrEA is to commit to developing and strengthening indigenous evaluation capacities by providing high-level training across Africa by way of national professional associations that conducted peer-to-peer training exercises [43]. Consequently, it is anticipated that these associations would work with their own governments and other stakeholders to articulate national evaluation policies and functional frameworks and operational structures. In addition, AFrEA works to support the creation and strengthening of M&E policies at country level, and promotes awareness of and demand for development outcomes and impacts. Other objectives were focused on building infrastructural capacity and promoting the utilisation of M&E systems and information to meet the increased expectations from stakeholders. Through AFrEA, African member states are challenged to produce collaborative strategies and infrastructure capacities to support a functional pan-African M&E network, particularly one focused on reviewing good standard evaluation culture and practices for implementation in Africa [43]. Although there were several additional efforts at domesticating and localising M&E among African governments and other development stakeholders, these initiatives are the notable ones. Africa is therefore on the right track with regard to evolving M&E demand and growth.

8. Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems

An M&E system is a set of organisational or institutional arrangements comprising management plans, standards, strategies, processes, information systems, indicators, reporting lines and accountability relationships, which enable national and provincial departments, municipalities and other institutions to perform their M&E functions successfully [2,59,62]. Thus, the question is: Why would governments bother to invest, develop, build and sustain stronger whole-of-government (WoG) M&E systems? Obviously, this question is complex, but requires a comprehensive answer with appropriate justification for undertaking ambitious steps towards spending and committing huge public resources to building such systems. Reference [13] contend that "it is difficult to build strong economies based on weak governments". Thus, results-based M&E systems are considered key to strengthening such governments by reinforcing the focus on demonstrable development results. Governments of developing countries may be overwhelmed in implementing policies, programmes and projects, without functional M&E systems to show what was working effectively and what was not [63,64].

In reality, there are several reasons for governments to invest in building functional WoGM&ESs. Factors such as internal organisational and political pressure, including potential external factors, to build effective M&E systems have been critical in demanding for such systems [53,65]. Further, combating corruption, expanding the authority of the auditor general, and strengthening the role of the parliament have been cited as fundamental internal reasons for the demand for M&E systems. Other internally generated pressures may arise from political parties in opposition to the sitting government, who demand reforms in the public sector. External pressures from the international aid community, civil society and other stakeholders may also compel public sector reforms and create demand for M&E systems as tools for better management of public affairs [39,48,66].

Another reason that it is critical to embark on building stronger public sector WoGM&ESs is that once such systems have been suitably institutionalised, they serve as an integral aspect of the development policy, programme or project cycle. Systems for M&E therefore bring improvements in the public sector performance [14]. Reference [13] add that good governance is more critical for less developed countries to pursue than for their counterparts in the developed world. Therefore, for many developing countries, M&E presents an opportunity to correct the problem and begin to build systems that will contribute to reduced poverty. In fact, it is regarded as an emergency for developing countries to create and sustain a strong and accountable governance environment. That is why [38] stresses that governance mechanisms are strengthened by functional M&E systems through improved transparency, accountability relationships, and by building a performance-based culture in support of better policy and budget decision making and management.

An example from India is apposite. Recently, India made an effort to pursue M&E from a practical angle and lessons can be learned for other developing countries such as those in Africa. According to [67], a surge had occurred in India's public expenditure, driven by growth in the national economy, which resulted in increased demand for M&E and performance management from central government (mainly ministries of finance and planning), programme implementers, international donor organisations, and civil society.

Arising from the economic growth, the government of India embarked on building a countrywide M&E system. This effort was undertaken to establish a firm and more institutionalised nationwide setting for results-based M&E activities, which were continuous and tied to the planning, budgeting and accountability processes. The ministry of finance instituted outcome budgeting, and the planning commission created an independent evaluation office, which would subsume the commission's pre-existing programme evaluation organisation. Similarly, the cabinet secretariat created the performance management and evaluation system [5,21,60]. Indeed, the role of government becomes vital in leading the process of building a WoGM&ES that will be used to inform public management processes in the poverty reduction agenda. Such a commitment, though, seems to demand consistencies in terms not only of institutional capacity, but also of political will even in changes of regimes.

National M&E systems whose focus is to provide all concerned development stakeholders with credible information are complex and require careful attention by governments that incorporate them. In support of this view, [66] added that M&E systems involve institutional activities that take the form of data and information collection, analysis, dissemination, reporting and feedback into policy processes, among others. There are many actors on the supply and demand sides of M&E systems and these create motivation and incentives to create and sustain successful systems. Key actors that benefit from M&E information include government-wide line ministries, CSOs, NGOs, parliaments, the donor community and private consultants. Others are research institutions, universities and the general public.

Essentially, building and sustaining a functional M&E system should be understood as a process and one that takes relatively longer. Reference [68] add that creating an M&E system should be considered a means, and not an end in itself, and is best linked to the process of public policy planning and management. Such a system would enjoy a balanced supply of quality information (that is, on the supply side) and its utilisation in such processes as planning, budgeting and management (that is, on the demand side).

A summary of reasons for building and sustaining stronger WoGM&ESs is now given.

8.1. Tools for Poverty Reduction

The implementation of stronger M&E functions is understood by many stakeholders as being key to enhancing poverty reduction efforts because they assist inculcating good governance, transparency and accountability tenets in development institutions. Reference [38] and [69] argue that M&E systems have been demonstrated to be useful tools in supporting poverty reduction efforts for

most governments and development organisations. The implementation of results-based M&E systems plays an important role in providing a feedback loop, which, according to [31], offers a systematic way of tracking progress of any given intervention, thereby strengthening policy and decision-making processes.

8.2. Informs National Planning

Planning is a fundamental requirement for successful organisations. When all planning processes are well grounded on evidence, development institutions tend to thrive by achieving their organisational objectives. In addition, when such planning is anchored on clearly defined results, stakeholders show support for such institutions. Therefore, results-based M&E systems are designed to strengthen the planning function [31,37,58,69].

Reference [36] observed that ordinary citizens had gone to the extent of exerting pressure on their governments to demonstrate development results for their work, which was often perceived to fall short of people's expectations. In many cases, goods and services delivered by government institutions were taken to be of poor consumption quality and products of misappropriation of public resources causing mass deprivation and poverty. In that regard, systems for M&E are meant to enhance the planning function so that priorities and sequencing of development choices are done in the most appropriate manner, in the spirit of doing more with less [31]. Therefore, it has become difficult for governments of developing countries to avert these pressures, and the incorporation of M&E systems in their mainstream operations has opened hope for better implementation of public development interventions [69,70,71].

Further, since national planning does not start and end only with local citizens of a country, additional pressures arise from the civil society and the donor community. Civil society demands that governments should be open to all forms of public accountability through the creation of forums in which the general public are told how public resources are being utilised. Donors also want governments to show through results how foreign aid is being utilised to improve human lives [6,39,41,72].

Thus, in all these situations, M&E systems would help governments to generate inclusive development policies, strategies, plans, programmes and projects centred on national priorities, based on evidence and incremental learning.

8.3. Enhances Government Transparency and Accountability

Good M&E systems promise enhanced transparency and accountability on the acquisition, distribution and utilisation of public resources [52]. Similarly, [70] argues that governments are able to demonstrate to interested stakeholders the attainment of desired development results. A further viewpoint is that without strong accountability relationships, there would be minimal incentives to stimulate performance improvement by organisations and governments.

However, for M&E systems to serve as instruments of public transparency and accountability, dissemination channels such as regular stakeholders' forums, reports and Internet should be used to increase the accessibility of M&E information produced by the systems [73]. In many cases, key stakeholders such as CSOs and donors press governments to demonstrate how public resources are being utilised in relation to poverty reduction plans. Governments may find such stakeholders' demands problematic in the absence of well-functioning M&E systems. Reference [6] assert that un-negotiated demand for M&E information by different stakeholders is the basis for a successful crusade towards meaningful accountability and transparency. That way, it is considered an effective approach to make those responsible for policy to account.

Consequently, M&E systems can be used as powerful platforms for stakeholders to hold government leaders accountable for the mobilisation, allocation and utilisation of public resources. Reference [49] also noted that the donor community and taxpayers in aid-dependent poor countries have limited means to hold to account those who allocate and manage donor resources, even when it is clear that such officials have incentives to enhance the wellbeing of the poor. In such cases, functioning M&E systems would provide performance-based incentives and enable donors and other stakeholders to overcome the challenges and learn what approaches were suitable for certain contexts [62,74,75].

Further, when information from M&E systems is used properly, internally and externally based stakeholders will have a clear appreciation of policies, projects and programmes statuses [24,54]. As a result, there could be increased popular and political support arising from such a demonstration of positive development outcomes and engagements. Reference [31] subscribe to the idea that while there may be risks associated with the implementation of results-based M&E systems such as organisational and political costs, there are crucial undesirable implications and risks in doing away with such systems.

8.4. Informs Budget Allocation and Fight against Corruption

Budgets are the main instruments that are used to invest in poverty reduction programmes in developing countries and elsewhere. Thus, it is important that M&E systems should collect complete budgetary data and information to inform other development interventions and decision-making processes. When M&E system findings and budget allocations are not integrated, it is difficult to make proper linkages between the intended outcomes of agencies and programmes and the budget classification [73]. These challenges arise from lack of causal chain links between M&E and budget processes. One way to address this disconnect is to adopt a programme or objective-based budget classification.

Increasing cases of corruption are among the major hindrances to the development efforts of many aid-dependent poor countries [56]. The resources that are supposed to be invested in transformational policies, projects and programmes that are targeted at reducing poverty and improving the welfare of the poor majority are sometimes mismanaged. Such corrupt practices are of concern not only to the stakeholders and citizens of developing countries, but to the international community

as well. Therefore, because of this, many stakeholders have regarded M&E systems as important tools in the anti-corruption crusade [36]. This kind of information tracking may lead those in charge of public resource management to avoid misapplication and focus on operatives that enhance human development.

8.5. Supports Policy-making and Improvement

In the same manner as projects and programmes are used as instruments of development, policies are significant vehicles upon which governments and other institutions deliver their development aspirations. Reference [72] state that M&E systems produce valuable information that feeds into development policy and organisational learning, and ultimately improves the effectiveness of development cooperation. Therefore, governments of aid-dependent developing countries would do well to build functional M&E systems and use the information to formulate public policies that are pro poor and evidence based [42,60,69].

Socio-economic policies are supposed to be products of a well-informed government process to generate positive effects on poverty reduction and national growth [76]. Since developing countries may not have well-functioning M&E systems, their policies may be the products of less informed processes [41,64]. It is therefore important to build systems that seek to provide this needed information to feed into development policies and programmes. Despite the weaknesses faced by many developing countries with regard to building and sustaining coherent and functional M&E systems, there is hope for improvement. Like most developed and transition countries, it will be possible for aid-dependent countries to show evidence of their social and economic achievements.

In addition, the essence of successful designing of results-based M&E systems is to assist in monitoring and evaluating development interventions at all levels of their implementation. Information and data from a given intervention could therefore be collected with matching analysis at any stage to offer regular feedback. Consequently, M&E functions should be conducted institutionally all through the life cycle of a programme, project or policy, and after completion of an intervention [31].

8.6. Generates Management Information

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems support the management function of development institutions by providing valuable information that is critical to decision-making processes. The systems are used as management toolkits for tracking and demonstrating progress of a given policy, programme or project against expected results. Systems for monitoring and evaluation should both be implemented successfully because a mismatch between them may lead to the managing of programmes and projects being derailing, hence, failure to track progress becomes a norm [14]. According to the [43], M&E is a development management tool whose ultimate objective is to promote a culture of futuristic learning and improvement of organisational policy and decision making for various users through the utilisation of evidence-based information.

Developing countries have become aware that to achieve meaningful social and economic development, prudence in the management of resources is essential. Therefore, M&E systems have become important factors in the development processes of aid-dependent developing countries. This is a 'management challenge function' that M&E systems are designed to offer governments and other institutions of development. For [70], it is for that reason that M&E systems have been created and strengthened by a growing number of governments. Thus, the ultimate motivation for creating such systems is anchored on performance management for development results.

Reference [25] add that M&E systems help in identifying the most efficient use of resources. This represents another management function that is attributed to systems for M&E. The information about performance indicators may be used at various management levels to direct resources to needy activities. M&E information allows performance comparisons such as benchmarking among government structures (that is, administrative units, provinces and districts) [31,68].

8.7. Promotes Organisational Learning and Feedback

Feedback constitutes an essential component of M&E processes through the provision of linkages between activities of the past and those in future [77]. In that context, well-developed feedback loops are needed for results of evaluations to be utilised in future policy and programme developments. When well strengthened and developed, the learning aspect is fundamental to the attainment of sustainability and improvement of M&E systems themselves. Usually, this kind of feedback occurs during the utilisation of M&E information, especially when results are presented [78,79]. Therefore, feedback from M&E systems helps managers to promote institutional learning, following a cycle that involves reflecting on progress and perfecting the course of projects or programmes where need is required [13].

A well-functioning feedback mechanism operates as an early warning system to development management in that when problems are identified, questions about the assumptions and strategy behind a development intervention are raised and possible solutions put in place. In that aspect, providing pointers forms the primary function of M&E and this improves the understanding of what works and what does not work and to some extent why [61,62,80].

However, [81] caution that sustaining the learning function of M&E is usually not easy, particularly given its complex nature, which involves a process of cultural and political dynamics of continuous and systematic management of public affairs. These authors contend that although it has been demonstrated implicitly that M&E functions result in some desired learning and reflection, it is not always so, and this requires that organisations regularly integrate information in such complex development situations [62,82].

Similarly, [83] argue that the utilisation of evaluation in organisations remains unpredictable and hard to sustain for several reasons, among them political or contextual, technical (that is, methodological) and organisational

bureaucratic dynamics. All these factors are necessary if the learning function is to take place successfully. In that way, [56] and [84] regard M&E as a management tool that supports the quality of information for use in decision-making processes, thus helping to build learning organisations [85,86].

9. Linking Monitoring and Evaluation Systems to Good Governance

There is an increasing linkage between M&E systems and good governance, which comes from providing governments and other stakeholders with the desired information on the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and quality of government policies, projects and programmes [43]. Information from M&E systems contributes to the enhancement of the public sector's accountability, feedback and learning functions. Here, good governance refers broadly to aspects such as accountability, transparency, combating corruption, inclusiveness and participation, and legal and judicial reforms [22,62]. This increase in demand for M&E information can be attributed to the increasing demand for good governance from providers of goods and services.

For the past two decades, internal and external development stakeholders have pushed their governments for results, demanding outcomes and impact of implemented policies, programmes and projects. These stakeholders are asking for evidence-based feedback on the status of current and ongoing development interventions. For example, since the mid-2000s, M&E has become more popular among international development organisations and the focus has since been on results and impact of development assistance [13,87].

An M&E system provides evidence-based information that is important in informing development policy processes such as planning, targeting, prioritisation, budgeting and expenditures [88]. A similar argument is posited by [89] and [67] that M&E systems are important and relevant not only to individual development agencies, but to many institutions and at different levels of development interventions and processes, regardless of their size and location.

As a result, countries around the world seem to have consensus on the urgent need for functional WoGM&ES as useful tools for promoting good governance and poverty reduction. To that extent, observations have shown that many countries are building and implementing M&E in pursuit of satisfying growing needs from their citizens and other interested stakeholders [70]. Although these efforts are justifiably being implemented at various levels of development owing to divergent in-country dynamics, that something was being done signified how M&E has been accepted globally as an essential ingredient towards improved public sector management, poverty reduction and overall sustained good governance practices. The benefits associated with M&E come from the use of a range of tools that are supposed to be applied appropriately, depending on the nature of an intervention. Reference [43] points out that M&E uses ongoing or continuing performance monitoring, real-time evaluations supporting continuous learning at all levels of development, performance and financial audits and ex-post evaluations. Furthermore, one of the collectively agreed positions in the 2000 report titled 'Can Africa claim the 21st century?' was that improved governance among African countries was one of the most basic requirements for fast-tracking the African development results-based agenda. The report argued in support of improved management, better distribution of economic resources, stronger institutions and programmes that make it possible to compel governments accountable to their citizens [23,90].

Good governance is not an abstract notion; it is a way of conducting affairs that are in the public interest and should be democratically enriching [91]. Good governance relates to a way of doing things or conducting activities that are proper, transparent and accountable. Furthermore, researchers at the World Bank distinguished six dimensions of good governance, namely voice and accountability, government effectiveness, lack of regulatory burden, rule of law, independence of the judiciary, and control of corruption [92].

M&E thus plays a significant role in the transformation process of public sector management systems by inherently advancing the ideals of good governance. Reference [62] affirms that M&E strengthens concepts of transparency, accountability and improvement at strategic and operational levels and that these resonate well with the tenets of good governance. Further, according to [29,93], M&E has been known to support performance management at various levels, thereby contributing to a results-focused approach by providing methodological options in support of the performance management process itself. In addition, Figure 1 shows fundamental conditions that are useful for supporting and measuring good governance, of which effective M&E systems is a crucial aspect.

Figure 1. Fundamental conditions for supporting and measuring good governance (Source: Naidoo, 2011, p.21)

10. Conclusion

The focus of this work was to stress an emphasis that African countries and their governments were struggling to meet governance and public management expectations of different stakeholders on the basis of lacking functional monitoring and evaluation systems. The paper discussed the concepts of 'monitoring' and that of 'evaluation'. It articulated M&E in the context of good governance in pursuit of a results-based sustainable development. In particular, the paper discussed reasons for governments, particularly of African countries to invest in building and sustaining functional and results-based WoGM&ESs to give a holistic picture of the experienced and perceived benefits of embracing M&E at various levels of governance. If governments and their development counterparts fail to develop functional systems for M&E, the cost would be huge. The point was made that governments need to dedicate more time and resources to strengthening institutional and human capacities towards building stronger and more sustainable WoGM&ESs. For African governments and other development stakeholders, the paper presented a solid foundation on which not only to inculcate M&E skills in a few technical people, but to reform the entire culture of governance, one that would be driven by strengthened WoGM&ESs. The study concludes that functional M&E systems are a missing vital in the African transformational development agenda and improving these systems will unlock many challenges faced by this resource endowed continent.

11. Recommendations

African countries and particularly governments and citizens will need to grow the demand for development results. Suggestions would include the following:

- **Institutionalise M&E championship**: The responsibility of growing, nurturing and driving the culture of results should be rooted in the presidency. This should be pursued under the managing for development results (MfDRs) approach. The presidency would then be seen as giving the 'sermons' to incentivise the rest of the stakeholders in the country in supplying quality M&E information and creating demand for its utilisation. Sustained over successive political administrations, such championship at this level will go a long way towards attaining stronger and successful WoGM&ESs.

- **Put in place leadership and ownership of M&E systems**: M&E champions and other capacities are required at country level, particularly in all apex institutions. Powerful ministers and other top leaders in these institutions will be expected to offer support towards the M&E function. Therefore, top government leadership will need to spur the spread and development of M&E systems at decentralised levels.

- **Create common or unified M&E systems within and across economic blocs**: Starting with the African Union (AU), there is need to put in place an M&E framework, with a robust indicator system that guides continental development goals and

objectives. In that regard, each bloc should design and implement a framework for M&E that work as a mechanism to implement programmes, projects and policies common to the member states in the bloc and beyond. Thus, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA), Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD), East African Community (EAC), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) will each need robust M&E arrangements.

- **Introduce stronger laws for M&E**: There is need for clearer 'stiffened' laws in support of M&E and results orientation. Starting with national M&E policies, there is need for constitutionally supportive M&E legislation in all African countries. This law should be able to capacitate and compel all public institutions, including the presidency, national apex institutions and decentralised government structures, to adhere to RBM through the implementation of a stronger WoGM&ES. These laws should include freedom of information, which will allow evidence to be reported on all development aspects of public interest.

- **Create synergies between government and training institutions**: Capacity-building, especially specialised skills in M&E was found to be a big challenge for most Africa countries' WoGM&ESs. Professionals and practitioners of M&E still face practical difficulties with regard to provision of high quality analysis and complete M&E products that satisfy stakeholder information requirements at all levels. It is suggested that government will come up with stronger and institutionally sustainable synergies and collaborations with local training institutions to provide skills in evaluation analysis and process. In return, training and research institutions will be innovative by developing state-of-the-art programmes and courses meant to meet the growing M&E industry in the country. In that regard, a policy to guide this process may be developed to institutionalise M&E at all critical educational levels of the country's educational system. The private sector can too be challenged by policy to play a significant role of localising and building results-oriented culture in Africa.

- **Establish an incentive structure for the consumption of M&E information**: A lack of incentives to stimulate the supply and demand of M&E information across the WoGM&ES was common. All levels were reported not to have any form of incentive in place to promote the use of M&E information. Incentives are significant to a successful M&E system, particularly in encouraging the strengthening of the supply and demand sides. Therefore, it will be useful to identify stakeholder-appropriate incentives that will spur the use of M&E information by stakeholders at all levels across the WoGM&ES. The incentives will have to work at all levels. Regardless of whether they are

carrots, sticks or sermons, they will need to be carefully enforced across the WoGM&ES in a non-selective and discriminatory manner. A range of incentives such as technical, political, financial management and skills training could be developed.

- **Reform and transform the national statistical function**: The transformation of WoGM&ESs will be possible only when an equivalent transformation takes place under the national statistical systems. Collaboration between WoGM&ESs and statistics systems is key. Therefore, governments, working in collaboration with stakeholders, will be required to invest in statistical functions and ensure the WoGM&ESs and statistics systems complement each other.

- **Create national and sub-national indicator systems**: Given the complex development work that governments have to do, such systems would clarify which priority measurement indicators to track at national, line ministry, provincial, district and sub-district level. In the absence of indicators, it becomes a matter of guesswork as to what informs decision and policy making at those levels without evidence from M&E systems or national statistical systems.

- **Re-engineer the National Monitoring and Evaluation Associations**: Some African countries have in place communities of practice (CoP) for M&E in the name of national M&E associations. Although these are platforms for practitioners of M&E and those interested in the field, they need to be anchored on stronger national level leadership (that is, state and non-state). National, line ministry, provincial and district level M&E practitioners would need to take proactive roles and responsibilities in strengthening the M&E function in the country.

- **Enhance the oversight role of parliaments at all levels:** National Assemblies have a constitutional mandate to represent the citizens in issues of development and human rights. Parliament makes laws and approves government spending. These roles and responsibilities give parliament a unique development mandate. For that reason, their M&E role across the WoGM&ESs will be crucial. Parliaments will need to demand for M&E information from across public and private sectors.

- **Avoid implementing parallel donor M&E systems**: In many African countries, it was reported that donors were in the habit of maintaining their own parallel M&E arrangements. This practice was said to weaken WoGM&ESs, whereby, instead of collectively supporting the national system for M&E, donors spent money on creating ICT-based systems that catered only for their work related information needs. In enhanced WoGM&ESs, donors would be expected to work with governments through unified national M&E work plans.

- **Transform the education system to being results focused**: Among the key gaps found in most WoGM&ESs in Africa are lack of analytical skills, inadequate in-depth M&E skills and generally the lack of champions for M&E in government. Even among non-state actors, the challenges were

reportedly similar. There was also a lack of results-based media reporting, particularly media coverage that highlights government achievements. Therefore, academia has an opportunity to help resolve the gap by vigorously introducing programmes and courses with development results-based content. This will mean developing academic level-specific and tailored M&E and RBM programmes and courses to address the skill gaps in the country.

- **Create strong competencies in undertaking development evaluations**: Not only do governments undertake limited number of evaluations, but the skills and expertise needed to carry out quality evaluations were lacking in and outside governments. Private sector consulting firms and individuals will be needed to provide practical M&E services. Evaluation practice and competencies will go a long way towards supporting and sustaining the countries' WoGM&ESs and ultimately in creating a culture of results through people's access to and use of information from the evaluations.

- **Reform media news towards results-based management**: Mass media plays a significant and central role in nation building and development. In their effort to implement transformational, robust and sustainable WoGM&ESs, the governments will be required to invest in promoting and supporting a media regime shift.

- **Develop and institutionalise M&E frameworks in all political party manifestos and constitutions:** In Africa, the executive arm of government is led by politicians who are sponsored by a political party of their choice and affiliation. These political organisations are legally registered entities required to operate within the confinements of the laws—even national constitutions. Thus, aside from listing many promises of deliverables to the people, there was lack of clarity on an organised way of implementation and measurement of such promises if or when they assumed power. Priority development areas, impacts, outcomes and outputs expected, indicators as well as targets become essential elements of success to be clarified in party specific constitutions, manifestos and M&E plans.

- **Introduce and sustain a culture of streamlined planning and budgeting for results**: While efforts are being made to simplify the planning and budgeting processes, especially through Public Finance Management (PFM) reforms, more clarity was needed on ways to actualise these policy provisions. For instance, practical challenges were reported in linking, sequencing, articulating and developing national visions, NDPs, MTEFs, annual budgets, sector strategic plans, provincial and district plans. Studies focused on making the linkages between planning and budgeting processes would enhance the results-based culture in Africa.

- **Identify the technical and political aspects of M&E in Africa**: The WoGM&ESs will need to be strengthened on the supply side and the demand side. However, doing so will require in-depth understanding of all critical operational and technical issues surrounding the systems. Although

technical issues may seem obvious to identify, political aspects may be complex to identify and resolve. As a bearer of good and bad news, M&E may not always go well with those tasked to design and implement M&E systems. Thus, more research studies will be required to understand currently unclear perspectives of M&E, so that ways are found to simplify the articulation and design of M&E arrangements.

- **Develop and implement a robust exchange programme with best M&E practising countries and organisations**: Putting in place a functional WoGM&ES is neither a one-off activity nor a short- or medium-term undertaking. It must be seen as a continuous and long-term endeavour of building, reviewing, strengthening and participatory process. As individual African countries work to build their national systems for M&E, there would be need to learn from other countries (within & outside Africa) with success stories in implementing WoGM&ESs through structured collaborations.

- **Establish financing architecture for the WoGM&ESs:** One of the outstanding reason given for weak M&E implementation across country WoGM&ESs for Africa's public sector pertains to inadequacies and in many instances lack of finances. The current budget support approach seems to fall short of the desired investment in creating a thriving country system for M&E. Innovative financing options which will help government and its stakeholders to practically deal with the current financial resource challenge are needed. An in-depth study may bring out salient alternatives to the M&E financing architecture for Africa. Such an M&E financial support strategy will for instance ascertain where resources to evaluate the NLTV, NDPs and strategic programmes and projects will be sourced from and give predictable estimates of expenditure. The alternatives will need to be robust enough to tackle resource challenges not only at national level, but institution-specific level as well. This suggestion comes in the light of research responses that acknowledged of sustained institutional failures to adequately plan for M&E activities.

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