

Opportunities and Challenges in Using Information from Zambia's Government Monitoring and Evaluation System

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Abstract To ascertain the opportunities and challenges in using information from Zambia's whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system (WoGM&ES) was the main aim of this research study. The study is premised on the conviction that the acquisition and use of information from M&E is what lacks in key development decision- and policy- making development processes. Thus, the Zambian government would do well to strengthen the M&E function and improve its culture of using results across the public sector. The research approach taken was investigatory and descriptive. Two analysis tools were employed for data collection, collation, discussion, drawing of conclusions and recommendations as well as presentation—a diagnostic tool and the LEADS scoring system. While Zambia's public sector system for M&E was in place, it was found to be weak in many ways. Efforts to improve the system were acknowledged by several stakeholders but clearly, the M&E gaps still left much to be desired if the country's use of evidence to inform development processes was to match expected local and global standards. Using results from the diagnostic checklist and the LEADS scoring system, useful insights critical to assist the Government of Zambia and other stakeholders have been identified and espoused. Thus, national and decentralised level-government structures, civil society, parliament, academia, donors and other key stakeholders have been identified to be crucial partners towards enhancing the demand and use of information from M&E within and outside government. Collaborations by these stakeholders will lead to a strengthened WoGM&ES for Zambia's public sector.

Keywords: M&E Outputs, monitoring, evaluation, whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system, diagnostic checklist, LEADS scoring system, good governance, results-based, evidence-based, Zambia

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1. Introduction

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) as a tool for good governance has brought about a fresh look towards global efforts for socio-economic growth and development. Undertaken to operationalise the Results-Based Management (RBM) approach to development, M&E has earned itself a valuable place in almost every development space and action. To the extent that human life needed to be enhanced and bettered in a more structured and predictable way, M&E has been adopted by various stakeholders and development agencies to assist in achieving growth and development [1-7]. Unused M&E information is therefore good for nothing. This happens through provision of evidence-based information to feed into critical decision and policy- making processes at different levels of organisational development. Many scholars and practitioners

consider M&E as an amazing practice that offers a trio benefit to countries and agencies—accountability, feedback loops, and learning [1,5-17].

Perhaps it is significant to mention here that, M&E information which is collected, at any great cost, if not used is meaningless and a cost by itself to the very organisation or unit that gathered it. Thus, M&E information that is not demanded and used to inform higher-level processes becomes redundant and hazardous to institutional improvement and learning. However, evidence has shown that when used consistently, information from M&E has transformed development agencies and the wellbeing of people across the world. For that reason, the use of M&E information by stakeholders such as multilateral and bilateral agencies, governments, civil society, parliaments and donors become a necessity. In that regard, many governments and agencies have embarked on initiating, developing and sustaining M&E systems to generate evidence-based information for their

internal and external use [8,9,10,18-32].

The objective of this research was to undertake an in-depth diagnostic assessment and analysis of the demand and use of information from M&E across Zambia's whole-of-government M&E system (WoGM&ES). As a developing country, Zambia would significantly benefit from such a study by firstly gathering the opportunities and challenges in M&E practice and secondly by getting possible remedial actions to strengthen the WoGM&ES for the public sector. [33] 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. On that basis, the study sought to augment the crucial role played by M&E in development through stakeholder collaboration, networking and cooperation.

2. Overview of Zambia

Zambia is a land linked country with a surface area of 752,612 km². It is located in South-Central Africa and shares its borders with eight countries. These are the Democratic Republic of Congo to the north, Tanzania to the north-east, Malawi to the east, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south, and Angola to the west. Administratively, Zambia is divided into ten provinces, and a provincial minister administers each one. Each province is further subdivided into several districts, with the total number of districts currently standing at 116 [20,30,34,35].

The 2010 census estimated the national population at 13.1 million. The country has a young population, with persons aged 15 years and younger comprising 52.5 per cent of the total population. The sex distribution of the population is almost even, with women constituting 50.7 per cent of the total population. The average annual rate of population growth during the 2000-2010 intercensal period was 2.8 per cent, with the urban population growing at 4.2 per cent and the rural population growing at 2.1 per cent per annum [10,36,37]. The 2019 projected national population was estimated at 17.4 million [22,38]. Furthermore, the country is sparsely populated, with a population density of 17.6 persons per km². Although relatively more urbanised than most African countries, the majority (56.9 per cent) of the population reside in rural areas. However, the rate of urbanisation has continued increasing, with Lusaka Province leading in terms of absolute urban population growth (from 2.8 million in 2015 to 3.3 million in 2019). The urban areas in Zambia predominantly lie along the rail line that runs from Southern Province to Copperbelt Province in the north. Areas along the rail line are the focus of economic activity and development concentration in the country.

3. Methodological Approach

The objective of this research study was to find out the

status of demanding and utilising information from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) within and outside the public sector in Zambia. The study covered all levels of Zambia's whole-of-government M&E system (WoGM&ES) which include national, line ministry, provincial and district. In addition, other development institutions and agencies critical to supporting the role of M&E were also targeted—parliament, civil society, donors, academia, media, etc. Broadly, the study was qualitative and investigatory with appropriate methods, tools and techniques for the descriptive research. Data and information was collected using questionnaires and interview guides from all respondents within Zambia's public sector as well as from those outside government institutions. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews were used. In addition, observations on the operations of public sector institutions and agencies were also made to collect information regarding how M&E functioned across Zambia's WoGM&ES. Consequently, both primary and secondary data sources were used in the research. Secondary data sources involved various Government reports and policy documents such as annual progress reports, Vision 2030, national development plans, sector reports, economic reports and other expert institutional and individual reports. Several other scholarly books, articles, discussion papers, working papers and research papers from experts and practitioners of M&E were used. Further, more information was gathered from primary sources, who comprised of government and non-state officials involved in M&E activities and institutional operations (key informants). Principally, the respondents were drawn from government line ministries, cabinet office, parliament, office of the auditor general, provinces, districts, academia, civil society, and development partners and donors.

The study adopted the analytical tool known as LEADS which consists of a 5-point scoring scale to guide data collection, collation and analysis (Table 2 below gives details of the LEADS scoring system). The LEADS system was used together with the diagnostic checklist which comprises of various assessment dimensions and questions. Other techniques used for synthesising and enriching the research discussion and analysis include the Nvivo software and thematic text analysis.

4. Analytical Framework

Assessing the demand and use of information from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in Zambia's whole-of-government M&E system (WoGM&ES) formed the basis for this research study. In close reference to the set objectives, this diagnostic study assessed and tracked what worked, what did not work well, and possibly why. The findings then helped to inform suggestions for further learning and improvement. We adopted two analytical frameworks/tools, which are; (i) the use of an assessment/diagnostic checklist comprised of five (5) dimensions for assessing the status of using information from M&E by various state and non-state actors. The five dimensions included the following: M&E Outputs; Effective use of M&E by donors; Effective use of M&E at central level; Effective use of M&E at local level; and

Effective use of M&E by outside government actors. (ii) the use of the LEADS scoring system, a five-point scoring system for each dimension in (i). The components in the 5-point LEADS scoring system include: **L** (Little action: 1), **E** (Elements exist: 2), **A** (Action taken: 3), **D** (largely Developed: 4), and **S** (Sustainable: 5).

In terms of application, the assessment checklist in (i) was used together with the LEADS scoring system, whose components correspond with the elements in the checklist. Therefore, the diagnostic checklist firstly was administered to all study respondents as well as used to undertake document reviews. Responses for each component in the diagnostic checklist were compiled in readiness for

Discussion and analysis. Secondly, the LEADS system

was used to assess the findings by way of scoring. The scoring was done following all responses obtained under each component in the checklist. Further, triangulation of techniques and tools assisted to reduce the subjectivity of the information collected and enriched discussion and analysis.

Each of the 5 components has detailed questions which were employed to generate evidence of the status of the demand and use of M&E information by stakeholders. This diagnostic checklist was used to conduct a comprehensive review using primary and secondary data sources from government documents and other expert sources. After data and information were collected, the LEADS scoring system was used to score each component (see [Table 1](#) below).

Table 1. Diagnostic checklist for country level use of information from M&E

No.	DIMENSION	QUESTIONS
1	M&E Outputs	Is there a presentation of relevant M&E results? Are results compared to targets? Is there an analysis of discrepancies? Is the M&E output differentiated to different audiences?
2	Effective use of M&E by donors	Are donors using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs? Is the demand for M&E data from donors coordinated?
3	Effective use of M&E at central level	Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Is it an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy?
4	Effective use of M&E at local level	Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Is it an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy?
5	Effective use of M&E by outside government actors	Are results of M&E used as an instrument to hold government accountable?

Adapted from Holvoet & Renard, 2005.

Table 2. LEADS scoring method for assessing country use of information from M&E outputs

Dimension 1: M&E outputs	
Scores	Questions
1 There is no presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are not compared to targets. There is no analysis of discrepancies. The M&E output is not differentiated towards different audiences.	Is there a presentation of relevant M&E results? Are results compared to targets? Is there an analysis of discrepancies? Is the M&E output differentiated to different audiences?
2 There is a presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are not compared to targets. There is no analysis of discrepancies. The M&E output is not differentiated towards different audiences.	
3 There is a presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are compared to targets. There is limited analysis of discrepancies. The M&E output is not differentiated towards different audiences.	
4 There is a presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are compared to targets. There is analysis of discrepancies, but analysis is still weak. The M&E output is differentiated towards different audiences. or There is a presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are compared to targets. There is in-depth analysis of discrepancies. The M&E output is not differentiated towards different audiences.	
5 There is a presentation of relevant M&E results. Results are compared to targets. There is in-depth analysis of discrepancies. The M&E output is differentiated towards different audiences.	

Dimension 2: Effective use of M&E by development partners	
Scores	Questions
1 Development partners are not using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs. The demand for M&E data from development partners is not coordinated.	Are donors using the outputs of sector M&E systems for their information needs? Is the demand for M&E data from donors coordinated?
2 Development partners are using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs, but rather in an ad hoc way. The demand for M&E data from development partners is not coordinated	
3 Development partners are systematically using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs. The demand for M&E data from development partners is not coordinated	
4 Development partners are using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs, but rather in an ad hoc way. The demand for M&E data from development partners is well coordinated. or Development partners are systematically using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs. The demand for M&E data from development partners is coordinated, but coordination could be improved.	
5 Development partners are systematically using the outputs of the sector M&E system for their information needs. The demand for M&E data from development partners is well coordinated	
Dimension 3: Effective use of M&E at central level	
Scores	Questions
1 Results of M&E activities are not used for internal purposes. It is not an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at central level.	Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Is it an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at central level?
2 Results of M&E activities are used for internal purposes, but rather in an ad hoc way It is an instrument of policy-making, hardly of policy-influencing and advocacy at central level.	
3 Results of M&E activities are systematically used for internal purposes. It is an instrument of policy-making, hardly of policy-influencing and advocacy at central level. or Results of M&E activities are used for internal purposes, but rather ad hoc It is an instrument of policy-making and policy-influencing and advocacy at central level.	
4 Results of M&E activities are systematically used for internal purposes, but use could be more intense. It is an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at central level.	
5 Results of M&E activities are systematically used for internal purposes. It is an instrument of policy-making, policy-influencing and advocacy at central level.	
Dimension 4: Effective use of M&E at local level	
Scores	Questions
1 Results of M&E activities are not used for internal purposes. It is not an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at local level.	Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Is it an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at local level?
2 Results of M&E activities are used for internal purposes, but rather in an ad hoc way. It is an instrument of policy-making, hardly of policy-influencing and advocacy at local level.	
3 Results of M&E activities are systematically used for internal purposes. It is an instrument of policy-making, hardly of policy-influencing and advocacy at local level. or Results of M&E activities are used for internal purposes, but rather in an ad hoc way. It is an instrument of policy-making and policy-influencing and advocacy at local level.	
4 Results of M&E activities are systematically used for internal purposes, but use could be more intense. It is an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at local level.	
5 Results of M&E activities are used for internal purposes. It is an instrument of policy-making and/or policy-influencing and advocacy at local level.	

Dimension 5: Effective use of M&E by outside government actors	
Scores	Questions
1 Results of M&E are not used as an instrument to hold government accountable.	Are results of M&E used as an instrument to hold government accountable?
2 Results of M&E are used as an instrument to hold government accountable, but only limitedly and only by a few outside government actors.	
3 Results of M&E are used as an instrument to hold government accountable, but only by a few outside government actors.	
4 Results of M&E are used as an instrument to hold government accountable by several outside government actors, but use could be more intense.	
5 Results of M&E are intensively used as an instrument to hold government accountable by several outside government actors.	

Source: Adapted from Holvoet, Inberg and Sekirime, 2013.

The second analytical tool used was the LEADS Scoring system which as earlier indicated corresponds with the diagnostic checklist above. Table 2 below shows the detailed LEADS scoring system showing its five-point scores (1-5) for the use of information from M&E.

5. Summary of Diagnostic Results

The overall results of the assessment for the use of information from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) by different stakeholders within and across Zambia's whole-of-government M&E system are shown in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Summary presentation of diagnostic results for the use of M&E information

COMPONENT	DIMENSION	SCORES
		Overall 1 (little action taken)
Use of Information from M&E Outputs	M&E Outputs	2 (elements exist)
	Effective use of M&E by donors	1 (little action taken)
	Effective use of M&E at central level	2 (elements exist)
	Effective use of M&E at local level	1 (little action taken)
	Effective use of M&E by actors outside of Government	1 (little action taken)

Source: Diagnostic study score results compiled by authors (2020).

In Table 3, we can note that the overall score of 1.4 (rounded up to point 1) was given to the overall assessment of the 'use of information from M&E'. The diagnostic results show that while M&E outputs may be available, their access and utilisation for management functions remain challenging across government structures and institutions outside government. Thus, the effective use of M&E outputs at local or decentralised levels scored a dismal 1- point (little M&E action was taken). Similarly, the effective use of M&E outputs by actors outside government scored 1- point, while the use of M&E at central level had a 2-point score. Again, these low scores suggest that currently the WoGM&ES did not inspire the demand for and utilisation of M&E

information for decision- and policy-making processes by key stakeholders in the country. In all, the presentation of these results opened up a number of discussion points. The positive aspects and the gaps would both stimulate opportunities to identify and strengthen aspects of Zambia's WoGM&ES, particularly the demand side of M&E information and use of evidence across the public sector. Taking time to consider these aspects in the assessment would generate critical action points. The next section unpacks this overall finding by giving details that provides clearer guidelines towards strengthening the use of information from M&E products across the public sector and beyond.

6. Discussion and Analysis

This section presents detailed study findings as well as discusses and analyses the results by giving a holistic picture of status regarding what works, what does not work and to some extent why so. For consistency and in conformity with the study design, the five dimensions as depicted in Table 3 are used as headings.

Dimension 1: M&E Outputs

The M&E outputs dimension was given a score of 2.0, denoting that elements exist. The diagnostic checklist sought to find out whether there was a presentation of M&E results, based on clear targets. The study also checked whether there was an analysis of discrepancies and whether the M&E outputs were differentiated according to audience. Further, the utilisation of information from the WoGM&ES by donors and whether they demanded M&E data in a coordinated manner was assessed. At national and decentralised level, the study sought to assess whether results of M&E activities were used effectively for internal purposes and as instruments of policy making and policy influencing and advocacy. As for the effective use of M&E by actors outside government, the study assessed whether results of M&E were used as instruments to hold government accountable. The review also checked the availability of M&E outputs in meeting the information needs of stakeholders. Questions included: Is there a presentation of relevant M&E results? Are results compared to targets? Is there an analysis of discrepancies? Is the M&E output differentiated to different audiences? These questions

were useful in understanding the M&E outputs at all levels of the WoGM&ES.

The assessment showed that there is a presentation of M&E results to some extent. As much as possible, results were compared with targets. However, the review indicated that there was limited analysis of discrepancies. In addition, the M&E outputs were not differentiated for audiences. According to [28,39,40,41], there was need for implementing agencies to give feedback on the implementation of development interventions in their jurisdiction. Such information therefore would be useful to inform development processes, including policy making and decision making. Monthly management monitoring reports, quarterly reports and annual reports were key M&E outputs that Ministries, Provinces and other Spending Agencies (MPSAs) were expected to produce. Apparently not all agencies produced such reports.

The NDPs reviewed singled out APRs as key outputs in the implementation of national plans and in the realisation of Vision 2030. In the APRs, performance results were compared with the targets as much as possible although in many instances, information was lacking to undertake such analytical comparison. This was made possible through the use of an indicator system, whereby KPIs were agreed upon by stakeholders during the preparation of an NDP. Progress was then tracked cumulatively and measured against the set targets [21,25,28]. To some extent, analyses of discrepancies were made and possible attributions highlighted. Although outputs were prepared to meet the needs of stakeholders, they were not simplified enough to be used by all stakeholders. The reports were reported to be written primarily to meet the needs of government institutions [27,34,35,42]. APRs were reported to have content inadequacies in that they were based solely on monitoring information received from the sectors. They did not contain evaluation findings [43]. This was attributed, among other reasons, to few evaluations being commissioned to supplement the monitoring information. Coupled with this was the reference to the lack of a dedicated budget to fund evaluations. Further, it was mentioned severally that there were no multi-year evaluation plans at district, provincial, sector and national level [21,37,43,44,45]. Therefore, because of the content and analytical gaps in the APRs, the utilisation of these documents by stakeholders was low and fragmented.

Catalogues of outputs for the WoGM&ES were acknowledged to be available only at national level and in a few line ministries. Lack of a published catalogue of all outputs was acknowledged as a weakness that kept away many stakeholders and possible users of M&E information. Such information lapses led to policy and decision-making processes being undertaken without evidence at all levels of governance [10,18,35]. However, this was not a common practice in institutions and levels across government, though many MPSAs maintained clearly defined outputs. Where output catalogues were available, it was reported that their regular updates were not easy to establish across the MPSAs.

It was reported that calendar schedules for outputs were in place, though irregular, particularly for 7NDP implementation. Only calendars for selected outputs were acknowledged to be in place. This was said to have been

developed in MS Excel after the publication of the Implementation Plan (volume II of the 7NDP). Whether calendar output schedules were advertised to the public and stakeholders was not clear. Only plans to circulate the calendar to stakeholders were stated to be in place. It was gathered that the release of outputs to all interested parties was not done simultaneously. For APRs, only a limited audience was reached during the launches, while many others were not. This was similar to other institutional reports. A few uncoordinated disseminations in the provinces and a few districts were also reported. While these outputs were disseminated, not all users had equal access. It was acknowledged that not all stakeholders had access to hard copy reports. At the same time, not all users across government had Internet connectivity to access the reports on institutional websites. This situation limited the accessibility and utilisation of M&E information, particularly in advocacy, decision- and policy-making processes. In many cases, it was acknowledged that sources, methods, and procedures related to the production of outputs were published and available, but only to some users. However, this was done only by embedding these elements in the reports. Many stakeholders remained unaware of these reports. Zambia's WoGM&ES did not have an arrangement in which products were available in various formats. It was stressed that suitable products to meet the information needs of decentralised structures were not available. Therefore, these gaps explained why the WoGM&ES was still in its infancy stage, with many aspects needing attention [19,46].

Similarly, no dissemination or communication strategy was mentioned for outputs produced by the WoGM&ES. None of the actors in the system were linked to any such strategies. Currently, only ad hoc dissemination arrangements existed, which were determined mainly as and when there was a report to disseminate. For instance, there was no national forum on which the dissemination of the content of the report would be made and particular issues of public development concern clarified. However, the MNDP was creating a strategy to disseminate M&E outputs from the WoGM&ES. No systems or arrangements apparently existed to maintain and disseminate M&E information except for ideas and plans within the MNDP (the central agency). Therefore, the aspect of whether such systems were friendly did not arise.

Dimension 2: Effective use of monitoring and evaluation by donors

This dimension was scored 1.0 point, signifying only little action taken. While the availability of designated M&E outputs was an important aspect to take into account, their utilisation was paramount. Therefore, the effective utilisation of M&E outputs by donors is a critical element in the diagnostic checklist for a successful M&E system. Key questions included: Are donors using the outputs of the WoGM&ES for their information needs? Is the demand for M&E data from donors coordinated? It was revealed that donors were using the outputs of M&E systems for their information needs, at least to a limited extent. Further, the demand for M&E data from donors was apparently not fully coordinated. APRs were produced from sector reports on progress in the implementation of programmes in NDPs. Thus, donors were expected to use APRs and sector reports (which are

M&E products) to meet their information needs. The review of APRs and sector reports showed weak evidence in the utilisation of M&E system information by donors. The demand for information by donors was also uncoordinated [24]. According to [7,24,47,48,49,50,51], such practices or weaknesses in the WoGM&ES motivate donors to maintain parallel M&E systems to satisfy their own information needs.

Dimension 3: Effective use of monitoring and evaluation at central level

A score of 2.0 denoting elements exist was given for this dimension. Another significant demand for M&E outputs is at central level. Accordingly, the checklist sought to establish these aspects: Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Are the results an instrument of policy-making and policy-influencing and advocacy at central level? [14,38,52,53]. Central-level institutions herein refer to agencies such as ministries of finance, planning, and cabinet office. The review showed that results of M&E activities were used for internal purposes, but in an ad hoc way. To some extent, M&E results were an instrument of policy making, but hardly of policy influencing and advocacy at central level. The NDPs indicated that results from M&E activities were supposed to inform and influence development processes such as planning, budgeting, decision-making, and policy making. There was some evidence of utilising M&E information in the planning process of NDPs (for example 7NDP benefited from APRs, reviews and evaluations). In addition, there was a weak mention of utilising M&E information in the APRs to inform budgeting processes by MPSAs. But no evidence was found of utilising M&E information to influence policy or advocacy at central level.

Dimension 4: Effective use of monitoring and evaluation at local level

For this dimension, a score of 1.0 was given, representing little action taken. The demand for and utilisation of M&E information at local or decentralised levels was also deemed important. In the checklist, these questions are asked: Are results of M&E activities used for internal purposes? Are M&E results an instrument of policy making and policy influencing and advocacy at local level? [14,53,54,55]. In the diagnosis, it was found that results of M&E activities were used for internal purposes, but in an ad hoc way. It was an instrument of policy making, but hardly one of policy influencing and advocacy at local level. As at central level, NDPs indicated that results from M&E activities were supposed to inform development processes. There was evidence of M&E information being utilised in preparing NDPs (for example, 7NDP benefited from APRs, reviews and evaluations). In addition, there was a weak mention of information being utilised in the APRs to inform budgeting (at sector and provincial level only). However, no evidence was found in the review of utilising M&E information at local level, particularly at district and sub-district level [10,18,19,20,22,34,56].

Dimension 5: Effective use of monitoring and evaluation by actors outside government

The score given for this dimension was 1.0 - little action taken. The effective use of M&E by actors outside government was another key aspect under the checklist.

This question was asked: Are results of M&E used as an instrument to hold government accountable? The question is fundamental in providing accountability information that is key to further processes such as informing decision and policy making at various levels of government. The results of M&E were reported to be utilised, but to a limited extent and by only a few actors outside government, such as civil society, parliament and donors [24,39,40,42]. Furthermore, no clear evidence was found of the use of results from M&E by actors outside government in the documents (NDPs, APRs, and sector reports). However, there was only an ad hoc mention of a few actors outside government using information from M&E (few members of the civil society and professional development bodies such as Civil Society for Poverty Reduction, Economics Association of Zambia) [12,37,42,43,46,57,58,59,60].

7. Conclusion

This study was a diagnostic analysis of Zambia's whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system (WoGM&ES). The diagnosis was about assessing the use of information from monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes and outputs. The motivation of the study was on the basis that, for M&E to be of perceived necessity to development discourses, the demand and use of information from M&E itself by various state and non-state actors was important.

Using the two analysis tools—the diagnostic checklist as well as the LEADS scoring system, Zambia's WoGM&ES was found to be weak particularly with regard to the demand and use of information from M&E (with overall score of 1.0). This meant that only elements of the demand and use of information from M&E existed across stakeholders. While some aspects were found to be stronger than others, the study has established that the country needed some extra efforts in ensuring that public efforts were made on the basis of informed decisions. Study evidence has shown that the effective use M&E information by donors, decentralised local level structures (provinces, districts & sub-districts) and by actors outside of government remained weakest and fragmented.

8. Recommendations

The research recommends the following for improving the demand and use of information from M&E across Zambia's WoGM&ES:

- **Institutionalise M&E championship beginning with the presidency:** The responsibility of growing, nurturing and driving the culture of results in the country should be rooted in the presidency.
- **Establish a national evaluation structure:** There is need to introduce an evaluation culture through spearheading the conduct of strategic evaluations for strategic projects, programmes and policies. Again, the presidency is expected to take the lead in the transformation towards a results-based and focused Zambia.

- **Create feedback mechanisms:** While a formalised and mandated structure to handle strategic national evaluations is extremely important, creating mechanisms that guarantees action on recommendations from these evaluations is of equal significance.
- **Put in place leadership and ownership of M&E systems in strategic public institutions:** One of the gaps identified in this study concerns inadequate or lack of evidence of M&E leadership at national level. M&E champions and other capacities are required at national level, particularly in all apex institutions—Cabinet office, ministries responsible for finance and planning, auditor and accountant general’s offices, etc.
- **Introduce stronger legislation for M&E function:** The supreme law of the land in Zambia is the national constitution. In addition, several accompanying pieces of legislation are aimed at helping to actualise the contents and aspirations articulated in the national constitution. There is need for a clearer ‘stiffened’ law in support of M&E and results orientation.
- **Create synergies between government and learning/training institutions:** Capacity-building, especially specialised skills in M&E was found to be a big challenge for Zambia’s WoGM&ES. 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.
- **Create information-sharing fora for inter-institutional M&E experiences:** This study has established that only limited M&E products were in place across the WoGM&ES. The prominent one is the annual progress report (APR), which is a compilation of progress reports from ministries, provinces and other spending agencies (MPSAs). New innovations are required and these could include exchange ministry-to-ministry, province-to-province and district-to-district programmes, an annual national M&E symposium, a web-based M&E platform to resolve related questions, etc. The Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association (ZaMEA) could be used as an M&E information platform for practitioners.
- **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.
- **Reform and transform the national statistical function:** The transformation of the WoGM&ES will be possible only when an equivalent transformation takes place under the National Statistical System (NSS). Collaboration between the WoGM&ES and the NSS at all levels was found to be weak, adhoc and fragmented. Therefore, the government, working in collaboration with all its stakeholders, will be required to invest in the statistical function and ensure the WoGM&ES and NSS complement each other.
- **Enhance the oversight role of parliament at all levels:** The study findings have shown that only weak and fragmented linkages existed between parliament and other MPSAs in Zambia. Efforts through innovations and initiatives will need to be promoted so that functional linkages between parliament and all other levels of development are strengthened.
- **Ensure collaboration and coordination mechanisms are functional:** Civil society organisations are an important stakeholder partner in the development process of Zambia. It will be important that deliberate initiatives should be identified and implemented to strengthen the linkages between government and civil society. In particular, M&E collaboration and coordination efforts between government and civil society will need to be strengthened.
- **Develop a joint national M&E work plan to support the WoGM&ES:** An M&E work plan is a detailed framework that is fully costed. As the study findings have shown, donors are involved in supporting the development of the WoGM&ES through provision of financial resources and technical services. Financing and technically supporting a common plan for M&E will entail strengthening the WoGM&ES.
- **Transform the education system to being results focused:** Among the key gaps reported in the current WoGM&ES for Zambia 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. Academia has an opportunity to help resolve the gap by vigorously introducing programmes and courses with development results-based content.
- **Create strong competencies in undertaking development evaluations:** The findings of this study have shown that the culture and practice of evaluation in Zambia remains poor, and in many cases non-existent. Evaluation practice and competencies will go a long way towards supporting and sustaining the country’s WoGM&ES 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:** The media will be expected to always search for evidence on development processes. All media houses would be expected to offer a wide range of evidence and remedial action to resolve the issues.
- **Develop and institutionalise M&E frameworks in all political party manifestos and constitutions:** A review of manifestos and constitutions for the

major political parties in Zambia indicated that none of them had any explicit articulation of an M&E arrangement (e.g. constitutions & manifestos of the Patriotic Front (PF), United Party for National Development (UPND) & Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD)). 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. The absence of M&E frameworks then undermines party messages and electorates would deem such promises as mere political rhetoric, propaganda and sheer vote-seeking. Adherence to good governance tenets equally gets compromised.

- **Transform political leaders into M&E Champions, focused and committed to a culture of results:** For M&E to be well institutionalised and used as an instrument of good governance, political championship will be a necessary requirement for Zambia's WoGM&ES. Such leaders as presidential candidates and senior party officials for every political party/organisation will need to play the role of M&E champion. That way, Zambians will be given an opportunity to get results-based party manifestos and messages and engage in meaningful debate as to the direction the country was taking developmentally.
- **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 Zambia works to build its national system for M&E, there would be need to learn from other countries with success stories in implementing whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation systems through structured collaborations.
- **Re-establish a financing architecture for the WoGM&ES:** One of the outstanding reason given for weak M&E implementation across the WoGM&ES for Zambia's public sector pertains to inadequacies and in many instances lack of finances.

Innovative financing options which will help government and its stakeholders to practically deal with the current financial resource challenge are needed.

- **Re-engineer the public sector planning architecture focused on development results:** M&E function thrives on good and results-oriented planning. The findings of this research have revealed that plans across government structures (that is, at national, line ministry, provincial & district) are currently fragmented and in some cases missing. There were many line ministries with outdated strategic plans while others either were implementing draft plans or had no official plans. The situation was worse at provincial and district level where barely a few of them had up-to-date plans. Thus, these gaps demand that all planning at

all levels of government—national, line ministry, provincial, district and sub-district should be responsive to a results-based planning.

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