




**TWENDE MBELE**

GUIDELINE

# **Establishing M&E Systems in African Parliaments**

DECEMBER 2021

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	<p><b>Guideline on Establishing an M&amp;E System in Parliaments in Africa</b></p> <p><b>Final Copy</b></p> <p><b>December, 2021</b></p>
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<b>Addressed to</b>	Parliaments in the African Region
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>The guideline aims to be a foundational document that will be adapted to different country contexts and used as a platform for discussion and adoption in the national monitoring system of Twende's country-level partners.</p> <p>The main purpose of this project is to draw on the expertise and learning of our partners produce a 'how to' guide on establishing an M&amp;E system in parliament.</p>
<b>Objective of the guideline</b>	To provide practical guidance for governments in Africa on establishing an M&E system in parliament

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Evaluations have increasingly been used by policy makers to make value judgements on the efficacy of public policies (Filgueiras & Queiroz, 2021; Weible et al., 2011) while parliaments, through the oversight function in particular, play a central role in holding the executive accountable for the effective delivery of public policies. It is therefore surprising, given this convergence of objectives, that monitoring and evaluation practice within parliamentary evidence systems is not as widely institutionalised as expected. One explanation could be the accountability mandate exercised by parliament over executive arm. Due to this oversight and the requirements it imposes, there is an incentive for more institutionalisation by government departments of evidence-based mechanisms in general and evaluation systems in particular. As such, parliaments consume and use evaluations without necessarily establishing the systems and architecture for conducting their own evaluations (Leeuw & Furubo, 2008). In addition, evaluation has emerged as a practice scrutinizing programs and policies implemented by organisations working on program effectiveness, driven by implementation of US government departments, eventually spilling over into aid and policy effectiveness work (Kenny, 2011). However, parliaments are structured differently - institutional arrangements in parliaments maintain longstanding, legalistic tradition built around rules and procedures that differ greatly from other spheres of government and organisations in general, which raises the question whether monitoring and evaluation as practiced by these organisations (and monitoring and evaluation systems as designed for the NGOs and executive government departments) are compatible with parliaments. Furthermore, does this mean that parliaments should not evaluate and instead rely on existing accountability mechanisms already in place? These questions are partly answered in the rationale section below.

### 1.1 RATIONALE FOR MONITORING & EVALUATION SYSTEMS IN PARLIAMENTS

An increased role of parliaments in institutionalising monitoring and evaluation in the public policy arena is emerging as key in public policy discourse. In executing the accountability role, parliaments are key consumers and users of evaluations from the executive arm of government, NGOs, CSOs and other suppliers of evidence for policy making (Speer et al., 2015). Therefore, parliaments can be key drivers for increased utilization of evaluations at various stages, parliamentarians request for evaluations to be conducted as part of oversight or legislation work done through parliamentary committees, the submission of written questions or during plenary, debates and question time (Zantsi, 2020a).

By their very nature and as a result of their oversight mandate, parliaments are a receptacle for vast amounts of evidence gathered in the course of executing government business. The national budget cycle by itself draws data from government departments in various forms and formats in a year long cycle while the oversight and legislative processes running simultaneously generate data traffic. Therefore, the value added by a monitoring and evaluation system, lies in how the system can systematically organise existing mechanisms, using appropriate methodologies and drawing from specialised units within such as the parliamentary budget office, research departments and parliamentary libraries to streamline the extensive array of reports, policy briefs, budget analysis notes that members of parliament and parliamentary committees work with, into a broader narrative that spells out policy imperatives

and highlights the short, medium and long term results of policy and programs implemented by the state in line with national development plans (Holvoet & Renard, 2007).

Parliamentary work is often conducted in an environment driven by partisan politics which can have implications on the design of a monitoring and evaluation system within parliament. Often in such environments, evidence can be weaponised to meet the political agendas of various groups. It is therefore important to have a monitoring and evaluation system that leverages technical knowledge and expertise to independently deliver results while navigating the intricacies of a political and bureaucratic environment (Speer et al., 2015)

In addition, parliaments could play a critical role in transmitting norms and values crucial for the uptake of monitoring and evaluation practice across the public sector. Studies show that often, institutions and organisations that value merit, knowledge and organizational improvement, tend to establish evaluation systems (Mark & Henry, 2004). While there is growing recognition by African parliaments that this gap needs to be closed, there is an opportunity for parliaments to lead this process by cultivating value-based objectives that privilege policy knowledge and evidence-based policy making (Blaser Mapitsa et al., 2020). There are examples of how parliaments have highlighted the importance of monitoring and evaluation in policy agenda setting by instructing through laws and clauses, for evaluations of policies and programs to be conducted while in some cases, evaluation of legislation occurs as a result of a parliamentary probe or request (Bussmann, 2010). It is possible therefore that through parliament's existing systems and structures, an evaluative culture can be harnessed and channelled through the institution itself and across government that underpins and sustains the emergence of monitoring and evaluation systems across the public sector.

Learning is another important rationale for parliaments to establish evaluation systems. Parliaments have overarching systemic vision and are charged with the mandate to oversee policy, holding the executive accountable in the delivery of public services (Mark, 2010). Monitoring and evaluation systems in parliaments can streamline the myriad of processes involved in generating technical knowledge in a political environment, providing efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy and allowing for corrective action and promoting targeted development of state capacity, as a result of learning from past mistakes (Patton, 1988). At the organizational level, the parliament itself could benefit from an evaluation system that looks inward to promote organizational learning with similar gains on efficiency and organizational improvement (Presman & Wildavsky, 1984).

## 1.2 OBJECTIVES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY M&E SYSTEMS GUIDELINE NOTE

This guideline note on establishing evaluation systems in parliaments draws on the technical understanding we have gained from studying monitoring and evaluation systems in parliaments and across governments, work led by Twende Mbele and facilitated through a partnership with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results- Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) in the Strengthening Legislative Oversight program and taking what we know about parliaments generally and specifically the African national and regional parliaments to present preliminary guidance on establishing evaluation systems in parliaments. The objectives of this guideline note are to;

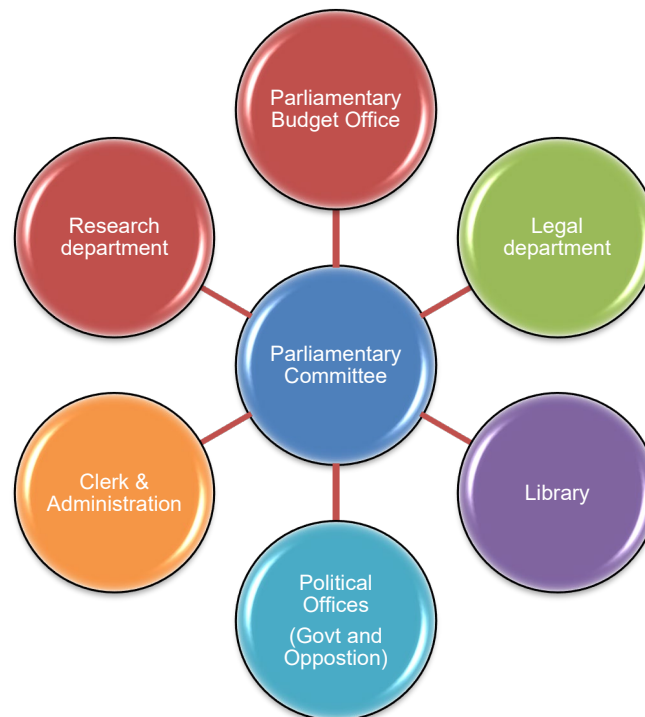
- (i) Provide an overview of the parliamentary institutional environment indicating the key institutions necessary in the parliamentary monitoring and evaluation system.
- (ii) Highlight the technical and political considerations of establishing a Monitoring and Evaluation system in a political and bureaucratic environment.

- (iii) Emphasize the importance of the unique institutional form of parliaments, primarily the work done through committees and its influence in the design of an M&E system.

### 1.3 THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE: A DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC FOR THE TECHNICAL WORK OF PARLIAMENTS

It is important to note that defining characteristics of parliaments such as their unique institutional form and the political environment will influence the administrative and technical workings within parliament and will most likely determine variations in evaluation systems as they emerge in parliaments (Vedung, 2009). Central to this idea is the institution of the parliamentary committee and its potential use as an engine for the operationalisation of an evaluation system in parliaments. In general, parliamentary committees convene parliamentarians from across party lines to conduct oversight and legislative work and also bring together the key technical and administrative units – research, parliamentary budget office, legal, library, political offices that support the technical knowledge generation and administration within parliaments, a great resource for those interested in introducing evaluations within this system. The illustration in Figure 1 provides a simplified and not at all universal depiction of how parliamentary committees are interconnected with the various departments across parliaments, allowing them to receive support and deliver work through these channels.

**Figure 1: Parliamentary Committees interconnection to technical structures**



## 2.0 KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

### 2.1 What we mean by monitoring

Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds(OECD, 2001). Monitoring gives information on where a policy, program, or project is at any given time (and overtime) relative to respective targets and outcomes. It is descriptive in intent(Kusek & Rist, 2004).

### 2.2 Evaluation

An evaluation is an assessment, conducted as systematically and impartially as possible, of an activity, project, programme, strategy, policy, topic, theme, sector, operational area or institutional performance. It analyses the level of achievement of both expected and unexpected results by examining the results chain, processes, contextual factors and causality using appropriate criteria such as relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. An evaluation should provide credible, useful evidence-based information that enables the timely incorporation of its findings, recommendations and lessons into the decision-making processes of organizations and stakeholders (UNEG, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Evaluation gives evidence of why targets and outcomes are or are not being achieved. It seeks to address issues of causality(Kusek & Rist, 2004).

### 2.3 Evidence

Knowledge that has been gained by employing a systematic and transparent approach(Eberli, 2015). Available body of facts or information indicating whether a belief or proposition is true or valid(Shaxson, 2019). Can also include knowledge gained from practical experience and community-based or citizens.

### 2.4 What we mean by a system

A “system” is defined as *a group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent elements forming a complex whole* (The Free Dictionary, 2007), and “systems thinking” is about gaining insight into the whole by understanding the linkages and interactions between the elements that comprise the whole system (Senge, 1990). Applying such a systems approach to M&E systems building, it requires identifying the components of the system (understanding that they are interrelated) as a means to describe the system; and ensuring that each component is functional to ensure that the system is functional (Goergens & Kusek, 2010). Simister (2009) defines a M&E system as a *‘series of policies, practices and processes that enable the systematic and effective collection, analysis and use of monitoring and evaluation information’*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNEG Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2017, <http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.intrac.org/resources.php?action=resource&id=663>

The growth in popularity of M&E within the state is as a result of both external and internal demands, and have become the tool that has been recognised for its potential in helping parliaments become more adept at their oversight role, both for compliance, accountability and governance, as well as for genuine learning and performance improvement in the state. Previous studies show that the role of legislatures in overseeing the implementation of policies and programmes by the executive is an inherently evaluative one. Tracking whether budgets are spent appropriately, targets are met (monitoring) and assessing whether the lives of citizens have been changed for the better (evaluation) are at the core of what legislatures do (Zantsi, 2020b, p. 1).

It is important to note that defining characteristics of parliaments such as their unique institutional form and the political environment will influence the administrative and technical workings within parliament and will most likely determine variations in evaluation systems as they emerge in parliaments (Vedung, 2009). Central to this idea is the institution of the parliamentary committee and its potential use as an engine for the operationalisation of an evaluation system in parliaments. In general, parliamentary committees convene parliamentarians from across party lines to conduct oversight and legislative work and also bring together the key technical and administrative units – research, parliamentary budget office, legal that support the technical knowledge generation and administration within parliaments, a great resource for those interested in introducing evaluations within this system.

### 3.0 FUNCTIONS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) SYSTEMS

M&E systems are essential components of the governance structure—and are thus fundamentally related to the political and power systems of government. An M and E system can serve various functions (Kusek & Rist, 2004): the M&E system aids in thinking about and clarifying goals and objectives; governments and stakeholders can also use M&E systems for formulating and justifying budgetary requests; help identify potentially promising programs or practices; help managers identify program weaknesses and take action to correct them. M&E systems can help strengthen governments by reinforcing the emphasis on demonstrable outcomes.

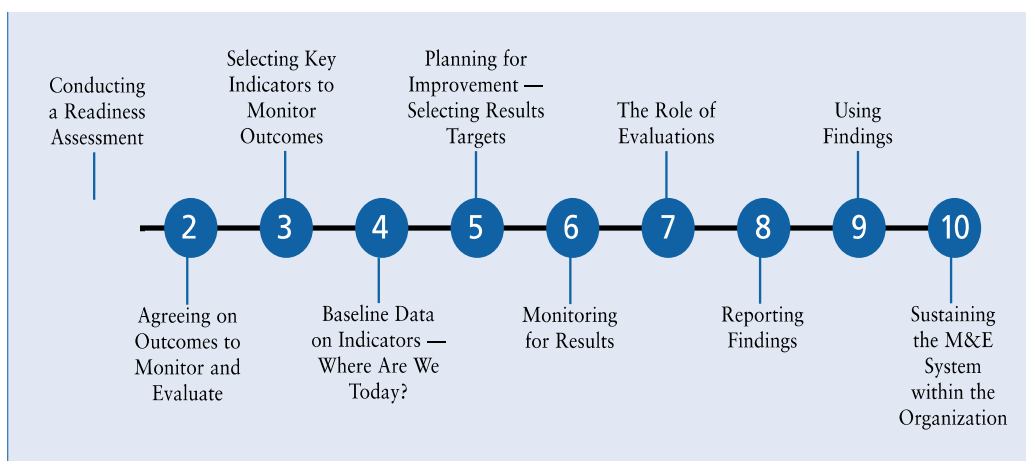
Good M&E systems enable governments and organizations to develop a knowledge base of the types of projects, programs, and policies that are successful, and, more generally, what works, what does not, and why. Information on progress, problems, and performance are all key to a public manager striving to achieve results.

M&E systems can also aid in promoting greater transparency and accountability within organizations and governments. Beneficial spillover effects may also occur from shining a light on results. External and internal stakeholders will have a clearer sense of the status of projects, programs, and policies. The ability to demonstrate positive results can also help garner greater political and build trust in a government that is striving to better the life of its citizens.

#### 4.0 WHAT CAN BE THE COMPONENTS OF AN M&E SYSTEMS

The World Bank manual *Ten Steps to Results Based Management* (Kusek & Rist, 2004) provides a useful, practical, and readable framework which shifts thinking toward M&E systems rather than tasks. It was written specifically for a government audience and assumes complex operational portfolios. Kusek and Rist emphasize that M&E should not be thought of in terms well beyond design of logframes and selection of indicators, but rather in terms of a spectrum of systems for quality reporting, analysis, learning, and long-term sustainability of the framework itself (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Ten Steps to Designing, Building and Sustaining a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation System**

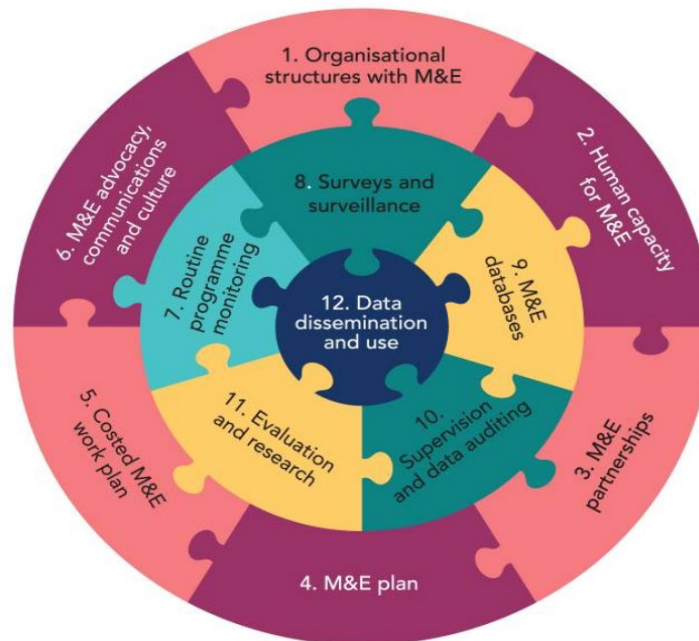


Kusek and Ray, 2004

In 2006, the World Bank additionally published *Eleven Components of a Fully Functional HIV M and E System*. This components have since been expounded into 12 by the United Nations AIDS Agency (UNAIDS) Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group (MERG) (UNAIDS, 2009). While this tool from UNAIDS was developed for organisations working on HIV/AIDS, they have become relevant and broadly applicable in international development illustrated in Figure. 3.

The 12 Components of a Functional M&E System offers a framework for what a strong M&E system looks like and how the system works (Goergens & Kusek, 2010).

**Figure 3: The 12 Components of a Functional M&E System**



UNAIDS, Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group, 2009

While the two approaches are broad and widely used in international development, the unique contexts of parliaments need to be considered. This guideline aims to harness the importance of M and E systems in parliaments and lays a framework on the “*how to*”.

## 5.0 WHAT IS AN M&E SYSTEM IN PARLIAMENT AND WHEN IS A M&E SYSTEM RELEVANT

While there has been increasing recognition of the importance of M&E systems in bolstering systems of governance and accountability with national governments yielding more support towards developing national M&E systems (Mackay, 2009), the nuanced understanding of M&E systems in the parliamentary context remains scant. Moreover, M&E functions in parliaments remain uncoordinated and mostly sporadic (Zantsi, 2020). M&E systems, therefore, serve critical roles in ensuring there is a structure and clearly defined institutional arrangements stating the roles and responsibilities that different stakeholders contribute to the system.

There have been growing efforts to institutionalise M&E systems in parliaments, evidenced by the drive to establish more national evaluation policies (NEPs) as critical anchors of M&E systems across the continent (Chirau et al., 2021). Zantsi (2020) asserts the centrality of parliaments institutionalising their M&E functions for more effective oversight. Notably,

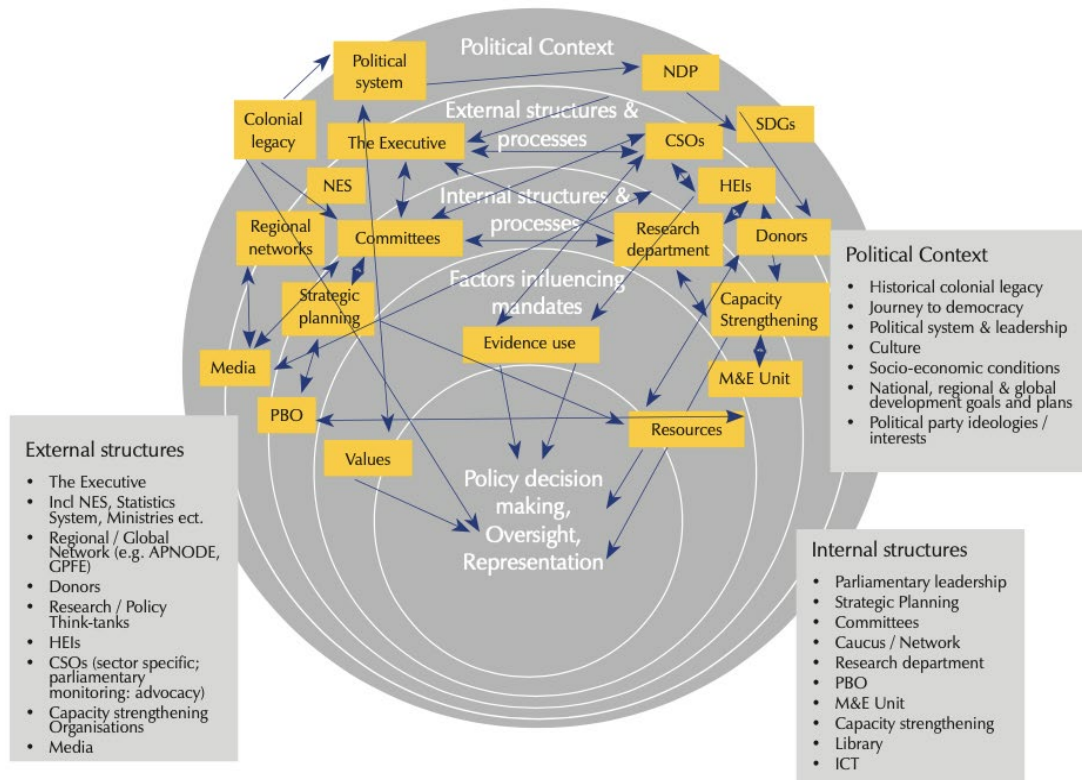
establishing M&E systems in parliaments is core to institutionalising their inherently evaluative roles. Zantsi (2020) further argues that institutionalising M&E cultivates the use of evaluative results for decision making by parliaments, promotes the need for MPs to demand evaluations, and harnesses the need for parliaments' self-assessments measuring their effectiveness in undertaking their core mandates. The relevance of M&E systems in parliaments can be viewed through a threefold lens, i.e., Firstly, M&E *by* parliament, which looks at the external focus of M&E, i.e. on the executive's performance and programmes performance. Secondly, the M&E *of* parliament involves the internal focus on parliament's performance towards their core mandates (Blaser-Mapitsa et al., 2020). Finally, applying an *evaluative lens encompasses assessing* the credibility of potential evidence brought to parliament to advance EIPM towards informed development outcomes. Therefore, MPs have critical roles in selecting evidence for use in decision making. As seen, this selection is not solely on technical grounds as evidence selection, and use is inherently based on political factors, e.g. political party expectations and incentives (Khumalo et al., 2021). Importantly, M&E systems in parliaments are unique from more general systems, given their need to exist within an appreciation of the parliamentary context as a contested political space with not one standardised structure or institutional arrangements.

It is essential to recognise the intrinsic relationship between systems of evidence use and M&E systems in African parliaments. M&E systems in parliaments are a critical bedrock of the broader evidence systems. Rabie and Ajam (2021) illustrate four key *evidence systems* components in African parliaments that provide a valuable framework for conceptualising and locating parliamentary M&E systems. These are: (i) the macro-political and external context such as structures and processes that shape evidence in parliaments, e.g. the type of parliament and the nature of democracy in a country, (ii) the micro and internal parliamentary structures such as the capacity and individual MPs incentives that support/hinder evidence in parliaments, e.g. political party commitments, (iii) interventions that seek to strengthen evidence systems in parliaments and finally, (iv) the M&E function of parliaments which assesses parliaments performance against their core roles. Notably, these components make up an ecosystem of evidence use in parliaments that needs M&E systems to function, i.e., M&E systems hold all the pieces together through providing a structured frame of understanding that guides how parliaments manoeuvre the different internal and external factors surrounding them to perform their core mandates. The institutionalisation of these processes is defined through M&E systems.

M&E systems, in essence, anchor an evidence-informed policy making (EIPM) practice in parliaments. They are systemic in nature, i.e., they involve various stakeholders, institutional arrangements, frameworks, and policies that interact to deliver parliaments mandates. Notably, these institutional arrangements differ across parliaments; for example, parliaments with fewer resources may not be as well endowed with M&E units, Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs), specialist researchers, and other structures that support the M&E function of parliaments. Masvaure et al. (2021) provide a valuable illustration of the components of systems of evidence

use in parliaments consisting of the political context, internal and external structures and how these interact to share parliaments performing their core roles as provided in Figure 4.

**Figure 4: Components of systems of evidence use in parliaments**



They further highlight the disparities in parliamentary contexts and debunk a reductionist, non-linear approach to understanding parliamentary systems.

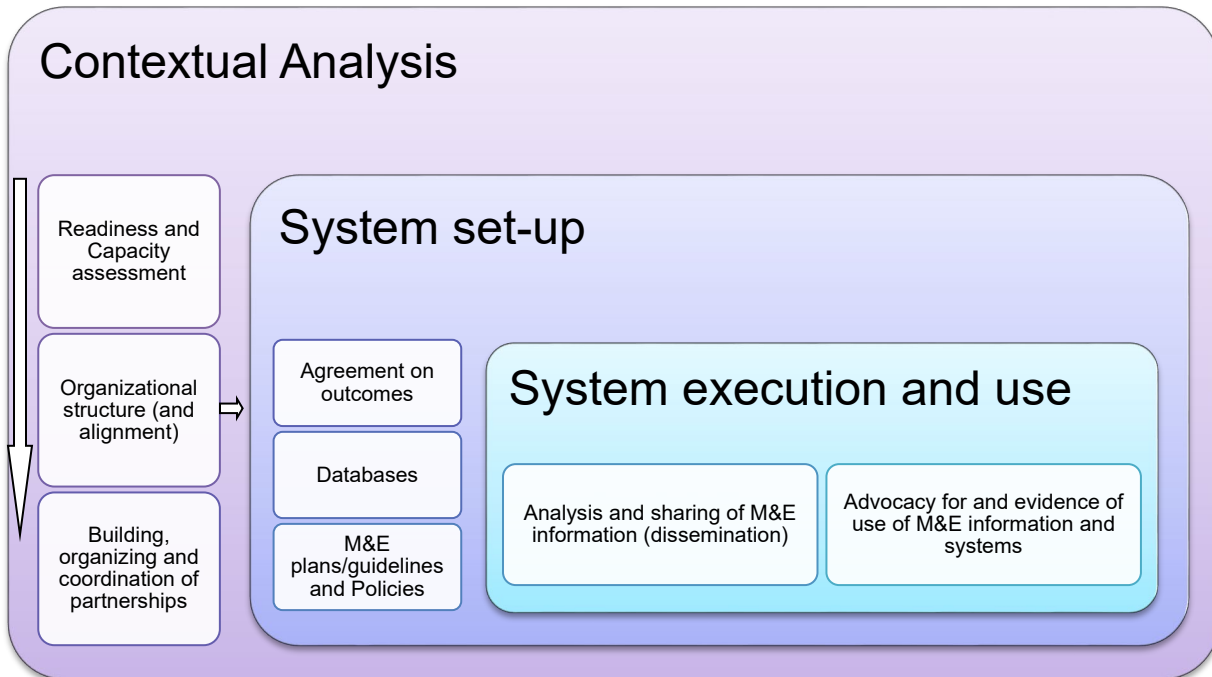
The significant and notably nuanced role of M&E systems in regional parliaments such as the EALA and ECOWAS need to be recognised and strengthened. Regional parliaments have critical contributions to make in fostering regional economic and political integration through oversight, representation and legislation. As such, their interaction with national parliaments and evidence brokers and producers is important. While the PAP and ECOWAS have taken strides towards establishing M&E capacity and dedicated staff in their parliament, this is still a work in progress with the EALA.

Thus, a design of M&E systems in parliaments needs to reflect the context's complexity and the myriads of role players involved that shape parliamentary functions. A linear approach to M&E systems would not work in the parliamentary context. Thus, this guideline takes into consideration the variations across parliaments. Moreover, the interconnectedness of the different elements is critical to the functioning of the system.

## 6.0 PROCESSES TO DEVELOPING AN M&E SYSTEM IN PARLIAMENT

Drawing from the literature, Figure 4 lays out the building blocks to guide establishment of M and E systems in Parliaments.

**Figure 4: Building blocks for establishing an M and E System in Parliament**



**Source: Authors**

Drawing from Figure 2, the first step, **readiness assessment**, seeks to determine the **capacity and willingness** of the organization to construct an M and E system. This starting point would help parliaments examine the status of the M&E **demand and the supply side factors** (Kusek and Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007). The demand side focuses on who are the users of M&E information, what are their needs for decision-making and the extent to which they use the M&E information; in this case members and committees of parliament whilst the supply side is concerned with the mechanisms/processes in place to effectively provide timely and reliable M&E information to users (Bedi et al., 2006; Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012) for example the outputs from research, budgetary office, legal advisors and monitoring and evaluation units. This assessment addresses such issues as the **presence or absence of champions**, the **barriers** to building a system and **who will own it**, and **who will oppose it**. An important precursor activity is the **identification of M&E champions and counter-reformers (resistors)**. Champions located in senior positions in administration such as the Office of the Speaker, Office of the Leaders of Opposition and Government business and Office of the Clerk are integral to the sustainability of the M&E system (Mackay, 2007; Bedi et al., 2006; Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012) since they can advocate for M&E and manage the counter reformers within the internal system (Kusek and Rist, 2004).

The type of organizational structure in place and the extent to which it supports the type of M&E

mandate of the organization is critical. In terms of **organizational structure (and alignment)**, Görgens and Kusek (2009) highlighted the importance of M&E roles and functions as the first component. This can be in the form of formally established units, positions, or M&E roles and responsibilities explicitly included in the job descriptions of existing key staff positions. Parliaments of Uganda, Zambia and South Africa have specific M and E units while Kenya, Ghana and Malawi parliaments designate M and E responsibilities within the research units. Bedi et al. (2006) and OECD/DAC (2006) advocate the importance of the M&E mandate of the agency being explicitly enshrined in legal frameworks. This is seen in Uganda where the National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy specifically delineates the role of parliament in M and E and sets a requirement for establishment of M and E units and functions within parliament within the wider M and E framework. These collective elements promote better alignment between the structure and operations of the organization and the requirements for a functional M&E system. Building M and E capacity of stakeholders at the organizational and system levels to perform the M&E functions effectively and efficiently is critical. To sustain a functioning M&E system as step two of the 10 Steps, it is important that the skills gaps are known (Kusek & Rist, 2004). This can be done with **capacity assessments** and hiring of relevant technically trained officers or **ensuring capacity building** (Görgens and Kusek, 2009; Mackay, 2007). Parliaments of Kenya, Uganda and Nigeria have in place Parliamentary Training Institutes that can play this critical role of undertaking M and E capacity needs assessment and building.

**Building, organizing and coordination of partnerships** with development partners, research institutions, lobby groups and other members of civil society should also be promoted since they serve as suppliers and/or users of M&E information (Bedi et al., 2006; Görgens and Kusek, 2009). The Zimbabwe Evidence Informed Policy Network (ZeipNET) play a central role in building capacity to use evidence for parliament staff. Further, engaging development is essential to ensure that the M&E system reflects their needs, which will promote development partners' alignment with and use of national M&E systems thereby promoting the aid effectiveness agenda (Bedi et al., 2006; OECD/DAC, 1991) and the same could be argued for engaging the other critical stakeholders. Other examples of such partnerships is the Data for Accountability Project in the Parliament of Ghana. **Coordination** includes mechanisms to promote inclusiveness of key stakeholders and can be promoted through the establishment of appropriate institutional arrangements, which should include a secretariat or coordination unit and technical working groups comprising relevant stakeholders such as line ministries, local government, civil society and statistics office (Bedi et al., 2006). The parliaments of Uganda and Zambia instituted specific units that coordinate partnerships and external support to Parliament.

Step two of the Kusek and Rist (2004) framework advocates for the **agreement on outcomes** that are linked to national development agendas and are the result of a consultative process so as to build ownership, buy-in and awareness (Kusek and Rist, 2004). Outcomes should be clearly and explicitly stated since **indicators, baselines and targets** (stages three, four and five) are related to and/or deduced from the outcomes. Notable is that indicators should be developed following a framework or criteria that allow it to be suitable for tracking the intended result (Kusek and Rist, 2004). Further, a key feature of developing indicators is having in place an '**indicator protocol**', which is a detailed definition of the indicator such as its purpose, rationale, method of measurement, data collection method and frequency, disaggregation etc. and it should be included in the M&E Plan (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). Parliament of Uganda has in place a Legislative Performance Index (LPI) as an example of an indicator protocol.

It is also important for **databases** to be in place to house the data pertaining to indicators and the scope of the database should be guided by the evaluation questions identified in the M&E plans, as well as routine monitoring data such as program finances and activities (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). An important aspect of data management is that the **quality of the data** is safeguarded through the implementation of guidelines/protocols and standards. Having high quality information enhances the use of it (Mackay, 2006; Görgens and Kusek, 2009; Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012). Lopez-Acevedo et al (2012) argue that the quality of the information coming out of an M&E system is positively correlated to the sustainability of the system. Parliaments of South Africa and Kenya have in place strong databases for tracking parliamentary business though there is still a great need for enhanced IT systems for the management and optimal usage of the databases.

Stage six and seven are focused on monitoring and evaluation, respectively. Monitoring requires that **M&E plans/guidelines** be in place to provide guidance on data treatment (collection, analysis, reporting, quality control, dissemination and transparency) and assignment of roles and responsibilities (Kusek and Rist, 2004). Görgens and Kusek (2009) further expanded that for national M&E systems, it is important that agencies contributing to the overall system have linkages between their organization's M&E plan and the national M&E plan. Parliaments of Malawi and Zambia are good examples where clear guidelines have been developed to promote M and E and evidence use in decision making. A key dimension to bring life and sustainability to the M&E system is to have a supporting costed M&E work-plan to accurately define time, human and financial resources needed (Görgens and Kusek, 2009). Further, the M&E system in parliaments need **devoted funding** for effective implementation (Görgens and Kusek, 2009: 231).

Stage seven on evaluation specifically promotes the **use of various types of evaluations** so that they can adequately answer the questions of the evaluation exercise and be able to amply inform decision-making (Kusek and Rist, 2004). More detailed guidance on the 'E' in M&E is provided by OECD/DAC (1991), which explicitly indicates the need for an **evaluation policy and guidelines** as well as upholding **independence and impartiality** in the evaluation process to promote credibility and use of the findings. Parliaments can use ex-ante evaluations (rigorous impact assessment) to provide information on the intended and unintended impacts of a law during the legislative process to determine who benefits and who is harmed. Using evaluations, parliamentarians can influence decisions regarding allocation of public funds. Ex-post evaluations are critical in the oversight function of parliament in assessing the results of government work. Parliaments of Uganda and Zimbabwe carry both primary and secondary, demand based and pro-active evaluations on government programmes to enhance independence of parliament.

Stage eight and nine supports the sustainability of the **demand side**. Stage eight advocates for adequate **analysis and sharing of M&E information (dissemination)** in the appropriate format to reach the intended users within suitable timeframes (who, what, how and when) (Kusek and Rist, 2004; OECD/DAC, 1991). Using the most **appropriate methodology** for the collection and analysis of M&E information is important for promoting accuracy the best suited methodology will obtain accurate data that measures what is intended to be measured. Parliaments of Ghana, Kenya and South Africa employ full reports, policy briefs, fact sheets and case studies as approaches in enhancing dissemination of M and E information. The innovation of evidence clinics and taking parliament to the people initiatives in the Parliament of South

Africa are worth learning from.

Stage nine places importance on the **use of timely M&E information** to support decision-making. Use of M&E information is considered the epicenter of the M&E system (Kusek and Rist, 2004; Mackay, 2007; Bedi et al., 2006). Low levels of demand for monitoring information also tend to impact on the supply of adequate information. If the results of monitoring are not sought out and used by policy makers and public sector managers, then monitoring comes to be seen merely as a bureaucratic burden, and compliance with monitoring procedures deteriorates (Bedi et al., 2006). Parliaments of Uganda, South Africa and Ghana have in place pre-determined parliamentary calendars to determine business of Parliament across the annual sessions of Parliament. The technical units need to keep track of business on the calendar and provide evaluation information in a timely manner. **Evidence of use of M&E information** manifests in various ways that should be kept in mind for the diagnostic exercise: adoption/implementation of recommendations, changes in budget/resource allocations, adjustments to programs and/or policy design, adjustment in institutional management practices (Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012). Coincidentally, these are also the mechanisms that provide incentives for building and sustaining M&E systems; that is, embedding the M&E system within the public policy cycle, national budgeting process and/or performance appraisals of ministries, departments and agencies, promotes demand for and use of M&E information (Lopez-Acevedo et al., 2012; Mackay, 2007). Further, in an effort to promote use of M&E information it is useful to have backstopping through **advocacy for and communication about M&E** (Mackay, 2007). This is critical for building an M&E culture that is conducive for the M&E system (Görgens and Kusek, 2009; Bedi et al., 2006). M&E culture [is a] shared set of values, conventions, or social practices about M&E. A positive M&E culture is where M&E is accepted, welcomed, encouraged and valued by all members of the team as an essential part of achieving implementation success (Görgens and Kusek, 2009: 228).

## 7.0 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS – WHAT WORKS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

### (i) Structural investments to support parliaments M&E systems

Structurally, the investment in M&E Units with core staff that focus on M&E in parliaments, as is the case in Zambia, Uganda, and South Africa, has been a critical success factor in ensuring the institutionalisation of the M&E function in parliaments. Moreover, establishing M&E frameworks in parliaments has been instrumental in allowing parliaments to internally track their performance towards achieving their core mandates which is a vital aspect of M&E systems. Investment in internal systems and processes for better infrastructure to support M&E systems cannot be overstated. This includes capacity building/training in M&E tools, methods, and approaches for researchers and MPs. Importantly, regional parliaments like the EALA also need to invest in dedicated M&E capacity, systems and M&E frameworks to support the institutionalisation of evidence. The establishment of M&E policies, and in some instances, a National Evaluation Policy (NEP), has also been instrumental in enforcing the practice of M&E in parliaments. Such has been the case with the parliaments of Uganda, Benin, South Africa, and the Government-Wide M&E system in Zambia. However, the formal linkages between parliaments and the national evaluation systems need to be strengthened to increase parliamentary demand for evidence and to ensure more systematic use of evaluations in decision making (Chirau et al., 2021).

## **(ii) Moving beyond technical to political and ideological factors to strengthen M&E systems in parliaments**

In designing M&E systems, the unique parliamentary context needs to be a critical consideration given parliaments' intrinsic political and fluid nature. One framework that has been useful to harnessing these considerations is the six spheres framework (Crawley, 2017) which illustrates the importance of a holistic approach that looks beyond the typical technical and logistical (more visible) elements of a system, moving into the deeper, more subtle components, i.e., the ideological/relational, political as well as value systems which shape how decision making occurs in parliaments. Consequently, such a holistic approach is imperative when designing an M&E system in parliaments, particularly as a more realistic /successful M&E system in parliaments considers the external layers/contextual political and value systems that shape M&E systems in practice. A parliament could, for instance, have renowned technical capacity and budget for supporting M&E practice. However, they could be constrained by political leadership that does not support a culture of evidence use and therefore has no drive for implementing M&E in practice. In some instances, particularly in the political context of parliament, M&E could be viewed as a direct threat as it may expose the ruling/opposition parties non-performance. Therefore, efforts towards establishing M&E systems could be met with great resistance. Evidence has shown the importance of parliamentary leadership, such as the speaker of the house being an evidence champion such as the parliament of Uganda and how this facilitates the adoption of a NEP and the practice of M&E in the parliament. The role of committee chairpersons in the uptake of M and E cannot be underestimated.

## **(iii)Championing M&E and an evaluative culture in parliaments**

The role of parliamentary continental networks and associations such as the GPFE, APNODE have been influential in advocating the importance of evaluative decision making and need mentioning. Also, national parliaments evidence forums such as the Kenyan Parliament's Caucus on Evidence-Informed Oversight and Decision-Making (PC-EIDM), APNODE national chapters existent in parliaments like Zambia and Uganda have been instrumental in driving an evidence use culture in policymaking.

In Kenya, the relationship between the Parliament of Kenya (through the PC-EIDM), The MED (Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate) and the Evaluation Society of Kenya (ESK) provides an important illustration of the role of VOPEs (Voluntary Organizations Professionalizing evaluations) in strengthening M&E systems in parliaments. For example, this collaboration has facilitated the sensitisation of MPs understanding their roles as inherently evaluative and their importance in demanding M&E evidence to make decisions and support the institutionalisation of Kenya's M&E policy. Similarly, the parliament of Zambia has increasingly strengthened its relationship with the MNDP (Ministry of National Development Planning) as a fundamental requisite to strengthen the G-wide M&E system. Such interactions between parliament, the executive and evaluators are critical to sustaining M&E systems in parliaments.

Cultivating an evaluative culture in parliaments, e.g., building internal capacity for engaging with evaluative information (Zantsi, 2020), nurturing champions, and fostering leadership buy-in are also critical factors to bolstering M&E systems in parliaments. Understanding the incentives for M&E practice and use is also vital (MacKay, 2009). Therefore, it is critical to establish guidelines on what M&E systems in parliaments consist of and document their significance to ensuring an evidence culture that supports principles of good governance such as transparency and accountability in policymaking.

#### **(iv) Facilitating peer learning between key stakeholders**

Another critical success factor worth highlighting is the model of peer learning and coordination between key stakeholders that work to support evidence systems in African parliaments. This approach informed the strengthening evidence use in African parliaments programme hosted by CLEAR-AA in collaboration with critical parliamentary and governance stakeholders such as AFIDEP, INASP, CPST, Twende Mbele and UN Women. The peer learning/exchange approach is worth sustaining and escalating to more parliaments as it provides a valuable platform for cross-sharing of best practices among MPs, parliamentary researchers, M&E and other support staff. Facilitating peer exchange across regional parliaments and between national and regional parliaments is critical to ensuring best practices are shared and practised towards strengthened M&E systems in African parliaments.

#### **(v) Collaboration between parliaments and critical stakeholders**

Ensuring coordination between critical external and internal stakeholders (as shown in figure 1 above) working with parliaments to facilitate evidence use is also essential for improved harmonisation of M&E processes in parliaments. For example, human rights institutions and oversight bodies in the parliaments of South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Uganda and Kenya, to mention a few, the rapid evidence centre at Makerere University in Uganda provides credible and timely evidence for parliamentary committees.

Moreover, watchdog organisations such as Mzalendo in Kenya and the Parliamentary Watch in Uganda are critical players in strengthening M&E systems in parliaments, given their role in harnessing accountability mechanisms between parliaments and citizens. Notably, African parliaments have increasingly become more creative in ways to engage citizens and ensure openness in parliamentary business, which is key to M&E systems, for example, Annual Parliament week in Uganda and Kenya and parliamentary constituency offices in Zambia, which facilitate citizen engagement in parliament processes and promote openness and transparency of parliamentary business is worth highlighting. For effective stakeholder engagement, barriers to entry/gatekeepers should be addressed. Structures should be put in place to ensure the easy/optimal flow of evidence from external stakeholders to MPs. Whether this be through parliamentary researchers, the M&E unit or library, systems should be formalised to ensure that evidence reach MPs. Gatekeeping of information can be a severe inhibitor to M&E implementation in Parliaments.

### **(vi)The good governance of evidence and acknowledging a values-based policymaking lens**

The *good governance of evidence* principle suggested by Parkhurst (2017) is valuable for ensuring that M&E systems in parliaments yield desirable results towards improved development outcomes. This involves a consideration of the multiple competing values and political-institutional contexts in parliamentary decision making. Furthermore, Blaser Mapitsa et al. highlight the significant role that values play in interpreting and using evidence in parliaments that should be considered in the development of parliamentary M&E systems. The centrality of values in decision-making is demonstrated by the different contestations parliaments face and how these shape EIPM. For example, the various political interests and values that define their work across multiple stakeholders may be met with power contestations that shape decision making. Consequently, successful M&E systems in parliaments should acknowledge and engage with the complex political context of evidence. Systems should be in place to ensure that parliaments can be monitored in terms of their use of evidence and their implementation of M&E systems. Having such systems in place would add healthy pressure on parliaments to implement M&E systems and base their engagements on evidence.

Parkhurst suggests advocating for rigorous, systematic, and technically valid pieces of evidence and ensuring that decision making processes are inclusive of and representative of the multiple social interests of citizens (Parkhurst, 2017 pp 9.). Therefore, citizen representation and gender, equity and social inclusion must be reflected and reinforced in parliamentary M&E systems.

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