



From Compliance to Learning

*Institutionalising Evidence Use for
Accountable Governance*

Lessons from the Twende Mbele Partnership with
Uganda

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Impact* | 8 May 2026



ABOUT US

What is Twende Mbele?

The Name

Twende Mbele – Kiswahili for "**Moving Forward Together**". A peer-learning partnership of African governments, not a donor project – country-owned and driven.

Our Goal

Strengthen government performance & accountability through M&E. Launched in Kampala, 2017 – Uganda a core partner from day one.



THE CASE FOR CHANGE

The Shift We Need

From Compliance

M&E driven by donor requirements. Tick-box exercises. Fear of revealing poor performance.

To Learning

M&E as a **management tool** for better decisions. Evidence used for planning, budgeting, and implementation. A culture where "not knowing" is the first step to learning.

What is Institutionalisation?

Translating a belief, norm or behaviour into **concrete, sustained action** within an organisation – where planning & budgeting are directly informed by credible evidence, and M&E is seen as a learning mechanism, not a threat.

Four Pre-conditions for Institutionalisation

Uganda has made progress on all four – especially through NIMES and the DMEI's sector reports. But gaps remain.

1

Planning & Resources

Evidence used for planning & resource allocation.

2

Learning Tool

Evidence perceived as a learning tool, not a compliance requirement.

3

Outcomes & Impact

Evidence assesses efficiency & effectiveness beyond outputs.

4

Leadership Champions

Managers champion evidence as a decision-support system.

M&E Culture Baseline Study (2017–2019)

1 — High Demand

Strong demand for evidence from ministers & senior managers across Uganda's government.

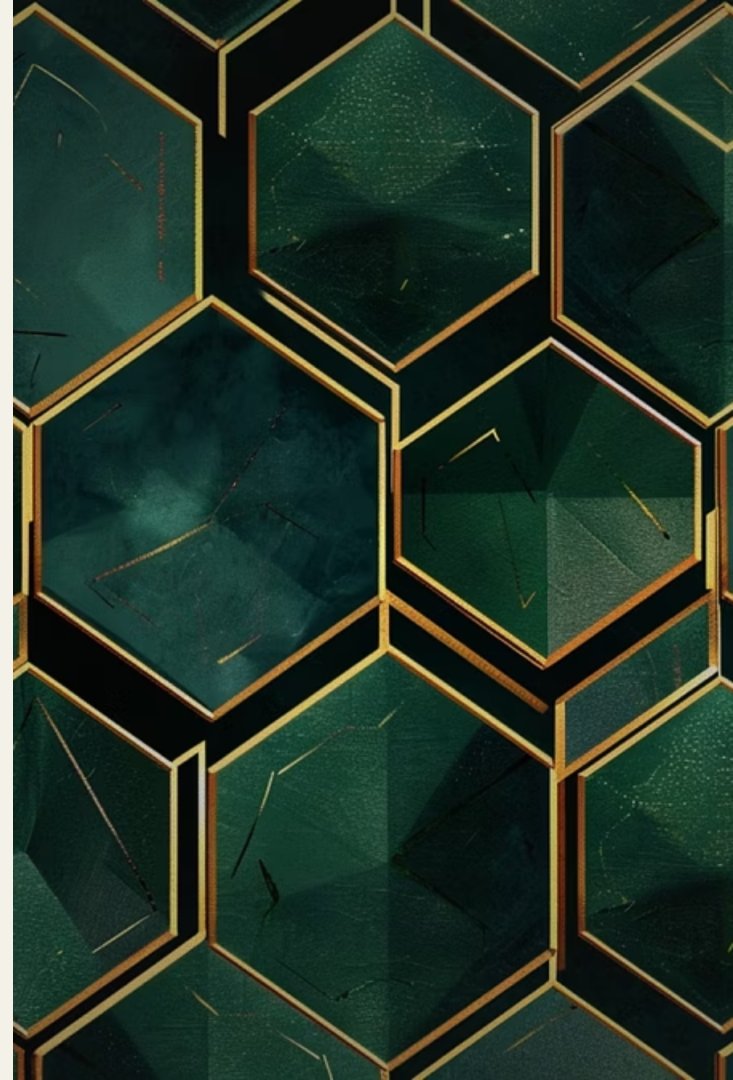
2 — ~30% Concealed

Approximately 30% of evaluation findings are concealed rather than acted upon.

3 — >50% Fear Mistakes

More than half of managers fear admitting mistakes – a culture of fear of accountability still overrides a culture of learning.

⚠️ These barriers are not unique to Uganda – they are behavioural and political, not merely technical failures.



What Blocks Institutionalisation?

Structural Barriers

→ Institutional Inertia

Bureaucratic resistance to change within established systems.

→ Fragmented Data Systems

Over-reliance on output-focused administrative reports.

→ Limited Capacity

Too few skilled people to analyse and apply evidence.

→ Political Inertia

Selective use of evidence to support pre-existing agendas.

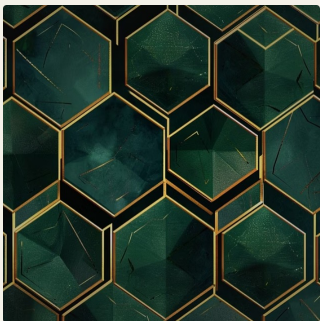
The Role of Power & Political Dynamics

"Power and political dynamics influence the rules and norms that govern evidence-use."

Leaders create policies that compel – or ignore – evidence use. Without leadership buy-in, even well-trained staff revert to old habits. Mental models matter: if using evidence is seen as costly or slow, no policy will change behaviour.

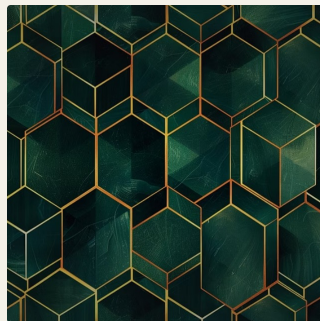
i Ghana adapted its training curriculum to include senior leadership – and saw better follow-through. Uganda can do the same.

Why Civil Society Matters



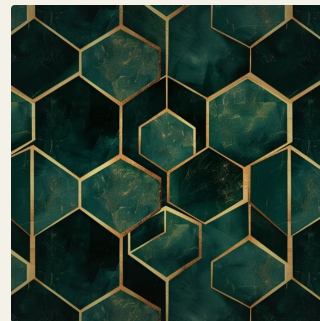
CSOs as a Hidden Asset

CSOs employ M&E professionals, commission evaluations, and often have **more advanced M&E systems** than government. They generate community-level data on outcomes & impact.



The Missed Opportunity

CSO participation in government evaluation systems is **limited**. Financial competition, fragmented M&E systems, differing ideologies, and lack of platforms all block collaboration.



Collaboration is Possible

We have seen it in the WASH sector gender-responsive training. The UEA and the forthcoming handbook are excellent platforms to strengthen these partnerships.

"Government tends to rely on internal admin reports – but CSOs can provide the outcome and impact lens that is often missing."



ACHIEVEMENTS

Twende Mbele – Three Concrete Achievements with Uganda

1

Rapid Evaluations

Toolkit designed and piloted with DMEI. Delivering timely evidence for health, agriculture, and policy adjustments.

2

Gender-Responsive Evaluation

2018 diagnostic → Guideline developed & adopted. Training for public officials & CSOs; NEP revisions completed.

3

Parliamentary Oversight

Peer learning with CLEAR-AA & APNODE → Guidelines, strategic plans, and input to national M&E directorate.

✔ Each of these shows that institutionalisation is possible – but it takes sustained, focused effort.

Forward-Looking Recommendations

Policy & Systems

01

Shift from M&E to MEL

Formal learning feedback loops – findings actioned, programmes adjusted.

02

Enact an M&E Act

Increase dedicated funding from 5% to 10–15% of government budget – ring-fenced.

03

Culture of Learning

Leaders must model that admitting failure is acceptable and rewarded.

Partnerships & Capacity

01

Formalise Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

National framework for government-CSO collaboration. Mandate CSO representation on sector evaluation steering committees.

02

Protect Parliamentary Capacity

Induction programmes for new MPs include evidence use. Sustain regional peer learning platforms.



Moving Forward Together

Conclusion

Institutionalising evidence use is **slow, political & behavioural** – but essential. Uganda has a strong foundation: NIMES, M&E Policy, DMEI, UEA.

Twende Mbele is committed to walking the next phase with you.

Twende Mbele – moving forward together.

Contact Us

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Join the Conversation

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Thank you for 25 years of evaluation excellence, UEA. We invite your questions and look forward to continued partnership.