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PARLIAMENT
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PARLIAMENTARY CAPACITY BUILDING: EVALUATION AS A TOOL FOR BETTER OVERSIGHT

WORKSHOP REPORT

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BETTER OVERSIGHT

29-31 MAY 2025

SOUTH AFRICA, CAPE TOWN

Workshop hosted through collaboration of the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (South Africa), Twende Mbele and the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

1. INTRODUCTION

Twende Mbele is a peer-learning initiative between six partner countries (Benin, South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi and Niger), with an objective of fostering knowledge sharing, peer learning and collaboration among partner countries to build their Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems, and to strengthen government performance and accountability, this includes the competencies of parliamentarians in M&E processes.

As part of the universal practice of separation of state powers, parliaments have the fundamental role of legislation development, representation and executive performance oversight. This essentially means that parliaments “sit at the centre of the web of domestic accountability” (Menocal and O’Neil, 2012)¹. They hold the executive branch of government to account on behalf of the people, ensuring that government policy and action are efficient, effective and commensurate with the needs of the public.

However, interest and capacity to engage with M&E evidence is varied among and within African parliaments. In working with various parliaments and parliamentarians in the previous iterations of the project, a key finding from the capacity strengthening interventions is the low uptake of monitoring and evaluation findings in oversight.

Several factors contribute to this challenge. Yet, there is great potential to strengthen how MPs and their support staff access and use M&E evidence. Some parliamentarians already rely on familiar evidence sources and may see little need to explore new ones, and also general scepticism towards reports produced by

government officials. Increasing awareness of available evidence sources and presenting reports in clear, accessible language can overcome the challenge. Building capacity to interpret and apply evaluation findings is also critical. Strengthening systems within parliaments can promote the use of evaluation evidence to inform legislation and oversight, while also reinforcing accountability mechanisms over the executive.

Twende Mbele has previously conducted M&E capacity building activities in South Africa, Uganda and Benin in 2018/29, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of members of parliament who have the responsibility of providing oversight to the executive and government ministries. This is premised on the understanding that members of parliament can serve as strategic allies in advancing the use of evidence to deepen good governance through their legislative, oversight and representative roles.

In line with its mandate, Twende Mbele in collaboration with the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), South Africa, organised a 3-day capacity building workshop to bolster and augment existing M&E capacities among Members of Parliament (MPs), parliamentary content advisors and researchers, and departments amongst Twende Mbele partner countries. The workshop was interactive and was co-facilitated with English and French translations.

This workshop aims to foster champions and cultivate an appreciation of the value of M&E evidence in informing public-sector planning, policymaking, and budgeting. The forum is part of Twende’s 2024-2026 approved work plan aimed at enhancing and advancing parliamentary oversight leveraging M&E.

¹ Menocal, A.R. and O’Neil, T. 2012. Mind the gap: lessons learnt and remaining challenges in parliamentary development assistance, <https://www.odi.org/publications/6971-mind-gap->

[lessonslearnt-andremaining-challenges-parliamentarydevelopment-assistance](#)

Twende Mbele's 2024-2026 work-plan includes a key component on *Advocacy for evidence-use in Parliamentary oversight and legislation formulation*. Strategically, this component of work includes Parliamentary capacity building on M&E evidence demand, production and use.

The strengthening of the capacity of parliaments and parliamentarians is premised on the understanding that parliamentarians can serve as strategic allies in advancing the use of evidence to deepen good governance through their legislative, oversight and representative roles.

2. PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOP

The purpose of the 3-day capacity building workshop was to build and augment existing M&E capacities among Members of Parliament (MPs) and Parliament Researchers of Twende Mbele member countries: Benin, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, South Africa and Uganda. This capacity building workshop aimed to foster champions and cultivate an appreciation of the value of M&E information in informing public sector planning, policymaking, budgeting and implementation processes.

The workshop was a continuation of Twende Mbele's mission of improving oversight through M&E. The workshop was co-facilitated by M&E experts namely Dr Chris Phiri, Dr Josephine Watera and Dr Kobena Hanson, with the provision of English and French interpretation. The approach that was used primarily based on interactive peer-learning and sharing of experiences from the participating members of parliament South Africa, Uganda, Ghana, Malawi, Benin and Nigeria - with the intention of bridging the gap between M&E theory and its practical application in the oversight functions of parliament.

Prior to the training a survey was conducted to assess the level of competency of the MPs and Support Staff from various countries (South

Africa, Malawi, Ghana, Nigeria, Benin and Uganda). The findings highlighted the various levels of competencies of MPs and Support Staff. The survey outlined the areas MPs were familiar with in parliamentary processes and their level of competency in M&E.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The aim of the capacity building and peer-learning workshop for members of parliament workshop was to:

- ✓ Enhance the capacity and strengthen the demand and use of evaluation evidence among members of parliament and parliamentary support staff.
- ✓ Link evaluation practices to the oversight roles of members of parliament;
- ✓ Integrate evaluation into planning and budget processes of parliament.

4. DELIVERY OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop was conducted from the 29th to the 31 of May 2025. The workshop brought together participants, notably Members of the South African Parliament (members of the Portfolio Committee on Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Chairpersons of allied Portfolio Committees, MPs and content advisors) each Twende Mbele member country parliaments, as well as a select number APNODE (African Parliamentarians Network on Development Evaluation) members.

A total of 42 participants attended the abovementioned workshop, including 28 (67%) from the Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, comprising Members of Parliament, Committee Researchers and Content Advisors. International participants included delegates from Benin (2), Ghana (1), Uganda (1), Malawi

(1) (a recent member), and Nigeria (2) (which is in the process of joining Twende Mbele). The remainder of participants were from the DPME.

Country	Institution	Number of Participants
Benin	National Assembly of Benin.	2
Ghana	Parliament of Ghana	1
Malawi	Parliament of Malawi	1
Nigeria	National Assembly Nigeria	1
	Nigerian House of Representatives	1
South Africa	Parliament of RSA	28
	DPME	6
	National Planning Commission	1
Uganda	Parliament of Uganda	1
Total		42

The workshop received an address by the Minister in the Presidency (Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation) Ms Maropene Ramokgopa. She outlined the importance of countries learning from each other and the importance of having peer learning as well as community of practice building the capability of parliamentarians with M&E skills. The Twende Mbele Programme Manager, Dr Thina Nzo also provided participants with an insight into the peer-learning M&E work Twende Mbele does across the continent and its relevance in parliamentary oversight.

The Deputy Director General at DPME Mr Godfrey Mashamba, also gave a background synopsis into why DPME approached Twende Mbele to support this capacity building initiative after the inauguration of new MPs and the 7th administration in South Africa. The Chief Director for Evaluations at DPME, Ms Thokozile Molaiwa and other officials from the DPME were also there to offer support at the workshop. The three-day training covered the following thematic areas.

- The importance of M&E and building a culture of using evidence in oversight and accountability
- Evidence-based policy-making cycle and Medium-Term Development Plan
- Integrating evidence in planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation processes
- The importance of theory of change in measuring outputs, outcomes and impact, assumptions and risks in implementation of policy plans, strategies and programme
- The role of research and sources of empirical evidence in M&E processes
- How to use credible, reliable sources of data in problem diagnosis and decision-making
- Developing actionable recommendations and improvement plans
- Collaboration between parliamentary committees and key stakeholders

On day 1, the facilitators highlighted the of parliamentary oversight, the key functions and methods of parliamentary oversight, identified the roles and responsibilities of various parliamentary committees in oversight, explored the relationship between parliamentary oversight and accountability in governance and discussions about the best practices and challenges in effective parliamentary oversight through the members of parliaments experiences.

Participants were provided with comprehensive evaluation types, their purposes, and the contexts in which they are most effectively utilised. They were provided with various evaluation tools that can enhance their oversight functions. By utilising these tools effectively, MPs understood these tools can help to monitor government performance, assess program effectiveness, and promote accountability.

On Day 2, the facilitators went into detail in terms of demonstrating how evaluation reports provide evidence-based insights that aid MPs in decision-making, oversight, and advocacy for better policies. This was further supported by equipping MPs with critical questioning

techniques to enhance their document review process. Facilitators provided MPs with an insight into how asking the right questions, how MPs can better assess the relevance, accuracy, and implications of documents related to legislative, policy, and oversight functions. Evaluation reports provide evidence-based insights that aid MPs in decision-making, oversight, and advocacy for better policies.

MPs were provided with an opportunity to learn how to identify credible evidence versus weak evidence in order to make informed decisions that enhance governance, accountability, and public service delivery. This sparked a debate amongst researchers and content advisors on how to identify good and bad evidence from credible and non-credible data and producers of data, evidence and research, particularly at a point where MPs mostly have a propensity of relying on ministerial reports from sector department administration.

Some MPs indicated how the insights generated from the workshop will be used when preparing questions they would ask to the ministries that account in their respective portfolio committee meetings and the portfolio committee for planning, monitoring and evaluation. This demonstrated that they understood the value of drawing from sources of evidence in asking the relevant questions. Participants were given a group exercise where MPs and content advisors were split into groups and had to hypothetically apply the concepts that they had learned into practical scenarios where they were able to demonstrate the importance of research in parliament.

On Day 3, MPs had discussion about the crucial role of research departments dedicated to providing MPs with objective, evidence-based analysis relevant to legislative functions, public policy, and governance in enhancing their legislative functions. By understanding how to effectively collaborate with research teams, MPs understood the importance researchers and content advisors in making informed

decisions improve legislation and policy-making to better serve their constituents.

Using a discursive engagement approach with political representatives, this enabled the facilitators to establish the extent to which members of parliaments were able to define and locate their oversight roles within the M&E framework and identify the institutional support available in their respective parliaments (researchers and content advisors). For example,

- MPs from Ghana related that MPs are allocated research assistants and committee secretaries are rotated every five years;
- MPs from Benin rely on Economists/Policy and Development specialists and have one common office that provides MPs with data and information support to oversight committees;
- Malawi has limited human resource base in the research section, this has therefore caused parliamentary research to be on-demand and not proactive to issues affecting the citizenry. Likewise, the failure to have standardised monitoring tools for tracking investment expenditure has resulted in lapses in the use of evidence-based mechanisms with this ruling party often times leverages on the gaps to push for their agenda or not to be accounted for.
- MPs from South Africa have both the researchers and content advisors who give strategic planning for the oversight committee and have a responsibility of simplifying technical concepts contained in reports. Researchers are also allocated to oversight committees and provide them with information that can enhance their scrutiny work in committees and parliament plenary.
- MPs from Nigeria also articulated that M&E is still a new concept in parliament and therefore heavily rely on oversight committee clerks. Therefore Nigeria is in a process of advocating for mainstreaming M&E for oversight, with a dedicated M&E department.

5. POST WORKSHOP ASSESSMENT

Analysis of participants' assessment of the training reflects the following:

The overwhelming majority (92.3%) of respondents to the post-training survey rated the workshop as very pertinent to them/their work. Further, most respondents found the training content to be timely and informative (76.9%), while almost everyone (92.3%) highlighted the need for a follow-up training.

This is indicative of their perceived relevance of the training, curiosity to deepen their knowledge and or skill in evidence-use for parliamentary oversight, cry for additional support to fully grasp issues/techniques discussed and/or brought to their attention for the first time. It also speaks to the trust and confidence in the trainers' individual and collective expertise and delivery styles.

More importantly, and as testament to the value proposition of the training, all respondents (100%) explicitly noted that they would be utilizing the learning/knowledge acquired in their day-to-day work. The participants can, in themselves become quasi-trainers/mentors in their respective institutions - invariably empowering others and heightening the need for, and utilization of, evaluation evidence in their oversight function (MPs) and /or in support of MPs oversight function (parliamentary staffers/researchers/content advisors).

An assessment by the DPME and Twende Mbele is that the workshop produced three key outcomes. Firstly, it exposed participants to M&E concepts and tools, and how these can be applied to support planning, budgeting, policy-making and oversight functions. Secondly, the interactive nature of the sessions stimulated peer-learning exchanges on country-specific M&E practices. Thirdly, it enabled participants to identify areas for improvement in their own

contexts and to begin planning practical actions to address them.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Twende Mbele Proposes for a follow-up session (hybrid) that will deepen what has been done thus far by mainly focussing on practical tools to embed the use of M&E evidence in the work of Parliament such as stakeholder mapping, evidence synthesis and visualization which can help researchers and content advisors to identify and utilise a variety of sources of evidence.

7. SIGNING OFF

_____ *Nzo* _____

_____ 19/06/2025 _____

Dr Thina Nzo

Date:

Twende Mbele Programme Manager

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TWENDE MBELE

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TWENDE MBELE is a multi-country peer-learning partnership centred on country government priorities for building national evaluation systems in an effort to improve government performance and accountability to citizens.

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