

# Twende Mbele partner governments conduct rapid evaluations for faster evidence generation

*In 2019, the Twende Mbele partnership began an initiative to explore rapid evaluations to provide a means to fill time-sensitive gaps and reduce late access to intervention performance information by decision-makers. While rapid evaluations are timely and cost-effective, they may lack rigor and comprehensive data when not sufficiently triangulated. Some reasons for conducting rapid evaluation are to respond to an unplanned demand for urgent information by decision-makers. To date, Twende Mbele partner countries have conducted eight rapid evaluations, with another three in the pipeline. This article presents the implementation and findings of rapid evaluation approaches on projects in some Twende Mbele partner countries notably Ghana, Niger, South Africa and Uganda. It further outlines recommendations for ensuring relevant and usable rapid evaluations.*

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## Key Messages

- Rapid evaluations are timely and cost-effective, but may lack rigor and comprehensive data collection.
- They respond to urgent information needs from decision-makers.
- Recommendations from rapid evaluations can guide policy implementation and assess the effectiveness of various initiatives.
- *Twende Mbele* member countries have provided feedback to improve the rapid evaluation Guideline, and good practices.

## The introduction of rapid evaluation to *Twende Mbele*

**T**wende Mbele is a multilateral peer-learning program by African governments aimed at institutionalizing Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) in governance processes to improve development outcomes. Country partners include Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Benin, and Niger, with the Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results, Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) and the Independent Development Evaluation (IDEV) of the African Development Bank as technical partners. In 2019, research in these countries revealed that these countries revealed that delayed access to evaluative information hindered effective decision-making, compounded by limited capacity to use such information and a governance culture that did not prioritize evidence-based decisions. Traditional evaluation methods were too slow to meet urgent needs. To address this, *Twende Mbele* developed a rapid evaluation methodology to provide timely

insights into policy and program effectiveness, enabling quicker adjustments and more responsive governance. Designed to be completed in 5-8 months, these evaluations balance speed with rigor using qualitative and quantitative methods for faster data collection and analysis. The approach was piloted after studies highlighted the need for timely evidence, revealing that over 43% of surveyed managers often made decisions without proper diagnosis due to late information. This led to the development of a rapid evaluation toolkit and guideline. Uganda, Benin, Niger, Ghana, and South Africa have conducted rapid evaluations in various sectors to address the timeliness gap.

## African countries' examples of leveraging this type of evaluation

### Ghana

In 2019, Ghana conducted a rapid evaluation of the One Village One Dam (1V1D) project, aimed at providing reliable water ►►

sources for livestock watering, domestic activities, and dry season farming to reduce poverty and address inequalities in rural and deprived communities. The evaluation, conducted by the Ministry of Monitoring and Evaluation (MoME) in collaboration with the Ministry for Special Development Initiative (MSDI), and supported by *Twende Mbele* and IDinsight, focused on assessing implementation progress, outcomes, and impacts.

During the inception phase, key stakeholders developed data collection instruments and a formulated a detailed workplan for the field assessment. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the sites (dams) and key informants. Data was collected through key informant interviews and physical verification to ascertain the status of the dams across selected districts.

Based on the objectives of the evaluation, a comprehensive data collection instrument comprising both qualitative and quantitative questions was developed. Field data was collected through key informant interviews and physical verification to ascertain the status of the dams across the selected districts.

Despite incompleting construction, most dams were used for animal watering and domestic purposes, demonstrating their potential to improve lives in the northern region. The assessment concluded that the IViD initiative could significantly enhance local farmers' livelihoods, aligning with the Ghana "Beyond Aid" agenda. The assessment documented implementation challenges such as structural defects, weak communication, and inadequate participation, and recommended prioritizing repairs, enhancing community engagement, and developing robust monitoring mechanisms (MoME, 2019<sup>i</sup>).

## **Niger**

In 2022, Niger conducted two rapid evaluations of the Free Maternal and Child Health Care Policy targeting women of childbearing

age and children aged zero to five, in the Dosso and Maradi Regions. The evaluations sought to improve healthcare access and public health sector governance, by providing evidence on the policy's relevance, effectiveness and effectiveness, and sustainability.

In accordance with the rapid evaluation matrix, the evaluators used two data collection methods, the interview guide and the survey questionnaire. The interview guide was designed for health center managers and health workers in integrated healthcare centers, district and regional hospitals. Interviews were also conducted with community healthcare providers and financial and technical partners. The household questionnaire was administered to women of childbearing age during household visits. After collecting and compiling the data, it was processed using Stata and Excel software and analyzed to derive results necessary for addressing the evaluation questions.

The rapid evaluation matrix served as a structured framework to guide the assessment process. It included specific evaluative questions, indicators, and a strategy for data collection and analysis, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the policy's implementation and outcomes. The matrix facilitated a systematic approach to gathering qualitative and quantitative data, aligning with the objectives of the rapid evaluation.

Key findings included increased contraceptive use and improved health for women and children. Despite challenges like frequent drug shortages, accumulated debts, and disparities in service quality. Recommendations included timely reimbursements, operationalizing the National Institute of Medical Assistance, improving monitoring mechanisms, and enhancing communication between health and finance ministries. Over half of the population was satisfied with the quality of care, though issues like drug shortages and increased patient influx reduced service quality.

The rapid evaluations revealed that the implementation of the free healthcare policy

in Niger has significantly improved access to health care services for vulnerable populations, particularly women and children. This policy has led to increased utilization of health facilities by the population and is associated with the reduction of maternal mortality rates and mortality rates among children aged 0 to 5, among other outcomes. However, the financial viability of the free maternal and child healthcare policy was found to be a challenge for healthcare centers. Additionally, an unintended effect of the policy was its impact on population growth (HCME, 2022<sup>ii</sup>). The findings of the rapid evaluation were therefore useful in the on-going policy debates about the sustainability and future of the free maternal and child healthcare policy.

## Uganda

In 2022, Uganda conducted two unpublished rapid evaluations. The first, titled “Rapid Evaluation of the Challenges in Local Government Staffing: Focus Filling of Critical Positions in the Local Governments Structures,” employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The evaluation began with a review of Local Government Performance Assessments (LGPA) Reports from 2017 to 2019, focusing on human resource management performance measures. The team also conducted a desk-based review of all relevant documentation guidelines, including LG financing strategies, public service LG staffing framework, decentralization, and service delivery in Uganda.

This participatory and interactive approach aimed to facilitate the learning process through dialogue. Key Informant Interviews were held with selected stakeholders at national and LG levels. LG officials provided insight into staff recruitment processes and challenges. By providing feedback at every stage of the assignment, opportunities were provided for discussions on the process of change based on the participants’ own experiences.

Among the evaluated districts, Mbarara LG reported the highest staffing at 91%,

attributed to financial resources for wages and a District Service Commission. In contrast, Karenga district exhibited the lowest staffing levels at 47%, due to its recent establishment (OPM, 2022). Key challenges identified included inadequate funding, political interference, and difficulties in attracting and retaining staff, particularly in remote areas. The findings informed the Ministry of LG and other authorities about necessary policy adjustments and strategies to address staffing gaps and improve recruitment and retention.

The second rapid evaluation, titled “The Rapid Evaluation on the Effect of the Contribution of the 20% Gate Collections Remitted to the Host Communities Surrounding the National Parks.” Examined the benefits and impacts derived from the 20% Revenue Service conditional grants to LGs adjacent to national parks. The evaluation targeted nine national parks across Uganda and, the respective adjacent district LG coordination offices.

Phase I was literature review to provide an overview of the project’s design, implementation and status, and to identify data gaps. The documents reviewed included guidelines, reports, and acts such as the Uganda Wildlife Act that passed by Parliament in 2019. Other key documents, such as a baseline survey report to establish status information on several key indicators before the Act’s implementation were also reviewed. Additionally, frameworks, program support documents, and monitoring and evaluation reports produced by government were included in the review.

Phase II involved interactive meetings with key stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the process of remitting 20% park fees as conditional grants to LGs and the economic value derived from these grants. Phase III focused on data analysis and report writing.

The evaluation found that the project contributed to increased household incomes, improved community social ►►

infrastructure, environmental protection and improved human-animal conflict (OPM, 2022). Issues of relevance and appropriateness of the project to the Protect Area (PA) communities were highlighted. The evaluation provided evidence on the project's effectiveness, efficiency in resource use, impact, and sustainability of the.

These findings were intended to guide the Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife, and Antiquities and other stakeholders in optimizing the allocation and use of the remitted funds to maximize benefits for the host communities.

### **South Africa**

South Africa undertook two rapid evaluations to improve monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes in government initiatives. The first one, titled "Measuring Government Business Incentives Schemes (GBIS): Towards a Set of Minimum Standards and Measures" was conducted in 2021<sup>iii</sup>. The evaluation aimed to design an integrated M&E system for all government business incentives to enhance monitoring, learning and reporting. Implemented in six stages spanning an 18-month period, the evaluation included a comprehensive literature review on the use and effectiveness of incentives in South Africa and globally. This review formed the basis for the development of an initial theory of change for the system of business incentives, which was validated in a steering committee workshop.

Two consultations were organized. The first involved interviews with 22 officials and 13 representatives from the manufacturing and automotive industries, aquaculture, business process services, textiles, film, television and tourism and academia. These interviews yielded valuable insights into the design, implementation and evaluation of business incentives, as well as the coordination of incentives across government. Secondly, 20 case studies covering specific incentives were carried out, based on interviews with a further 74 officials and 79 representatives from the various industries. Country

comparisons of business incentives in Chile, Thailand and Germany were also included. The evaluation findings highlighted that those existing M&E systems primarily focused on administrative compliance, revealing fragmentation, and limited ability to assess the actual economic and equity effects of government incentives on business establishment and operation (DPME, 2021).

The second rapid evaluation in South Africa was the "Khaedu Senior Management Service (SMS) Deployment Program in Limpopo Province" conducted in 2022. Its objective was to assess whether the Program was being implemented as intended, if it effectively improved service as intended, identify any shortcomings and the reason behind them, and determine its relevance. If deemed to still be relevant, the evaluation was to propose how to strengthen the program.

The evaluation employed a multi-method approach. A literature review of the Khaedu Program/concept documents provided an understanding of the program's design, context, and relevance, exposing good practices from similar interventions. Secondary data included deployment reports by SMS members and administrative data. Focus group discussions were held with SMS members, the Department of Public Service Administration, and National School of Government (NSG). Key informant interviews were conducted with departmental Khaedu champions, deployed SMS members, and management of monitored facilities, including the Limpopo Department of Health. Direct observation of site inspections in selected monitored facilities provided firsthand insight.

The evaluation concluded that the Khaedu Deployment Program is central to the government's efforts to improve public service delivery. It plays a key role in addressing service delivery challenges, and enhancing standards. However, to maximize its impact and ensure value for money, Khaedu must focus its efforts on improving the quality of service (DPME, 2022).

## Conclusion

*Twende Mbele* partner countries have conducted eight rapid evaluations, with three more in progress. These rapid evaluations were initiated to address the needs for timely evaluative information as previous M&E Culture research studies had shown that delays hindered decision-making. The rapid evaluation methodology, developed through a toolkit, and guideline adapted from the Western Cape provincial government in South Africa, has been applied in various sectors to address the timeliness gap. The evaluations have informed policy decisions, leading to revisions in the rapid evaluation guideline and enhancing the utilization of findings.

The rapid evaluations conducted by member governments of *Twende Mbele* have generated many recommendations. These recommendations have been used to inform decisions regarding the continuation of existing policies or the implementation of new ones and helped to generate lessons about what works and what does not. Lessons learned from implementing these rapid evaluations have led to revisions to the rapid evaluation guideline, particularly the timeframes, methodology and strategies for enhancing the utilization of rapid evaluation findings.

## Recommendations for ensuring relevant rapid evaluations that are usable

- i. **Clearly Define Roles:** Define the roles of the external facilitator and the ministry staff to ensure that the findings address the evidence needs of the institution commissioning the rapid evaluation, increasing the likelihood of report utilization.
- ii. **Extend Design Workshops:** Increase rapid evaluations design workshops from three to five days to develop the evaluation matrix, methodology and theory of change.
- iii. **Stakeholder inclusion:** Involve stakeholders in developing the terms of references and evaluation matrix.
- iv. **Establish a Steering Committee:** A steering committee should oversee the rapid evaluation and brief decision-makers on emerging results, ensure ownership, facilitate rapid implementation, and enhances the likelihood of use through stakeholder engagement.
- v. **Disseminate Reports:** Disseminate rapid evaluation reports and prepare improvement plans to guide recommendations.

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