

https://dspace.org/

Strengthening African M&E Systems through country-based programmes: Country-owned, Country-Led

Dr Takunda, Chirau; Ms Banele, Masilela; Mr Ayabulela, Dlakavu

2020-04
CLEAR-AA
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29169

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

clear
Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results
ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

CLEAR-AA LEARNING NOTE

APRIL 2020

COUNTRY-OWNED, COUNTRY-LED

STRENGTHENING AFRICAN M&E SYSTEMS THROUGH COUNTRY-BASED PROGRAMMES

Authors: Takunda Chirau, Banele Masilela, & Ayabulela Dlakavu

ABOUT CLEAR-AA

The Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA) is one of six regional centres housed in academic institutions across the globe with the purpose of building the capacity of countries, people and institutions to plan, measure and report on development programmes – a process referred to as monitoring and evaluation (M&E). CLEAR-AA's work in supporting and improving M&E contributes to better governance and improved development outcomes across Africa.

In the past, CLEAR-AA's approach to supporting and improving M&E in Africa has been to offer discrete interventions, for example pieces of training, peer-to-peer learning and technical assistance. But in 2019, we shifted to using country-based programmes to achieve systematic, systemic results. The positive impact on governance and development can be seen not only in individual countries but also in their sub-regions.

IN THIS LEARNING NOTE

- How CLEAR-AA does country programmes
- Why country programmes work
- Some challenges in Africa
- CLEAR-AA's recommendations for strengthening African M&E systems

The ownership principle

Each country programme is owned, focused and led by the country itself. A ministry, department, agency or other custodian owns and leads its country's M&E system, while CLEAR-AA and other development partners support the sustainability of the system. This ownership principle is paramount.

The in-country capacity principle

The custodian of the country's M&E system and CLEAR-AA take a consultative, participatory and systems approach to strengthening the country's M&E system. Stakeholder voices are valued and accentuated, which strengthens country ownership and in-country capacity. The in-country capacity principle means that we use local in-country partners who know the country's M&E context. Higher education institutions, private consultancies and voluntary organisations for professional evaluators, for example, implement the interventions, while CLEAR-AA provides technical backstopping.

Situation analysis

Our interventions for strengthening different elements of a country's M&E system are informed by a situation analysis or diagnostic. We use our in-house tool called Monitoring and Evaluation Situation Analysis (MESA) to gather information from ministries, departments and agencies, civil society organisations, higher education institutions, voluntary organisations for professional evaluators, and parliament. Then we validate the findings of our analysis through a workshop with stakeholders.

Strategy and plan

Based on the situation analysis and validation workshop, an M&E capacity strengthening strategy is then established for implementing interventions to strengthen the country's M&E system. The strategy highlights the results that need to be achieved for the country to be able to improve its M&E performance and the specific approaches to be followed for delivering those results. The strategy is accompanied by an M&E capacity strengthening plan, which provides details of the results proposed in the strategy, indicating who will do what and when, and what resources will be required and where these will come from.

CLEAR-AA works in selected English-speaking African countries: Zambia, Lesotho, South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Namibia, Botswana, and Uganda. We also work at the regional level with the East African Legislative Assembly, the Pan African Parliament, the Economic Community of West African States, the African Evaluation Association, the African Institute for Development Policy, and the African Centre for Parliamentary Affairs.



How does CLEAR-AA choose which countries to work in?

- The potential for self- or co-financing
- Partnership possibilities
- General responsiveness

OTHER STRATEGIC AND OPPORTUNISTIC REASONS TO WORK WITH A COUNTRY

Political and administrative will

Internal appetite and/or demand at the administrative and political levels of a country are paramount. Securing political and administrative buy-in and will is crucial in making sure that M&E is championed by champions who can exert their influence on ministries, departments, and agencies. This is the case for Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana.

Established M&E systems

In Uganda and South Africa, country M&E systems have been institutionalized through approved national M&E policies. This indicates that a government values M&E for improving development outcomes and bringing about social change. Other countries that have already established M&E or national evaluation systems are Ghana, Zambia, and Tanzania.

Ability to deliver all CLEAR-AA programmatic interventions

Our work is based on the notion that a full package of projects must be implemented in a country if development outcomes are to be sustained. That package depends on a country's particular needs. CLEAR-AA's programmatic areas of evaluation systems, strengthening legislatures, capacity strengthening, and research and learning are implemented through these various projects. At present, Tanzania is the country that is able to deliver all the projects in the package.

Partnership with a knowledgeable local institution

CLEAR-AA's approach is unique in that we use a local entity to strengthen the country's M&E system – the in-country capacity principle. In Ghana, we are working with the Ghana Institute of Public Administration. In Zambia, there is the possibility of working with the Zambia Institute for Policy Analysis and Research and the Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association.

CHALLENGES

Austerity measures

African countries have not grown their economies as anticipated, and austerity measures are in place to reduce government spending. Informal conversations with public sector officials reveal that M&E services suffer the most, indicating that M&E's role in improving governance and supporting social change is undervalued.

Bureaucracies

African governments are among those known to be excessively bureaucratic, and initiating country-led M&E strengthening programmes is daunting task.

Misperceptions of M&E

Monitoring and evaluation are at their nascent stages in most African countries. M&E is not well recognized let alone valued. In fact, most public officials still see M&E as 'policing' and 'witch-hunting' rather than as providing information for learning and improving.

M&E is not a vehicle for authoritarianism. In strengthening country M&E systems, M&E should be understood as an opportunity for learning rather than as machinery used to exacerbate authoritarianism through accountability mechanisms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Raise the visibility of country voluntary organisations for professional evaluators. VOPEs are important advocates for M&E and the cultivation of evaluative and critical thinking in a country.

Political and senior administrators should act as champions for M&E in their country. Political buy-in is required for channelling adequate resources for promoting M&E and fostering an enabling environment.

Make M&E capacity strengthening country-led and country-owned. Current M&E systems are driven by donors. If the drive is endogenous, M&E findings are likely to be used.

The approach should be consultative and participatory. Including higher education institutions, voluntary organisations for professional evaluators, civil society organisations and parliament increases buy-in for and ownership of the M&E system. Information from the system is more likely to be used.

Conducting a situation analysis is a prerequisite. It helps to understand the status quo or prevailing current situation of M&E in the country before drafting a plausible intervention.

Tools, methods and systems should be African-focused and produce information that is relevant and context specific to African governments and citizens.

THE VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THE LEARNING NOTE ARE THAT OF THE AUTHOR

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

clear
Centers for Learning on Evaluation and Results
ANGLOPHONE AFRICA

CLEAR Anglophone Africa
@CLEARAA1
CLEAR Anglophone Africa
CLEAR.AnglophoneAfrica@wits.ac.za
www.wits.ac.za/clear-aa
Telephone: +27 11 717 3157

The Oval Building, University of the Witwatersrand
2 St David's Place, Parktown, Johannesburg