Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

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Abstract

This study aims to show how employees employed by the Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) for a minimum of six months use M&E data to guide decision making choices and improve programme outcomes. To explore and appreciate the mechanisms and processes of decision-making using data from individuals collecting data and those making decisions in the organization, a research design used a case study through a qualitative method approach.

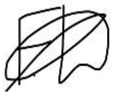
One of the issues facing the NGO sector is the lack of documentation about the use of monitoring and evaluation data in decision-making procedures (Bornstein, 2006). Comprehending how gathered and processed data is used and how it improves programme outcomes is challenging because of this deficiency. The planned study will examine the various ways the organization uses data to make choices, as it is currently unclear if CSVR has the same conceptualization issues with data use and practice.

The investigation results verified that the organization is faced with the same issue of inadequate documentation of its processes for monitoring and evaluation. This is made clear by the M&E framework, which provides insufficient information on database administration, information consumption, and routine data management activities. Using data and making decisions are related. The organization's decision-making process is not well understood; some people think decisions are made collaboratively by the team at weekly meetings, while others think project managers are in charge of making decisions. Decision-making and standardization in the application of knowledge are impossible without a functioning M&E system.

The organizational structure makes it difficult to adopt an M&E system completely since it affects other programme support and where the unit fits in the organogram. M&E only provides support for one programme.

DECLARATION

Plagiarism Declaration I, Fanelwa Lutshaba, declare that ‘Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation’ is my work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other University or academic institution. All sources and materials used are duly acknowledged and are properly referenced.



Signature: Lutshaba F. Date: 28.02.2024

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Chapter 1

1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to better understand how staff members who have worked at the Centre for Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) for at least six months use M&E data to inform decisions and enhance programme outcomes. CSVR is an independent non-profit organization founded in 1989 and registered in 1990. According to CSVR's 5-year strategy (2020), CSVR is a non-governmental organization based in Braamfontein, in Gauteng province; it also has offices in Cape Town, in Western Cape. For three decades, CSVR has worked to understand violence, heal its effects, reconcile communities, and build sustainable peace in South Africa, the continent, and elsewhere in the world. CSVR provides technical support and works with individuals and communities to focus on the wide range and forms of violence and conflict, including collective and interpersonal, political and criminal state and social violence. It engages in research, community interventions, policy formulation, service delivery, education, and training. CSVR undertakes targeted research and advocacy in partnership with civil society and affected communities to hold state, continental, and global institutions accountable. CSVR provides mental health and psychosocial support and other interventions to address and prevent violence and human rights violations.

Making decisions based on facts or evidence is not a new concept. Tranfield, Denyer, and Smart (2003) corroborate this, stating that evidence-based approaches were rooted in the British government's growing emphasis on informed policy and practices during the 1980s, founded on a rigorous and accurate body of evidence. It went on to say that the medical and healthcare industries challenged conventional wisdom in data collecting, interpretation, and analysis, which led to the adoption of an evidence-based approach (Cook, Mulrow & Haynes, 1997). The progressive creation of comprehensive standards and best practice manuals in public policy and development was prompted by the increasing need for accountability and openness about the efficient use of public resources. In contrast to other fields, the social science field is criticized for lacking explicit guidelines or norms on the use of evidence (Rousseau, 2006). Guidelines and best practices only encourage data use in organizations with a clear, standardized decision-making process and organizational culture. The study will be guided by implementation and organization theories because of their relevance in the interactive decision-making process.

Organizations strategically plan annual programmes to address identified operational problems. A growing body of literature recognizes M&E as an effective tool to improve the quality of programmes and project planning. M&E has become a crucial aspect of good governance as a governance tool (Abrahams, 2015; Shongwe & Meyer, 2023). Structured, methodical environments that adhere to rules, regulations, and standard operating procedures are conducive to an organization's success because they enable it to create plans and specify goals and objectives. Due to the diverse functions of the administrative, operational, and management levels of organizations, jobs are typically segregated to separate authority delegation and hierarchy.

In the past, the duties of managers were making decisions at their level and communicating those decisions to other staff members and stakeholders. However, public policy and engaged citizenship promoted issue-participation discussions. The collaborative effort between individuals, organizations, and communities is used for planning, problem-solving, and examining possible solutions and alternatives that need to be well-documented for the process to be replicated, tested, and reviewed (Mandinach, 2012; George et al., 2019)

Monitoring and evaluation approaches assist project stakeholders in planning their interventions to meet specific requirements, measure their success, improve activities, design practical projects, and communicate project activities and goals (Jacobs et al., 2010). Based on the goals of the intervention, the study will investigate the theory of change, the logical framework approach, participatory monitoring and evaluation, and the results framework. A monitoring and evaluation system aids in collecting, analyzing, reporting, storing, and utilizing data to improve programme outcomes within an organization. It provides details on how data will flow in the organization and the personnel attached to those responsibilities, from data collection to use. The lack of clear data usage in the M&E system can potentially lead to underutilization. This might lead to unstructured decision-making that is not based on evidence but rather on instincts and power (Rousseau, 2006).

The study is about understanding the monitoring and evaluation framework used by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR). What is the approach used, and how is the information generated used to inform practice that improves programme outcomes? The NGO sector has been mandated to conduct monitoring and evaluation as a prerequisite for receiving additional donor funding (Abrahams, 2015; Mouton, 2010; Potter & Kruger, 2001; Swilling & Russel, 2002). The study will explore the factors that influence the monitoring and evaluation approach, whether it's a decision made by the donor or the NGO due to its organizational growth.

With an emphasis on how staff members perceive and interpret new information in their day-to-day work, the study will look into decision-making processes for enhancing programme outcomes in monitoring, evaluation, and management (Spillane, 2012). Methods and procedures of data-driven decision-making will be investigated in order to comprehend participant experiences.

1.1 Problem statement

The NGO sector faces a problem with insufficient documentation of monitoring and evaluation data utilization in decision-making processes (Bornstein, 2006). This lack makes it difficult to understand how collected and processed data is used and how it contributes to improving programme outcomes.

How is the process of linking data use and practice conceptualized? For what purpose is the data collected other than reporting and accounting to donors for funding received? At this stage, it is not clear whether CSVR has the same problem of conceptualizing data use and practice or not, and the proposed study will explore different ways the organization makes decisions utilizing data. According to some authors, staff of donor and government agencies frequently report using monitoring and evaluation data for decision-making minimally, despite large investments in these systems (Davies, 2019; Abrahams, 2015; Stout, Bhatia-Murdah, Kirby, & Powell, 2018). Spillane (2012) highlights the growing interest in using data to inform practice. The ability of data to inform practice is largely trusted by public health and policymakers, but the effectiveness of these efforts is heavily dependent on the desired practice. The positive use of data has been acknowledged, but it is suggested that the relationship between data and practice requires further conceptualization.

1.2 Purpose statement

The study aims to investigate the utilization of data to enhance practice and programme outcomes in CSVR in Gauteng. The organization provides technical support and works with individuals and communities to focus on the wide range and forms of violence and conflict, including collective and interpersonal, political and criminal, and state and social violence

1.3 Research question

The research questions for the study are:

1. How is the process of linking data use and practice conceptualized in CSVR?
2. How is the M&E framework conceptualized, and what informs the choice of the M&E approach?
3. What decision-making tools are used, and what are the challenges encountered when using these tools?

It is anticipated that information regarding data use will be collected from different levels of employees to understand how everyone interacts with data and how decision-making is structured in the organization. Analyzing documents used will also provide evidence on data sourcing, the use of collected data and the M&E approaches used. It is assumed that sharing and accessing documents that the organization uses to collect data, M&E framework used, reports, and other M&E-related documents will not be burdensome as it was included in the permission letter.

The next chapter will include a review of existing literature to identify gaps in the field and the advancements achieved by NGO's in the use of M&E data, M&E frameworks and approaches and the role of the third sector in community development. The details of the research design, methodology, data collection instruments and analytic process will be next covered. The presentation and analysis of the data will come last.

Chapter 2

2. Literature review

2.1. The role of NGOs in community development

Internationally, authors have consensus on the definition of NGOs and what they want to achieve (Davies, 2019; Lewis et al., 2020; Bach-Mortensen et al., 2018; Osborne, 2011). The international NGOs are mostly the ones from the North that were established to respond to the needs of the countries in the South, with the primary role of helping citizens defend human rights, fight injustice, and provide humanitarian relief (Davies, 2019). These organizations are independent of government, although they make partnerships with it.

NGOs are among the most prominent features of contemporary international life (Davies, 2019). Some of the best-known international actors on the world stage are NGOs such as Amnesty International, CARE, and Greenpeace, being household names in many countries. NGOs are generally understood to wield considerable normative power, such as advancing human rights protection worldwide and helping to bring about international agreements, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. Some NGOs such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, also wield considerable economic muscle. Up to two-thirds of emergency relief funds may be channelled through NGOs (Development Initiatives, 2018). NGOs do not all have the power to bring change; it can be true with the international and funding NGOs, but implementing NGOs lack power and, in some cases, recognition and have to prove themselves and fight for their recognition by providing concrete evidence of their achievements and the calibre of personnel behind those achievements.

Different countries have a legal framework to which these NGOs operate and are regulated. In England, the Charities Act of 2006 was established to ensure that charities are independently regulated in an open, consistent, and proportionate manner. In Ireland, the relationship between the third sector and the state was challenged to move towards its recognition as an effective player in promoting public trust and confidence. Germany and France both had corporatist traditions. In Germany, many third-sector organizations are very large and receive most of their funding from the government, while in France, third-sector organizations are at the local level (Osborne, 2011).

NGOs strive to make a change in different areas by shaping and reshaping their ideas and influencing the behaviour of other role players (Lewis et al., 2020). Mueller-Hirth (2012) suggests that NGOs act as brokers or bridge builders, utilizing and circulating development meanings and practices of development. According to their focal areas, progress in NGO development can be described into four generations. Non-governmental organizations may implement their interventions in different stages, also known as generations, with the primary aim of bringing change to the communities. Sustainability and advocacy issues were the focal areas of the third generation, and the fourth generation focused on collaboration with social movements at national and international levels to contribute to long-term structural change (Lewis et al., 2020). It is true that NGOs are also competing for space and resources because of the high number of those that have been established over the years; strong partnerships and collaborations give some NGOs better recognition than those working alone.

NGOs are often considered as part of the third sector, providing a more comprehensive understanding of their role and responsibilities: the first sector being of government, for-profit business as the second sector, and a third group of organizations that do not easily fit into either category, a family of diverse organizations, ranging from not-for-profits to non-governmental organizations, may exhibit various characteristics such as social change, voluntarism, charity, values, community-based, self-help, or non-governmental focus (Lewis et al., 2020; Davies, 2019; Osborne, 2011). According to Bach-Mortensen et al., (2018), the third sector is expanding and becoming a growing provider of public, social, and health services in many high-income countries, although they claim that little research demonstrates evidence of the effectiveness and impact of third-sector service deliveries.

The intensifying interface between NGOs and different donors has potentially significant consequences for monitoring and evaluation activities (Marshall & Suárez, 2014). This has led to pressure exerted on implementing NGOs by donors. According to Mueller-Hirth (2012), non-governmental organizations are being given more responsibility to demonstrate their relevance and accountability, and their reporting, monitoring, and evaluation may eventually become independent development activities. According to Marshall & Suárez (2014), requests for increased accountability and transparency have grown as NGOs have become more significant and well-known, with the sources of these requests mirroring the complexity and diversity of the sector itself. NGO's main priority is implementing interventions that bring change to the communities; donors introduced advanced compliance requirements and measures as funding requirements changed. This change compelled implementing organizations to upskill themselves to meet these new requirements. One of the challenges this sector faces is inadequate documentation of its successes, which contributes to little research demonstrating this evidence. NGOs need to increase their capacity and document their success stories and best practices.

Amongst the scholars who agree on the characteristics of the third sector are Lewis et al., 2020; and Bach-Mortensen et al., (2018). The characteristics they define as a formal, institutionalized organization with regular meetings, office bearers, and some organizational permanence. the organization is private and institutionally separate from the government, distributing non-profitly and not generating financial surpluses for owners or; the organization is self-governing, managing its own affairs, and voluntary, with some degree of participation in its management, such as a voluntary board of governors. Third-sector organizations are praised for being better at connecting with hard-to-reach populations while being driven by more altruistic values than the government and private sector (Bach-Mortensen et al., (2018).

However, it is not clear how these organizations guard against the dependability of these hard-to-reach areas on them. Also, when the areas have received help, how is the sustainability of interventions maintained? One of the challenges observed on the part of the NGOs is a lack of sustainability in providing the support needed to the communities, making the aid needed temporal. NGOs are also confronted with the demand and expectation to account for the funding received and the service promised. This demand propels the need for systems and compliance, which, during implementation, increases the responsibility of accounting to stakeholders and funders, something that is not appreciated by implementing NGOs.

Dumay et al., (2010) added that organizations are seeking to report more information than is included in traditional financial accounting as there are broader techniques of sustainability accounting and accountability that have the potential to be powerful tools in the management, planning control and accountability of organizations. In doing so, these organizations are seen to be central to the continued development of sustainability as they are intricately involved in activities that shape people's lives.

NGOs must improve their abilities and change how they see themselves as organizations offering emergency or temporary aid. This may have been true when NGOs started; in this case, there was no time for systems setup and creation of systems because of what needed to be achieved. The sustainability of interventions, therefore, was not well thought out because of the short-term service that needed to be provided. With the increase in funding and accountability responsibilities that were introduced, NGOs find themselves needing to comply. The increase in funding and accountability measures has not changed the short-term service provisions, as NGOs have interventions that can last up to a year. These short-term services make NGOs unreliable to communities as the sustainability of interventions is questioned.

2.2. Monitoring and evaluation in the NGO sector

Mueller-Hirth (2012) asserts that M&E is a crucial aspect often overlooked in the study of NGOs, significantly influencing their operational logic and positioning compared to other development actors. Marshall & Suárez (2014) oppose this view by stating that the research indicates monitoring and evaluation is becoming more common in the NGO sector, but significant variation still characterizes the range of activities undertaken. These competing views demonstrate the priorities placed in the NGOs that if M&E is donor initiated it becomes common in the implementing NGOs, but if NGO-led, it becomes neglected. It also substantiates the views that M&E is imposed by donors for accountability (Markiewicz & Patrick 2016).

Monitoring is described by Mueller-Hirth (2012) as the methodical, ongoing, and systematic gathering and evaluation of programme data in order to evaluate stakeholder satisfaction, performance in relation to goals, and programme progress. In order to determine the extent to which goals have been met and outcomes and long-term effects have occurred, the assessment process expands on monitoring data. In line with this perspective, Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010) emphasised that monitoring is an internal programme management tool used to manage activities and adjust them to changing implementation conditions by methodically and critically observing progress. There are benefits to include monitoring into the implementation process. It improves the accuracy of information and data that has been gathered, lowers the price of gathering data and information, sharpens participating implementers attention, minimizes the delay in making managerial adjustments.

Monitoring is a continual function of an organization that is often completed by its employees or in collaboration with pertinent stakeholders. When monitoring and implementation are carried out simultaneously, the personnel carrying out the activities can also gather important data that will be processed and used to assess the effectiveness of the programme and make necessary adjustments on time. It also helps improve programme outcomes while the implementation is ongoing (Singh et al., 2017).

The increase in NGOs implementing development programmes has been confronted with a demand for accountability and measuring achievements and performance; therefore, monitoring and evaluation have been used to measure performance and make NGOs accountable to donors. Mueller-Hirth (2012) concurs with this need, noting that the relative lack of development funds makes it harder for NGOs, both in South Africa and globally, to show their impact and output. NGOs are allocating more resources to M&E, but impact measurement is also becoming more and more important to donors, some of whom now require that a specific portion of the budget be used for M&E. For example, in the case of United States Agency of International Development (USAID) grants to South African NGOs, M&E is to make up 9% of total project expenditure (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

While some grant-makers may not mandate a certain percentage for M&E, they do have reporting procedures in place that require significant NGO resources, like the preparation of detailed narrative reports, budgets, and financial audits. When donors stipulate the percentage to be used on M&E human capacity and system, this strengthens the organizational M&E frameworks while accounting to donors. However, it has been noted that not all donors have this stipulation, and implementing NGOs are still overlooking the role played by M&E in demonstrating results.

Monitoring, therefore, is defined by Singh et al., (2017) as the concurrent process of tracking the implementation of activities of the programme and attaining its planned outputs. It helps to provide real-time information on the project's progress in terms of completing its activities and achieving its immediate outputs, both in terms of quality and targets Consequently, Singh et al., (2017) describe monitoring as the process of simultaneously keeping track of how the programme's operations are being carried out and achieving its intended results. It assists in giving current information on how the project is going regarding finishing its tasks and producing its intended results, both in terms of quality and targets.

There is consensus between Mueller-Hirth (2012) & Markiewicz & Patrick (2016) that Evaluation consists of a periodic assessment of the outcomes, efficiency and impact of a project and is undertaken with a view to drawing lessons that may be more widely applicable. Evaluation focuses on effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability and efficiency while monitoring focuses on tracking implementation. Markiewicz & Patrick (2016) supports the progressive move of M&E from tracking implementation to outcomes by emphasizing that M&E frameworks have developed so that assessments now concentrate on outcomes rather than just tracking implementation and the conventional preoccupation with activities and outputs. Additional requirements for M&E include covering and thoroughly evaluating a variety of programme performance areas, such as the suitability of the design and the effectiveness of delivery.

It doesn't appear that there is any proof that implementers have advanced in their M&E work beyond donor accountability and compliance. Rather, there is compelling evidence that M&E has been employed as a governance instrument to hold implementers accountable for continued funding (Mouton, 2010; Potter & Kruger, 2001; Swilling & Russel, 2002; Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). It is customary to distinguish between upward and downward NGO accountability, drawing attention to worries about inequity in development partnerships while upward accountability is necessary for funders, downward accountability to CBOs or beneficiaries directly isn't often the case (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

Organizations, therefore, need a good system they can use to provide feedback. Goergens & Kusek (2010) claim that a result-based M&E system is basically one of these feedback systems. It is a management tool that provide information for governance and decision-making while measuring and evaluating results. According to Markiewicz and Patrick (2016), while methods to M&E must become more sophisticated, they should also be easily understood and encourage the active involvement of a wide range of stakeholders. Additionally, depending on the structure of the programme and the organization, active participants may play a variety of roles. Additionally, M&E results and products must be actively employed and efficiently shared to be valuable. These requirements and standards highlight the importance of M&E frameworks in including and directing an all-encompassing M&E (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016).

Therefore, monitoring and evaluation need an effective system with indicators, their definition, frequency of collection, who will use the system, the role of users, and how the information will be processed, analysed, and managed. Lastly, how will the information generated be used to make decisions that improve programme outcomes of current and future projects and results reported? Lastly, monitoring performance is useful for tracking progress made and learning as it provides early warning signs to the implementation of the project and can give direction to the users on whether the intended outcomes will be achieved. Monitoring and evaluation should be primarily used to focus on programme performance, improvement, and organizational learning while maintaining donor responsibility and compliance standards.

2.2.1 Data quality

Data quality, according to Goergens & Kusek (2010), is the degree to which information satisfies the six criteria of quality: timeliness, accuracy, reliability, completeness, precision, and integrity. Important functional elements need to be in place at every system level for high-quality data to be generated and move through a data management system. As a result, data quality is essential to regular data management, and each data management process should take these six dimensions of data quality into account.

According to Singh et al., (2017), gathering high-quality data is crucial for the programme management team and other key decision-makers to be able to rely on it and utilize it to monitor and enhance the programme. Reliable data must be exact, timely, consistent across several sources, accurate, full, and easily available. Strong data quality assurance procedures and frequent data audits, according to Singh et al., (2017), guarantee the accuracy of the monitoring data. Systems, document protocols, and guidelines for monitoring data quality are built across the various project stages for data quality assurance. Moreover, checks and processes are specified at every step, including creating monitoring formats and translating them when gathering, entering, or digitising data.

For them to maintain these high standards for data quality, NGOs must ensure that standard operating procedures or guidelines are followed in the verification and validation of data. It is their responsibility to ensure that when data is reported, it is checked and audited for accuracy, and that the procedure is recorded so that consumers can rely on the accuracy of the data.

2.3. M & E frameworks

According to Markiewicz & Patrick (2016), the monitoring and evaluation framework is a written document and a planned process intended to provide guidance for doing monitoring and evaluation tasks over the course of a programme. Establishing programme and initiative level progress and results has made the use of M&E frameworks more crucial to promote accountability, inform management and decision-making processes, and direct organizational learning for programme improvement. Therefore, it becomes essential that an M&E framework serves as a comprehensive plan for carrying out M&E tasks over the duration of a programme and offers a detailed manual for operationalizing and implementing it over time (Markiewicz & Patrick, 2016). Additionally, they suggest that M&E frameworks be created in tandem with and inspired by a programme design or plan . As an alternative, the M&E frameworks could be constructed in outline form during the design phase and further developed early in the programme implementation.

Bashir (2019) argues that while it is fairly uncomplicated and helpful to develop an M&E framework before the initiation of a programme, organizations find it quite tricky to develop such a system while the operations are already underway.

The parameters of regular monitoring and recurring evaluation that will occur during the course of the programme are specified by M&E frameworks. According to Markiewicz & Patrick, (2016), the M&E architecture demonstrates how data are routinely gathered, combined, and processed to address the predetermined assessment. Goergens and Kusek (2010) also add that M&E frameworks consist of twelve components that shape a good and functional system. Depending on the organization's priorities, there is no certain order in which these components should be implemented. These components are related to people, partnerships, and planning that supports data production. Utilizing data creates the climate that makes M&E possible. A few elements produce data that allows the framework to function and information that is shared to empower and inform decision-making at all levels.

It appears that NGOs must comprehend the globally recognized frameworks for monitoring and evaluation so as to properly position themselves within the field of programme management and development . Whether M&E frameworks are developed before the initiation of the intervention or not, it is important to note that as the implementation progresses, the M&E frameworks need to be aligned or realigned with the intervention strategy and programme plan in order to ensure synergy between M&E and programme implementation. It is one of the funding requirements to demonstrate and convince donors of how implementing organizations intend to track and report results. Without a clear framework, it might be difficult to convince donors that their money will be accounted for and that the goals of the programme will be met within the stipulated period.

2.4. Monitoring and Evaluation Approaches

M&E frameworks have different approaches that are used to measure the change caused by the intervention. (Singh et al., 2017; Jacobs et al., 2010; Batliwala & Pittman, 2010). For the measurement to take place, organizations design tools and systems that will make routine monitoring of indicators possible; the systems give details of how information from the field will be collected, processed, and used. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks assist in mitigating poor project performance, demonstrate accountability, and promote organizational learning for the benefit of future projects. Reporting through an organizational structure is one mechanism by which information flows and is the basis for assigning accountability (Crawford & Bryce, 2002).

Four approaches that NGOs employ will be covered in this study. Each of these approaches provides information about the performance components that must be measured, how they will be measured, the approach's goals and purpose, and its benefits and shortcomings.

2.4.1. Logical Framework Approach (LFA)

LFA is one of the approaches that is used for planning and Monitoring. The approach was originally developed for military planning in the USA and was adopted by USAID for development projects in the late 1960s. In the 1980s, it was adopted by many international and official development organizations, and later, other major bilateral and international donors joined in (Jacobs et al., 2010; Hummelbrunner, 2010; Bakewell & Garbutt, 2005; Nakabayashi, 2000); Bornstein, 2006). Jacobs et al., (2010) and Mueller-Hirth (2012) agree that LFA has become the leading industry standard approach to planning, approving, managing, and monitoring development interventions.

According to Jacobs et al., (2010), the foundation of LFA is the logical framework matrix. An intervention action and the anticipated outputs, outcomes, and impacts are described vertically in a results chain. Horizontally, columns list each level of actions and results together with their assumptions, methods of verification, and objectively verifiable indicators. The overarching matrix outlines the predicted contributions of various activities to broader changes and the methods for monitoring these contributions. To foster ownership and consensus on indicators, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts, key personnel in the organizations should actively participate in the compilation of LFA; otherwise, there may be inadequate accountability and a lack of ownership during implementation.

LFA has been praised for being the leading approach for planning management tasks such as allocating projects and resources and monitoring development interventions despite its criticisms by some users. Staff Mueller-Hirth's (2012) study on NGOs in South Africa typically had bad things to say about log frameworks, characterizing them as restrictive. In a similar vein, the M&E literature increasingly characterizes the usage of more creative alternatives while criticizing simplistic approaches like LFA.

Jacobs et al. (2010) and Batliwala and Pittman, 2010 identified how LFA systematizes logical hierarchy, outlining how project objectives will be reached. The process includes multiple analyses and steps, including a cause-and-effect problem analysis, a stakeholder analysis, an objectives tree and hierarchy, and an implementation strategy. Log frames assume that complex social issues can be reduced to one key goal shared by all interest groups, yet in general, this is inadequate for tackling political issues where interests diverge or conflict (Jacobs et al., 2010).

Complex social issues cannot be resolved using linear logic because interaction between stakeholders is unpredictable, and implementation of interventions does not always bring certainty. Organizations need to first think about whether they are trying to solve a simple or complex issue before they come up with an approach, as LFA proves to be limited in solving complex issues. The level of complexity should determine the approach to be used. This means LFA can only be used in some programmes because it is considered a leading approach for planning.

Advocates of the logical framework approach to M&E highlight how information and monitoring needs are identified early in a project, contributing to better information management (Coleman, 1992). Monitoring and evaluation systems in South Africa have been criticized for contributing little to better project implementation and learning (Bornstein, 2006). Even with all of these serious issues, LFA is still the most popular monitoring tool for international donors and some of the largest corporate sector funders in South Africa.

Those who support the log frame cite the approach's goal of serving as a logical summary of its essential components as support for their position . Additionally, it is stated that some of LFA's drawbacks can be solved by participatory monitoring (Jacobs et al., 2010). M&E requirements affect NGOs by favouring ways of measuring the impact of a project but also by influencing organizational culture, as this section will argue (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

NGOs can benefit by combining at least two approaches instead of using one. It is apparent that LFA has gaps that PM&E can address because of its stakeholder participation and learning component, which seems to be missing in the LFA.

2.4.2. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation Approach (PM&E)

PM&E started as an approach to bridge the gap of excluding key stakeholders in monitoring and evaluating interventions affecting them. Dissatisfaction with top-down, traditional M&E is what spurs recognition of participatory M&E's benefits. The trend in many agencies towards transparency, RBM, performance-based accountability, and the need to show success led to the realization of the significance of PM&E (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010). The issues with the traditional top-down approach to M&E led to the development of new methods for performing PM&E. These methods seek to improve M&E's responsiveness and suitability to people's demands and real-world situations.

PM&E would be appropriate and should be chosen, depending on the programme goal, particularly if it tries to empower beneficiaries . PM&E not only promotes empowerment but enhances ownership of achievements and knowledge generated. The history of PM&E is explained by Hilhorst & Guijt (2006) due to the necessity to use and gather information from the communities. Consequently, during the past few decades, the idea of "the local population" has gained widespread recognition, giving rise to the practice of working with and through communities. Additionally, they noted that participatory approaches and methods, which first led the way in action research-oriented initiatives and organizations, have grown more and more commonplace. In many development projects, the use of tools like wealth ranking, Venn diagrams, social mapping, and transects has become standard procedure. Participatory diagnosis, priority setting, and planning are standard practices in hundreds of development programmes in the North and South. But "participation" should also cover implementation, oversight, and assessment. The need to guarantee greater participation is quickly expanding, and since the mid-1990s, the phrase "participatory M&E" (PM&E) has gained popularity

Jacobs et al., (2010) state that PM&E acknowledges that development outcomes are arbitrary and differ for various interest groups (e.g., men and women). In determining the needs of target groups and carrying out interventions, the idea of involvement has grown increasingly important (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010). Nonetheless, Hilhorst and Guijt (2006) contend that in order for involvement to be significant, the main players must be able to establish objectives, monitor advancement, take note of modifications, and offer remedial measures. They contend that although major stakeholders are becoming more involved in some aspects of planning, they are frequently absent or present insufficiently when it comes to monitoring and reviewing actions. Therefore, active participation extends beyond including key stakeholders in a "conventional" M&E process, such as reviewing indicators with them and soliciting their input or opinion on the outcomes.

Supporters of PM&E view monitoring as a chance to support local learning and learning as a catalyst for progress. This is supported by Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010), who state that the term PM&E refers to a methodology that emphasizes group problem-solving and collaborative learning through the creation and application of knowledge. According to Singh et al. (2017), it is a procedure that involves all project stakeholders at different levels in all phases of monitoring and evaluation, including developing the M&E framework, gathering and compiling data, analyzing and interpreting it, and making decisions. In agreement with other academics, Rowe and Frewer (2004) defined participation as the process of consulting and incorporating pertinent stakeholders in the activities of organizations or institutions in charge of developing policies, including agenda-setting and decision-making.

Collaborative learning of this approach strengthens the intervention's sustainability, a concept supported by Hilhorst & Guijt (2006). Even after the programme ends, beneficiaries and other stakeholders can use the information to solve similar problems or apply to other new or ongoing programmes. In that way, beneficiaries will not be dependent on the implementing organization. There is a significant connection between sustainability and monitoring. It explains why some non-governmental organizations view externally determined monitoring procedures as productive despite the additional demand on organizational capacity. An NGO can maintain its competitive edge by continuously evaluating its impact and building a track record (Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

According to Hilhorst & Guijt (2006), there was a need to increase the primary stakeholders' role in monitoring and evaluating the progress made towards mutually agreed-upon outcomes and choosing appropriate corrective action that connected outcomes to practice. The aim of PM&E, therefore, is to give voice to the marginalized and the beneficiaries at the grassroots level. In addition to gauging a project's efficacy, PM&E seeks to guarantee accountability to its beneficiaries and boost openness in the project's M&E procedure. Participatory processes provide project recipients more influence and foster a sense of ownership of programme success as active participants who can contribute meaningfully to project performance and decision-making (Singh et al., (2017). This means that NGOs and other implementing partners must be deliberate in building the capacity of beneficiaries for this meaningful participation and analysis of results. The primary focus of this approach is knowledge sharing amongst stakeholders (Rossman, 2015). This approach needs feedback loops in place for communication between stakeholders to be effective for participation in planning, decision-making, and improved accountability (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006).

Beneficiaries active involvement needs to be increased. While NGOs are aware that they must answer to funders, it is uncommon for them to account for the beneficiaries. Assume that this beneficiary accountability can be enhanced and encouraged. In that case, beneficiaries will not only see themselves as people who only need to consent to the implementation of activities but also have a voice in decision-making, making active participation meaningful and empowering.

As the importance of participation in the implementation of development initiatives is being emphasized more and more, M&E participation is becoming increasingly significant. According to Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010), this shifted emphasis from externally managed data-seeking initiatives to discovering locally relevant information gathering, analysis, and utilization processes. Different organizations have adapted participatory approaches to their specific structure, programmes, and context. For example, Action Aid International's Accountability, Learning, and Planning System (ALPS) involves annual participatory learning and review processes by stakeholders; Oxfam's "Most Significant Change" technique collects stakeholders' local change stories; and Concern Worldwide's "Listen First" is a tool for increasing accountability and transparency to stakeholders, Batliwala & Pittman, (2010). Since PM&E promotes the active engagement and meaningful participation of beneficiaries and other stakeholders at the bottom of the radar, it is in favour of bottom-up action as opposed to top-down. PM&E is used in projects funded by the World Bank, which improves the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of initiatives (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006).

One of the main arguments made by Hilhorst & Guijt, (2006) is that enhanced beneficiary participation in PM&E leads to a better grasp of the development process and validity of M&E results that are locally significant. This Enhancement promotes intervention's sustainability by evaluating its advantages and disadvantages in order to improve management and decision-making. Furthermore, the implementation of participatory monitoring and evaluation increases capacity at the local level for M&E, which supports shared experiences and self-sufficiency in overall execution through methodical documentation and analysis based on widespread involvement.

When carefully examined, all these arguments promote the bottom-up approach, which management must understand and promote before implementing interventions. PM&E can also be time-consuming as well, and this needs to be considered when deciding on this approach because stakeholder involvement is not predictable, and the approach is a negotiated process.

Planning and managing development interventions, organizational learning, impact evaluation, and co mprehending stakeholder viewpoints are just a few of the uses for PM&E. To better plan and execute a continuous development intervention, PM&E can be utilized to gain an understanding of it. PM&E is a management tool that can be used to prepare for future improvements and reflect methodically on a development intervention. In an effort to improve organizational learning, learning processes are also developed using PM&E. Additionally, it can aid in evaluating organizational capabilities and enhancing those for and enhancing those for an upcoming deployment. In light of this, PM&E assists individuals in monitoring their development, recognizing and resolving issues on their own, and expanding on areas of endeavour where achievement is attained.

PM&E can also be used to assess how well a development intervention is working. When development efforts are evaluated for their impacts, it may be determined whether or not the best strategies have been used, whether or not the interventions are producing the desired results, and whether or not the interventions objectives will remain relevant in the long run. It can also be used as a process to allow multiple stakeholders to communicate their needs, preferences, and objectives. It would be easier for designers of development interventions to include beneficiary choices if they were to solicit such interests, needs, and expectations (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

Monitoring and evaluation must adhere to these principles to be truly participatory. Hilhorst & Guijt (2006) defined participation as the process through which stakeholders are involved in and influence decision-making, resource allocation, implementation, and control of development initiatives. As a result, the key idea of PM&E is its emphasis on participation, which recognizes the involvement of various stakeholders in the M&E process. An M&E can be collaboratively, domestically, or externally led, depending on who started it these parties could be donors, government officials, programme workers, and beneficiaries. When PM&E is externally directed, stakeholders, such as donors, often organize and start the initiative, and people or groups deemed to have no direct involvement in the intervention carry out the work. The people who are directly involved in the implementation are the ones who lead internal PM&E initiatives. The combined PM&E attempts to evaluate from the perspectives of insiders and outsiders by incorporating internal and external M&E methodologies(Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

Learning is another aspect of PM&E that sets it apart. It can be defined as a process of learning both individually and collectively that helps people recognize their advantages and disadvantages. Additionally, PM&E improves organizational learning. It is envisioned that learning would foster environments that support action and change. Learning also helps to develop a community's ability to plan, address problems, and make decisions. Through the process, participants also gain a better grasp of the several elements that influence the dynamics and conditions of the intervention, the reasons behind its successes and failures, and possible fixes or alternate courses of action. Different stakeholders at different levels can conduct PM&E on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis to gather feedback, review, and modify the way interventions are being implemented (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

Experimentation and flexibility are seen as essential components of PM&E. It ought to be contextual, taking into account the sociocultural, political, economic, and institutional settings that are unique to the area. The PM&E process should be continuously changing and adjusting to the demands and conditions of each intervention. The reason for this is that, involved parties may come up with fresh concepts for handling the M&E process (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

Hilhorst & Guijt (2006) assert that because a PM&E process involves multiple stakeholders, it always necessitates interacting with a range of interests that are reflected in power dynamics already in place, making the process intensely political. To determine who will participate in PM&E, what will be monitored or assessed, when and how data will be collected and analyzed, the importance of the findings, how they will be shared, and the next steps, negotiations will unavoidably be required. The knowledge that follows can be used to improve the efficacy of interventions and put oneself in a stronger negotiating position with other parties. According to Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010), bargaining is seen as helping to develop trust and altering beliefs, actions, and attitudes among stakeholders, which influences how they participate in the intervention when several stakeholders are involved in the M&E process. In PM&E, negotiations can be understood as a social process involving individuals with varying demands, expectations, and viewpoints.

Reviewing participatory monitoring and evaluation is necessary to ensure that it encompasses not just the involvement of various stakeholders outside the organization but also varying levels within the same organization. When workers at various levels participate in the processing and decision-making of data management, organizations may find this method beneficial. Their participation will encourage ownership of the knowledge produced, comprehension of its application, and improvement of programme outcomes. This approach could aid in comprehending the regular organizational culture surrounding the use of data.

2.4.3 Gaps in LFA and PM&E

According to Mueller-Hirth (2012), NGO professionals were reportedly eliminating qualitative data because they believed that many of the activities that they considered to be fundamental to their work, including education workshops or participatory engagement with communities, did not fit neatly into a log frame matrix. According to Jacobs et al., (2010), log frames provide an overview of real events and analysis that may be interpreted in a variety of ways by many stakeholders. In this situation, PM&E would enhance LFA by adding a knowledge-sharing element. They stated that LFA frequently has to give employees a helpful manual to help them deal with the problems they encounter on a daily basis while interacting with partners and local communities. Once implementation begins, field staff stops using them, resulting in a division between the work that is done and the documented plans (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

Estrella and Gaventa,1997 note that there is still ambiguity in translating the concept and objectives of participation into practice. Despite the LFA's discomforts and limitations, according to Jacob et al., (2010) and Mueller-Hirth (2012), international NGOs continue to primarily utilize it since it seems to better satisfy the demands of influential decision-makers than the alternatives now in use. Implementing organizations must be careful not to allow funders to persuade them to adopt a particular strategy just because it is well-liked by others. To preserve the autonomous function, the strategy should be centred on the implementing organization's information needs and goals.

In the political reality of negotiating and reaching consensus on project ideas, log frames often become rigid. The more participatory the process in developing them, the more difficult it is to alter them (Jacobs et al., 2010). To agree on who will participate, what will be monitored or evaluated, how and when data will be gathered and processed, what the information means, how findings will be disseminated, and what steps will be taken, PM&E must be negotiated. The ensuing understanding can enhance intervention performance and readiness for negotiations with other parties (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). Contention, however, stems not only from the difficulty in identifying who participates but also in determining what roles different stakeholders can and should play at which stages of the process (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006).

Implementing organizations need to exercise caution so that donors do not pressure them to follow an approach of action merely because it is popular with others. The approach should be centred on the information demands and objectives of the implementing organization so as to maintain the autonomous function. Even though PM&E can negotiate responsibilities and participation, it seems to be time-consuming. The availability of stakeholders must also be taken into consideration as this could impede the project implementation, particularly in situations where immediate decisions have to be made. Nonetheless, prearranged meetings with stakeholders that everyone agrees to could be a viable remedy for this.

2.4.4 Theory of Change (ToC)

Theory of Change is defined by Taplin, Clark, Collins, and Colby (2013) as a planning and assessment technique that establishes long-term objectives and then maps backward to identify changes that must occur sooner. The changes that have been found are visually represented as causal pathways of outcomes, demonstrating how each outcome is logically related to every other consequence. Reinholz and Andrews, 2020 expanded the definition and added implementation to the planning and evaluation. The addition of implementation makes ToC a tool used throughout the lifespan of the intervention, not only in the planning and evaluation phases.

According to Taplin et al., (2013), state that the Theory of Change is used to design and conceptualize interventions for re-evaluating the objectives, underlying presumptions, and actions of an ongoing effort as well as for planning and planning purposes. Effective use of ToC can enhance collaborations, foster organizational expansion, and ease communication. Thus, it extends beyond only satisfying funders and making sure that implementers monitor the intervention's changes and results. This approach can be used by organizations implementing programmes for many years because of its nature of tracking and measuring the change in long-term goals and outcomes. The Theory of Change's capacity to provide goals, outputs, and tactics with clarity improves the designs of interventions and evaluations and gives implementers more confidence to claim credit for outcomes that align with their theory (Taplin et al., 2013). This promotes ownership to the implementers and allows them to drive activities towards desired outcomes.

Theory of Change typically begins from the top down, with a user first identifying the long-term outcome, then the preconditions on the way to the outcome, and finally, appropriate interventions (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). The pathway for outcomes is a sequence of visually represented construction pieces that are linked together in a causal manner; results at one end of the pathway serve as prerequisites for results at the other end (Taplin et al., 2013). Preconditions define a change that needs to happen to achieve the goal or impact. According to Reinholz and Andrews (2020), a theory of change specifies one or more indicators to measure each precondition and the long-term outcome for the project teams to know when they have been achieved.

After the outcome's pathway has been depicted, project teams identify interventions to be implemented to achieve the desired outcome. According to Taplin et al., (2013), mapping interventions to the outcome's pathway has the impact of exposing a method that illustrates the theoretical connections between actions and outcomes at every stage. Explaining the reasons, the group believes the theory will function in practice is necessary in order to identify unambiguous outcomes and their prerequisites.

As stated by Taplin et al., (2013), stakeholder's assumptions regarding how the change will happen are one of the key elements of the theory of change. These assumptions might be supported by research findings or by the professional knowledge of experts in the field. These presumptions might manifest in a number of ways. The first is in the causal framework, which consists of the conditions and actions that lead to the long-term results and impacts. Furthermore, assumptions may be made on the context or environment in which the initiative will work, and the precise relationships between outcomes in a pathway are predicated on these assumptions (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). In the narrative summary, the causal relationships are supported and justified by assumptions.

According to Taplin et al., 2013, the narrative summarizes the theory that explains the overall logic, highlights major assumptions, and presents a compelling case as to how and why the initiative is expected to work. The purpose of the narrative is to convey the major elements of the theory easily and quickly to others and to communicate how the elements of the theory work as a whole. The narrative is a natural companion to the visual elements of the theory as they reinforce each other.

What outcomes the organization will hold itself accountable for accomplishing must be made clear in a theory of change. It must specify the achievable outcomes that the organization will attain, taking into consideration any outside variables that could impede its success, rather than just what it believes will occur. To validate the organization's stated theory and determine whether it can be measured over time, a comprehensive literature review must be conducted. Organizations that prioritise learning might make greater use of theory of change to continuously assess newly emerging presumptions and how they affect interventions.

2.4.5. Results-based Framework

According to Singh et al., (2017), the Result Framework is more output-oriented because it concentrates on the items that will still exist when the programme is over. These are the outcomes that each implementer has set out to accomplish, and they also contribute to the programme aim and purpose. Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010) state that this is further supported by the current emphasis on achieving results (outcomes) and the necessity of demonstrating performance. This emphasis has remained the same today, especially in the third sector, where results have to be tracked and reported regularly for accountability to stakeholders, organizational learning, and for possible funding and extension of current funding. Therefore, the interest of stakeholders in development initiatives rests on whether or not the interventions are making a difference in people's livelihoods.

The emphasis on results caused a shift from traditional ways of monitoring and managing implementation activities and progress to Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E), which focuses on assessments of the contributions of interventions to project outcomes. RBM&E typically works with the measurement and assessment of performance to more effectively achieve results or outcomes, ensuring that efforts are translated into improvements in the lives of beneficiaries and their environment (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010). For organizations to improve programme results, it is crucial that organizations comprehend and record the reasons behind both excellent and poor performance. RBM&E can offer this crucial information. According to Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010), state that RBM&E can also be used to assess what functions well and poorly, as well as the reasons behind it. Because of this, a number of organizations are working to raise their performance levels by creating methods to monitor and assess them.

The benefits of using RBM&E systems are highlighted by Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010) in that they foster more accountability and transparency around the usage of organizational resources. It is imperative to acknowledge that stakeholder’s interests extend beyond the utilization of resources, organizational operations, and results. Their primary focus lies on attaining outcomes that enhance the quality of life for those receiving services and greater access to resources. Second, RBM&E facilitates learning as well. The data it generates gives managers or employees a solid foundation on which to make decisions. It is believed that using lessons gained from past experiences to drive future planning and implementation of interventions improves outcomes, as a result, it is suggested that RBM&E can provide pertinent knowledge that organizations can extract for planning and programming.

The information can be applied in a number of productive ways to help decision-makers decide how to proceed with interventions, whether they are making progress and succeeding, and how to make improvements the next time around. Nonetheless, some contend that RBM&E is worthless inherently, just like all other frameworks. In order to evaluate performance, enhance organizational management, and better implement programmes, organizations and their management must encourage everyone to use information.

When implementing a programme using this approach, an organization must make sure that key monitoring tools and mechanisms are in place to measure progress. These tools and mechanisms may include self-assessments, field visits, reports, reviews, and requests for feedback from partners on progress. Within the monitoring and evaluation framework, feedback is a procedure that allows knowledge and information to be shared and is used to verify the achievement of results or assess overall progress toward results. Recommendations, results, conclusions, and experience-based lessons can all be included in feedback. It can be applied to raise performance, serve as a foundation for decision-making, and encourage learning inside the organization.

2.5. Uses of M&E information

Information on progress should be gathered at all outcome levels in the M&E system at various time intervals and in response to the needs of various stakeholders. Apart from offering direction to enhance the effectiveness of various treatments and establishments, the RBM&E system has numerous other benefits. A strong M&E system can be a knowledge source, helping organizations to foster organizational learning by establishing a database of the kinds of programmes that were successful and unsuccessful and the reasons for such achievements. M&E systems are also instrumental in promoting transparency and accountability within the organization. The information can be used to monitor and evaluate the programme. Information can be collected and analyzed continuously at all levels so that the data can be used to provide timely and useful information for decision-makers and stakeholders. Transparency and accountability inside the company are also greatly aided by M&E systems. The data can be utilized for programme monitoring and assessment. All levels of information gathering and analysis are possible, allowing for the timely and effective provision of relevant data to stakeholders and decision-makers. As a result, M&E needs to be done both during and after the programme design and implementation cycles. Knowledge build-up and effective M&E systems assist organizations in creating a knowledge base about the kinds of programmes that have succeeded, failed, and why. It also provides ongoing feedback to promote organizational growth (Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., 2010).

It can be applied to encourage increased organization-wide responsibility and openness. Internally, it can be used as a management tool for making necessary corrections, planning ahead, and allocating resources efficiently. This will make it easier for stakeholders to understand the programme current state.

2.6. Role of NGOs in South Africa

NGOs are intermediaries or bridge builders that use and disseminate development meanings and practices (Mueller-Hirth, 2012). In South Africa, NGOs implemented service delivery in communities where the government could not provide services to the people. This was true both before and after 1994, with the range of labour in many industries and fields. Numerous organizations founded before 1994 chose to remain non-governmental to challenge the apartheid regime. But after 1994, many had to seek non-profit status because they were either employed by or supported by the government. These organizations are currently also called non-profit organizations (NPO) because of their not-for-profit status (Swilling & Russsel, 2002).

Prior to 1994, Abrahams (2014) observed that donor and recipient organizations in South Africa had a more lenient and accommodating relationship. All that was needed for NGOs to be eligible for further funding was to submit yearly reports and financial audits. Funding organizations, including the Netherlands, USAID, and the Department for International Development (DFID), also began enforcing strict accountability standards for their funding, bringing in technical procedures (Abrahams, 2015; Bornstein, 2006).

According to Abrahams (2015), South Africa has also been selected as a base for several international development aid agencies operating in the Southern Hemisphere and the rest of the African continent. To guarantee access to communities or other organizations, NPOs frequently collaborate with government agencies. Occasionally, they also enlist volunteers to help them operate more efficiently. Corporate firms funded non-profit organizations to provide Corporate Social Investment (CSI) services related to welfare, education, health, and general development. To defend investment and utilize the outcomes for marketing and branding, they also need thorough assessments of development initiatives (Abrahams, 2015; Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

In South Africa, the practice of monitoring and evaluation originated from the need for project activities and results to be assessed by the non-governmental sector to receive more money from donors (Mouton, 2010; Potter & Kruger 2001; Swilling & Russel 2002). According to, Mueller-Hirth, (2012), this requirement sparked reforms in the industry by putting pressure on NGOs to demonstrate their cost-effectiveness, good governance, and accountability. Logical framework approach was introduced to monitor programme results and performance (Stone, 2012; Bornstein, 2005; Mueller-Hirth, 2012). This approach was chosen because of its ability to communicate key information about a project's design, progress, and impact to funders, NGOs, and other stakeholders. It also allows NGOs to review how they have been implementing their interventions and adapt to new ways of ensuring efficiency and effectiveness (Bornstein, 2006; Mueller-Hirth, 2012).

2.7. Evidence-based management approach

Using evidence when making decisions is advantageous because complete, accurate, and dependable data is preferable to incomplete information, and facts are more persuasive than intuition. People can be convinced by data gathering, interpretation, and analysis that an evidence-based management strategy can result in superior programme performance outcomes and decisions for the organization. In management and organizational science, there is a disconnect between research and practice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). While some argue that there is insufficient evidence and systematic research to support the claim that evidence-based management enhances organizational performance and facilitates better decision-making by managers (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006), the benefits of evidence-based management to organizations cannot be discounted due to the lack of proof , (Briner et al., 2009).

The proposal is for decentralizing power in decision-making due to the absence of evidence. Decentralizing decision-making will encourage users to recognize issues early on, find solutions, and enhance programme results. The organization has to encourage implementers to use data because doing so will also encourage them to collect high-quality data because they will understand that poor data quality will result in decisions that are not significant.

2.8 Decision-making process

Making decisions based on evidence presented managers with both a challenge and an opportunity to be open and honest about their decision-making procedures to be held accountable to stakeholders and other data users. Rousseau (2006) states that for managers to solve problems and successfully make decisions, they must adhere to evidence-based principles and procedures and follow a comprehensive decision cycle that entails analysis of the decision context, appraisal of alternative solutions, and decision-making. Consequently, the decision-making process is impacted by the requirement to take into account the frequently at-odds goals of many stakeholders, necessitating the process's standardization to avoid being repeated at various levels (Rousseau, 2006).

Stone (2012) proposed a logical process for making decisions that involves weighing all available options impartially and fully, evaluating pertinent data and information, consulting experts and experience from both inside the group and outside sources, evaluating each option's expected outcome, and selecting the one most likely to succeed.

An alternative perspective is offered by Rousseau (2006), who claims that the conventional decision-making method either heavily depends on first-hand experience or blindly adopts the recommendations of business books or consultants, mostly motivated by ingrained ideas or flimsy evidence supporting data in rational decision-making. Leech (2004) concurs that information alone is frequently insufficient as a basis for action. It must be paired with a manager's wisdom and experience to provide the information needed to take effective action. In line with Leech, Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) contend that managers who adopt an evidence-based management approach attempt to act rationally even in the face of scant or non-existent accurate information. Decentralizing power, stakeholder involvement, and participation in structured decision-making through facilitated and well-coordinated steps for context analysis, weighing potential solutions, and taking trade-offs between potential solutions are essential for meaningful decisions (Wickremasinghe et al., 2016).

This demonstrates the necessity of decentralized and standardized decision-making. One of the factors is to include community people in the decision-making process, particularly when it comes to public policy. It fosters accountability to the implementers and a sense of community ownership as part of public engagement. The fundamental components of a standardized decision-making process are accountability and transparency. The rational approach to decision-making results in transparency, which, if followed, may encourage ownership and data use by all parties impacted by the choice made. In contrast, an alternative perspective is limited in explaining how the manager can maintain objectivity and ethics while using his experience without abusing his power.

2.9 Organizational culture and use of M&E information

Organizational culture is one of the many variables in an organization's context that might impact evidence-based practice. An organization's culture impacts how it functions and helps defines its context. In a culture that encourages evidence-based decision-making, decision authority would be distributed according to an individual's competency and mastery of evidence as a critical resource for decision-making rather than organizational politics and structural power (Rousseau, 2006). Decision-making processes should, therefore, be connected to the individuals who collect data and make decisions. All tiers of the organization, irrespective of the employee's position, must participate in decision-making. Organizational routines with recurring, recognizable patterns might encourage utilization at the data collection level (Feldman & Pentland, 2003).

The main goals of organizational structure are the utilization of data in routine operations and the encouragement of organizational learning through cross-user interaction. Individuals working at different organizational levels and with varied job responsibilities tackle gathering, analyzing, synthesizing, interpreting, and using data for decision-making. By collaborating, data producers and users can increase their understanding of the sources that are available, the techniques used to obtain the data, and the quality of the data. They might enhance the sharing of data resources and remove obstacles to data utilization. They can also define important programming issues and connect them to the data that is accessible in their settings, talk about any worries they may have, and ask questions about the way the data is collected. Together, they can assess and understand data to provide programmatic answers. Making decisions based on data, establishing data ownership, reinforcing the information cycle, and showcasing the value of data for programme improvement are all facilitated by knowing your data producers and users and tying them into each other's work (Nutley, 2012)

According to Spillane (2012), if policymakers and reformers want more and better use of data in everyday practice, then organizational routines are likely to be a key mechanism in achieving the goal of noting a patterned activity or trend analysis rather than a single occurrence and discussions on what aspect of data to notice. Regarding trend analysis, it becomes imperative to comprehend how data is utilized to inform practice and how initiatives to modify the practice to encourage data use are recorded and assessed; routine in practice is the focal point (Bach-Mortensen et al., 2018). Current, accurate, and pertinent data helps decision-makers make better programme results. Crucially, investigating the relationships between structure and agency in practice is made possible by viewing routines as performative and ostensive (Wickremasinghe et al., 2016).As part of the organizational culture, it is practical that organizational regularity in daily operations can provide positive results in boosting data utilization and improving performance.

Examining the purpose and importance of the data that practitioners and data gatherers use to inform their decisions might lead to a multi-level perspective and presume that contextual factors have a cross-level influence on the process of generating evidence-based decisions. The organization, which is the pertinent setting for promoting data use to guide practice, is referred to as the "context" in this study. Higher analysis levels reveal that these contextual elements can either support or limit the evidence-based decision-making process. By agreeing, all parties involved may assume responsibility for the choices taken, increasing support for their execution(Wilson & Arvai, 2011).

A planned, supported procedure for reaching consensus will contribute to a seamless and effective decision-making process. The model focuses on how, in the context of an organization, evidence is converted into managerial decisions. Evidence is not always employed logically by managers, regardless of whether it is provided to them by their formal training and education or is found by them through means of their own discretion.

As per the notion, evidence-based decision-making is a multi-level phenomenon that manifests at the human level but is influenced by cross-level constructs at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels both independently and interactively. When formulating options for decisions, manager's backgrounds, experiences, judgment, and level of education determine what constitutes evidence. Additionally, within institutional, organizational, and personal contexts, manager's preferences and values and stakeholder's preferences impact the evidence-based decision-making process. Finally, while selecting a final choice from the generated choices for decision-making, managers may encounter ethical challenges at the organizational and personal levels.

2.10 Approaches to implementing intervention

The study will adopt the implementation theory as the main theory to understand how interventions are implemented and the monitoring framework followed. According to Hill & Hupe (2002), implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders. Ideally, that decision identifies the problem to be addressed, stipulates objectives to be pursued, and, in a variety of ways, structures the implementation process. The implementation contains the goals and objectives of the intervention and the means of achieving them through activities that are routinely monitored. As a result, one cannot make a distinction on whether implementation has failed or succeeded without examining these goals (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Bach-Mortensen et al., (2018) argue that implementation is often understood in terms of implementation fidelity, which can be defined as the degree to which interventions are implemented according to the design. Furthermore, they state that implementation aspects include adherence to protocol, dose of treatment, participant responsiveness to intervention, and implementation quality. This means that there are various actors that can be identified in the implementation of interventions, namely, those who formulate what needs to be implemented and make decisions on them and the implementers. These can be the same group of actors or various actors, depending on how the organization has structured its interventions. What power each actor has needs to be determined, as well as whether decision-making is at the bottom or top.

The theory will examine the following two approaches. While implementers are at the bottom of the hierarchy and are responsible for driving service delivery, leaders are at the core of the top-down approach to policymaking. To demonstrate whether implementers at the bottom regularly use data and whether decisions taken at the top can be linked back to the users, the top-down approach will be scrutinized (Hill & Hupe, 2002). While managers are tasked with making decisions, other members of the organization also play a role in this process because data is mostly generated by those at the implementation level (Rousseau, 2006).

It is critical that decision-making be distributed throughout the organization's levels. However, there are clear disparities in the use of data between consumers at the management level and data collectors at the implementation level. The obstacles arise from users perceptions that the data is inadequate or unimportant because of differences between the parties collecting the data and the users; the data was collected for a different purpose, such as monitoring instead of decision-making; the data is prone to intentional misrepresentation; or the users think that using the data as a symbol of rational decision-making is more important than the process's outcome, according to Wickremasinghe et al., (2016).

Chapter 3

3. Research methodology

A thorough explanation of the research methods used and the theoretical framework of the study is provided by research methodology. It details the research's perspective, the data tools employed, and how they were used. How was the sampling carried out, and what steps were taken to process and analyze the data utilizing thematic and content analysis? There were restrictions, the study's viability, and data quality standards that were considered.

3.1 Research Approach

Three approaches are taken into consideration in the study to improve understanding of the world. Depending on the research subject one aims to explore and comprehend, the strategy can be either qualitative or quantitative, and some researchers can blend qualitative and quantitative methodologies in one study. A qualitative research approach can be utilized to study a variety of issues, but it tends to focus on meanings and motivations that underlie cultural symbols, personal experiences, phenomena, and a detailed understanding of processes in the social world (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life and its methods, which in general generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). It seeks to understand people’s experiences and attitudes about a particular issue.

On the other hand, quantitative research tests objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured, typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Creswell & Zhang, 2009), while mixed methods research is an approach that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods.

The research study employed qualitative approach because it sought to understand and explore the mechanisms and processes of decision-making through the use of data from individuals collecting data and those making decisions inside the organization. Because of its interpretive nature, the technique is most suited for understanding the different kinds of data implementers collected, why they collected it, and how they processed and used it to inform practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Because of its participatory method, which involves a variety of role actors in issue solving and solution implementation, the study examined decision-making mechanisms and organized processes through the prism of policy implementation theory (Hill & Hupe, 2002).

3.2 Research design

With the goal to collect participant’s experiences and perspectives on how data is processed, utilized to inform practice, and what processes facilitate this usage, the study was carried out in a natural context. The research investigated the mechanisms that enable the use of data for decision-making, to get the best results in this investigation a case study design was selected.

CSVR was selected as a research site because of its unique and important work of analysing the evolving forms of conflict and violence inside countries enduring a transition to democracy. The CSVR 5-year strategy (2020) states that the organization's approach considers the context in which they operate and the insights they have gained. In an attempt to bring hope and healing to conflict and crises, they pledge to learn about the causes and prevention of violence, apply what they learn in the community, and share their knowledge and ideas with academics, duty bearers, and other members of civil society. CSVR has five strategic objectives with outcomes and leading programmes attached to each objective. Understanding how the organization uses M&E frameworks in documenting its achievements and lessons learned and how it uses M&E information to measure whether they are achieving the goals and objectives it set for itself is of great importance.

The other interest was choosing a research site that was within reach and accessible. Known NGOs are funded for implementing HIV/AIDS-related programmes and are funded by either Global health and USAID donors, CSVR provides a unique implementation of programmes that are funded by different donors as listed in their websites. NGO’s funded by international donors have M&E frameworks and teams that are initiated by funders themselves and are specific to the programme being implemented. This was confirmed by Mueller-Hirth, 2012 in that NGOs with international donors turned to have M&E that is donor led and has stringent requirements, this is different to NGO led M&E.   Conducting a study in an NGO that is funded differently was of interest in order to get a different perspective. The increase in NGOs implementing development programmes has been confronted with a demand for accountability and measuring achievements and performance; therefore, monitoring and evaluation have been used to measure performance and make NGOs accountable to donors. Mueller-Hirth (2012) concurs with this need, noting that the relative lack of development funds makes it harder for NGOs, both in South Africa and globally, to show their impact and output. NGOs are allocating more resources to M&E, but impact measurement is also becoming more and more important to donors, some of whom now require that a specific portion of the budget be used for M&E. For example, in the case of United States Agency of International Development (USAID) grants to South African NGOs, M&E is to make up 9% of total project expenditure.

While some grant-makers may not mandate a certain percentage for M&E, they do have reporting procedures in place that require significant NGO resources, like the preparation of detailed narrative reports, budgets, and financial audits. When donors stipulate the percentage to be used on M&E human capacity and system, this strengthens the organizational M&E frameworks while accounting to donors. However, it has been noted that not all donors have this stipulation, and implementing NGOs are still overlooking the role played by M&E in demonstrating results.

In the CSVR 5-year strategy (2020) it is stated that the organization receives no financial support from the South African government. The organization largely depends on donations from foreign governments, foundations, and other non-governmental organizations. Limited resources are also provided by the South African corporate sector and through consultancy and contract fees earned.

Non-governmental organizations are autonomous because their primary goal is to improve the communities in which they work in, not to make money or submit to political authority. Lewis, Kanji, and Themudo (2021) define this catalyst role as an NGO's capacity to stimulate, support, or provide ideas and action to encourage change by developing novel approaches to issues. Virtual interviews with participants were conducted during business hours to avoid interfering with regular tasks and organizational operations. Appointments were made for participants to avoid conflicting priorities and duplicate bookings. An interpretive or constructive worldview is advocated because of its approach to highlights people's subjective experiences anchored in social-historical settings and suggests that people actively participate in building and reconstructing meanings via their daily interactions. (Leavy, 2022; Zhang & Creswell, 2009).

Implementation theory assisted in examining organizational structure routines, whether they contribute in data use. It provided context for how participants utilize data in their daily work and how this use fosters organizational learning through interactions between various users. Patterns of interaction and interpretive procedures resulting from the conditions and activities of the participants shape the social environment and its meaning. With the theory serving as the endpoint, inductive analysis was applied by first classifying the data into themes and categories, then connected those themes and categories to the generalised model or theory (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The fidelity of the programme as outlined in the organizational frameworks were examined and implications added to demonstrate whether these lead to improved programme outcomes.

3.3 Research tools and their applications

For in-person interactions, a naturalistic method of interviewing participants in their workplace was used. Participants were interviewed one-on-one to gain an understanding of the mechanisms behind data use and to get an account of what they knew and understood about data use. Interviewing is preferred above other methods of gathering data because the interviewer starts with the presumption that other people's perspectives are relevant, knowable, and comprehensible (Patton, 2014).

The interview technique helps the researcher readily probe and obtain additional information when replies are ambiguous. Each interviewer only conducted one point-in-time approach (Patton, 2014). For every interview, a set of standardized and open-ended questions was created along with an interview guide. This was carried out in order to investigate the responses provided and gain a comprehensive grasp of the specifics of the answers. Participants proposed to be interviewed via Microsoft Teams instead of face-to-face because the organization adopted a hybrid workplace model after the COVID-

19 shutdown. For the purpose of maintaining control over the line of questioning, telephone interviews were scheduled with participants in lieu of electronic questionnaires (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Due to connectivity challenges, there were two telephone interviews that were pre-arranged with participants.

Project records, including minutes from progress review meetings, the M&E framework, data flow charts, the M&E plan, the M&E standard operating procedures and guidelines, the strategy document, and other relevant documents, were sought as part of the documentary analysis process. Examining the procedures and methods used in data-driven decision-making is the goal. With the help of these records, the researcher will be able to capture the participants' words and language during meetings without having to be present or pose questions that could sway their answers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The documents solicited also served as evidence backing the answers of the respondents.

3.4. Description of the sample

The study employed a purposive sampling strategy to choose people who provided informed consent and demonstrated particular attributes related to handling and utilizing data . It is known as a technique that is better utilized when there are limited resources for selecting respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and helpful information (Patton, 2014; Goergens & Kusek, 2010; Kelly, 2010; Palinkas et al., 2015). The selection of participants to ensure that specific individuals using data are selected was made possible by the initial meeting that was held with the Senior M & E personnel in order to draft the interview schedule and understand the organogram of the organization and the roles and responsibilities of the personnel. The reason for adopting a purposive strategy assumes that, given the aims and objectives of the study, specific kinds of people may hold different and important views about the ideas and issues in question and, therefore, need to be included in the sample (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Trost, 1986).

Initially, the study had a provisional sample size of thirty participants; however, due to the practical reality of the size of the organization, the number was reduced to ten participants during data collection. Another reason the number of participants was reduced was personnel holding dual roles. Programme implementers are responsible for programme implementation and data collection; there is no personnel responsible for data collection other than programme implementers. Five programme implementers from different programmes were interviewed , two M&E team members, two programme managers and one acting programme manager . The monitoring and Evaluation team has two members who were both interviewed. Although the organization is implementing three programmes, M & E personnel is only in one programme, and other programmes do not have M & E personnel. Two managers and one acting manager from different programmes were interviewed.

Each programme has its own programme implementers responsible for collecting data from the community and clients who come to the office, using data collection tools designed by the monitoring and evaluation team for all programmes. Programme managers enforce the use of the tools, make decisions, and lead project performance discussions with the help of the monitoring and evaluation team. The monitoring and evaluation team is responsible for designing data collection tools, logical framework design, data processing, database management, data interpretation, and analysis. Participants had to be CSVR employees who had worked there for at least six months in order to meet the inclusion requirements. This was done to provide room for the monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual reporting periods that would have been required in order for the organization to update partners, funders, and stakeholders on its progress and results. The organization has three programme interventions, namely research, advocacy, and mental health prevention, and psychosocial support. All interviewees were selected from all interventions. Two managers were selected from the two interventions because the Advocacy intervention had no manager at the time of interviews, and an outgoing Acting Manager was interviewed for the position of Manager. Ten participants were interviewed via Teams. This platform was recommended by participants themselves to accommodate their busy work schedule.

3.5 Process of analysis

For quality control purposes, the gathered data was marked, coded, and dated to make sure that no information is missing or incomplete. By assembling cogent responses to the main descriptive questions, case analysis started the analysis process, which examined each interview (Patton, 2014). After that, the analysis was followed by a cross-case analysis in which responses to the main question from various participants was analysed, and those that differ were grouped together.

Cross-case analysis and the usage of standardized open-ended questions worked well together. Answers from various interviewees were categorised according to interview guide topics when using an interview guide technique. To confirm the validity and applicability of the inductive content analysis, the study used deductive analysis, which closely scrutinizes anomalous examples or data that did not fit the predetermined categories. By generating fresh ideas, justifications, conclusions, and hypotheses about certain facts, the inductive analysis was utilized to find and classify patterns and themes in the data (Patton, 2014).

Themes that surface from the interviews and materials gathered were organized and classified in advance of the analysis procedure. Content analysis was employed to ascertain and classify the meanings, patterns, and consistency presented in the data. Through this process of winnowing, the focus topics and their contents were sorted into a manageable group of five to seven themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Every information collected will be recorded and kept safe in a computer.

3.5.1. Analysis of Primary Data

Collected data was audiotaped and transcribed as direct quotes before organizing them into themes that were described and summarized. To analyse means to take apart words, sentences, and paragraphs, which is an important act in the research project to make sense of, interpret, and theorize such data. In other words, when using qualitative analysis as a means to explain or make sense of the inquiry, evidence is not used as frequencies or quantities with which something occurs but rather elicit meaning from the data in a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous manner (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.5.2 Organizing collected data

After transcription, data was organized into different sections, looking at which interview question answers the research question, the expectations of the researcher compared with the answers received, and the differences.

The research questions for the study are:

- How is the process of linking data use and practice conceptualized in CSVR?
- How is the M&E framework conceptualized, and what informs the choice of the M&E approach?
- What are the decision-making tools used, and what are the challenges encountered when using these tools?

Different themes were then identified and coded, as well as responses to the themes referred to. Each interview was given a specific code that mixed the person's initials and the title position and programme. A secure file was created that linked code numbers to the original respondents, but as with any research this file is confidential and would usually be destroyed after completion of the project (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Similarly, names and other identifiable material were removed from the transcripts.

3.5.3 Coding of data

Transcriptions of interviews were analysed using the constant comparative method; as data was collected, concepts and themes from the data were coded and analysed at the same time (Kolb, 2012). This process made data analysis iterative, with data collection reflecting continuously on impressions, relationships, and connections while collecting data. The search for similarities, differences, categories, themes, concepts and ideas formed part of the continuous process. An analysis commenced with reading all the data and then dividing the data into smaller, more meaningful units (Smit Brigitte, 2002).

There were two processes that were engaged in identifying themes in the study. Some themes were identified from monitoring and evaluation literature, and emergent themes came from the terms used by respondents themselves and taken from the data itself. Initial data analysis guided further and more focused data collection, leading to the further conceptualization of the data and refinement of the coding schemes. As part of the analysis, similarities and differences in the compiled codes were clustered together to create categories. Relationships between various identified themes were identified (Lacey & Luff, 2001). Relationship in themes was linked to the interviewees' roles and their implementation programmes.

The process of Coding enabled the grouping and labelling of several elements under one concept or theme. Coding is described (Willig, 2014) as a major methodological step in analysing data. Through Coding, common themes used in routine monitoring of interventions and from the respondents were identified. Interviews were coded by conceptualizing underlying patterns in the data (Lacey & Luff, 2001). This was done by organizing, reducing, and describing data. Charts for all datasets were created with themes that appear across all respondent's datasets.

3.5.3.1 Open, Axial, and selective Coding strategy

Williams & Moser, 2019 describe open, axial, and selective Coding as a strategy that enables a cyclical and evolving data loop in which the researcher interacts, constantly comparing data, and applies data reduction and consolidation techniques. As the coding process progresses, its dynamic function and nonlinear directionality enable essential themes to be identified, codified, and interpreted in the service of a research study's focus and contribute to the associated literature. Data was presented using open and axial coding strategies.

3.5.3.2 Open Coding

In open Coding, concepts and themes were identified for categorization to organize data. The first level of data was organized by creating initial broad thematic domains for data assemblage (Williams & Moser, 2019). In Open Coding, in brief, the concept-indicator model made constant comparisons of textual indicators and focuses on comparing regularly occurring textual material. This approach was accompanied by the ongoing Coding of themes as an indicator of a concept, always comparing it to previous indicators that had been similarly coded (Saldafia, 2009). Informants responses with similar words and phrases were sifted and organized in broad thematic domains. Interview transcripts were read in order to search for thematic connectivity leading to thematic patterns to classify and determine the grouping together of data that look alike. The 5W -1H questioning approach of determining codes was used as a foundational way for connecting codes with categories and content.

3.5.3.3 Axial Coding

It is the second level of Coding, in contrast to open Coding, which focused on identifying emergent themes. Axial Coding further refined, aligned, and categorized the themes. With the completion of open Coding and transition to axial Coding, collected data was sifted, refined, and categorized with the goal of creating distinct thematic categories in preparation for selective Coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). The relationship between open codes was identified, and major codes were developed as aggregates of interrelated open codes.

Open codes were extracted from the participant's answers to each research question. Research questions 1 and 2 were omitted in the codes because of their nature. However, they will be included in the analysis chapter as they answer the qualifying requirements of participants.

3.6 Limitations, feasibility, and positionality

Face-to-face interviews with participants were conducted; however, due to scheduling constraints, this was not always feasible. In those situations, telephone interviews were scheduled. It was possible to carry out the study within the company with managers overseeing implementation and administration, programme staff, and monitoring and evaluation personnel .

The researcher's position in this study was of an outsider with monitoring and evaluation experience who has no relationship with the participants within the organization. As a result, the researcher had no control over anyone who choose to take part in the research. There were no language barriers experienced when conducting interviews with implementers and data collectors. As a result there was no need of using two languages, including English as initially planned. There was no need of hiring a transcriber as all participants spoke English.

3.7 Ethics

The researcher safeguarded the participants by building trust with them, promoted the integrity of the study, and guarded against misconduct and impropriety that could reflect on their organization because ethical questions are evident today in issues like personal disclosure, authenticity, and credibility of the research report, (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To guarantee participant safety, specific protocols were followed, and the researcher applied for permission from the institution to conduct the study. Permission to conduct research was given by the organizations management and all participants were provided with the permission letter. The researcher chose the place impartially and without any prior knowledge of the participants. The study used a naturalistic approach, so it did not interfere with the site regular operations. The participants chose to be interviewed virtually this helped in managing the setting of the interviews.

3.8 Ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, protection of human subjects, reactivity

The researcher will ask the organization's management for permission to conduct interviews before speaking with the participants directly, throughout this process, the goal of the study was clarified. The study protocol was elucidated and deliberated upon with the participants. Participants privacy was protected, and they were not coerced into signing consent papers (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Participants were asked to participate voluntarily, no harmful information were collected from them, and the interview only began when consent was given and consent documents have been completed by the researcher. The research report did not include the name of the organization or the participants; their identities will remain anonymous.

3.9 Validity, reliability, and dependability

The proposed study employed various strategies to ensure the validity of research findings. These strategies included verifying the accuracy of the results and utilizing a member-checking strategy, which involved returning the results and themes to the participants to ascertain whether the results accurately reflect their responses. The respondents were clear about the researcher's biases throughout the investigation so that the reader may comprehend how the interpretation of the results is influenced. A peer who will review and pose questions will be utilized (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).When these tactics are used, the reliability and validity of the findings will be confirmed .

Every stage of the study and research process was recorded for future replication, and data was verified and updated to guarantee that research findings are reliable. Credibility checks were performed on the coherence of the study's design, data collecting, analysis procedure, and results reporting.

Chapter 4

4. Data presentation and analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings obtained in the study. Data was presented and organized in various themes that came from respondents that were interviewed. In programme implementation various actors have distinct roles to play in the execution of programme activities to meet objectives. These roles were taken into consideration in the selection of respondents. Five programme implementers were interviewed: two M&E team members, two Managers, and one acting manager. Although the organization is implementing three programmes, M & E personnel is only in one programme and other programmes do not have M & E personnel. Two managers and one acting manager from different programmes were interviewed. Altogether, ten personnel from three programmes were interviewed.

4.1 Framework analysis approach

The study adopted a framework analysis approach because of its suitability for research that asks specific questions and has limited timescales. It also provides clear, visible, and systematic stages of the analysis process (Lacey & Luff, 2001). One of the benefits of using framework analysis is that although the general approach is inductive, this form of analysis allows for the inclusion of a priori as well as emergent concepts in coding (Lacey & Luff, 2001). This is important in the study as the research has specific questions it wants to answer using the existing themes in the monitoring and evaluation literature. The distinctive feature of framework analysis is that it forms a series of thematic matrices in which every participant is allocated a row and each sub-theme a column. This level of transparency in analysis makes explicit the processes employed in the interpretation of raw data (Goergens & Kusek, 2010; Kiernan & Hill, 2018; Wickremasinghe et al., 2016). However, to better present data, each participant will not have a row, so instead of having one theme appearing many times in different rows for each participant, a specific theme will be chosen for all participants.

4.2 Familiarization

Reading full transcripts of the data familiarized the researcher with the data collected. Judgments have to be made as to how data for analysis are to be selected and broken down into a dataset of a manageable size Kiernan & Hill, (2018). Interview transcripts were divided into three levels in order to identify themes and relationships using open and axial coding. The levels were grouped into implementers to start the familiarization process, practitioners or specialists, and managers were then added until no new themes emerged. The grouping of different levels made familiarization of raw data and identification of themes explicit. The rationale behind the levels was influenced by how data flows in different interventions.

A total of seven themes were identified from monitoring and evaluation literature, and twenty-six emergent sub-themes came from the terms used by respondents themselves and taken from the data itself. Furthermore, the identified themes were used to formulate arguments, reasoning, and deliberations on the use of M&E information.

4.3 List of themes

Theme categories	**Sub-themes**	**Notes from the respondents supporting the content of the codes**
Organizational structure	Location of M&E	From a strategic point of view, M&E should be the umbrella that oversees all of the projects within an organization and everything that sort of grants within an organization.
M&E system Routine data management processes	Designing of tools	The M&E team designs data collection tools for MHPSS interventions.
	Data Collection	Administering of attendance register and consent forms by implementers
	Data flow and duties	Data flows from the beneficiaries to the community practitioners to check that data collection tools are completed. They sign off for a stipend being given to Community Psychosocial Supporters (CPSs); from the CPSs, checks and balances are done and sent to the M&E team. Clinicians fill in screening forms and submit them to the M&E team. Researchers conduct output monitoring.
	Data analysis	Data is analysed by sifting conversations about what comes from data. M & E provide feedback to the team on the themes that come up from the collected data and issues on data quality.
	Reporting	The designed tools enable the team to report on the indicators. M&E collects all of the information from the implementers and populates it into result-based frameworks relevant to each project, and that's how reports to both the team in terms of what the team's reach is and to the donor are generated.
	Data use	Information is utilized to develop blog posts and opinion pieces, and we primarily use it to develop our intervention content, workshops, and capacity building. We draw it from what has come up in the data to say this is the need. This is the gap.
	Data submission guidelines or SOP, error log forms	When there's an error in the data that was submitted, M&E is able to log it in an error log. If there are also late submissions of the data, it is logged in, and feedback is given to the implementers for

		them to take note of missing data elements from the one that they submitted or what needs to be rectified. Data is submitted at the end of the month; a week is allocated to clean and verify the data.
Data quality assessments and verification	Data quality checks and balances	checks and balances are done to double-check that the physical forms are actually what people are reporting. Data is verified in relation to each indicator to ensure that what is being reported is accurate.
	Data quality review	M & E leads the process, the team provides feedback, and the Manager and M&E team provides direction on what is missing and remedial actions.
Data management system	Data capturing	Salesforce is the main data management system used within the MHPSS team An Excel-based system is also used. Clinicians have screening forms that they use, and that information is transferred into these Excel-based systems.
	Storage	The M&E team is responsible for keeping of documents and controlling access
Project performance	Project monitoring rubric	Developed internally or shared by the donor to capture quantitative data because that is what most donors are interested in.
	Internal reflective process	Deliverables reached targets, and impact is captured in a more conversational way. Personnel leading the process are the project lead or project manager with M&E support.
	Meeting discussions	In the weekly meetings, project plans and how to address some of the obstacles or challenges are discussed. Project performance is tracked. Staff performance reviews are conducted on a quarterly basis, where each person is expected to meet certain targets that feed into the annual targets. If any targets are not met, they are adjusted accordingly.
	Results-based framework and logical framework	There are outcomes, indicators, outputs, means of verification, location, frequency of collection of data and targets in the results- based framework. During the team meetings or project meetings, these documents are updated. If there are any red flags in relation to indicators that are not met, plans are put in place to ensure that the efforts are zoned into those specific indicators.

	Five years strategy	There's a strategy that's translated to performance contracts for individuals, and this is used in performance management reviews.
	Different approaches	There is institutional work that is done for governance. There is a specific donor compliance component that also strengthens the system in that regard. For example, there is one donor that has its own pathways and a different donor with its own pathways.
Uses of M&E information	Funding	looking at what the data reveals about the frequency of issues to be resolved
	Research	In order to come up with innovative interventions that are backed with data and will assist in future programming
	Programming	Monitoring performance between staff and the meetings, adjusting to challenges to meet targets
	Thematic reports	The information around clients in thematic areas where referrals are going to all of that information is important to give feedback to the team so that we can assist. If a specific community needs more advocacy work, then we need to bring that into that community.
	Improving programme outcomes	Information is utilized to develop blog posts and opinion pieces, and we primarily use it to develop our intervention content, workshops, and capacity building. We draw it from what has come up on the data to say this is the need. This is the gap.
	Learning	
Decision-making	Resource allocation	Discussion on who needs to be part of the team according to the work that needs to be done and decisions around office locations.
	Strategic planning	In the organization's strategic documents, violence is explored as a whole right, but in five or fewer years they would choose specific things, and the data helps to narrow it down based on what is out there, what is topical.

4.4 Thematic analysis

4.4.1 Organizational structure and alignment

The workplace is the organizational culture, and organizational structure defines the hierarchy, reporting lines, and methodical ordering of work in an organization. Organizational culture refers to the shared assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs that direct an organization's operations. According to Goergens & Kusek, (2010) it is one of the most crucial components of a highly successful organization. CSVR has a 2020-2024 five-year strategy that has strategic objectives that drives the implementation of three programmes. The Three programmes are research, advocacy, and Mental Health and Psycho-social Service (MHPSS). Depending on where the M&E unit is located inside the company, decisions may need to be made regarding its viability. At CSVR, M&E is not present at the organizational level and is instead categorized as a section under the MHPSS programme. Responded 5 confirmed the placement of M&E and why it is located the way it is but also acknowledged that a change to the current placement is needed.

> *"I think this has come from a place of funding, and LME (Learning, Monitoring & Evaluation) is housed under MHPSS. And it shouldn't actually be right. From a strategic point of view, M&E should be the umbrella that oversees all of the projects within an organization. Because you need it for more than just a single project, you need it as an entire umbrella. Therefore, strategically, LME is not situated very well. But like I said before, it's because of a donor requirement for projects that were done under MHPSS and also a lack of funding for LME staff".*

There was a different view that pointed to the LME officers working in other programmes as well, but other respondents did not support this.

> *"So, what we've been trying to do for the whole organization is to centralize everything so that it's not housed under one department. But apart from that, we do work in other departments. We do work with research and advocacy."* (Respondent 2)

The two LME Officers in the MHPSS programme set it apart from the other two programme structures. According to the five-year strategy document, the programme also supports strategic objectives 2 and 4 by providing much-needed empirical data to support more comprehensive CSVR research, advocacy, and interventions and by incorporating M&E data into the iterative development of MHPSS intervention models. As such, there is a connection between how the programme is implemented and what is written in the strategy documentThis was also confirmed by respondents in the two programmes;

> *"I would say as Advocacy we don't have a specific person looking at our M and E or the M and E tools, we just use the ones the MHPSS team are using but with Advocacy team we don't have somebody within the team who looks at our M and E"* (Respondent 3)

M&E capacity is limited, obscuring data flow pathways in other programmes. This might be because two other programmes do not have M&E team. For the M&E framework to be effective and functional, human capacity is needed. One respondent has changed programmes; she was previously working in a programme supported by the M&E team and has now moved to the one without M&E. She often referred and answered according to her previous experience of being guided by the M&E team.

> *"We have an M and E Officer even previously when we were with the community team we used to send to the M and E Officer,"* Respondent 3.

An unfavourable organizational culture concerning data management and information sharing hinders the functionality and efficacy of the M&E system. In a different programme, M&E received minimal attention. As a result, less value was placed on it. This also proves that other organizations and even programmes implement M&E for compliance, not because they see the value and benefits of learning from experiences and improving the programme outcomes.

> Respondent 1 said*, "M&E is alive, and well; they do the pre and post-evaluations, I do not. I do very little M&E. I only invite M&E when I'm forced to by donors".*

The views expressed contradict the organization's approach in the five-year strategy. CSVR's 5-year strategy (2020) claims to value the contributions of M&E in the organization. This approach holds that the lived experiences of survivors and their communities, as observed in clinical and community work, influence CSVR research and assist refine and enhance therapies. Learning monitoring and evaluation are essential to their work because they want to be leaders in their field and continuously improve their interventions. They understand how important it is for practitioners to interact with LME to reflect and offer feedback so they can keep improving their interventions.

As an organization, CSVR has no M&E system in place. Before an organization can have an M&E system for the programme and project, there is a need for an umbrella M&E team that will manage the strategic objectives of the organization where they can assess if the organization is succeeding or failing in what it seeks to achieve. The new strategy brought changes in the previous structure and proposed new structure where all three programmes have LME teams. However, zooming in into each programme the operations of Learning, Monitoring and Evaluation (LME) in Advocacy and Research programmes are not mentioned. The structure of the organization makes it difficult for M&E to have a voice or advocate for an M&E culture that all will support. M&E in the structure is at the bottom; in the management, there is no M&E, and the interests are not in M&E. The absence of M&E culture weakens the M&E framework and its operations; this is partly caused by the lack of human capacity and the placement of M&E.

4.4.2 Routine data management processes

The critical part of the M&E framework is data generated and processed for interpretation and decision-making. Data is generated during the implementation of the intervention in order to make a distinction on whether the execution plan of activities is conducted according to the fidelity of the programme and whether objectives and goals will be realized at the end. The first step in routine data management is designing data collection tools that will be used as data sources according to the data needs of the intervention. This was confirmed by Respondent 2, working in the M&E team who states:

> *"We design tools that enable them to report on the indicators to be achieved. So, it's structured in a way that every MHPSS intervention has to cascade down to M&E".*

Some of the tools that are designed by the M&E team include referral forms, attendance registers, screening forms, and consent forms. These tools are then administered by the implementers as Respondent 3 alluded.

> *"We take attendance register and also the consent form so that we have the names of people who attended because it's also required per funder even in the organization we have to have an attendance register to show where the funding went to".*

Respondent 4 also confirmed the use of tools in collecting data from the beneficiaries during implementation.

> *"In the community we go with registers, everyone who comes will fill in those attendance registers those are tools developed by M and E personnel to meet the requirements of the funders and CSVR regarding our mission, vision and values".*

Respondent 5 added:

> *"And so, clinicians have screening forms that they use each time they see a client"*

The M&E team puts together the data that is submitted by implementers, as Respondent 5 stated.

> *"And so, the M&E officers are the sort of collators of the data".*

After data is collated it is then analysed by the M&E team. Respondent 6 confirmed data collection at different levels and analysis of that data. Out of ten respondents interviewed its only respondent six who confirmed the data analysis being conducted and the engagements afterward.

> *"So, at the different levels there's a collection and analysis will mostly happen at M&E level but then they would come back to us with their reflections on what's come up in the data and we'll dispute or support based on their experience and their interaction with the set data".*

After data is analysed, it is important that it's reported to the management and donors for accountability and use. Data is also reported so that the intervention's change can be examined and interrogated.

Respondent 7 highlighted the importance of data sourcing and how it helps them capture data that enables them to extract reports from the database. Respondent 7 states that

> *"Forms are what allow us to put on the database and be able to draw out reports"*

After reports have been generated, the information can be used to make decisions on creating programme content, improve results, research and capacity building. The phenomena of data use is considered from the perspective of practice, that is, the practice of those who are implementing interventions hope will use data to make decisions about improving programme outcomes (Spillane, 2012).

Organizational routines focus on using data in day-to-day practice and promoting organizational Learning from the interaction of different users in the organization. People in various job functions and at different levels of the organization address efforts to collect, analyse, synthesize, interpret, and use data in decision-making. When data users and producers work together, they become more aware of the data collection processes and methods, available data sources, and data quality. Additionally, in the course of their regular work, practitioners take note of and analyze new information (Spillane, 2012).

Following organizational procedures, according to Nutley (2012), may help remove obstacles to data use and enhance the sharing of data resources. Additionally, they can address any worries they may have, get clarification on the data-gathering procedure, pinpoint important programmatic queries, and connect these queries to the data that is already available in their settings. Together, they are able to assess and understand data to provide programmatic answers. Knowing your data producers and users and how they relate to each other's work helps to establish data ownership, reinforce the information cycle, make data-driven decisions, and demonstrate the value of data for programme improvement.

Different respondents at different levels at CSVR use information in various ways. Respondent 7 confirms this view stating that:

> *"It's used in different ways to develop knowledge products, for graphics, blog posts, research, and opinion pieces. It contributes to what we put out there. For example, if we are to talk about the impact of violence, what is data saying and how does that link to the research and how it links to the information that you disseminate. It goes a lot with internal and external seminar spaces. We used data in a lot of ways like in proposal writing, for funding".*

Respondent 2 pointed to the use of information for assessing the impact the programme had:

"The information that has been generated, like I mentioned domestic reports to donors, are used to check what impact the interventions have in the society".

It appears that how one views data use at the programme level cannot be effortlessly done at the organizational level.

"So regarding how we use the data in improving programming I don't know how that is happening right now except at micro level and in advocacy programme basically it's about monitoring performance between staff and the meetings and adjusting to challenges for example in one of my projects if I have noticed that we are taking longer to develop certain publications I will then speak to the team and we will reduce the number of publications we expect to produce within the year that's the practical way of how we reduce and adjust to that challenge to make the project more manageable whilst meeting our deliverables" (Respondent 8).

It is also debatable that organizations can decide to implement intervention with or without M&E personnel depending on whether donors insist on having the team or not. Should the donor not insist then the organization might implement interventions without M&E personnel. Again, this proves that M&E is conducted for donor compliance (Abrahams, 2015). Monitoring and evaluation is seen as an accountability tool to the donors either for existing project or future funding. This is aligned with the thoughts of several authors who stated that M&E has been used as a governance tool for accountability to donors for future funding (Abrahams, 2015; Mouton, 2010; Potter & Kruger 2001; Swilling & Russel 2002; Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006).

"We take attendance register and also the consent form so that we have the names of people who attended because it's also required per funder. Even in the organization, we have to have an attendance register to show where the funding went to," confirmed Respondent 3.

Respondent 5 mentioned the benefits of adhering to donor requirements as possible renewal and extension of projects.

"A lot of projects have been renewed beyond agreed timeframes. I think USAID the maximum amount of time that you can get funding for is eight years, and CSVR got the maximum amount of time. This shows that the way that we were implementing the project, the learnings that they were taking from it, all of that contributed to projects and donors renewing contractual agreements".

There are conflicting views amongst respondents on the type of monitoring the organization should conduct. Singh et al., (2017) contend that as monitoring is essential to a project's success, it ought to be an internal responsibility of the project management team. Respondent 1 from the programme without the M&E team disputed this idea in favour of external or joint monitoring.

"What we need is M&E practitioners. Donors, government structures, let them continue as practitioners, let them have the tools. Let it not be imposed on our practitioners. This is how I imagine it, you are my M&E practitioner, you've given me money. You want to know how your money has been spent. You send your own people, finance, send your consultant. Let them do the logical framework, write their own indicator, outcome for their audience present it to me and let them sit with us and let us give them what they need. I don't want to do the logical framework but I'm willing to be in conversation".

It is; therefore, unclear how other programmes track their achievements if there is no M&E team responsible for routine monitoring in their programmes. The lack of M&E support in other programmes was strongly expressed as a disadvantage in recording the outcome of the activities being conducted. Respondent 3 described the gap that exists in the advocacy programme as a result of the absence of M&E support by stating:

"Currently, we are not really recording the impact of the dialogues; we are hearing from people that the dialogue impacted some of the people that came. I think for us, we need to know how to record the outcome of the dialogue, that somebody came and had a conversation with the larger population of other people who were not part of the dialogue. For advocacy we do it by word of mouth unless there is a person who got that information were able to say I saw people sharing the information,".

Lack of documentation of the impact of the activities incapacitates the organization as less work and few benefits might be reported than actual. Lack of documentation was also identified as an area of improvement by Respondent 5 who said:

"I think that somehow data that is being processed and the Learning from it, have contributed in donors renewing the projects based on sort of being able to produce this data. Also based on the evaluations that have been done and, the research that has been undertaken in the project, I think we need to be improving our documentation".

According to Ba, (2021) this scarcity of evidence in the measurement of M&E may lead to greater confusion and weak successes in assessing the results and achievements of development programmes, primarily in Africa and low-income countries in general. It has been observed in the interview responses of respondents that there is no common knowledge on the M&E routine data management processes and the system being used as a result, it is unclear to understand the organizational routines on data use. There is no uniformity in data sourcing and data analysis. The tools used are specific to MHPSS and are not standardized to suit all programmes.

4.4.3 Data quality assessments and verifications

According to Singh, et al., (2017), gathering high-quality data is crucial for the programme management team and other key decision-makers to be able to rely on the information and utilize it for monitoring and enhancing programme result. Good quality data should be precise, timely, consistent across several sources, accurate, full, and easily accessible. Goergens & Kusek, (2010) concur that the degree to which information satisfies the six criteria of quality: accuracy, dependability, completeness, precision, timeliness, and integrity, is referred to as data quality.

The Implementing team and M&E must ensure that programme output indicators meet data quality assessment standards as stipulated in the M&E plan. Respondents mentioned completion and correctness of data quality standards as the two that are often verified and standards not met.

> *"Yes, it comes in our team meetings when M and E will say we have received this evaluation forms or registers or questionnaires submitted by community practitioners and there is information that is missing and we go back and verify the information in the ground and feedback to the M and E team again so that they can work with information that is complete" Said* Respondent 4.

Respondent 3 also confirmed the data quality standard that is corrected.

> *"We used to send to the M and E Officer to check if the participants filled in correctly and just to advise us that in the future this is what needs to be done".*

Completeness of data is the standard that is of concern. It is also clear that different personnel have different interests in data. While the programme team is more concerned about the themes coming up from the data it is M&E that pulls the team to gauge the data quality issues of the data submitted.

Respondent 6 explained

> *"The M&E team comes back to the practitioners on what came up, the themes as well as the quality of the data. Such as where there are challenges, where there's a blockage so the last one we were looking at in December there was a lot of data quality issues around missing data. It was because we were working with new community facilitators - so we could see the challenges. The team in 2022 went digital for the first time so it was great seeing the feedback from the M&E and the quality of the data, because what we've gotten used to is the data going up in terms of themes but not really looking at the quality of the data and this was really good for us"*

There were other respondents who seemed not be aware about the data quality assessments and the process of verification that is undertaken. This is not aligned to what all respondents have confirmed in that data quality concerns and feedback is provided by the M&E team in the weekly meetings.

"I know the M and E team will take that further in that they will do data quality assessments, data verifications and all those things. No there are things that they need from us, missing data, dates are wrong but I am not directly involved in that process" asserted Respondent 7.

Strong data quality assurance procedures and frequent data audits, according to Singh, et al. (2017), guarantee the accuracy of the monitoring data. Systems, document protocols, and standards for monitoring data quality are built across the various stages of a project to ensure data quality assurance. At every stage, including the creation of monitoring formats, their translation, data collecting, data entry, and digitization, checks and processes are also established.

"So, then you can sort of do your checks and balances as well where you double check that the physical forms are actually what people are reporting. But what also used to happen, because we need to have a means of verification in relation to each indicator that we are reporting on and so to assist with the checks and balances, and also just to ensure that we have accuracy in relation to what it is that we are reporting" affirmed Respondent 5.

4.4.3.1 Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the routine monitoring system

Out of ten respondents interviewed only two expressed the knowledge of guidelines used in ensuring that there is guidance to what is expected in terms of data submissions and verification of data. There was no evidence of guidelines for cleaning, editing, and documenting changes on source documents, raw data, and reports.

Knowledge and use of guidelines and SOPs in the organization was confidently explained. Others either they were not aware or they assumed that the organization has those documents.

"We have data submission guides. We have error log forms, so those are the mechanisms in place that we use. For instance, if we realize that there's an error of some sort with the data that has been submitted, we are able to log it in an error log. If there's also late submissions of the data, we are able to log it in and then revert back to the practitioners for them to take note of what data is missing from the one that they submitted, or what needs to be rectified" said Respondent 2.

No one else amongst the respondents mentioned any use of submission guides nor any knowledge of SOPs used for M&E information other than one M&E team member. According to Ba, (2021) the information management system must display existence of capacity-building plan on M&E, this includes knowledge of set-up, maintenance and resource quality. Some respondents displayed no knowledge or awareness of the M&E SOPs used.

Responded 7 said *"I am sure they do because they have one for the psycho-social interventions and the clinical as well. I have not seen the document but I know they are there".*

Responded 4 also expressed no knowledge of guidelines

> *"No, I don't know any SOP used when making corrections and improving data quality, it is only our collaboration as a team".*

Respondent 6 brought a reason there are no SOPs and guidelines used when conducting data quality assessments.

> *"No not really, I think it's just based on the kind of data. Over the times we've become more project driven rather than having our own train to create. We find that our projects have different needs then we find ourselves being pulled in different directions of the requirements".*

A detailed process on how verification of data is conducted was highlighted.

> *"So, then you can sort of do your checks and balances as well where you double check that the physical forms are actually what people are reporting. But what also used to happen, because we need to have a means of verification in relation to each indicator that we are reporting on and so to assist with the checks and balances, and also just to ensure that we have accuracy in relation to what it is that we are reporting. People would take pictures of the documents that they're using"* Respondent 5 explained.

> Respondent 2 continued *"So in terms of the data quality checks, we are in the process of hiring data capturers, that will be an added element in the data quality check. So, when they submit data, what we do, we sit with the data and we verify, we validate, we verify if all the information was captured accurately. If there are no fields missing, mandatory fields were filled out correctly, so that we can be able to revert back to them if there are any errors for them to rectify those errors from the data quality chart".*

There is no common knowledge on conducting data quality assessments. It appears that implementers are not involved in data quality assessments but in making corrections based on the feedback provided by M&E. Implementers have a limited understanding of data quality standards that are used to assess quality. Lack of guidelines could be the contributing factor to this limited knowledge. Capacity building could play a vital role in ensuring that all personnel working with data know and understand all guidelines and SOPs used.

4.4.3.2 Data flow and duties

Data flow as a theme is important in the study because it provides an understanding of how data moves from the point of collection to the M&E desk for processing. How it moves from the field and what are the stages it passes through to the last stage. Knowing and describing the data flow means understanding the processing of data in the organization. All stages of data flow need to be managed throughout the implementation process of the project, failure to manage how data flows might result in data being lost.

Each stage of the dataflow has its duties attached to them. In some organizations, different personnel perform different duties in some organization it might be the same personnel. Data start from the field where it is collected by implementers. This data is collected throughout the life cycle of the project when activities are conducted. It then passes collection stage to collation where data from different personnel is put together and be made ready for verification. Implementers or M &E team can be responsible for data collation. Data verification activity is performed by programme personnel together with M&E team. Full data can be verified or a sample size can be selected. The purpose of this stage is to verify the reported data in terms of beneficiaries, services received or rendered. Data verification validates the integrity of data and ensure that data is according to what was reported. Data reporting.

It is a common practice that organizations put together on a chart a flow demonstrating how data will flow and the responsible personnel with their duties pertaining to data. Data flow chart was requested from CSVR, Data flow chart in the organization exists but no personnel is attached so it’s not clear to know the person responsible for each stage. Not having personnel attached to each stage might compromise on accountability as it is not clear which information each personnel is responsible for.

The role of the M&E team is clear in how they are providing support to the programme staff on M&E related matters. Amongst other duties, the M&E team is responsible for designing data collection tools, collating data, ensuring that data is clean, audited, captured and reported. They also lead data quality review sessions and project performance discussions, update results-based frameworks and manage electronic database. This is evident in the detailed processing of information that one responded mentioned;

> *“We have a data flow. When they submit data, we verify and validate if all information was captured accurately. If there are no fields missing, mandatory fields were filled out correctly; we revert back to them if there are identified errors for them to rectify from the data quality chart. Upon verifying data, that's when we are able to load it in the Salesforce data management system that we use”* Respondent 2 explained.

Responded 5 also added to the role performed by the M&E team in the programme by confirming the framework used.

> *“In terms of the results-based frameworks, the LME team is responsible for developing those and ensuring that indicators like the structure of the results-based framework is outlined”.*

The role played by implementers is clearly explained by Respondent 9

> *“We do the activities, after the interventions we send the data to the M&E so after registers, evaluation forms are completed, we share activity reports to say this is what we've done, this is what we agreed upon, these are our observations and we also administer evaluation forms to ask our beneficiaries how was the intervention then send all to M&E”*

There are two roles that are clear in the management of all the routine data collected. The role of the implementers and M&E team are clearly stipulated however, managers roles are not clear. Lack of this role undermines all the efforts that could be made at the bottom. M&E in the organization is at the bottom but not at the top, it is also not clear who advocates for it at the top if it is only at the bottom.

4.4.4 Data management system

M&E system contribute to knowledge base information on development programmes that promotes accountability through knowledge generation and Learning. It also generates strategic information for improved Learning and decision-making (Ba, 2021). The effectiveness of the M&E system is linked to how organizations manage its data and information. Before programmes can be implemented, high-quality M&E plan or procedures need to be in place giving details on how data will be managed, whether data will be paper based or electronic and how each will be stored.

Few respondents provided knowledge of the database used

All team members interviewed in the MHPSS programme understand that, there is a database used where they can pull reports from.

> *"Across the board, everyone engages with data we have clinical activities, we have community-based activities and every activity that is done at those levels are then sent back to the monitoring and evaluation teams, forms are that allow us to put on the database and be able to draw out reports especially regarding to the MHPSS practitioners"* Respondent 7 confirmed.

> *"We introduced Salesforce to the organization, and so Salesforce is now the data management system that everybody needs to use within the MHPSS team, but we were also using an Excel-based system. And so, clinicians have screening forms that they use, and so each time you see a client, you screen the client obviously and then that information is transferred into these Excel based systems".* Respondent 5 explained

> *Responded 2 added "We have a system we use, we have Salesforce, we have Survey Market, analytic software we use for data from MHPSS"*

The database system can be standardized to accommodate all programmes. Users of the database are not clear and the user rights they have.

4.4.5 Project performance

The emphasis on results caused a shift from traditional ways of monitoring and managing implementation activities and progress to results based monitoring and evaluation (RBM&E) which focuses on assessments on the contributions of interventions to project outcomes (Gebremedhin, Getachew & Amha (2010). Therefore, in order to enhance programme outcomes, it is crucial that organizations comprehend and record the reasons behind both excellent and poor performance, and

RBM&E may offer this crucial knowledge. RBM&E can also be used to examine what functions well and poorly, as well as the causes behind each. Because of this, many organizations are working to raise their performance levels by creating systems to monitor and assess them.

Some respondents provided information about project performance, but these generally did not include clear steps and guidance on procedures for discussing project performance. Each programme and project use different platforms and timeframes to discuss performance. One of the respondents implementing activities answered that;

> "*Quarterly M and E team will give us an update on how far are we are with the targets of the project. It is that feedback that make us know that here we have achieved 6 women and on the side of male we did not achieve and the following quarter our focus will be on where we did not perform well"* Respondent 9 explained.

It is evident that different programmes use different frameworks to measure performance. Another respondent answered as follows;

> Respondent 3 said *"We would have monthly meetings with the project manager just to check and look at the LFA of the project, how far are we in terms of the deliverables and the target numbers that we have to reach"*

> *"So, what we do, on a monthly basis, is to produce a framework, maybe we use the results-based framework that we do have - various results based for different projects. Then from the data collected, the data submitted. When the data is cleaned and audited, when it's ready for analysis, we are able to measure it against the targets. That was said, for that particular project, that's how we review performance"* Respondent 2 added.

A respondent from the same programme mentioned the use of a different tool used to measure performance and that is led by M&E team.

> *"We mostly do it quarterly, it's a process that's mostly led by M&E. So, based on the PMR (Project Monitoring Rubric) that the donor has shared with us or that we have developed to monitor we would then look at the numbers - the quantitative stuff because that's what most of our funders are interested in. And then the qualitative stuff is more of an internal process for us to look at what we've seen, most of our reviews or reports are based on what we do for funders: how many reports, how many people, you know that kind of basic stuff" Respondent 6 asserted.*
> *"Then we would do an internal reflective process to assess what we've been doing. So now we find that a lot of processes that we would normally follow looking at themes that are coming. We might not have room to do so in the project monitoring document. But what we would do is maybe include an Annexure that just looks at the things that are coming up and what we are learning as an organization. Such as lessons that we feel are important"* Respondent 6 continued.

A Manager in another programme expressed her dissatisfaction when asked about project performance. She sees project performance and M&E as imposed by donors. She wants to conduct monitoring for accountability purposes. Because of the funding received she concurs to the use of M&E but has expressed her reservations about it.

> *"Let me start by saying that I don't like M&E… I feel like M&E is not quite research but it's a recent phenomenon…and actually we've normalized it as a way of going where we're so business mind orientated and for me it feels like less about social change. Currently, we have the national youth policy and also the national GBV plan and the key thing that the government keeps telling us about progress are these indicators. But these indicators are not translatable in the community, the research I'm doing now is showcasing that this thing of taking indicators at a provincial level is not translating to actually changing people's lives*" expressed Respondent 1.

This programme has no M&E team member attached to it so they are implementing their activities without the involvement of M&E. The only value that is seen in M&E is on training when pre and post-information is collected.

> Respondent 1 added *"I do very little M&E. I only invite M&E when I'm forced to by donors".*
> *"But these indicators are not translatable in the community, the research I'm doing now is showcasing that this thing of taking indicators at a provincial level is not translating to actually changing people's lives... Because I should be able to say there's still no clinic, or the clinic is there, but there are no resources for it"* Respondent 1 continued.

There is no standardized approach for reviewing performance in the programmes. Out of everyone interviewed, no one gave a clear step-by-step process of how performance is reviewed. Performance can be reviewed weekly, monthly and quarterly in different meeting platforms. M&E team is driving the performance discussion and the role of others is not clear. Project performance is also linked to individual's key performance areas reviewed quarterly. The discussions around performance are not clear, MHPSS updates the results framework during performance discussions, but it's unclear what happens in other programmes. In Advocacy, the impact of the interventions is not measured as there are no tools to collect this data although there are opportunities presented to collect this information. The research programme seems detached from M&E and views targets and indicators negatively. The focus in the programme is not on M&E but rather on individual's performance which they believe it must not be linked to targets.

4.4.5.1 Learning

There is a learning aspect that monitoring and evaluation provides. This is also clearly stipulated in the CSVR approach. As per the CSVR 5-year strategy (2020), the organization's approach takes into consideration the environment in which it functions and the insights it has acquired. It endeavours to provide hope and healing in times of conflict and crisis by dedicating itself to learning about the causes and prevention of violence, putting what it learns into practice in the community, and exchanging information and perspectives with other members of civil society, academics, and duty bearers. One respondent endorsed the position of the organization on learning and knowledge generation.

> *"Because we are also a knowledge generation organization it can be used it terms of radio interviews or any social communication*" Respondent 3 explained.

There is strong evidence that suggests that the approach that promotes learning is participatory monitoring and evaluation. In that the term PM&E is used to refer to a method that focuses on collaborative learning and problem-solving through the development and use of knowledge, Berhanu Gebremedhin et al. (2010) concurs. Participatory M&E involves sharing control over the procedure, content, and outcomes of the M&E activity among all project stakeholders, including donors, implementation agencies, key stakeholders, and other stakeholders. The idea of involvement is now essential for determining the requirements of target groups and carrying out interventions. Its supporters see monitoring as a chance to support local learning and learning as a catalyst for growth.

> *"I mean besides knowledge generation it's just to try and setup meetings with relevant people for example a meeting in Themba is around drug abuse identify the government stakeholders who deals with drugs in that space"* Respondent 3 continued.

One respondent connected learning to improving programme outcomes.

> *"I think that because we incorporate learning into the way we operate, learners, (there's also something called brown bags), within the organization learn what's going on out there, ensuring that they are at the forefront of things that are currently happening. And so, all of that contributes to how the programming unfolds within the organization*" Respondent 6 added.

However, if implementers are not routinely monitoring, it is not clear how personnel will learn from experience and capture good practice. CSVR refers to the learning aspect of their work in the current strategy document without stipulating on how will it be achieved. The participatory approach at CSVR is evident in how they collaborate in conducting data reviews, discussing performance and using information. Out of all the M&E approaches in the literature review of this study, PM&E is the one that drives the learning aspect of M&E, learning can be within different role players within the organization and it can also include other stakeholders. Without the learning register documenting what the organization is learning it is not be easy to validate this claim. Learning and participation seem to be at implementation rather than at M&E level.

4.4.6 Decision-making

Patrick (2016) hinted that the usage of M&E frameworks is becoming more and more crucial in order to determine the progress and outcomes at the programme and initiative level, which in turn helps to direct organizational learning for programme improvement, promote accountability, and inform management and decision-making processes. One of the reasons organizations collect and process data is for the management or any user to make decisions using data that has good quality standards, verified and validated by the M&E team. To begin, data do not objectively guide decisions on their own—people do, and to do so they select particular pieces of data to negotiate arguments about the nature of problems as well as potential solutions (Spillane, 2012). For decisions to be taken using data, the management need to be deliberate in their organizational culture and in ensuring that there are planned routines that promote the use of information in decision-making. Spillane, (2012) added a recommendation that practitioners need to follow the guidance offered by data when making decisions.

It is difficult to understand the organizational culture in decision-making as decisions are seem to also depend on the programme being implemented. Different programmes expressed different decision-making processes.

> *Respondent 9 said "It's difficult to say. Like I said, it's only been over a year Since I started the work".*

> *"I think the decisions are predominately made by the project manager, I can suggest that this is what came out from the dialogue or the engagement so moving forward it will also feed into the project outcomes that this is what we promised the funder. I think I can make recommendations on the linkages to services outside CSVR because we also need to be working with other partners but sometimes recommendations are not always taken forward"* explained Respondent 3.

An implementer from a different programme had a different view

> Respondent 9 said *"We make decisions within teams because we sit together and make the decision as a team".*

According to Hill & Hupe, (2002) implementation is the carrying out of a basic policy decision, usually incorporated in a statute but which can also take the form of important executive orders…Ideally that decision identifies the problem to be addressed, stipulates objectives to be pursued and in a variety of ways structures the implementation process. The confidence in making decisions using data was displayed by one of the M&E team members giving examples on the problem that was identified, and the solution to the problem.

> *"We do make quite significant decisions with some of the project. We have the South Sudan project, based on the data that we have, it was realised that, the information that we have maybe it's not sufficient, that we need to go do an evaluation. Maybe this team needs capacity building*

on how to incorporate better M&E frameworks in their interventions. Or maybe the field workers that we have are not really meeting expectations, when the task gets ahead, how can we add on more human resources to assist with the target" Responded 2 explained.

Same views on making decisions on human resources were also expressed by the manager in the same programme.

"In our strategic documents, we explore violence as a whole, but in five or less years we would choose specific things and the data helps to narrow it down based on what is out there, what is topical. Also, around staffing, such as who needs to be part of the team in terms of the work that needs to happen. We've also made decisions around offices even" Respondent 6 continued.

Respondent 1 introduced a new level of decision makers other than the team that meets weekly for their progress meetings in a form of the board and management committee.

"So, M&E allows that accountability, it allows a sophisticated whip for the workers. Because you can always say, these are the targets. They are approved by the board. They were approved by the management committee"

The requirement to take into account the frequently at-odds goals of many stakeholders influences the decision-making process as well, necessitating its standardization for it to be repeatable at various levels (Rousseau, 2006). This means there are various actors that can be identified in the implementation of interventions namely; those who formulate what needs to be implemented and make decisions on them and the implementers. These can be same group of actors or various actors depending on how the organization has structured their interventions. What power each actor has, need to be determined and whether decision-making is at the bottom or top (Hill & Hupe, 2002). The top-down approach in some programmes has been proven true by implementers at the bottom. In the response below it is clear that project managers have more power in decision-making that implementers although implementers might make suggestion the project manager has the final say. Implementers from different programmes makes decisions differently

Respondent 3 said "I think the decisions are predominately made by the project manager I can suggest that this is what came out from the dialogue or the engagement so moving forward with the project outcomes that this is what we promised the funder".

"Accessing health services from last year we had challenges with people who were not South African who were denied access even when they needed to go for pre- natal services access was denied so then I approached section 27 and even now when anyone is faced with that difficulty we approach section 27 and the issue is resolved the letters of recommendations are helping" Respondent 4 explained.

The top-down approach which puts managers at the centre of decision-making while bottom-up approach puts implementers at the bottom as the ones who drives service delivery seems to be favoured in some programmes. It sounds like there is no standardized decision-making process that is following. Some respondents seem to be making decisions and those are the project managers of some interventions while implementers at the bottom seem not to be making decisions but can be in the meeting where decisions are made.

4.5 Document analysis

In an attempt to validate practically what the respondents said, certain documents were requested. Unfortunately, not all requested documents were shared despite the permission given to the assigned Officer to share documents with me. All attempts to send reminders for this submission did not succeed. Bashir, (2019) added that collection of organizational documents is important as they can be used to analyse the existing system of performance management. Therefore, although interviews were the primary source of data collection used by the M&E team, it was of utmost importance to triangulate all data collected from interviews with data contained in organizational documents to ascertain whether or not the intended goals or mission of the organization were actually being implemented. During this process, documents that were requested and shared by the M&E team that were found useful included meeting minutes, data sources, MHPSS dataflow chart, CSVR overview strategy, guidelines, M&E plans, and MHPSS results framework. Below are the documents shared and the reasons for the document to be shared.

4.5.1 MHPSS Meeting minutes for the 23 March 2023

At CSVR project performance and M & E related matters such as data quality, data verification, are discussed in meetings where minutes are taken and discussions documented. This document was important because it contains evidence of these discussions. In the minutes there was an agenda item on M&E. The M&E officer was given a responsibility to consult and give feedback about a certain software. The team showed interest in the software as they needed more information on it. One would place this software under routine data management processes. The minutes therefore did not give an account of M&E activities that had taken place in the week, what challenges were encountered, support needed and the plans for the following week. According to the MHPSS dataflow chart, data is captured into the database system on the 20th and in the meeting this could have been reported as well as an activity that is either underway or has been completed, challenges and successes to the capturing highlighted.

4.5.2 Data sources

These are the forms that are used by implementers to collect data when rendering services.

Attendance registers – this form has instructions on how to fill it, who fills it in, when must it be filled, where must it be submitted and by when. It also has M&E verification space in order to authenticate and validate the information and its capturing. All these details and forms assisted in data collection and collation.

- Client sign in form – Inconsistencies in the client sign in form and attendance register were clearly visible. There are no instructions in the form and it is not clear who completes the form and where it is taken after completion by when as it is the case in the attendance register form. No M&E verification space.
- Intake screening form – This is a 12-page comprehensive form that is used to gather information from the beneficiary during the screening process. It is not clear who fills out the form, but there are details that the screening process is done at the trauma clinic. There are no instructions on how to fill in the form. There is an M&E project data requirement section and it's unclear who fills in this part.
- Community intervention report – this form gathers details for the intervention, where it took place, objectives of the intervention, achievements, decisions made, action items, key issues identified. It also has M &E verification details. There are no instructions on how to fill the form and who fills it.

4.5.3 MHPSS data flowchart

Data that is gathered need to be reported, usually data flows from one location to another, or from one personnel to another. Data flowchart demonstrates the location and points of how data flows from the start to the end. Goergens & Kusek, (2010) state that it is typically beneficial to explain dataflow using both words and illustrations since different persons internalise words differently and interpret illustrations more easily. The data flow chart for the MHPSS programme is similar in that it has both words and illustration that details when data is submitted, captured into the system and when it is reported however, there is no date for reporting all other activities have dates allocated.

4.5.6 CSVR five-year overview strategy 2020-2024

The purpose for analysing this document was to understand the organizational culture by zooming into the approach used, whether the objectives of the programmes are linked to M&E processes and the structure of M&E in the organization. The respondents also referred to the strategy of the organization as the one guiding the operations and also showing that M&E is not properly placed in the structure. Goergens & Kusek (2010) state that a clear chain of command should be established, an acceptable span of control should be ensured, and structure should always come first. The coordination and procedures inside the organization assist in guaranteeing that the right information will be shared. CSVR has no M&E unit, at organizational level although the organogram shows all three programmes with M&E teams only one programme has an M&E team. It is therefore not clear how other programmes process the information they gather. M&E culture is not good in the organization, which is also evident in the organizational culture.

The strategy has five objectives with outcomes connected to them, it is the role of M&E to gather and process information that will help the organization understand their progress towards meeting their objectives and measuring the outcomes. An M&E section outlining particular M&E methods to solve M&E system shortcomings ought to be included in the programme plan or strategy (Goergens & Kusek, 2010). The organization acknowledges the important role played by M&E in the implementation of the programmes but has not succeeded in making this importance practical. Three programmes that will be supported by strong LME incorporated inside the interventions were identified as evidence of the alignment between the strategic objectives and the strategic approach; nonetheless, the strategy lacks an M&E component.

4.5.7 Guideline – data submission for community psychosocial support

When one is collecting routine monitoring data, guidelines become essential to ensure that there is uniformity is data collected. Goergens & Kusek, (2010) propose content to be included in guidelines which are advantages of reporting, kinds of information to be obtained , the types of forms to be used, data elements definitions for each data element on each form, description of six data management processes, description of data quality assurance mechanism and use of data. Guidelines can vary according to the roles of those handling different data. Implementers can have different guidelines related to data collection, M &E staff will have guidelines that are relating to data management, auditing. Guidelines for managers can have reporting formats and data quality procedures. CSVR guidelines submitted were only for the implementers and they are in line with what was is proposed in the literature. Guidelines for other role players were not shared. Only one person in the organization had knowledge of the guidelines.

MHPSS guidelines had comprehensive details of how to complete data collection tools for the MHPSS programme. Where to use each tool e.g. attendance register is used in meetings, workshops, trainings and capacity buildings. A screenshot of the tools is also included in the guideline, and each data field is explained. The tool that was not submitted was the referral form but it is in the guideline.

CPS capture sheet – how to complete this form. It is an excel spreadsheet called the CPS capture sheet, which combines all the data from the psychosocial database, psychosocial register and referrals. No one amongst respondents mentioned this tool and only two respondents mentioned referrals.

The guideline also provides details on the format and algorithm to be used when naming files.

4.5.8. M&E plans

These plans are an important component of the M&E system. It gives details of how the system will operate, what data will be collected, frequency of collection, by who, list of indicators, their definition, how often they will be measured and targets. It provides details of how data will be interpreted, analysed and reported as well as the reporting timelines. The MHPSS M&E plan submitted had activities, timelines, LME notes, and whether an activity was completed or not. All other details of the plan were omitted.

According to Goergens & Kusek, (2010), an M&E strategy's main components and aims are explained in detail in a monitoring and evaluation plan, which serves as a guide. It acts as a road map outlining the programmes monitoring and assessment procedures and how the organization plans to use those assessment's information to inform future projects and decision-making. M&E plans assist in defining the parameters of a project, establishing contingency plans for when things go wrong, and providing insight into how those contingency plans impact the overall programme. When plans aren't working as expected or conditions have changed, a project might use both monitoring and evaluation as tools and approaches.

Among the specifics included in the M&E plan should be how the organization plans to use the information that is generated. Employers that omit this component may use information in an unorganized way or not at all, which makes decision-making difficult.

4.4.9. MHPSS results framework

According to the CSVR's 5-year strategy (2020) Violence and conflict are still are still prevalent in many places of the world in the twenty-first century. In response to this reality, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) emerged as a crucial tool for treating the fallout from conflict and violence. CSVR employs an MHPSS perspective to address the effects of conflict and violence by providing affected individuals, families, and communities with direct and indirect interventions that support their psychosocial and mental health. The MHPSS intervention is based on empirical research that considers victim’s lived experiences, contextual realities, and rehabilitation needs.

MHPSS has offered their services in 21 different countries of which the majority is from Africa. It has various components which include: Addressing the psychosocial components of reparation of victims; Increasing access to MHPSS; Community mobilisation, social cohesion and peacebuilding initiatives; Psychological counselling services (face-to-face or online); Designing and implementing capacity-building workshops and trainings for organisations; Peer supervision support and mentorship; Capacity building and technical support (CSVR's 5-year strategy, 2020).

MHPSS is the only programme in the organization with an M&E team and a framework to follow. The framework is aligned with what has been described in the literature, in that it focuses on the outcomes and objectives. This is supported by Singh et al., (2017), who stated that the outcome framework is more output-oriented because it concentrates on the items that will exist once the programme is finished. These are the results that each implementer has planned to achieve which also feeds into the objective and goal of the programme. Nowadays, the importance of attaining results outcomes and the necessity of proving performance are highly valued. Result framework is one of the approaches used by the MHPSS programme in its implementation in order to plan and track results of their interventions.

An individual looking at a results framework should be able to understand the fundamental theory for how important project objectives will be reached, yet this is missing in the documentation for several important components of the framework. The organization's framework presents strategic objectives, outcomes, and targets; nevertheless, inputs, actions, output, and effect are absent.

Chapter 5

5. Conclusion

The study aimed to explore how data is used to inform practice and improve programme outcomes at CSVR. Before one can use data, other components must be in place to provide an enabling environment. Understanding the M&E framework used and how its conceptualized becomes imperative for data use. Goergens & Kusek, (2010) state that using information to improve results is one of the twelve components of a functional M&E system. This part encapsulates the main goal of the system, which is to assess data and provide knowledge that can be shared to empower and inform decision-making at all levels . The analysis of results established gaps between the organizational structure and M&E framework. These gaps were identified by analysing data obtained from CSVR staff who had been employed in the organization for more than six months and through document analysis.

Three research questions were of interest to the study to address; How is the process of linking data use and practice conceptualized? How is the M&E framework conceptualized and what informs the choice of the M&E approach? What decision-making tools are used and what are the challenges encountered when using the tools? The process of establishing a connection between organizational practice and data utilization lacks a consistent and standard approach. This results from the organizational level's lack of an M&E framework, which is influenced by the organizational structure.

Due to a lack of essential documentation of M&E components and processes, the few tools and records that are in place do not contribute to a functional M&E system. For organizations to improve programme results, it is crucial that organizations comprehend and record the reasons behind both excellent and poor performance. According to Berhanu Gebremedhin et al., (2010), state that RBM&E can also be used to assess what functions well and poorly, as well as the reasons behind it. Because of this, a number of organizations are working to raise their performance levels by creating methods to monitor and assess them.

Organizations have different ways of tracking results to be accountable to donors and improve programme outcomes and organizational learning. This requires organizations to design a good M&E system that will help document M&E plans and frameworks. A good M&E system can help organizations measure their performance and use M&E information to improve implementation results and decision-making. Therefore, the M&E system helps answer the goals of the organization, whether they are achieved or not, and how achievements can be proven (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Organizations design tools to collect information on the implementation and tracking of results, process information, and use it in various ways that can make them accountable and improve programme performance, depending on why that information was collected. At CSVR, out of three programmes only one has data collection tools and an M&E team support that provides routine data management processes.

When these gaps exist, it's difficult to understand how data can be used to improve programme outcomes. If data is not collected, it cannot be processed and, therefore, cannot be used. At CSVR, two programmes do not have an M&E team supporting them in the routine data management processes and, therefore, cannot use such data as it cannot be trusted. If the impact of the programme cannot be measured using evidence collected, processed and validated by M&E, that evidence is unreliable (Singh et al., 2017).

CSVR does not have a functional M&E system. An ongoing flow of information that is helpful both internally and externally is provided by a functional M&E system at any l(Goergens & Kusek, 2010). The organizational structure puts the M&E team at the bottom of the structure; the disadvantage of this is it can weaken the voice of those who are meant to be arguing, motivating, and advocating for the shared values, beliefs, and conventions about M&E. Attitudes and actions on monitoring and evaluation need to be changed through the exchange of information and this will be better achieved if it comes from the top and cascade to the bottom. At the moment, M&E is at the bottom and does not have the power to influence the top. There is also a view that M&E is a support system to programmes and it needs to be placed and given enough powers and be independent like finance and operations departments and not be attached to programmes. These other two departments are represented at the management level.

According to Hilhorst & Guijt (2006), M&E systems are often designed to give data for reporting on accomplishments in order to complete accountability obligations. As a result, M&E is now closely linked to the functions of accountability and control. However, M&E systems could also help with strategic management, lessons learned, and incorporating experiences into policy processes. Mueller-Hirth (2012) agrees with this demand by stating that NGOs in South Africa and elsewhere are increasingly challenged to demonstrate relevance and results due to the relative scarcity of development funds. Greater resources are allocated to M&E by NGOs, but impact measurement is also becoming an ever-bigger priority for donors, some of which now stipulates that a certain percentage of the budget be spent on M&E. Organizations need to track results not only to be accountable to donors and other stakeholders but for themselves, for impact and sustainability, and this impact need to be measured.

The reason NGOs are established is to bring service delivery and improve people's livelihoods, and at the centre of their implementation, improving programme outcomes should be prioritized. Information from the M&E system is an essential management tool that helps managers make sure that particular targets are accomplished, according to Goergens & Kusek (2010). Information on progress, problems, and performance are vital to managers striving to achieve results. Likewise, the information on the M&E system is important to the stakeholders expecting results and want demonstrable impacts.

Designing a good, effective, and functional system alone is not enough; the system needs to be supported by a good organizational structure that is embedded in M&E. M&E should not be enforced or conducted as a donor requirement; it should come from within the organization so that a positive M&E culture can be created. When organizations have a culture of advocacy, communication, and M&E mechanisms in place, it leads to a positive M&E culture .

Organizational structure and alignment for M&E systems can be reviewed in the next five-year strategy. Because of this alignment, M&E will be able to assess the programme goals as stated in the present strategy document .Furthermore, it could assist the organization in evaluating the M&E framework's advantages and disadvantages as well as in readiness evaluations to demonstrate that the framework is operational. Improving organizational culture should also enhance the implementation of advocacy for M&E culture possible. Stout, Bhatia-Murdach, Kirby, Powell (2018), propose that achieving data use requires changing how M&E systems are implemented, which requires changing the traditional approach to designing M&E activities.

In line with organizational structure and alignment is the human capacity of M&E. As the human capacity for M&E is aligned with the organizational structure there will be enough capacity at the organizational level. The lack of finances to fund the M&E unit is arguably another reason why other programme do not have an M&E team; this challenge can be addressed through the right placement of the unit and standardization of M&E routines and practices. Although Bryant (2007) finds that NGOs with the least donor funding were the ones doing the most monitoring and evaluation, it is difficult to fully agree with the argument that the M&E function is disempowered by a lack of funding. This could be because, in the case of donor funding, the evaluation is treated as part of contract compliance and donor needs must be met rather than meeting the organization's learning needs.

Data use is linked to decision-making. The organization's decision-making process is unclear as some believe it is collaborative and taken by the team during weekly meetings, while some believe that project managers are the ones making decisions. Project managers are not at the bottom of the implementation, and therefore, this means decision-making is at the top. Using data in the organization is understood as staff providing reports in the meetings about their activities without using structured M&E processes and tools. Stout et al., (2018) add that there can also be mismatches between delegation and information. Delegated responsibility may be too broadly, or too vaguely, defined. Agents may be expected to "improve outcomes," but are only able or encouraged to collect and report information regarding inputs and number of activities. As a result, local agents may be "left in the dark" about whether efforts are resulting in positive change in outcomes; or led to consider that doing more of an activity is equivalent to doing it better.

The study's findings agree with reviewed literature that CSVR conducts monitoring and evaluation for accountability and for future funding purpose (Mouton, 2010; Potter & Kruger, 2001; Swilling & Russel 2002; Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). The information needs of the donor partially influence the M&E approach used, although the organization adds to it, so the approach is not entirely imposed. The organization has opportunities to instil M&E culture in their regular weekly meetings, but this opportunity is not well utilized.

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Appendix A

Research questionnaire

<u>Research topic</u>: **Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation**

Title	
Date	
Time	
Place	
Interviewer	
Interviewee	
Introduction	
Good afternoon XXX - Thank you for making time to speak to me. My name is Fanelwa Lutshaba. I have been granted permission by the University of Witwatersrand to conduct research...This research will fulfill a partial requirement for completing a Masters degree of Management in Monitoring and Evaluation. This interview is part of a data collection exercise to obtain information to understand how monitoring data is used in decision-making within your organization. As one of the key respondents chosen to participate in this study, you are requested to provide honest feedback on your knowledge and experiences in using monitoring data. This interview will last between 30 and 40 minutes of your time.	
Are you comfortable with proceeding with the interview? **(YES/NO)**	
With your permission, this conversation will be recorded. Do you consent to the recording of the Audio of this interview **(YES/NO)**	
Do you have any questions so far for me? We can now begin the interview.	

1. What is your role in the organization, and how long have you been in your current position at CSVR?
2. What is your staff complement and structure in your programme?
3. How are different levels of personnel engaging with data?
4. Do you conduct data quality reviews? What is the frequency and the process of conducting data reviews? If no, how is progress performance reviewed?
5. Are the reviews mentioned in question 4 documented, and for what purpose?
6. Is there a specific structure or guideline that is being followed when conducting reviews?
7. Do you have any SOPs guiding the reviews? If no, what is guiding the reviews?
8. Who attends the reviews and what are the roles of the attendees?
9. What are the steps for reviewing performance? What is the purpose of performance reviews?

10. How is it used after reviewing data for quality and performance?
11. What decisions have you made using data? What informed those decisions? What is the problem you were trying to resolve or the improvement that you made?
12. What other platforms do you use to review data and discuss performance?
13. In your understanding, who should use data in the organization and why?

Appendix B

Permission letter to conduct research

CSVR
Centre for the Study of
Violence and Reconciliation

Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation
No 33 Hoofd Steet
Braampark
29 November 2022

Dear Fanelwa Lutshaba

Re: Permission to conduct research at CSVR

The permission to conduct research as per the request on the letter dated 04th November 2022 is hereby granted. The details regarding project data will be clearly outlined through the process and confidentiality of all our participants will be paramount, thus access to documents will be further discussed; in addition CSVRs POPIA policy will guide accessibility.

The research will be conducted on the following topic:

Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation.

With supervisor:
Supervisor's name – Rekgotsofetse Chikane

CSVR
Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

E : rekgotsofetse.chikane@wits.ac.za

T : +27 11 717 3809

Sincerely,

Annah Moyo,
Executive Director

Direct contact for the research,
Stacy Norman-Hector
Senior Learning Monitoring & Evaluation officer

+27 (11) 403-5650 info@csvr.org.za www.csvr.org.za

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Reg. No.: 1998/000544/08 Section 21 **Reg. No.**: Welfare 007-428 NPO
Board: Tefo Raditapole (Chairperson), Annah Moyo (Executive Director), Nontsikelelo Sisulu-Singapi, Nokukhanya Ntuli, Prudence Malefu Madlokazi, S'mangele Mayisela, Dr Solomon Dersso, Prof. Khabele Matlosa

Appendix C

Consent forms

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Participant consent form

Title of project

Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Name of researcher

Fanelwa Lutshaba

I, …Gaudence Uwizeye………………………………………………………., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about. **YES** NO

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study **YES** NO

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded **YES** NO

I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in her research report/ manuscript/book chapter **YES** NO

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not **YES**
NO be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)

I agree that other researcher may use the information I provide in my **YES** NO

interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on

………………Gaudence Uwizeye…………………… (signature)

…………………………………… (name of participant)

…………14/04/2023……………………….. (date)

…………………………………… (signature)

…Fanelwa Lutshaba……………………………….. (name of researcher/person seeking consent)

……14.04.2023…………………………….. (date)

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Participant consent form

Title of project

Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Name of researcher Fanelwa Lutshaba

I, ELIZABETH……………………agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	**YES**	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	**YES**	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	**<u>YES</u>**	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in her research report; manuscript/book chapter	**YES**	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	**YES**	NO
I agree that other researcher may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	**YES**	NO

.... (signature)

ELIZABETH ZONDO (name of participant)

31 MARCH 2023 (date)

....

.... Fanelwa Lutshaba 31.03.2023

....

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Participant consent form

Title of project

Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Name of researcher

Fanelwa Lutshaba

I, ………Gugu Nonjinge……………………………………………………., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in her research report/ manuscript/book chapter	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	YES	NO
I agree that other researcher may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

………………………………… (signature)

…Gugu Nonjinge………………………………… (name of participant)

…11-05-23………………………………… (date)

…………………………………… (signature)

…Fanelwa Lutshaba………………(name of researcher/person seeking consent)

……11.05.2023…………………… (date)

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Participant consent form

Title of project

Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Name of researcher
Fanelwa Lutshaba

I, …Sumaiya Mohamed…., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in her research report/ manuscript/book chapter	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	YES	NO
I agree that other researcher may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

……S.Mohamed……………………………… (signature)
…Sumaiya Mohamed … (name of participant)
…12/04/2023………………………………… (date)

……………………………………
Fanelwa Lutshaba
12.04.2023

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Participant consent form

Title of project
Mechanisms that enable the use of M&E information in decision-making to improve programme outcomes in the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation

Name of researcher
Fanelwa Lutshaba

I, Jasmina Brankovic, agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below)

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in her research report/ manuscript/book chapter	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	YES	NO
I agree that other researcher may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on	YES	NO

(signature)
Jasmina Brankovic (name of participant)
30/3/2023 (date)

Fanelwa Lutshaba 30.03.2023Fanelwa Lutshaba 30.03.2023