

THE 1<sup>ST</sup>  
*Africa*

**MONITORING & EVALUATION INDABA**



planning, monitoring  
& evaluation

Department:  
Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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## CORE PRINCIPLES OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> AFRICA MONITORING AND EVALUATION

### INDABA

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has been utilised mainly in the development and aid sphere, but it has recently emerged in Africa as powerful instrument in the context of national development. M&E is now seen as an effective tool that can be used to enhance learning from experiences, to improve effectiveness and efficiency of programme performance, to assess impact of policy implementation and ensure accountability initiatives. In the era of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, Africa Agenda 2063 (the Africa We Want) and related country development plans, there is renewed interest to make M&E systems contribute more meaningfully towards the achievement of the development goals.

Against this background, the Government of South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the United Nations in South Africa (UN-SA) co-hosted two-and-a-half days 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Indaba (the Indaba) as a multi-stakeholder workshop from Monday, 30 October 2017 to Wednesday, 1 November 2017.

The theme of the Indaba focused on the role that M&E can play in economic development and six key areas where explored including:

- M&E Ecosystems
- Harnessing the demographic dividend
- Innovations in data
- Use of evaluations
- Gender, youth and vulnerable groups (leave no one behind)
- Fore-sighting and modelling for decision-making

While the results of these discussions are contained elsewhere, this paper draws the principles that are common in the M&E approaches discussed at the Indaba. These are highlighted below:

#### **1. Accountability is a key aspect to Monitoring and Evaluation**

Initially M&E developed out of the context of research as applied to developmental programmes to provide rigorous evidence that the aims and objectives of these programmes were met or that the





programme complied with the contractual obligations. At this time, these results were of interest to programme managers, donors and organisational leaders.

Over the years greater understanding of the role of M&E has developed and the calls for accountability has expanded and become more entrenched. No longer are the results confined to the programme staff and donors but these are of interest to all to governments that seek these results for better assessment of the assistance that is being provided to their people.

This inclusivity has also been extended to the participants or beneficiaries of the programmes. With the latest understanding of M&E eco-systems, this inclusivity has grown to capture both directly or indirectly participants involved in the programme. The systems perspective that accompanies this understanding has enabled a greater understanding of the results of programmes. It's within this context the human-centered designs are prominent with participation of constituents at all phases of monitoring and evaluation to ensure relevance is promoted.

## **2. Results are the norm**

The move to results has been a difficult transition however it has been worthwhile. Being aware of the inputs and outputs of a programme assists with planning and implementation but the focus on results enhances the accountability and relevance of a programme moving us beyond mere compliance.

## **3. Quality data is the cornerstone of analysis and decision making**

Quality of M&E is key, poor quality will lead to misinformation and problematic decision making. There are challenges with the present field due to the lack of a comprehensive body of knowledge called M&E. This has provided opportunist unregulated trainings to develop. However, while these challenges exist there was a big and enthusiastic call for people to start. Start exploring and knowing more, keep reading.

A further challenge is the gaps evident in practitioners' capacity when engaging with constituents and stakeholders. Part of the M&E process becomes one of capacitating all involved for effectiveness

## **4. Inclusivity is important:**

'No one is left behind' was a common principle or phrase that was used throughout the Indaba. Building on the M&E ecosystems understanding, emphasis was put on the women and the youth although other groups were acknowledged for example, those with disabilities.



## 5. Public-Private Partnerships

PPPs are important not only important to ensure the relevance of programmes, but they can also enhance the M&E data and strategies employed. PPPs tend to bring more financial resources to enhance the scope and rigour of assessments. These partnerships also provide another source of data and methods which can be triangulated to support the results obtained.

## 6. M&E is evolving

Technological advances are pushing M&E to evolve to remain relevant. These changes affect the types or data and methods employed.

Big data presents challenges and opportunities for gaining a better understanding of programmes and impacts. Civic technologies can be utilised by governments to be more responsive. In this way technology can be an enabler and assist governments and partners to move from compliance to improving lives.

These types of data also challenge existing methods within M&E, however there is also a call to keep a space for local data and meanings. Within Africa we have various epistemologies and methods for gaining knowledge, these methods can enhance the Western methods that have dominated the field. It is here that the move toward rigours mixed method approaches have become valuable.

### **M&E is a natural tool for empowerment and democratisation**

Through these principles and application of M&E approaches, M&E can become a valuable tool for democratisation. M&E when accessible to all levels of stakeholders and constituents can be a tool for improved democratic accountability, which would further drive effective development.