



## MONITORING & EVALUATION INDABA

Held on 30 October – 1 November 2017 in Boksburg, South Africa

# Strategic Executive Summary

*The Government of South Africa's Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the United Nations in South Africa (UN-SA) Monitoring and Evaluation Group (M&E Group) co-hosted the first Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Indaba under the theme "Opportunities and challenges of using evidence from M&E to accelerate economic development and employment in Africa."*

## I. Background

The main motivation behind staging the first *Africa Monitoring and Evaluation Indaba* was the realisation that though monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is frequently used in decision-making processes for the formulation and implementation of development strategies and plans but it has not received due recognition for the role it has played for a long time. M&E is also considered as a powerful tool for enhancing effectiveness by learning from experiences and for taking corrective measures in cases where programme performance does not meet expectations. More importantly, there have been many programmes that have been developed and implemented across the continent to address the most complex and demanding developmental challenges in various areas of human endeavour but instruments to assess their impact on policy implementation and to ensure accountability have been found wanting. Currently, the United Nations Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and related National Development Frameworks and Plans have engendered renewed interest to make M&E systems contribute more meaningfully towards their attainment. The challenge, however, remains that limited resources are availed to make M&E systems function at their required and most effective capacity. It is also critical that both leadership and technical officials from all sectors of society begin to engage robustly on how to advance M&E to make a difference in people's lives.



## 2. Theme of the Indaba

The Indaba's main theme was: "Opportunities and challenges of using evidence from M&E to accelerate economic development and employment in Africa." The Indaba therefore focused on the use of data and evidence from M&E to contribute to important areas of economic development and employment, which are some of the major challenges currently faced by many of the African countries. Six sub-themes were adopted as the topics of parallel sessions for in-depth engagements and inclusive deliberation:

1. *M&E ecosystems*
2. *Harnessing the demographic dividend*
3. *Innovations in data*
4. *Use of evaluation*
5. *Gender, youth, children and vulnerable groups*
6. *Fore-sighting and modelling for decision making*

## 3. Key objectives of the Indaba

- To promote use of evidence from M&E to achieve development goals via knowledge exchange among African governments and strategic development partners.
- To contribute to the implementation of local development plans and international development agendas of various countries through mutual technical advisory and support opportunities.

## 4. Intended Outcomes

- Enhanced learning and common understanding of how M&E can be used to address economic development, employment and inequality facing African countries.
- Strengthened use of information (data, statistics) and evidence from M&E in policy, planning, programme design, implementation and development impact (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), African Union Agenda 2063, National Development Plan, etc.).
- Improved understanding of the importance and benefits of championing M&E by political leadership.
- Platform for building partnerships and networking for the use of evidence to enhance human development created.

## 5. Participants

The target audience for the Indaba was the administrative leadership and technical M&E officers from African governments (national, provincial and local levels), multilateral bodies, diplomatic corps, academia, civil society, and private sector. A total of 160 people participated in the Indaba, comprised of representatives from the following countries: Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Lesotho, Senegal, South Africa, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Event partners included Statistics South Africa (Stats SA); Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTaC); Centre for Learning on Evaluation Results – Anglophone Africa (CLEAR-AA); and Twende Mbele. The partners conducted exhibitions and live demonstrations of their knowledge products.



## 6. Highlights from Keynote Speakers

### 6.1 Hon. Mr Jeff Radebe (MP) – The former Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

- Stressed the importance of M&E, which should be implemented to measure progress against the national and international development agendas, and should be used as evidence to improve the quality of life of citizens.
- Shared examples from South Africa, where Government uses the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) to implement and monitor its National Development Plan (NDP). The South African Government also applies a rapid results methodology called “Operation Phakisa” to intervene in key areas, and uses participatory methodologies and other frontline monitoring systems to engage communities about their own experiences of government services, which are used to make necessary changes.
- Reiterated the implementation of the National Evaluation System against the NDP, by which the evaluations are discussed at the Cabinet level, and the publications and findings are used to improve policies and programmes.
- Underscored the necessity of leadership to ensure that M&E and evidence are used in decision-making. Emphasised that M&E reports should be presented in a user-friendly manner to optimise use by leadership and to ensure that the results of M&E make a difference in people’s lives.

### 6.2 Ms Anne Githuku-Shongwe, Representative, UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO)

*On behalf of Mr Gana Fofang, the former Resident Coordinator of UN-SA, Ms Anne Githuku-Shongwe, Representative of UN Women South Africa Multi-Country Office (SAMCO) gave the Keynote Address.*

- Raised concerns about the measurement languages used in development agendas, that appear to be detached from reality, using the example of violence against women which requires deeper thinking and engagement.
- Emphasised the need to link measurement language of variables in development agendas to reality and the use of big data.
- Underscored the importance of involving new stakeholders like citizen journalists to help enhance the voice of the voiceless.
- Stressed the principle of “leaving no one behind” as a vital consideration to achieve the SDGs, as the theme of the conference is aligned to SDG Goal number 8 (*Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all*).



### 6.3 Ms Adeline Sibanda, President, African Evaluation Association Evaluation

- Raised provocative questions to stimulate a dialogue about the main theme of the Indaba:
  - *Who are the economic drivers in Africa, and are they involved in the discussions?*
  - *Can M&E alone lead to accelerated economic growth?*
  - *How do different groups, such as women, youth and vulnerable groups participate in economic development?*
  - *Do we know who is left behind?*
- Indicated that the African Union Agenda 2063 and the SDGs have approximately 90% alignment.
- Emphasised the need for M&E reports to be presented in a suitable manner to ensure use by the decision-makers.

### 6.4 Mr Asghar Adelzadeh, Director and Chief Economic Modeller, Applied Development Research Solutions (ADRS)

- Shared ADRS' recent work with Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) and DPME on facilitating government access to more advanced analytical tools. These tools can be used for planning, monitoring and evaluation and are built upon Stats SA's raw data and basic analytical tools.
- Demonstrated a range of models that have been developed in partnership with Stats SA to enhance the policy design, forecasting, monitoring and evaluation capability of government.
- The models were described as having the potential to enhance the ability of the South African government to generate forecasts of key economic and development indicators that are necessary for strategic decision-making; and establishing baseline forecasts to monitor and evaluate future paths of economic growth, employment, poverty alleviation and inequality reduction.
- Indicated that the policy briefs are currently being prepared to present results from a simulation exercise that includes a benchmark scenario (BMS) and alternative policy scenarios.
- Policy briefs will provide quantitative policy paths to NDP targets and can be used for planning, monitoring and evaluating purposes.



### 6.5 High-level panel discussion

*Objective: To reflect on the main theme of the Indaba drawing from the areas of the work, experiences and the countries that the panellists are involved in.*

#### Panellists

*Mr Tshediso Matona: Secretary of the National Planning Commission, DPME*

*Ms Nana Serwah Amoako: Special Advisor to the Minister of Monitoring & Evaluation, Office of the President, Ghana*

*Dr Bernd Mueller: Employment Specialist, International Labour Organization (ILO)*

*Mr Chris Wake: Team Leader of South Africa Development Partnership Unit, Department for International Development (DFID, UK Aid)*

*Mr Pramod Mohanlal: Managing Director, Yowzit, South Africa*

#### Key highlights from the discussion:

- Make the case for M&E and its role in ensuring accountability, and to have buy-in at the highest level to ensure a responsive state is built.
- Engage a wide range of stakeholders including the community, civil society and media for further public participation.
- Harmonise reporting, including the evaluation and monitoring reports, to ensure reporting is utilised to inform programming and policy making.
- Address challenges of capacity for those who are conducting the M&E on the ground, and the various stakeholders involved in the process.
- Implement the “leaving no one behind” principle, while being mindful of disaggregation and intersectionality of different issues.
- Strengthen the link between national and subnational contexts.
- Incorporate technology in the context of M&E, for example, real-time monitoring.
- Examine sources of funding for M&E and development not only focusing on the official development assistance (ODA) but other finance sources, such as remittances, domestic revenues and illicit financial flows also need to be considered.



## 7. Description and summary of key recommendations from parallel sessions

### 7.1 M&E ecosystems

**Description of session:** *Contribution of M&E evidence to addressing issues of unemployment, poverty and inequality.*

**Key recommendations:**

- Strengthen capacity building and ensure greater participation in M&E by women, youth and vulnerable groups so that no one is left behind.
- Strengthen coordination mechanisms among core M&E stakeholders and with non-M&E disciplines like planning, finance and human resources management.
- Embrace new technologies and ensure the results-focus and transformative role of M&E evidence.

### 7.2 Innovations in data

**Description of session:** *Discuss ways that big data, administrative data and civic technology offer avenues for data innovation. Innovations provide an opportunity for governments to better understand the needs of citizens and to gain nuanced insights to guide decision-making regarding policy choices and the design of programmes.*

**Key recommendations:**

- New skills are required to be part of the data revolution, what is otherwise known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution.
- The capacity of countries must be strengthened through working with partners to take on big data; administrative data; civic technology projects; making equipment available to increase access to administrative data; and by strengthening the capacity of users.
- Statistics offices of African countries are encouraged to work together to set standards and harmonise concepts for the use of administrative data for policy formulation.



### 7.3 Harnessing the demographic dividend

#### Description of session:

- Focus on ways to improve national data systems to map and address inequalities, advance SDGs and the International Conference on Population and Development agenda.
- Discuss the mainstreaming of demographic intelligence to improve the responsiveness, targeting impact of development policies, programmes and advocacy.

#### Key recommendations:

- The age, gender, location disaggregation of population and human development data is required to fully understand the gaps in relation to the four pillars of the demographic dividend: education, health, employment and empowerment.
- Countries need to assess the state of their population to develop contextually relevant and efficient policies and programmes that will lead to harnessing the demographic dividend and to prioritise key interventions among the four pillars.
- Address socio-cultural barriers to economic development and promote women's empowerment and equal access to education and job opportunities.

### 7.4 Use of evaluation

**Description:** Analyse effective government evaluation systems to promote the use of evidence at an analytical, strategic and operational level to improve the role of M&E in economic development and employment. Sub-themes include: evaluation and culture; role of donors/power relations; and incentives for use in government.

#### Key recommendations:

- Gender has not been well integrated in evaluations over the past couple of years and gender evaluations should not only be led by women.
- Evaluation culture can be built through capacity development, moving from compliance to learning and continuous improvement not just the mere application of rules.
- National evaluation systems should specify how donors can be involved in the system.
- A multi-faceted approach to the use of incentives (carrots, sticks and sermons) should be applied.
- All role players need to take up their role in ensuring accountability through evaluations, such as civil society in voicing the needs of citizens, parliamentarians on their oversight role, opposition parties in keeping track of government performance, and so forth.



### 7.5 Gender, youth, children and vulnerable groups

**Description of session:** Discuss the challenges and potential solutions of the use of M&E with focus on gender, youth and vulnerable groups, so that policies will include those that are often “left behind” and how these policies can be inclusive in the country’s economic growth including on issues relating to employment.

#### Key recommendations:

- Engage all relevant stakeholders from the beginning for participatory research (e.g. CSOs, private sector and direct beneficiaries).
- Government and stakeholders should sit at the same table, as equal partners, on the same development agendas, with continuous feedback, on progress and results; encourage the use of lessons learnt from previous evaluations.
- Qualified practitioners who are responsive and cognisant to the context are required.
- Identify political champions who can follow resources and promote an inclusive agenda.
- From the beginning, design policies and frameworks that are customised for different audiences, beneficiaries and contexts, which incorporate the existing framework.
- Institutionalise reporting and dissemination mechanisms to the beneficiaries at the cabinet levels, such as creating data repository.

### 7.6 Fore-sighting and modelling

**Description of session:** Discuss fore-sighting and modelling as a collaborative diagnostic tool, which is critical for projections of future investments needed within a system, and its processes which facilitate stakeholder engagement and learning that can lead to technical and institutional changes.

#### Key recommendations:

- More resources should be invested to build fore-sighting, modelling and forecasting capacity as critical areas that will promote use of evidence from M&E and other sources to inform better decisions in planning, resource allocation and policy making.
- Data should be made accessible and quality assured to enable better application of these fore-sighting and modelling tools.

## 8. Conclusion

The First M&E Indaba set a foundation for future practical engagements among stakeholders in the context of the UN-SA and DPME collaboration on areas of common interest, including providing knowledge support to all African countries on specific strategic areas of need. Most importantly, the Indaba showed that M&E systems should contribute meaningfully to decisions that improve the quality of life of Africans.

The Indaba provided a platform for dialogue that addressed the fundamental purpose of monitoring and evaluation systems to improve the quality of citizens – i.e. employment capabilities, opportunities, and conditions; raising standards of living; reducing poverty; and increasing economic growth. These can be achieved through increasing accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, sustainability and impact.