

12. Government and Civil Society Partnership for Evaluation in Kenya: Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

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INTRODUCTION

The leading and most diversified economy in Eastern Africa, Kenya faces unprecedented development opportunities and challenges, in equal measure. The birthing of a devolution dream by the Constitution 2010, an empowered human resource base, new natural wealth discoveries, regional leadership in technological innovation and infrastructural developments, among others, provide a lot of hope for the citizenry towards better socioeconomic well-being. On the other hand, the nation faces daunting constraints amongst them high levels of poverty (45.2 percent)²³⁴ and youth unemployment. Out of the 24 million working-age population, one in every six young Kenyans is unemployed.²³⁵ Runaway corruption, food insecurity and other climate change effects have aggravated the situation.

The *Vision 2030* is the country's economic blueprint based on economic, social and environmental pillars. It is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This strategy is implemented through five-year medium-term plans (MTPs) and related sector plans, the third of which (MTP III) is currently under development. Additionally, the 47 county strategies are aligned to the *Vision* through County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs). Development partners, accordingly, align their country strategies to support the national priorities in these plans.

To track and provide feedback on the implementation of these plans, the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) and the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES) were established, in 2004 and 2013, respectively. This is coordinated

234 <https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/20426-kenya-national-bureau-statistics-study-reveals-counties-lowest-poverty-rate-452-kenyan>.

235 <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2001230740/kenya-s-economy-groans-under-weight-of-its-jobless-youth>.

by the Monitoring and Evaluation Department (MED), Ministry of Devolution and Planning. Over the years, development partners such as the United Nations, World Bank, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and African Development Bank, among others, have supported the strengthening of the two systems. Currently, MED benefits from some of the funding under the World Bank's Kenya Devolution Sector Support Programme domiciled in the Ministry of Devolution.

The Evaluation Society of Kenya (ESK), a partner of MED, is a new entrant in the development landscape. As a professional network with the comparative advantage of having membership from across all development actors and sectors, with regional and global linkages, it is expected that ESK will add value over time. Jointly with MED, ESK is spearheading the EvalPartners/EvalSDGs Vision (2016-2020). Plans are underway for ESK to play a role in the efforts of the SDGs Unit (State Department of Planning) from an evaluation perspective.

In a competitive and dynamic global environment, there is growing public pressure for more prudent management of public resources and demonstration of development results through evidence. On this, the potential of NIMES/CIMES to transform the country's socio-economic landscape for the better is enormous. Nonetheless, a lot still needs to be done for this to be realized.

Specifically, in an environment characterized by weak national culture and practice for evidence-driven growth, there are many constraining factors. For example, it is the case for Kenya that, "... while statistics enjoy a higher profile than ever before, many developing countries still lack the capacity to produce, analyze and use the range and quality of statistics required to support effective development progress..."²³⁶ Low capacities and national budgetary allocations for evidence as well as the "fear of reporting failure through evaluation"²³⁷ are also among the prevailing challenges.

To ensure a vibrant NIMES, its conceptualization envisaged strong participation by non-State actors as it develops. This is yet to be realized. Despite the fact that interventions by civil society organizations and the private sector impact national development significantly, their contributions are not fully captured in official government statistics. Most non-State actors collect data for purposes of donor reporting and do not feed into the NIMES. Their contributions are rarely in evidence terms, factored on the national development (NIMES Needs Assessment Report, 2012). In a recent national EvalVision advocacy event co-organized by MED and ESK, there was a unanimous call for more stakeholder (especially non-State actors) and public participation in the affairs of the national and county monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems.

KEY PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES RELEVANT TO DEVELOPING NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITIES TO SUPPORT THE SDGs

The advent and localization of the SDGs including their current integration in the MPT III and CIDP processes and the Jubilee Government's big four priorities (food security, health,

236 <https://www.paris21.org/sites/default/files/2532.pdf>.

237 Government of Kenya, 'National Integrated Monitoring & Evaluation System Assessment Report', Government Printers, 2012.

housing and manufacturing) provide strategic opportunities for evaluation to take the country's development agenda to the next level. The SDG EvalVision and the theme of the National Evaluation Capacities Conference 2017, "People, planet and progress in the SDG era", add to this momentum, particularly towards the ongoing efforts and the need to redress some of the existing gaps. The NIMES/CIMES and the ESK need strengthening as they spearhead the evaluation agenda. Various ongoing multi-stakeholder efforts to strengthen the systems exist. Some of these, e.g., towards capacity-building in training, include a recent review of the curriculum of the Kenya School of Government focused on gender and social equity, done under a joint MED/ESK project funded by the UN Women EvalPartners/EvalGender+ Network. Capacities for translating this into practice through learning by doing are necessary.

Significantly, for greater effectiveness, MED requires a semi-autonomous or autonomous status. As currently constituted under the Ministry of Devolution and Planning, it lacks the necessary authority to execute its huge and important national mandate. More harmonization and coordination of the country's data systems could have revolutionary effects towards data-driven growth, i.e., the NIMES/CIMES, administrative systems, Kenya National Bureau of Statistics and the SDGs Unit data systems. Among efforts to redress these is the Electronic Project Monitoring Information System for the Government of Kenya (e-ProMIS Kenya) operationalized at the National Treasury to track project expenditures and a new automated data system (the E-NIMES)²³⁸ which is under development.

The monitoring function through annual progress reports has dominated most of the existence of NIMES. These reports are not used optimally to add value due to delays in their preparation and dissemination, e.g., towards informing annual planning and the national budgeting calendar. Evaluation is still "left behind". There is need to shift more to the evaluation function (including in terms of capacity strengthening and funding) for a healthy balance.

On the supply side of evaluation, ESK is a young professional network limited in its capacities to deliver on its mandate. It is operationalized on a voluntary basis by an elected board with competing career priorities, varying commitment levels and financial constraints. With its increased national recognition and workload, ESK needs more institutional strengthening including secretariat support. Further, local evaluators increasingly have gained theoretical knowledge of evaluation, but opportunities to translate this into practice are a gap. Specifically, there is limited access for them to opportunities for gaining practical field evaluation experience.

Previous evaluations include those on the Constituency Development Fund (CDF); Impact of Malaria Pandemic; End-Term Review of the Kenya Economic Recover Strategy; Reviews of the First and Second Medium-Term Plans of the Kenya Vision 2030; The 50-Kilometre Thika Road Super Highway; and the Kisumu International Airport.

238 <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/businessarticle/2001258846/government-rolls-out-new-system-to-evaluate-mega-infrastructure-projects>.

On the CDF assessment, its benefits are nationwide from the equity and equality perspectives. Theoretically, it gives local communities opportunity to participate directly in their own development affairs, which is enshrined in the Constitution 2010. Nevertheless, this is not the actual practice. For the period of the Fund's existence, the assessment flagged various weaknesses that undermine its effectiveness. For instance, there is low public participation and a poor feedback loop between the Government and the local communities. There is also low representation of special interest groups, e.g., women and people with disabilities, in the management of the Fund's affairs. Further, the powerful role of Members of Parliament in the CDF Committee is often abused. There have been efforts to redress these challenges. The CDF Amendment Bill 2007 and CDF Act, 2013 constitute some of these efforts. More needs to be done for more efficiency and effectiveness in its implementation and outcomes/impacts.

The Kisumu airport evaluation established that the project has seen a positive transformation. Specifically, that it has "... been highly efficient not only in its operations, but also for the clientele, both domestic and international...". The majority of respondents (over 70 percent) felt that the impact of the airport's expansion was huge. A respondent noted that, "... there is a boom in real estate...". Importantly, the study reported that unlike, e.g., South Africa and Malaysia where M&E has received strong government support, this does not seem to be the case for Kenya, i.e., "... The monitoring and MED has not received its rightful standing as key organ of Government evaluating the implementation of projects in the medium term plans and needs to be strengthened to do so...". There was also a seeming lack of knowledge of the role and functions of M&E in the implementation of the project by the experts interviewed during the study.

In the Malaria Control Evaluation findings, major funding of malaria control has been mostly through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (disbursed through the Government), non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and the private sector. Notably, the study recommended the need to review the malaria funding strategy towards more local ownership, i.e., for sustainability, with the local private sector playing an important role. It called for strengthening of leadership, coordination and public integrity (including procurement integrity) as necessary towards accountability. The study further echoed the need to strengthen the M&E capacities of health systems.

To enhance the evaluation function, MED has now prepared an Evaluation Plan, mainly for mega public programmes, to ascertain their effectiveness against resource investment. The Evaluation Plan projects are from the infrastructure, energy, agriculture, tourism, transport, education, health and devolved sectors. The Plan will provide unique opportunities for implementing, sharing results and mitigation measures needed to address challenges of the Vision 2030 MTPs, devolution agenda and their alignment to the SDGs. Gender and equity dimensions will be given special focus. It is expected that with the new demand for evaluation by the Government, ESK will play its role in providing experts and this will in turn provide more opportunities for its members to conduct evaluations and redress some of the gaps outlined above.

To bridge the gap of low non-State actor and public participation around the NIMES/CIMES, ESK has positioned itself to be the link of these with the State actors. Accordingly, a multi-stakeholder networking group and which is spearheaded by a Technical Working Group is now operational at MED and coordinated by ESK. A “Googlesgroup” on the same is also up and running.²³⁹

There are growing calls for professionalization of M&E to join other worthy professions like law and accounting. Under the multi-stakeholder network, it is planned that professionalization of the discipline will be one of the priorities. Accordingly, issues of accreditation and adherence to global evaluation standards will be consultatively discussed and acted upon. Further, on the development of local evaluation standards and codes of ethics to guide the profession, ESK is participating in the consultative review and revision of the African Evaluation Association’s African Evaluation Guidelines.

The development of a standard M&E curriculum is also vital towards professionalizing evaluation. Plans are underway for this, specifically under the State and non-State actors’ initiative mentioned above and picking up from earlier efforts spearheaded by the MED and the United Nations Children’s Fund. Under the network, MED/ESK will bring together academia and the Commission for Higher Education towards development of a multi-stakeholder standard curriculum. Related to enhanced professionalism, members of academia have highlighted the need for them to be exposed to the practical workings (e.g., through “professional attachments” to the national and county governments), notably to be able to link theory to practice as they prepare students for the labour market.

Enhancing the enabling environment including through the ratification of the draft M&E policy (currently at the cabinet level) is going to play an important role in realizing all these. Linked to this is also the need to step up efforts through advocacy for more public participation, political good will and increased demand by the Government for evidence including through more national budgetary allocations to the NIMES/CIMES.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR POTENTIAL COLLABORATION

The challenges outlined above present potential opportunities for a multi-stakeholder and multifaceted approach in strengthening the NIMES and CIMES, with the MED and ESK at the centre. For instance, development partners could support the strengthening of individual and institutional capacities including through training and mentorship. There are growing calls for professionalization and development of a standard curriculum.

Enhanced non-State actor and public participation around the systems is another potential area of support. The evaluation function through the conduct and utilization of evaluation findings for strategic evaluation programmes and advocacy are other important areas for consideration.

239 Report of the National Evaluation Advocacy Event for the SDGs, 2017.

CONCLUSION

Globally and nationally, fast-changing technological innovations and citizen pressure for demonstration of results have raised the momentum for more evidence-driven socioeconomic growth. Despite having a NIMES and CIMES, the national culture and practice for this remains weak in Kenya. Redressing the challenges outlined above provide potential opportunities to take the country's development agenda to the next level. The ratification by Parliament of the draft M&E policy and the enactment of an Act of Parliament to enforce it are deemed critical.

Additionally, there is need for more individual and institutional capacity strengthening. The MED and ESK as institutions need affirmative action. Special focus needs to be on the "doing" element, in order to translate the theory acquired over the years into practice. Accordingly, there is need for more demand-driven evaluation by the Government. This expected to in turn provide more opportunities to ESK members on the supply side to meet the demand and strengthen individual capacities.

The development of a standard curriculum and professionalization of M&E are other important opportunities. More development partner support and other stakeholder participation especially for non-State actors and the public around the NIMES and CIMES are going to be necessary catalysts in achieving these.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

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- Government of Kenya, 'Assessment of Evaluation Gaps, Challenges and Solutions to Government Programmes-Kisumu International Airport', Government Printers, 2014.
- Government of Kenya, 'Evaluation Report of the National Malaria Control Programme', Government Printers, 2014.