

Title: Strengthening Public Sector Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Zambia

This abstract highlights the efforts of the Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association (ZaMEA) to enhance monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems and capacities within the public sector. Persistent challenges in establishing functional M&E systems in many public institutions have adversely affected transparency and accountability for several programs. The 2023 Annual Progress Report by the Ministry of Finance and National Planning noted significant difficulties in data availability, which hampered the assessment of program outputs due to insufficient information. This issue largely stemmed from the lack of developed statistical and M&E management information systems. Additionally, inadequate processes for systematic data collection, collation, and analysis during the review period exacerbated data gaps.

To address these challenges, especially given resource constraints, ZaMEA, in collaboration with the University of Zambia, initiated a project to support ministries in developing M&E frameworks and building their M&E skills. Key activities included conducting an assessment using a custom tool called the ZaMEA Barometer, and organizing 5-10 day workshops to develop and validate M&E frameworks with staff from various ministries.

ZaMEA has successfully supported five ministries—namely the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Ministry of Labour and Social Security, and Ministry of Science and Technology—in assessing the status of their M&E systems, building capacity in M&E, and developing comprehensive M&E frameworks. This collaborative approach has enabled institutions to actively participate in the development of their M&E frameworks, thereby fostering ownership and enhancing their M&E skills. The participation from these institutions was substantial, and their input was crucial in establishing processes and indicators.

As a result, all five ministries have developed M&E frameworks and trained staff in M&E concepts and implementation. However, the implementation of these frameworks continues to face challenges due to inadequate resources.

Key lessons learned from these initiatives emphasize the importance of senior management participation in the process and continuous engagement with all stakeholders. Ensuring high-level involvement is crucial for securing the necessary resources and support for the successful implementation of M&E frameworks. Going forward, ZaMEA aims to expand these initiatives to other ministries and strengthen the support structures to overcome the resource constraints that currently hinder effective M&E practices.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Capacity Building, Public Sector, Zambia, ZaMEA, M&E Frameworks, Data Gaps, Transparency, Accountability