

## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION TEMPLATE

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Title of the abstract	Building Strong National Evaluation Systems: A Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment of Government Agencies in Nigeria.
Conference session	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Stream A. Responsive National Evaluation Systems
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Preferred format:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Formal presentation (maximum 10 minutes) <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in a panel discussion where the experience can be shared <input type="checkbox"/> Participation in an interactive session where the example can be shared, without a formal presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) _____
I will need to apply for bursary support, if selected.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Language to be used for presentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> French <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese

### Abstract Text (max. 500 words)

This abstract examines strengthening the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) capacities of Nigerian government agencies. Cloneshouse, in collaboration with the National M&E Department, housed

within the Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning (FMBEP), assessed the M&E capacities of 34 Federal Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and their compliance with the provisions of the National M&E Policy of Nigeria. This assessment is crucial for the NM&E Department's role in institutionalising performance management in the government and building strong national evaluation systems. The collaborative effort was built on prior assessments by Cloneshouse, including the Result-Based M&E Readiness Assessment of the FMBEP (formerly the Ministry of Budget and National Planning) and the Federal Ministry of Health in 2019. Additionally, Cloneshouse has provided technical assistance to various MDAs, aiming to strengthen national results-based M&E systems.

The M&E capacity assessment employed a multifaceted approach. A comprehensive literature review informed the adoption of a standardized tool, the Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment Toolkit (MECAT), aligned with established best practices for M&E systems as outlined by Görgens and Kusek (2009). The data collection process utilized Eyemark, an indigenous data collection and monitoring application developed by the FMBEP, which significantly expedited the process. The MECAT assessed MDAs against nine core components, each with sub-components rated on a 0-3 scale (0 = M&E practice is not in place in the MDA, 3 = M&E practice is totally in accordance with the statement). This rating scale was also consistent in the analysis and final scoring, categorizing MDAs based on their M&E development stage (Embryonic, Emerging, Growing, Mature). Following the assessment, M&E System Improvement Plans were developed to address identified capacity/compliance gaps specific to MDAs. This approach strategically aligned M&E interventions and technical support to MDAs by the FMBEP rather than the generic approach applied in the past.

Some challenges were encountered, including standardizing terminology, addressed through a robust desk review comparing existing resources on Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) and Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Assessment (MECA). Again, scheduling constraints limited participation by a few MDAs.

From this process, several key lessons emerged. The standardization of tools is crucial for consistent and reliable assessments. Using a standardized tool like the MECAT minimizes subjectivity and allows for easy replication of the assessment in different countries. In addition, in the evolving evaluation landscape, digital data collection platforms improve efficiency and enhance data accuracy and accessibility. Furthermore, transparency, communication, and collaborative validation are vital for successful assessments and capacity building. The validation workshops clarified the MDAs' concerns and facilitated collaborative learning by allowing MDAs at different development stages to share experiences and best practices.

This assessment approach presents a significant model for strengthening the M&E capacities of government agencies globally. By adopting the MECAT, other countries can replicate this approach. This process equips governments with robust M&E systems, empowering them for more informed decision-making, efficient resource allocation, and, ultimately, the achievement of development goals.