

WHO SAID MONITORING AND EVALUATION IS NOT ROOTED IN FIRM THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS? A REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Who said monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is not rooted in firm theoretical foundations? The paper articulates the theoretical constructs upon which the function of M&E rests. It clarifies from the theoretical perspective the basis on which the concepts and practice of M&E are built and practised. To do so, the article discusses four theoretical perspectives that explain the logic and practice behind M&E. Thus, the theory of change (ToC), results-based management (RBM), managing for development results (MfDRs) and the logical framework approach (LFA) are discussed as constructs that form the broader theoretical basis and guidance for evidence-based M&E. As a relatively new phenomenon, it becomes crucial to situate the function and practice of M&E on firm theoretical foundations. At the same time, such anchorage in theory grounds M&E as a Development Studies specialisation in scientific rigor. In discussing each of the four theoretical constructs, the paper provides background information and definitions and then articulates how the paradigms are linked to and helps understand M&E functionality and application. These discussions are regarded as important because whole-of-government M&E systems (WoGM&ESs) for countries and indeed M&E systems for other development organisations are expected to be developed and guided by the principles entrenched in clearly defined theoretical foundations. Therefore, M&E is presented herein as a phenomenon and practice of good governance anchored on theoretical constructs, a factor deemed significant to development practice and management.

KEYWORDS

Monitoring, Evaluation, Theory of Change, Results-Based Management, Managing for Development Results, Logical Framework Approach, Results-Based M&E system

1. INTRODUCTION

In scientific research, it is important to strongly explain phenomena within the ambit of existing theories and practices. It is for that reason monitoring and evaluation (M&E), as a good governance instrument when planning and implementing development interventions is supposed to be identifiable within the framework of known theories. Many development stakeholders including governments, local and international development agencies, civil society, parliaments, donors and citizens are increasingly demanding for results. Thus, the Theory of Change (ToC), Results Based Management (RBM), Managing for Development Results (MfDRs) and Logical Framework Approach (LFA) are herein discussed as key theoretical paradigms supporting the practice and function of M&E within both specific and broader development debates. While it is less contested in the development arena about the usefulness of M&E in helping to track

progress—thereby enhancing accountability mechanisms; feedback loops; and institutional learning, situating M&E in theory has not been adequately explored and fully explained in existing literature and practice. It is important for literature to address this gap so that as governments, development agencies and individual practitioners are designing interventions and building systems for M&E, it makes both theoretical and practical meaning.

Therefore, theories demonstrate how functional and well-institutionalised M&E systems contribute to the attainment of good governance towards the achievement of higher-level goals of poverty reduction and sustained social, economic and political development. Essentially, a cause-effect relationship between M&E systems and the ultimate desired development results of poverty reduction and improved wellbeing of people is best explained and understood using theoretical understanding and frameworks.

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) have become accepted tools of good governance and actors within and across development spaces have adopted it to enhance performance and attainment of desired results. Governments, bilateral and multi-lateral development agencies, civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are repeatedly and increasingly demanding and providing some more refined evidence towards development results. Also, citizens and beneficiaries of different development interventions are no longer limiting their demands for inputs and activities and outputs, but want to see and sustain long term results (outcomes & impacts). In that regard, M&E has become an instrument of good governance and better management of policies, programmes and projects around the world [17, 18 & 20].

However, the emerging question in the broader discipline and practice of Development Studies is: What theoretical constructs inform the practice of M&E? In other words, the gap in literature pertains to the insufficient effort to justify the linkage of M&E to existing theories so that its practice is well entrenched in theoretical foundations. Thus, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of the significance of explaining this link as the effort solidifies the scientific nature of M&E as an instrument of enhanced development management. The findings are meant to enrich literature on this subject matter of monitoring and evaluation as a theoretically sound practice. In the same way, the study stimulates further need for future research in M&E. The users of information from M&E also will be assisted by the findings of this study to know that it is credible and reliable because it has scientific grounding.

3. METHODOLOGY

In undertaking this study, a desk research approach was adopted. This meant reviewing a variety of relevant literature on the subject matter of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as well as development practice in broader terms. To do so; books, journal articles, academic works and other related reports were used. Web pages of renowned international organisations and countries have also been consulted as a way of triangulating information on the subject matter. To that extent, rigor and validity of findings have been substantiated.

4. DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Evaluation: an evaluation, according to [17] systematically and objectively assesses a policy, programme or project which is on-going or completed, its planning, design, execution and results. The main focus of any evaluation should be determining an intervention's relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability with a view to appreciate its value, significance or indeed its worth.

Monitoring: a monitoring exercise is said to be a continuous function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and key stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds [17-18].

Results-Based Management: Results-based management (RBM) means a management strategy with clear framework, methods and tools for strategic planning, performance monitoring and evaluation and risk management which is aimed at achieving desired changes in the way organisations function [17].

Results-based monitoring and evaluation system: Reference [10] regard results-based M&E systems as tools for managing and tracking progress in the implementation processes of development interventions (that is, policies, programmes and projects). All the information pertaining to the successes and failures of development interventions in attaining desired outcomes is captured through a systematic reporting mechanism, which tracks progress towards desired development results.

Managing for development results: Managing for development results (MfDR) refers to a management strategy based on sustainable development performance enhancements in a given country's outcomes. RBM achieves this by utilising practical tools, which include strategic planning, progress monitoring and outcome evaluation and risk management. Through these, RBM tries to offer a coherent framework for development effectiveness, whereby performance information is used in various processes of decision and policy making of key stakeholders [30].

5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

5.1. Theory of change

The field of M&E strongly inspires the theoretical foundations of the theory of change (ToC), which equally provides the theoretical basis for M&E [19 & 48]. In that regard, there seems to be a chicken- and- egg dilemma relationship. In the literature of development studies and materials on management of development interventions, ToC is the predominant contemporary theory guiding phenomena in pursuing the success of such efforts.

Consequently, ToC, also known as programme theory, forms the theoretical understanding of the practice of M&E. Many theorists and M&E practitioners and scholars have attempted to provide meaning to the concept of ToC. Reference [36] describes it as follows:

Theory of change, variously referred to as programme theory, programme logic (Funnell, 1997), theory-based evaluation (Weiss, 1995, 1998; Albert et al., 1998), theory-driven evaluation (Chen, 1990), theory-of-action (Schorr, 1997), intervention logic (Nagarajan & Vanheukelen, 1997), impact pathway analysis (Douthwaite et al., 2003b), and programme theory-driven evaluation science (Donaldson, 2005) refers to a variety of ways of developing a causal modal linking programme inputs and activities to a chain of intended or observed outcomes, and then using this model to guide the evaluation.

C denotes a systematic visual way of presenting and sharing an understanding and perspective of the relationships among the resources available to operationalise a programme, planned activities and changes or desired results [47]. Many development commentators have advocated for the adoption and utilisation of the ToC. According to [4] and [43], ToC has received a great deal of attention in programme evaluation for over two decades, signifying its important role in the implementation of development interventions and to the poverty reduction agenda.

Figure 5.1 illustrates the thinking behind the ToC, demonstrating how a development intervention's inputs lead to executing activities and how these activities help to achieve the high-level results of outputs, outcomes and desired impacts. The main thrust of the ToC is the cause-effect relationship of development results (that is, inputs-activities-outputs-outcomes-impacts).

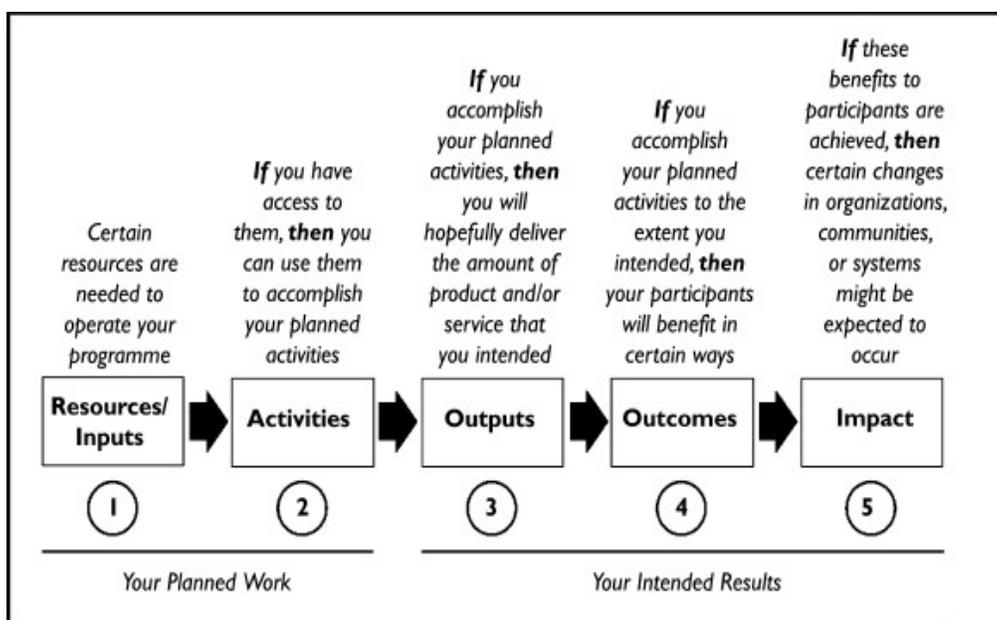


Figure 5.1. Basic representation of theory of change thinking
Source: Adapted from W.K. Kellogg Foundation, 2004, p.3

To understand the concept of ToC, it is perhaps important to appreciate the concept of the 'black box', which was popular before ToC became 'the buzz words' in M&E. For many years, black box theory was used to initiate, design, implement and evaluate development interventions such as projects, programmes and policies [33]. It did not concern itself fully with the understanding or clarification of the cause-effect relationship in development programming,

but the focus was on the resources or inputs required to undertake a development action. As described by [15], ‘the black box is a plan-of-work programming that assembles the inputs, delivers them, then proceeds to measure the outputs. Thus, if the black box represents the real world, we find ourselves on the outside, trying to look in. We stand outside the black box, delivering the “inputs” and expecting the “outputs”. We have no idea why the programme may be a success or failure; it all happens inside the black box.’ The main interest in the black box approach was to mobilise inputs or resources, deliver them, and expect immediate results. This was done without a deliberate well-conceived understanding of the interlinkages and causal relationships between inputs and the anticipated outputs. Because of the absence of linking aspects or elements that help achieve the intended development results, rethinking became inevitable. ToC was therefore a new way of looking at the efficient conceptualisation and achievement of development results, hence going beyond black box thinking.

Reference [34] regards ToC as an approach based on outcome-level results in which critical thinking is applied to designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating development initiatives. Worldwide, ToC is used by stakeholders such as multi-lateral and bilateral development agencies, civil society organisations, governments, international non-state actor organisations and research programmes to support development outcomes. Reference [37] adds that ToC refers to the process by which change comes about for an individual, organisation or a community, while [41] agree that a programme theory should ideally describe the hypothesised processes by which a programme can bring about change. For [47], a programme logic model represents a roadmap of programme highlights in terms of how it is expected to work and the required activities, including how desired outcomes and impact will be achieved. Thus far, the ToC has much to offer to development discourse. As long as there is full stakeholder participation when developing development interventions, ToC may guarantee shared planning and understanding of organisational and programme goals. In addition, rigorous testing of assumptions may be made in the process of planning, budgeting and implementing such deliverables, thereby improving accountability and learning functions [3, 21, 27, 38, 43, 49, 50 & 29].

TOC has been used for a long time by stakeholders to define their intended development interventions. Provided that a programme or any development intervention has been described in terms of the logic model, [6] and [9] assert that critical measures of performance can be identified and determined. A sequence of cause-and-effect relationships could effectively be illustrated using logic models, which represent a systems approach to communicating pathways to achieving desired development results. Furthermore, [35] and the International Network on Strategic Philanthropy (2005) simply sees the ToC as a clear explanation of how activities are perceived in terms of producing the intended higher-level outcomes and impacts for any given development effort.

This research study intends to demonstrate that monitoring and evaluation are important functions of good governance and that building stronger WoGM&ESs by governments becomes inevitable and a much-desired undertaking. That way, development decisions at all levels would be enhanced because they would be informed by timely and relevant information. The ToC is a helpful construct to conceptualise success by using a clear path-way to realising desired results and overall improved living standards of the people, especially the poor and marginalised majority.

Governments and development agencies often have ambitious goals, and so planning and implementing specific on-the-ground strategies to those goals is not an easy undertaking. In such instances, theories of change are vital to development programming and evaluation success for a number of reasons. To gain desired results, development programmes need to be grounded in good theory. Therefore, by developing a ToC based on good theory, managers and implementers can be better assured that their programmes are delivering the right activities for the desired outcomes. Thus, by creating a ToC, programmes are easier to sustain, bring to scale, and evaluate, since each step—from the ideas behind it, to the outcomes it hopes to provide, to the resources needed—are clearly defined within the theory. Figure 5.2 below shows a flow of how different results for a development programme can be achieved—desired vision can be attained through putting in place appropriate inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact.

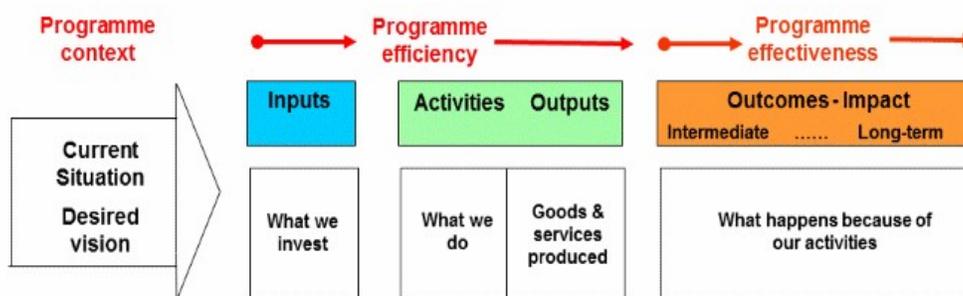
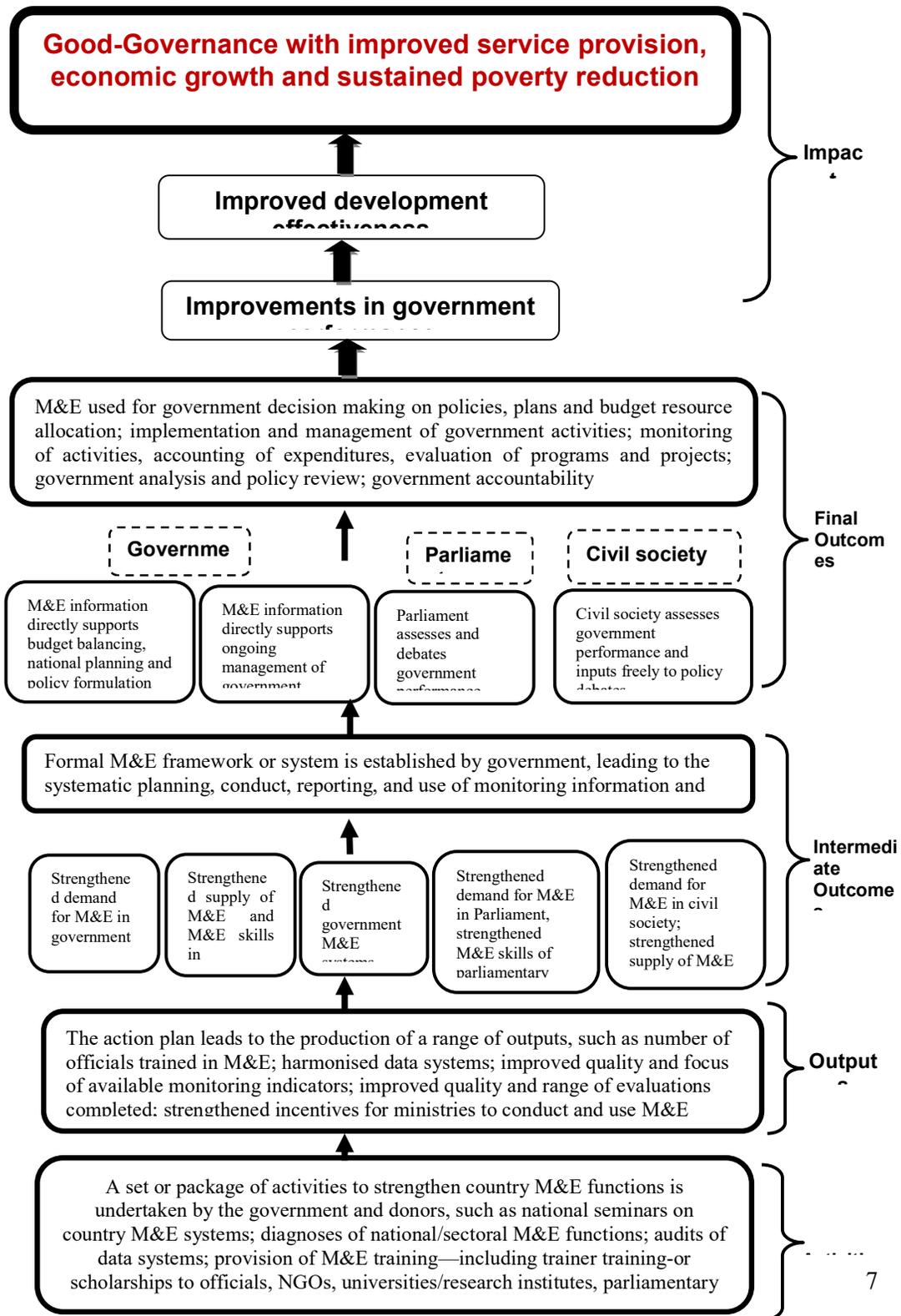


Figure 5. 2. Theory of change depicting the flow of different levels of results
Source: <http://learningforsustainability.net/theory-of-change/>

In addition, Figure 5.3 below provides another illustration of the ToC for building a national-level M&E system that is meant to contribute to poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Figure 5.3. Theory of change for building a whole-of-government M&E system
Adapted from Mackay, 2007, p. 76



M&E systems are not only directly related to, but are important determining elements in the poverty reduction agendas of successful countries. The cause-effect relationship is a strategic theoretical way of appreciating long-term results from the planning point of view. Figure 5.3 demonstrates that a country's M&E system should be able to capture data and information from all activities of government interventions to impact level. However, the M&E system should be a public system that allows non-governmental actors such as the civil society, academia and donors to take an active part in analysing government operations and utilising M&E information. Other key arms of governance such as parliament should be strongly linked to the M&E system in utilising the M&E information.

M&E systems fulfil an important function in the good governance agenda of aid-dependent developing countries, especially in their bid to reduce poverty for citizens. Reference [25] and [16] assert that M&E can provide unique information about government performance of projects, programmes and policies. Because M&E provides performance information of donors that support the work of governments, it assists in identifying what works and what does not work, and in making us understand the reasons. Thus, ToC becomes a crucial and appropriate theoretical phenomenon for providing a pathway to the attainment of development results through stronger country and organisational systems for M&E.

5.2. Results-Based Management

The evolution of the Results Based Management (RBM) approach from the 1990s onwards seemingly contributed to the effective and efficient delivery of goods and services by public sector and other development agencies. Today, the RBM approach is being used widely in the developed and less developed countries (LDCs) as a practically oriented management approach, including results frameworks or logic models, results-based strategic planning, risk management, results-focused budgeting, and results-based M&E [30-32]. In line with the ToC, the concept of RBM is based on the cause-and-effect relationships in which inputs and activities of an intervention lead logically to higher orders of results. In this context, development results entail well-sequenced and time-bound changes connected to a series of management phases in the programming cycle for a development policy, project or programme [25]. The main emphasis of RBM is the realisation of higher-level outcomes that are meant to improve the wellbeing of people. In other words, RBM is concerned with how accountable development interventions and their programming are in attaining desired medium and long-term results [54, 17 & 30-32]. RBM represents a management strategy that is characterised by clear and distinctive framework and tools for organisational strategic planning, performance monitoring and evaluation, risk management meant to measure and attain significant changes in the way development agencies operate [11]. The main purposes of RBM include the fulfilment of accountability obligations through performance reporting and improving the organisational learning function [25, 28, 53 & 30].

RBM is a management strategy that is used widely by private, public and non-profit making organisations around the world. For instance, as a result of the popularity and positive gains anticipated from M&E systems, several international initiatives have sprung up to enforce the implementation of the RBM approach. Such initiatives as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their successor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) Initiative under the Poverty Reduction Strategy approach spearheaded by the World Bank and IMF, Paris Declaration (PD), World Trade Organization (WTO) membership, International Development Association (IDA) funding, European Union Structural Funds and

Transparency International, European Union (EU) enlargement and accession have embraced M&E [55]. These provide strong backing for functional M&E systems. In fact, the MDGs were pioneers in adopting the most ambitious global initiative of using a results-based approach to poverty reduction and improving people's living standards [10]. At best, therefore, RBM emphasises the performance of a development intervention and results. It is holistic and futuristic in practice and intent in that it endeavours to provide current evidence and future information about development interventions under implementation [44-45; 57].

Thus, RBM is a tool that is implementable through the development and usage of functional M&E systems. These systems are meant to enable governments to plan and meet the aspirations of their citizens and other stakeholders in terms of results such as improvements in human development and economic growth. Therefore, in view of implementing a results-based management system for better governance, a country or institution may build and sustain functional M&E systems by strengthening existing ones or building new ones.

In addition to defining and describing the concept of RBM, linking RBM to the functions of M&E is an important aspect. Thus, the linkages between RBM and M&E are inevitably stronger. M&E refers to the systematic collection of performance information pertaining to a given intervention against stated desired objectives [31]. Consequently, such information is then used as input in internal and external organisational management decision- and policy-making processes for purposes of improvement. To that extent, M&E offers strong operational models, frameworks and tools that are useful for measuring performance, which ultimately and comprehensively leads to increased effectiveness and efficiency in the implementation of development interventions [2, 7, 36 & 52]. Hence, it can be observed that the two notions of M&E and RBM resonate, despite the practical challenge of a seemingly chicken-and-egg dilemma relationship, which tends to exist between the concepts. Reference [40], in affirming this view, assert that RBM represents a strategy for enhancing the M&E function and its culture, particularly in the context of strengthening a country's WoGM&ES, while the activities of M&E could effectively assist in realising the objectives pursuable under RBM.

More precisely, M&E has been increasingly adopted to assess the achievement of development results since the 1990s. This was the period in which RBM approaches came into wider use by public institutions and international development agencies. In the same period, the RBM approach became predominant. Thus, the application of M&E could have brought about the emergence and popularisation of the RBM approach among development agencies, including governments [16 & 40].

Therefore, the relationship between RBM and M&E is intrinsic and the two are a fundamental way of achieving great development results. In that sense, it is crucial to ensure that M&E is pursued within the broader context of RBM, and vice versa, and that practitioners and learners of both take this important relationship into account. The conceptualisation of success in development management in the context of RBM and M&E is significant, thus, building and sustaining stronger M&E systems is essential for all development implementers.

¹The chicken or the egg causality dilemma is commonly stated as 'which came first: the chicken or the egg?' The dilemma stems from the observation that all chickens hatch from eggs and all chicken eggs are laid by chickens. 'Chicken-and-egg' therefore is a metaphoric adjective describing situations where it is not clear which of the two events should be considered the cause and which one is the effect.

5.3. Managing for Development Results

Managing for development results (MfDRs) is another concept that has become common among practitioners of M&E around the globe. Like the ToC and RBM approach, MfDRs has become a widely adopted and practised paradigm among public sector and non-state development actors. Like the RBM approach, MfDRs is understood broadly as a management strategy whose emphasis is the achievement of development results at all levels of an intervention. The approach uses performance information to support enhanced decision-making processes through the utilisation of technical tools for strategic planning, progress monitoring, outcome evaluation and risk management [1]. At the core of the MfDRs strategy is the concrete and continuous utilisation of evidence to inform all phases of development processes. Typically, the approach involves shared tenets of good governance, which include objective setting, transparency, evidence-based decision making, and constant adaptation and improvement [53 & 30-31].

The utilisation of results in informing development processes is the central focus of the MfDRs strategy. This is so because governments and other development agencies usually find themselves undertaking efforts to alleviate poverty without using evidence generated from systems of monitoring and evaluation or indeed any accountability feedback. In that regard, the MfDR strategy puts an emphasis on the acquisition of evidence by those in charge of public policy and decision making and directly utilise such information for development purposes. The strategy contends that in the midst of scarce resources in the custody of development agencies, including governments, it is incumbent upon public managers and agencies to seek and use evidence for planning and designing development interventions. Table 5.1 below illustrates the significance and historical evolution of MfDRs as a good governance strategy for effective development management towards poverty reduction.

Table 5.1. Managing for development results – a historical perspective

At the **International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico (2002)**, the international community agreed that it would be important to provide more financing for development – but more money alone was not enough. Donors and partner countries alike wanted to know that aid would be used as effectively as possible, and they wanted to be able to see that it was, in fact, making a difference. This threw into sharp relief the need to measure results throughout the development process, and the need to demonstrate that results were achieved. Soon afterward, the World Bank convened an **International Roundtable on Measuring, Monitoring, and Managing for Results (2002)**, at which development practitioners grappled with concepts, approaches, and practical issues related to getting development results.

At the **Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, in Marrakech, Morocco (2004)**, more than 60 representatives of partner countries met with representatives of bilateral and multilateral development agencies to discuss the challenges of managing for development results (MfDRs). Participants endorsed a set of core principles on how best to support partner countries' efforts to manage for results, and agreed on a costed and time-bound action plan for improving national and international statistics – without which baselines cannot be established and progress cannot be measured.

At the **Paris High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (2005)**, 60 partner countries and 60 donor agencies endorsed the Paris Declaration, committing to specific action to further country ownership, harmonisation, alignment, managing for development results, and mutual accountability for the use of aid.

In 2007, the **Third Roundtable on Managing for Development Results in Hanoi, Vietnam**, focused on country-to-country learning. Representatives from 45 countries, 32 development agencies, and 30 civil society and private sector partners shared experiences and charted a course for continuing efforts.

In 2008 the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness took place in Accra with the participation of about 1,700 participants, including more than 100 ministries and heads of agencies from developing and

donor countries, emerging economies, UN and multilateral institutions, global funds, foundations, and 80 civil society organisations. The high-level engagement at Accra helped bring about the **Accra Agenda for Action** which expressed the international community's commitment to further increase aid effectiveness.
Busan HLF

Source: Managing for Development Results, 2017
(Online: <http://www.MfDRs.org/Sourcebook.html>)

The historical perspective in Table 5.1 shows how MfDRs as a concept has emerged over the years and how it has led to the transformation of the global development agenda. Furthermore, there has been an evolution at global level of the adoption and utilisation of the MfDRs approach by development agencies and governments in their efforts to lower poverty levels, attain equitable and sustainable economic growth, and improve the definition and measurement of development results. In its broader scope, development effectiveness refers to countries and agencies being able to meet their collective development outcomes using the right tools to measure progress towards desired results, report on them, and improve performance by continuously using the lessons learned [18, 25 & 30]. MfDRs, like related concepts such as the RBM and LFA, is focused on the achievement of development results. Since the Monterrey2 Conference of 2002, there has been a focus on managing the work of the development community (which comprises partner countries and donors) to achieve the maximum development results. Thus, although there were efforts before 2002, the new era of a shared and strengthened understanding concerning the need to think about results and ways to sustainably realise them from the beginning to the end of an intervention has become the emphasis. However, this demands regular monitoring of progress in order to continue shaping the effort so that the expected results were achieved as planned [17, 25, 28 & 54].

In 2004 at the Second Round Table Meeting on Managing for Results, principles for the MfDRs were agreed by development stakeholders. MfDRs has stipulated principles that guide its practice and these include aligned programming results-based M&E; keeping simplified measurement and reporting; managing for results, not managing by results; and learning and decision making using information from results [39 & 24].

Reference [30-32] and [20] add that although in the current understanding, RBM is synonymous with MfDRs, accountability has been the only core focus of some approaches to RBM. Instead, MfDRs departs from this basic undertaking by incorporating newer and more innovative ideas about country ownership, harmonisation, collaboration, partnership, and alignment. In addition, MfDRs focuses continuously on country outcome performance, which is a higher management standard than giving prominence to short-term results only. Table 5.2 shows the three core focus areas for MfDRs.

² The Monterrey Consensus was the outcome of the 2002, United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, Mexico. It was adopted by heads of state and government on 22 March 2002. Over fifty heads of state and two hundred ministers of finance, foreign affairs, development and trade participated in the event. Governments were joined by the heads of the United Nations, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO), prominent business and civil society leaders and other stakeholders.

Table 5.2. Core areas for Managing for Development Results

Areas of Action

In the global community, action on MfDRs is taking place in three broad areas:

1. Strengthening Country Capacity to Manage for Results. The quest for development results begins with developing countries, which must manage their development processes to achieve the outcomes they want. They need to define the results they want to attain and – working in partnership with development agencies, civil society, and other stakeholders – design policies and programmes to achieve those results. Countries need information on which to base this work, and statistical capacity and monitoring and evaluation systems to generate the information. The role of development agencies is to support developing countries in strengthening their capacity to manage for development results

2. Improving the Relevance and Effectiveness of Aid. For most development agencies, managing for development results means going beyond their traditional focus on input delivery and output quality to focus on the achievement of outcomes – that is, a more explicit consideration of the contribution that an agency makes to country results. To this end, agencies are introducing results frameworks into their cooperation strategies and programmes, shifting their internal incentives to focus on sustainable country results, and developing reporting systems on results

3. Fostering a Global Partnership. Some of the greatest challenges in managing for development results can be best addressed through a global partnership – for example, a global effort is needed to support countries in generating reliable and timely data to assess progress on the Millennium Development Goals and other country goals; to strengthen international reporting mechanisms; and reduce the burden on countries of multiple, agency-driven reporting requirements and monitoring and evaluation systems. Through partnership, the international community can make it easier for developing countries to manage for results

Source: Managing for Development Results

(Online at: <http://www.MfDRs.org/Sourcebook.html>)

The information in Table 5.2 illustrates how the MfDRs approach has emerged as a centrepiece of efforts at global level to improve public management. At best, MfDRs is broadly considered an example of best practice in development management. Unequivocally, in an attempt to achieve desired development results, MfDRs focuses on improving all financial, technological, human, and natural resources, internal and external. In that regard, it becomes inevitable to view MfDRs not only as a methodology, but as a way of thinking and acting, built and linked on a practically oriented toolbox for enhanced public management [31 & 32].

Therefore, to achieve success, it is crucial to invest in the development and nurture of a ‘performance culture’ that could be attained operationally through full implementation of the MfDRs approach. Nevertheless, this kind of development achievement can come effectively by creating incentivising results-focused management systems and internal preconditions through targeted human resource and organisational development [1]. However, capacity development alone would not be enough, thus requiring a stronger and sustained leadership and political buy-in, of which both are essential ingredients in pursuing the fuller benefits of institutionalising a MfDRs approach. Consequently, the role of leadership remains central to constantly clarifying the essential organisational objectives and functions through setting the development course. Additionally, a visionary leadership provides a clear model of operation and works to inculcate

a transformational development agenda at individual and institutional levels pursuant to a results orientation. In that regard, sound leadership develops and seeks to sustain an incentive structure that assists in realising a change in institutional and cultural conduct [28]. Further, [11] affirmed that the MfDRs approach is essential in that it represents an essential shift in such key aspects as policy process, predominantly in the nature of thinking, acting and overall management in the wider scope of the public sector. In the absence of prudent public management approaches like MfDRs, governments will tend to perform poorly in good governance tenets of accountability, transparency and reward mechanisms.

Therefore, MfDRs denotes a strategy for prudent management and measurement of development performance, and emphasises sustainable improvements in country-specific and organisational results. In that context, a result is a describable or measurable development change emanating from a cause and effect relationship [31]. According to [53] and [25], MfDRs contributes to processes of policy- and decision-making improvement by making available evidence-based information on results. This is achieved through a range of tools and techniques, which include strategic planning, progress monitoring, risk management, and outcome evaluation. To a large extent, MfDRs is aimed at holding development actors such as governments, international agencies and individuals accountable for delivering desired results to the citizens they serve. Therefore, country systems are required to promote the managing for results agenda in order to have an improved and sustainable country development results [30-32].

MfDRs has recently evolved to incorporate a range of policy issues, including country ownership, harmonisation and alignment of donor efforts, international goals and standards, accountability for development results, and the participation of civil society and other interest groups [43 & 17]. Therefore, advocates of good governance see this approach as a way for governments to be accountable to their own citizens and to donors. Further, as can be seen in Figure 5.4, MfDRs ensures that all development efforts must be informed from inception by the end result. Such a long-term planning horizon is useful in allocating all forms of resources and efforts in a focused and meaningful way.

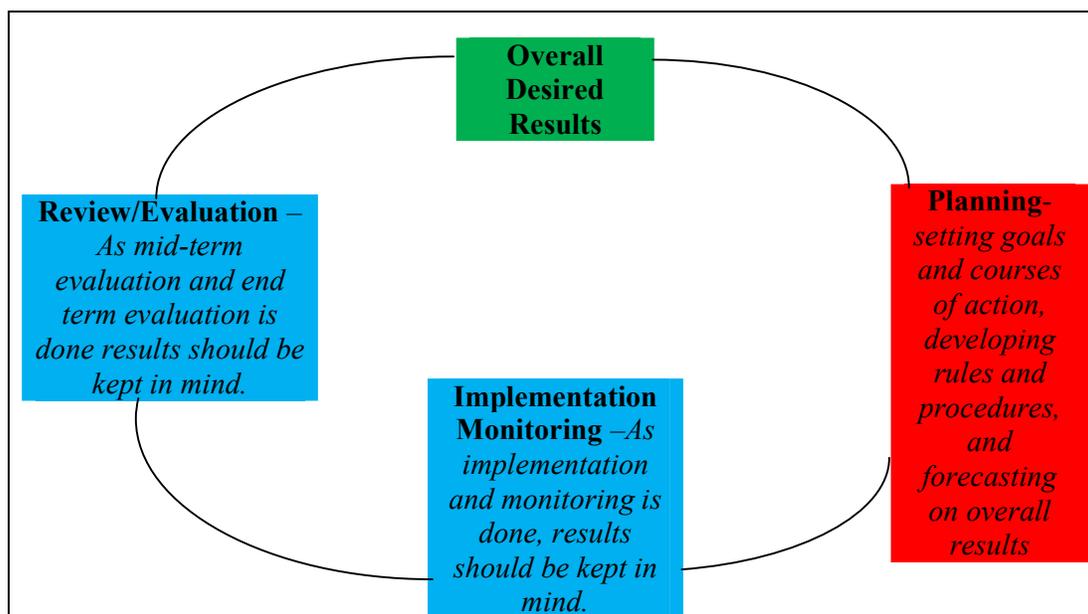


Figure 5.4. Managing for Development Results cycle: importance of results at all levels

MfDRs interrogates a number of critical development aspects and these assist in achieving results. Information flow, mainly in terms of its supply and demand, is a central aspect of the MfDRs approach. In particular, the capacity of a country to provide credible and well-analysed statistical data and information, and ultimately how these are put to use by users, becomes pertinent to success [12 & 23].

The linkages between MfDRs and M&E can be demonstrated in a number of ways. Like ToC, RBM and LFA, MfDRs is premised on the elements of a results chain, namely the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts, as illustrated in Table 5.3. It is also upon these elements that M&E is conducted properly and thus the linkages between MfDRs and M&E could be easily appreciated.

Table 5.3. Linking monitoring and evaluation and managing for development results

How should this be implemented?		What should be produced?	What outcomes do we expect from this investment? (How are outputs used?)		Why should we do this?
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-term outcomes	Medium-term outcomes	Long-term impacts

Source: Adapted by author, 2017
(Online at: <http://www.mfdr.org/Sourcebook.html>)

The linkages between MfDRs and M&E are critical in many ways, and are self-reinforcing. While M&E provides useful techniques, tools, methodology, data and information to achieve the desired results under MfDRs, the results of the MfDRs approach become a significant feedback for strengthening and undertaking M&E exercises successfully [25 & 54].

M&E offers a strong foundation for anchoring performance measurement tools and models, which ultimately contribute to increased effectiveness in the development and management of interventions [5]. For instance, since the 1990s, M&E has become the most used way of assessing the achievement of results. This was at a time that approaches for results-based management (RBM) came into wider utilisation in country-level public institutions and international development agencies. This evolution of adopting and using results-based M&E continues today and is a major component of the MfDRs toolbox, helping governments and agencies to systematically measure project and programme outcomes [12]. In that regard, M&E is viewed as an important component in helping achieve the objectives of MfDRs.

To practically embrace and institutionalise MfDRs as a results-oriented and management strategy, leaders of development institutions and governments should propagate and promote the agenda. At the same time, leaders are supposed to develop transformational systems of M&E, which provide relevant information for other development processes. Reference [22] and [13] caution that a lot of challenges are faced by national leaders in putting in place stronger M&E systems under the broader MfDRs reform agenda. Instead of focusing on the utilisation of lower-level traditional process results of inputs, activities and outputs, it is important for agencies of development to have a long-term horizon of desired development results [25 & 53].

5.4. Logical framework approach

In addition to the theoretical understanding of the efforts that contribute to clarifying the practice and meaningfulness of M&E in the development discourse, the Logical Framework Approach (LFA) is a key management tool. Simply put, an LFA is a technical management technique that comprehensively summarises significant information associated with given development interventions. In other words, it is a matrix or simply a table covering such categories as inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts (that is, objectives); indicators (or objectively verifiable indicators); and the means of verification; and assumptions/risks (Coleman, 1987). According to [52], LFA is practised by many organisations in project planning and management.

Further, [52] asserts that the evolution of the LFA is traceable to the 1970s. Since then it has been utilised widely by managers in processes such as planning, budgeting and management of development interventions. Other attributions state that it originated from the US military planning approach. Reference [26] explain that before being adopted and used by USAID for development projects over fifty years ago, the LFA was adapted for the US space agency NASA. Logical frameworks are thus widely used to strengthen the internal logic of activity design, implementation and evaluation. In other words, a logical framework matrix (often simply called the 'logframe') serves to translate this broader LFA theoretical understanding into action, and as a document forms the basis of an actionable work plan to guide implementation through the project or programme lifecycle. In that regard, the LFA becomes a critical management tool upon which M&E could be premised.

Through a thorough LFA, once a project has been described in terms of the logic model, critical measures of performance can be identified. The logframe thus assists directly in establishing the development pathway by which:

- ❖ Objectives will be reached
- ❖ The potential risks to achieving the objectives are identified
- ❖ The ways in which outputs and outcomes might best be monitored and evaluated are established
- ❖ A summary of the activity is presented in a standard format, and
- ❖ Suggestions are made for M&E activities during implementation

In addition, a logical framework could be understood as a set of concepts that are interlinked and used conjointly to elaborate a well-conceived project or programme, described in terms of objectives and from which it will then be possible to evaluate the results [54, 26 & 51]. According to [7], an LFA was described by its developers as ‘a set of interlocking concepts which must be used together in a dynamic fashion to permit the elaboration of a well-designed, objectively described and evaluable project’. Further, the International Finance Corporation, Germany Technical Cooperation and Department for International Development state that the LFA is a management tool that identifies strategic elements of inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impact [14]. These elements are regarded as having causal relationships with indicators and assumptions or risks that may influence success and trigger failure of an intervention. The LFA therefore facilitates the key processes of effective planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects. Therefore, the LFA can be considered a tool that supports RBM in systematically managing projects and programmes and by focusing on high-level results. Further, the LFA not only logically establishes project objectives and defines their cause-effect relationships, it also fundamentally describes external factors that influence success, namely assumptions and risks that require critical attention to safeguard the smooth implementation of development interventions. Thus, through the identification of performance indicators that help determine the status of implementation and progress for a given intervention, the LFA can effectively be attributed to supporting the enhancement of regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E). Table 5.4 illustrates an LFA by showing the linkages and interlinkages of key concepts.

Table 5.4. Elements of logical framework approach

Narrative summary of objectives	Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI)	Means of verification (MoV)	Critical Assumptions/risks
Overall objective (Impact) WHY?	WHAT AND WHEN DO WE MEASURE?	HOW, WHERE, AND BY WHOM?	(Specific objective Overall Objective)
Specific objectives (Outcomes) WHY?	WHAT AND WHEN DO WE MEASURE?	HOW, WHERE, AND BY WHOM?	(Outputs Specific objectives)
Outputs WHAT?	WHAT AND WHEN DO WE MEASURE?	HOW, WHERE, AND BY WHOM?	(Inputs outputs)
Inputs/Activities WHO & HOW?	HOW MANY or HOW MUCH?	HOW, WHERE, AND BY WHOM?	PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS

Source: Adapted by author from Coleman, 1987

Further, the simplicity of the logical framework seems to be deceptive. On the one hand, a logframe can be described as a 4 x 4 matrix, characterised by rows representing the levels of project objectives, including the means necessary for their achievement (that is, the vertical logic). On the other hand, it has columns that indicate how the achievement of these various objectives could effectively be verified (that is, horizontal logic).

5.4.1. Vertical logic

Vertical logic refers to the factors that a stated project intends to achieve. This is done by clarifying relationships between project means and ends. The causal relationships are made in the context of uncertainties that concern the project itself and associated environmental factors such as social, physical and political. Much of the work is embedded in the process of ensuring that all concepts in the logframe are considered holistically to give the kind of vertical logical explanation that is expected. These vertical linkages and explanations would include checking the hierarchy of project objectives, the causal linkages across the hierarchy and whether the important assumptions have been taken into account. The vertical logic includes these elements, as shown in Table 5.5:

Table 5.5. Elements of vertical logic

Objective/element	Description
Goal	The reason for undertaking the project: the ultimate objective of the programme to which the specific project will contribute
Impact	The broader and high-level result of a programme over a longer term. Are people's lives improved? Is public health improved as a result of the intervention (e.g. the availability of drugs to combat HIV/AIDS? Is asthma reduced as result of the drop in carbon emissions in a country (or in a particular region/city)?
Purpose/Outcome	What the project is expected to achieve in development terms once it is completed within the allocated time. What behavioural changes have occurred in the population as a result of the intervention?
Output	The physical outputs produced by the development intervention (the kilometres of all-weather paved roads built, the number of power plants constructed, the number of health clinics built and quantities of medicines distributed)
Activity	The activities to be undertaken and the resources available to produce the outputs
Input	The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention (amount of dollars, the number of teaching staff, the number of textbooks delivered to schools).

Source: Adapted from Coleman (1987) and World Bank (1997)

5.4.2. Horizontal logic

The primary significance of horizontal logic is to provide some measurement of resources and results of development interventions. These measurements are done using what are known as objectively verifiable indicators (OVIs) together with the means of verification (MoV). Horizontal logic provides details about results to be obtained at each of the higher levels of the hierarchy of objectives, namely the output, outcome and impact. Table 5.6 provides a description of the elements for the horizontal logic:

Table 5.6. Elements of horizontal logic

Element	Description
Objectively verifiable indicators	These are referred to as OVI and represent a set of criteria that indicate in concrete terms that the expected results have been achieved. Their content adds precision to the statement of intent given in the narrative summary. For each level of the vertical logic there is a set of OVIs that are appropriate to the objectives at that level and constitute proof of achievement at that level
Means of verification	Means of verification (MOV) ensure that the previously defined OVI can be measured effectively. They confirm that the indicators are realistic, since they specify how the indicators can be verified. MoV are the sources of information
Important assumptions or risks	The important assumptions concern conditions that could affect the progress or success of the project, but over which the project manager has no control. This lack of control may arise from many sources. One of the most important is that projects take place in a natural environment (rather than in a laboratory where 'external' elements can be controlled) and are therefore subject to natural variations

Source: Adapted from Coleman (1987, p. 256)

LFA does not comprise an integrated set of procedures or guidelines for evaluating a particular form of project. Instead, it focuses on providing a clear structure for project planners and evaluators to specify the components of their activities and to help in identifying logical linkages between sets of means and corresponding ends [8]. For that reason, it is imperative to view the LFA as a mechanism that supports logical thinking and as a means through which a project may be structured and described for analytical purposes [8 & 52].

The relationship and linkages between the LFA and the concept and practice of M&E are clear and sustainable. At best, the LFA could be understood as functionality within the broader practice of M&E. In that event, M&E becomes the overall platform under which one may design and fully implement the LFA. In that case, the logframe becomes a technique that is useful in actualising the results clarified in an M&E framework. M&E focuses on the attainment of results using a clear pathway informed by evidence. Through that, the LFA assists in making this important development aspiration a reality, and practitioners and implementers of interventions for development pursue the LFA seriously. Hence, the logframe matrix summarises key information that feeds into M&E processes:

- ❖ What the project should achieve, from the level of an overall goal to specific activities
- ❖ The performance questions and indicators that are used to monitor progress and overall achievement
- ❖ How these indicators are monitored or where the data can be found
- ❖ The assumptions behind the logic of the way in which activities will contribute to the goal, plus associated risks for the project if assumptions are incorrect

LFA deals with seven key questions: Why? What? To whom? How? Who? When? How much? [52].

6. CONCLUSION

Who said monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is not rooted on firm theoretical foundation? To answer this question, four (4) constructs were discussed with the intention of demonstrating and anchoring M&E on a solid theoretical foundation. The paper aimed at articulating that M&E

notions were not abstract and arbitrary concepts that agencies of development around the globe were pursuing, but were well founded and grounded in sound theoretical perspectives. The theory of change (ToC), results-based management (RBM), managing for development results (MfDRs) and logical framework approach (LFA) were identified as appropriate theoretical constructs to anchor M&E and were the basis for building and strengthening M&E systems for countries and development organisations. Collectively, these theoretical concepts were articulated to bring home the point that when well developed and sustained, stronger M&E systems would predominantly assist nations and agencies of development to achieve the much-desired higher level results.

Finally, the paper established that M&E had a longer historical perspective, embedded in theory and practice, and would provide a rare opportunity to development actors nationally and globally to generate information useful to improving processes such as decision and policy making. Through consulting various materials on M&E and generally from development practice, it has been established that indeed, M&E is anchored on sound theoretical foundations and that advocates and practitioners of M&E should discharge their mandate prudently and ethically. Equally, stakeholders also should use information from M&E processes and systems to inform their decisions in all development spheres particularly in policy-making, planning, budgeting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to provide more insight and understanding of the importance and use of information from M&E, it is critical that development stakeholders appreciate that such data and information are credible, reliable and valid since they are products of a scientific process and anchored on sound theoretical basis. Further, there is need to ensure that M&E practitioners, researchers as well as all development actors to develop stronger M&E systems and inculcate a culture of results within their organisations and countries. In doing so, the following will be important:

- ❖ There is need for political and technical champions in every organisation—government, presidency, private sector, civil society organisations, donors, parliaments, citizens, etc. Political economies and political party manifestos to adhere to M&E theories when articulating development alternatives to electorates, for instance.
- ❖ Anchor organisational strategic plans, national development plans, policies and institutional M&E plans on theoretical foundations.
- ❖ Every development intervention (i.e. programme, project or policy) to have a well-developed and elaborated theory of change. This will enhance the conduct of M&E function in those organisations.
- ❖ Legal and structural reforms in support of M&E are needed at country and institutional level to anchor the practice of M&E on concrete national constitutionalism and laws.
- ❖ Organisational and government visions and missions to be developed and pursued based on theories of M&E.
- ❖ Research studies to further knowledge on different aspects of M&E practice will need to explore and clarify theoretical implications to sound M&E building and strengthening.

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