

CHAPTER ONE

PERSPECTIVES ON THE NEED FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

Africa is a continent with great potential for developing and realising the human capability in all spheres of life. However, this potential remains a dream that is never realised in one regime after another in most African countries. While this book and its scholarly essays represent yet another contribution to perspectives on unravelling the complex nature of the challenges facing Africa, its contribution is limited to the area of performance monitoring and evaluation, a subject that emerged from the developmental and policy implementation challenges facing Africa and the world. These challenges are more pronounced and evident in Africa, as if Africa is carrying the world's problems on its shoulders. This chapter introduces the book by providing an overview of these challenges and outlines the need for performance monitoring and evaluation. It also provides a summary of the next twelve chapters.

OVERVIEW OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

Africa is home to 54 states. The African population in these states is estimated to be 1.5 billion, while the world population is approximately 8 billion. Africa's population constitutes 18% of the world's population with Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia the most populated African countries. It is estimated that Africa's population has 51 people in every square kilometre. Nigeria is the only African country that featured in the top ten most populous countries of the world in 2024. India, China, the United States of America, Indonesia and Pakistan are ahead of Nigeria (Worldometer, 2024; United States Census Bureau, 2024). While India, China and the United States were able to leverage the demographic dividend for development, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Ethiopia have not succeeded in reaping the benefits of development of the higher population density.

It is projected that the African population will double by 2050. This growth will occur on a continent whose resources and economic growth are lacklustre. Of the 46 least developed economies, 33 are found in Africa; 10 to 12 million African youth enter a labour market that can only absorb 3 million,

leaving the majority of the youth either unemployed or underemployed. Approximately 40% of Africa's population is made up of children below the age of 15 (Children International, 2024). These children face a bleak future if African countries cannot unlock their developmental prospects.

The advent of Covid-19 in 2020 pushed 30 million more Africans into extreme poverty, which denotes people living below US\$1.90 per day. However, poverty levels were no better before Covid-19, when 445 million Africans or an equivalent of 34% lived in abject poverty nine times the global average level. There are, however, signs of inequality in levels of poverty in Africa. North African states were able to contain their levels below 3% as early as 2019, while Sub-Saharan Africa seems to be the hardest hit. Central, southern, western and eastern Africa poverty levels are 54.8%, 45.1%, 36.8% and 33.8% respectively. South Sudan is the poorest country with poverty levels estimated at 80%, followed by the Central African Republic and Democratic Republic of the Congo with poverty levels that are above 70%. In 1990, poverty levels in Lesotho, Nigeria, Madagascar and Zambia were similar to those of China, Vietnam and Indonesia (McLachlan & Aikins, 2022). China, Vietnam and Indonesia moved from poverty levels of 70% to 0.1%, 1.0% and 19% respectively. In stark contrast, the poverty levels of Lesotho, Nigeria and Zambia have lowered to 32.4%, 30.9%, 63.9% and 60% respectively (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2024). This shows that the lowering of poverty is slower in Africa in comparison to other parts of the world.

Poverty is a reality and can deepen in Africa if its causes are not identified and aggressively countered with programmes that are targeted at its reduction. Wars and instability on the African continent are a major cause of poverty. The rapid population growth without equal economic growth is another cause of poverty. Climate change has exacerbated these existing causes of poverty that the African continent has been battling with for decades. Disease is also intricately linked to poverty and is either its cause or result (SOS Children Villages, 2024). In addition to poverty, Zanli, Gbossou, Tang, Komoto and Chen (2022) identify soil erosion, energy shortages and environmental pollution as some of the major challenges facing Africa.

Globally, life expectancy decreased by 1.6 years between 2019 and 2021 mainly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In Africa, significant decreases were identified in subnational locations such as KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo Provinces in South Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa, a major contributor to the proportion of under five-year-old deaths, is responsible for 56.3% of deaths, followed by South Asia with 25.3%, Southeast Asia, East Asia and Oceania with 7.6% and North Africa and the Middle East with 5.2% (Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2024).

Cilliers (2022) believes that good governance is a prerequisite for development in Africa. Most African countries are known for poor governance, which Cilliers sees as a consequence of poor politics and policies. On the occasion of Africa Day held with West African academics and students at Lansana University in Conakry, Guinea, Mbeki (2023) asked two critical questions that Africans need to answer if they want real change: who are we and what is the New Africa we want? While these questions must be answered by all Africans, politicians must take the lead in shaping Africa's future by creating stability and conditions that can stimulate development. Equally important for the new Africa to emerge, the African electorate must be educated and take responsibility for electing leaders that can bring lasting change to countries where democracy exists. Similarly, the African Union and other subregional organisations need to be vocal and to ostracise politicians who are corrupt, rig elections or gain power through devious means.

Some countries on the continent seems to be moving backwards mainly due to a leadership crisis. The saying 'the people shall govern and not the elites' needs to find practical expression in Africa. The masses should be educated about the need for a new Africa. According to Mbeki (2023), The quality of parties in power in Africa has weakened over time. Oleribe et al. (2019) concur with Mbeki that poor leadership and management are the main reasons for Africa's backwardness. Developing a new cadre

of visionary servant leaders and succession planning needs to be given special attention if the continent's great development potential is to be realised in the foreseeable future.

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation has published the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) since 2007. The index examines the performance of the 54 African states over a ten year period. The IIAG assessment is based on four categories, security and rule of law; participation rights and inclusion; foundations for economic opportunity; and human development. A score out of 100, rates the performance of African countries at 49.3. This is an improvement of 1.0 from 48.3 in 2014. The top 10 performing African countries are Seychelles, Mauritius, Cabo Verde, South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Ghana, Morocco, Tunisia and Kenya. In the sub-category of public administration, Africa scores an average of 51.3 with Rwanda being the best in public administration.

However, the scourge of corruption continues to militate against all efforts to improve development in African countries. Transparency International has consistently published statistics regarding perceptions of corruption in different countries around the world. Their survey assesses each country out of 100. In Africa, five countries score above 50. These are in their descending order, Seychelles (71), Cabo Verde (64), Botswana (59), Rwanda (53) and Mauritius (51). Tanzania and Cote d'Ivoire presented signs of improvement by 10 and 8 points respectively. In the survey, Sub-Saharan Africa is represented by 49 countries that score an average of 33. North Africa is clustered with the Middle East. Of the African countries surveyed, 90% scored below 50. While this score is better than 95% of eastern and central Asian countries that scored below 50, it is still not a consolation, given the magnitude of developmental challenges facing the African continent.

African countries scoring the least are Libya (18), Equatorial Guinea (17), South Sudan (13) and Somalia (11), which scores the least globally (Transparency International, 2024). The lower scores attained by Libya, Equatorial Guinea, South Sudan and Somalia, countries where conflict persists, underscore the importance of stability for good governance and development to take place. Fragile states need to be assisted to develop effective systems before they destabilise their neighbours and regions.

THE NEED FOR PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND EVALUATION

African governments have historically approved and will in future approve policies that are meant to improve the livelihoods of the African populace in various countries. In addition to the political will alluded to in the previous section, technical knowledge of performance monitoring and evaluation deserves attention in Africa. Challenges highlighted in the previous section reveal Africa to be a continent that is in dire need of effective systems of monitoring and evaluation. This section of the chapter outlines these needs. Reasons advanced for the design, implementation and regular improvement of performance monitoring and evaluation systems include improved decision-making, allocation and sparing use of resources, early detection of implementation challenges, documenting and communication of messages, learning and performance improvement, and transparency and accountability.

Improved decision-making

Good decisions are a foundation of good governance. The converse is also true. A series of bad decisions at political and administrative levels of government can lead to bad governance, stagnation in development and, in worst case scenarios, regression. Data generated from performance monitoring and evaluation should form the basis of credible decisions. Decisions are as good as the data they are based on hence Raimondo (2016) advises that data must be of high quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated. It is for this reason that performance monitoring data must be quality assured and audited.