

# CHAPTER TWO

## **AN EXPLORATIVE DISCOURSE ON THE PERFORMANCE VALUE OF INDIGENOUSLY RESPONSIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION FOR IMPROVED SERVICE DELIVERY: SNAPSHOTS FROM SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

Isioma ILE

### ***INTRODUCTION***

There is mounting frustration on the part of citizens in various African countries due to weak state service delivery performance. If not checked, this frustration may completely derail the development trajectory of these countries. Thus, all opportunities to strengthen service delivery need to be explored. This is critical against the backdrop of public investments not yielding desirable results and brings to the fore the issue of strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) to ensure what was promised is delivered. However, the M&E function of the state, as positioned under New Public Management, has not necessarily borne results across the continent as it has been compliance-based and government-owned rather than citizen-owned. Therefore, every opportunity to improve and innovate the M&E function must be explored. This chapter discusses the discourse around Indigenously Responsive Monitoring and Evaluation (IRM&E) and its potential for improving service delivery. Furthermore, it develops a sound theoretical and contextual base for IRM&E through country snapshots from two African countries, South Africa and Nigeria, and teases out some of the emerging insights and features of IRM&E. The study employs document and thematic content analysis, based on a solid literature review, with the findings shedding some light on the value of IRM&E.

The classic works on the social contract, as espoused by Thomas Hobbs (1651), John Locke (1690) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), anchor the emergence of modern states, with the agreement between citizens and the state on their roles and responsibilities to promote an orderly and prosperous society. Over the years, these roles have expanded, with the state expected to deliver, amongst others, what is termed 'basic services' to the public and to ensure the improved well-being of citizens and residents. These services include providing water, housing, infrastructure, social services such as education, security, sporting facilities, municipal services such as refuse removal, and enabling environments for business. However, it can be argued that over the years, countless communities in Africa have been increasingly showing frustration about the level of essential services they receive,

and they are beginning to question this social contract. This has led to, amongst others, non-payment of services and taxes, protests, violent demonstrations and destruction of state facilities by citizens in countries such as Nigeria and South Africa.

With these heightened frustrations amongst citizens about state underperformance, states' stability is being questioned, especially when the quality of these essential services is not significantly improved. Thus, politicians frantically make commitments and counter-commitments to appease communities and placate citizens. However, these may only satisfy citizens for the short term if not much improvement in the quality or performance of public administration services is felt. Thus, it is only a matter of time before these frustrations cause serious harm to the governance and development trajectory of many African countries.

M&E ensures that promises are delivered on. Monitoring ensures that there is a continuous collection of data, and oversight ensures that there is performance and movement in the right direction towards a goal or result. Evaluation, on the other hand, periodically, mostly either at mid-term or at the end of a programme, assesses to determine whether the expected goal has been delivered fully, partially or not at all. However, the researcher argues that the mainstream M&E function, as positioned above, has not necessarily borne the expected results across the continent. Hence, every opportunity to strengthen, improve and innovate it needs to be explored. This is the angle this chapter seeks to probe. The author notes that IRM&E is not about developing a parallel system, nor about competing with mainstream M&E but rather about adopting context-relevant elements that add value to mainstream M&E in a complementary manner where both systems can integrate and co-exist for improved systems performance. If this were to be actualised for appropriate sectors, an opportunity for IRM&E would add value to governance processes. In this chapter, the author seeks to enhance the understanding of IRM&E and tease out the possible promise that it may hold. This chapter's main study objectives, therefore, are to position and explore the concept of IRM&E; develop a sound theoretical and contextual base for its exploration; present country snapshots from selected African countries – South Africa and Nigeria; and lastly, tease out the insights from and features of IRM&E.

## **MAKING A CASE FOR INDIGENOUSLY RESPONSIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

Effective and efficient M&E efforts should be sustained across the continent. The current status suggests that in many instances M&E is a tick-box exercise for government services; it is sometimes outsourced to consultants and does not sufficiently bring about a sustained developmental performance. In some instances, it can be characterised as government-led or government-owned with communities as spectators not invested in this vital and participatory function. In other instances, communities are marginally included only when it comes to data collection; again, it is not owned by the beneficiaries (Ile & Boadu 2017). In the African context, the ideal would be where the M&E function has evolved and is devolved in a manner that communities can engage with it meaningfully, understand and are used to, i.e., using indigenously responsive elements. The author argues that when the indigenously responsive elements (use of the tried and tested methodologies and cultures are utilised), M&E is not a foreign or academic concept but adds value to society, improving chances of project success and sustainability.

Thus, efforts at making monitoring indigenously responsive in various programmes on the African continent are critical and enrich the current debates around strengthening monitoring and evaluation discourse. This enhancement of an M&E trajectory by positioning it as embracing IRM&E showcases a local and authentic African knowledge base that is tried, tested, and, thus, valid. Furthermore, in so doing, it reverses the tendency to overlook and neglect Afrocentric values in the monitoring process (Chilisa, Major & Mokgolodi, 2016). For instance, the M&E value base within an African context is essentially relational, as opposed to contemporary M&E, which could be described as transactional.