

# CHAPTER THREE

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF PUBLIC SECTOR PERFORMANCE IN UGANDA: PAST, PRESENT TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

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### *INTRODUCTION*

This chapter examines the past, present and likely future direction for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of public sector performance in a developing country context. The chapter uses experience from Uganda. A well-functioning and unquestionably effective public sector remains the dream of every country (Basheka & Kihamba, 2023). This is for countries both in the developed and developing classifications. On an almost daily basis news headlines in African countries report glaring examples of public sector failures and inefficiencies of governments at all levels. The failure to deliver public services is the most reported. The cause of this failure relates to outright mismanaged of public resources or the lack of motivation by civil servants to deliver. Some civil servants are poorly trained. The problem is also fingered both those tributed to government agencies' failure to coordinate with each other and some mandates are consequently duplicated. As a result, citizens are either deprived of quality public services or must go through a bureaucratic maze to access the same public services for which they are required to pay taxes. Even where some services have been privatised and are controlled by the market, the regulatory arm of government becomes almost invisible. and citizens are left to the whims of the market forces.

In the expansive field of public administration and public management, the quest for how best public institutions should deliver public services has occupied the minds of scholars and policymakers for several hundred years. Primarily, the usage of phrases like public sector performance measurement, output-based budgeting, results-oriented management, performance management, monitoring and evaluation, are terminologies that allude to the one goal of checking, how best government and its agencies are delivering the required services. The goal is to assess how public sector delivery systems and processes work to produce the required results-efficient and effective services. Whereas a tendency has evolved for some people to use each of these phrases differently, depending on their ease of reference, all phrases are geared to answering one primary question. Is government delivering on its job? They all attempt to answer the secondary question of whether stakeholders can state with

certainty that the investments in public sector activities are producing the desired results. The quest to find answers to such questions compels a monitoring and evaluation undertaking.

Monitoring and evaluation can take place in any sector. It happens in public, private or religious institutions, other non-state institutions and civil society organisations (CSOs). This chapter, however, is contextualised to the M&E in a public sector setting. It is premised on public sector organisations that are mandated to deliver public services and shares the experience of Uganda's M&E of public sector performance. Public sector organisations (PSOs) have multiple, complex and often conflicting objectives. Stakeholders sometimes champion their own goals and aspirations, but it is the duty of government through PSOs to balance the varying interests and shoulder the public service delivery function to the common man. Citizens need services such as water, electricity, education, health and defence among others.

Sinclair (2011) reports how effective stakeholder engagement management can be used to enhance trust and credibility through improved relationships at various levels of an organisation and how, when effectively used, can lead to faster approval of the projects. To achieve its benefits, however, the process of engagement needs to ensure that stakeholder managers foster organisational interaction and have a mechanism to resolve issues and promote open exchange of information. The need to institutionalise M&E in public sector management, which has for some time been a driver of government reforms, has been a result of the demands of stakeholders for an accountable government. Kusek and Rist (2004) relate this to increased pressures on governments and organisations around the world to be more responsive to the demands of internal and external stakeholders.

Since the 1980s, governments in all parts of the world have thus weathered extensive reforms. Within the African context, the reforms have included decentralisation, privatisation and liberalisation, downsizing of the public sector, outsourcing of public services and contracting out, and performance-based contracting. In all these reforms, the influence and need for M&E has continued to grow. Basheka and Kihamba (2023), in their comparative analysis of Uganda and Tanzania, conclude that there are some areas where public service organisations have performed well due to the reforms but in a number of other areas, unfinished business remains since there are a number of public service areas where performance has been doubted. The next sections of the chapter deal with conceptual issues, the application of evaluation in Uganda, and the future direction.

## **CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

M&E play a crucial role in the public sector. It is argued to be an enabler for policymakers, programme managers, and other stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of policies, projects, programmes, and interventions. By investing in strong M&E systems and processes, PSOs will ensure that their programmes and policies are responsive to the needs of the communities they serve. This leads such public sector organisations to achieve their primary goal, which is meeting the stakeholder needs and interests.

In a field where words attach different meanings even when some degree of resemblance exists, it is a good practice to examine conceptual difficulties and later develop a theory of their common application. Moreover, performance management of PSOs is done at different levels. Hood (2007), for example, who has distinguished himself as an ardent advocate of performance management (PM), considers three types of PM, each alluding to the different levels at which PM can be done. He considers target systems, which measure performance against a standard ranking systems, which measure performance against comparable units and intelligence systems, which measure performance for background information. His consideration of performance management, however, only constitutes the tools and methodologies for undertaking performance management.