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Role of Actors Outside Government in Strengthening the Country Monitoring and Evaluation System in Zambia

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Abstract Actors outside of government have a crucial role to play in building, strengthening and sustaining a country's system for monitoring and evaluation. Specifically, the role of parliament, civil society and donors can improve, in innovative ways, the operations of government monitoring and evaluation systems. For Zambia, these actors are key in the development process of the country and their role in making the public sector monitoring and evaluation system better becomes significant. This research study investigated the participation of parliament, civil society organisations and donors in strengthening Zambia's whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system. It was found that although their role was recognised, it was rather weak and fragmented. There was generally lack of formalised arrangements pertaining to how these actors needed to engage government in strengthening the function of monitoring and evaluation across the public sector. While donors provided some notable financial and technical support, parliament and civil society had weaker evidence. Nonetheless, donor support was not flexible but fundamentally restricted to areas of their (donor) interest as opposed to national monitoring and evaluation priorities. In the midst of these positive and negative aspects regarding the role of non-state actors, the study has brought out salient insights which if addressed may help improve Zambia's whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system. The research has established that going forward, the Government of Zambia will need to engage parliament, civil society and donors meaningfully if these actors were to help accelerate the development and strengthening of the country's system for monitoring and evaluation. Similarly, the non state actors are also challenged to design and implement their monitoring and evaluation activities alongside government priorities and plans.

Keywords: actors outside government, parliament, monitoring, evaluation, civil society, donors, culture of results, evidence-based, whole-of-government M & E system, results

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1. Introduction

The Zambian public sector whole-of-government monitoring and evaluation system (WoGM&ES) is in its embryonic stage [1]. As a consequence, many of its components are yet to develop to the satisfaction of stakeholders. In that regard, the WoGM&ES for Zambia is currently unable to satisfy various information needs for different players in the country's development process. However, the country remains challenged in finding sustainable ways of developing and sustaining functional arrangements for monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The government still lacks in many ways to make the public system for M&E robust enough to supply and trigger demand for M&E information across state and non-state actors. Despite these challenges, the Government of Zambia has for a long time now thrived to

put in place some semblance of a WoGM&ES to promote the practice of monitoring and evaluation across the public sector and to inspire stakeholders outside of government.

Given the above, three (3) actors outside of government make a significant contribution towards a better WoGM & ES for Zambia's public sector. These include parliament, civil society organisations (CSOs), and donors-which now prefer to be called cooperating or development partners. The role each one of these actors play in ensuring that a country system for M&E is robust and responds to the information needs of stakeholders becomes crucial [2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11]. Indeed, support from these players come in many forms. Since a typical WoGM&ES is comprised of two sides, that is, the supply side and the demand side, the actors outside of government would support such a system on either side. Other stakeholders for instance, may even help to strengthen both the supply and demand sides of a given WoGM&ES [12,13,14].

Therefore, a country that initially undertakes a (rigorous) diagnosis to ascertain the contribution of the actors outside of government to build and strengthen its WoGM&ES stands a better chance to succeed. The issue is that non-state actors participate in a number of development processes in the country and that their roles could be useful in strengthening governance structures especially those to do with accountability and transparency. In M&E, the focus is on initiating and implementing development interventions that were informed by evidence. Thus, any stakeholder that contributes to strengthening systems of good governance and promotes the use of evidence in policy and decision making becomes an ally of sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

This study aimed to address the question of the role actors outside of government played in strengthening Zambia's public sector WoGM&ES. For the Zambian government and its partners, the findings of the research study are necessary as the country positions itself to build and implement a robust WoGM&ES which will provide the desired information for all forms of development to all stakeholders. In that regard, parliament, civil society and donors have been investigated on how they impacted the strengthening of Zambia's WoGM&ES. The findings and analysis provide some insights useful for policy to those who have the responsibility of building a stronger and sustainable M&E culture for Zambia. Equally, the study provokes aspects of further research to understand other dynamics of improving the WoGM&ES for Zambia.

2. Methodological Approach

This research study focused on finding out the role of non-state actors in building and strengthening Zambia's whole-of-government M&E system. The study sought to collect and analyse existing information on the function played by parliament, civil society and donors in building the country's M&E system for the public sector. A qualitative approach was adopted to guide the research. The approach was more investigatory and descriptive. For that reason, a number of data sources were consulted during data collection, collation, analysis and reporting. Thus, to undertake the study, data were collected from the reviews of secondary data sources as well as primary data sources. In that regard, document reviews and one-on-one interviews with relevant key informants in institutions (state and non-state) were conducted.

The five-point LEADS system of scoring was used as a quantitative way of making the results analysis and discussion clearer. The LEADS scoring system has five-point categories: **L** (Little action: 1), **E** (Elements exist: 2), **A** (Action taken: 3), **D** (largely Developed: 4), and **S** (Sustainable: 5). Alongside the LEADS scoring system was the diagnostic checklist which were used together. The diagnostic checklist comprises of questions which were used for data collection. Semi-structured interviews through self-administered (survey) questionnaires, focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informants were the data collection instruments employed in the study. Equally, rigorous document review was also used.

2.1. Analytical Framework

Table 1 and Table 2 below represent the analytical frameworks used for this research, i.e. the diagnostic checklist and the LEADS scoring system, respectively.

Table 1. Diagnostic checklist

Component	Question
Parliament	Is the role of Parliament properly recognised, and is there alignment with Parliamentary control and oversight procedures?
Civil Society	Is the role of civil society recognised? Are there clear procedures for the participation of civil society? Is the participation institutionally arranged or rather ad-hoc?
Donors	Is the role of donors recognised? Are there clear procedures for participation of donors?

Table 2. LEADS Scoring system

L	Little action	Score of 1
E	Elements exist	Score of 2
A	Action taken	Score of 3
D	largely Developed	Score of 4
S	Sustainable	Score of 5

The research information was collected using the diagnostic checklist while the scoring was done using the LEADS system. For each score under the LEADS system, analysis was done in line with the corresponding questions for each non-state actor.

3. Presentation of Findings

The study sought to assess the status of participation by actors outside of government in helping to strengthen Zambia's public sector whole-of-government M&E system (WoGM & ES). In doing so, three (3) actors have been identified and used to undertake the investigation, these include; parliament, civil society and donors. Table 3 below shows a summary of results as scored using the LEADS scoring system.

Table 3. Summary presentation of diagnostic results

COMPONENT	TOPIC	SCORES
PARTICIPATION OF ACTORS OUTSIDE GOVERNMENT		2.0
	Parliament	2- Elements exist
	Civil Society	2- Elements exist
	Donors	2- Elements exist

Source: Diagnostic study score results compiled by author (2019)

From Table 3, it is shown that all three actors, namely parliament, civil society and donors, were each scored a 2-point scoring (with overall average score of 2 points). This signifies that only elements of M&E existed in these development actors and ultimately could mean that their participation and contribution to matters related to the WoGM&ES were weaker.

While we may not fully appreciate lots of detail regarding the specific issues of strength and weakness about each actor's contribution to the improvement of Zambia's WoGM&ES, it would be useful to analyse

intra-component dynamics. The next section provides that analysis.

4. Discussion and Analysis

To appreciate the details of the findings, a fuller discussion and analysis of the results follows. The diagnostic checklist considers three key actors outside government, namely parliament, civil society and development partners and donors. Thus, for consistency and in conformity with the study design, the three actors (parliament, civil society & donors) are used as sub-headings.

4.1. Parliament

The study sought to analyse the role played by parliament through checking whether there was alignment with parliamentary control and oversight procedures in the context of the functionality of Zambia's WoGM&ES. In addition, the assessment checked whether parliament participated in joint sector reviews (JSRs) and other working groups.

Overall, the parliament component was given a score of 2.0, denoting that elements exist. The role of parliament was acknowledged in the WoGM&ES as providing legislation and oversight functions. However, there was no alignment with parliamentary control and oversight procedures. Further, parliament did not participate in JSRs or working groups. As an arm of government tasked with overseeing the legislation system and approval of government estimates of revenues and expenditures (i.e. national budgets), parliament could play a significant role in the successful implementation and strengthening of the WoGM&ES for Zambia [15,16,1,17,18]. However, the annual progress reports (APRs) and other M&E-related documents did not mention the role played by parliament in strengthening M&E functions in the public sector. It was not clear how parliamentary control and oversight procedures were being undertaken in the context of national M&E [19,20,21,22,23,24,25]. Further, aside from the mentioning how parliament is envisaged to participate in sector working groups (i.e. cluster advisory groups) in the current processes, there was presently no clear evidence of its M&E strengthening role. Although parliament performed its traditional role of oversight through debates on the floor of the house, visits to selected project and programme sites, and meetings of parliamentary committees, it was acknowledged that there was room to engage parliament in a more innovative and meaningful way. These efforts remained uncoordinated and fragmented in terms of their linkages and contributions to the functionality and operational arrangements of the WoGM&ES [25,26]. In addition, it was acknowledged that parliament was involved in the discussions about national development plans (NDPs), although with weak evidence on how it was engaged. In that regard, parliament was reported to be participating to a lesser extent in the development planning process through the participation of parliamentary offices at ward and district levels during the NDP consultative processes. Further, parliament was acknowledged as being critical to

providing oversight during the implementation of NDPs, especially through annual budgetary hearings and approvals.

It was established that the WoGM&ES did not embrace or have a strategy in place for dissemination of M&E outputs on poverty to parliament. Instead, there was only a general dissemination of poverty data to all national stakeholders through reports from the Zambia Statistics Agency (ZSA-formerly called the Central Statistical Office/CSO), APRs and related reports. Presentations and reports to parliament were not structured and were normally voluminous without user-friendly summaries for easier reference by parliamentarians. However, only ZSA was mentioned as practising the dissemination of statistical data to parliament. Therefore, the WoGM&ES was weak in that regard because parliament plays an oversight role in the governance system of the country. Thus, for parliament not to have access to reports and information on how NDP implementation was being undertaken, and more so the development results being pursued and achieved, much was left to be desired on the transparency, accountability and good governance tenets of the nation. It was revealed that this scenario contributed to weaker parliamentary debates in the house on types of legislation needed for growth and development and debates on financial resource allocations during budget appropriation hearings. A stronger WoGM&ES would be structured in such a way that parliament and its committees would play a dual role of supplying M&E data and information and demanding M&E outputs to enhance its participation in the development process of the country.

The WoGM&ES recognised parliament as one of the potentially major M&E information users. However, the issues of appropriateness, timing, timeliness and form of M&E outputs to meet the needs of parliament were reported as being fragmented and in many cases missing. Although general reports were acknowledged to be disseminated to parliament, there was a need for innovative data presentation and visualisation, rather than the current bulky reports (APRs, institutional reports, etc). Further, M&E data and information would be more useful to parliament if it was produced at constituency and ward level. But at the moment, it is produced only at provincial and national level in most cases. In addition, the WoGM&ES needed a well-defined framework for engaging parliament. It was suggested by respondents that there should be a way to link what happens in parliament, and also in all constituencies in the country. When such information was harmonised and synchronised within a functional WoGM&ES, parliament would operate effectively with improved evidence-based policy and decision-making processes. Parliament needed to demand for proper accountability and transparency from the executive branch of government based on evidence and real-time information supplied by a stronger WoGM&ES.

With regard to the use of information from the WoGM&ES by parliament and its committees, it was reported that no clear evidence was available to prove the practice. No such demonstrations of the utilisation of information by parliament existed. The debates by parliamentarians were guided mainly by popular media subjects and some reports given by the executive. However, with regard to the data from the statistical office

(ZSA), parliament was said to have been using it to inform policy and some types of projects being implemented in the country. In the absence of a functional WoGM&ES, parliamentarians were reported to be using any source of information such as the media and other unsubstantiated sources. This created information decay with credibility, reliability and relevance issues. To that extent, creating a stronger WoGM&ES, coupled with a robust national statistical system (NSS), would be the sure approach for Zambia [27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34].

Further, parliament was reported as not communicating its needs formally or informally through legislation that required particular information. No such formal or even informal requests were in place. Instead, it was reported that some requests from parliament to the executive were available, which sought explanations and certain statistics on selected issues. In such cases, the executive would respond by providing responses as requested by parliament. It was acknowledged that parliament had the capacity to use M&E information effectively. However, before being used by parliamentarians, such information had to be appropriately packaged, presented, simplified and consistent.

4.2. Civil Society

The research study also investigated whether the role of civil society was recognised in M&E activities of the WoGM&ES. The focus here was on the clarity of procedures for the participation of civil society and whether their participation was arranged institutionally or was merely ad hoc. Further, whether civil society participated in JSRs and other working groups was another crucial aspect of assessed by this study.

On the sub-dimension pertaining to civil society, a score of 2.0 was given, denoting that M&E elements existed. The role of civil society in the WoGM&ES was recognised. Procedures were in place for the participation of civil society, although these were not comprehensively clear. Through some institutional arrangements, civil society institutions were reported to be participating in M&E activities such as JSRs and in technical working groups (TWGs) of various cluster advisory groups (CAGs) as implemented in the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) [14,25,35].

The Fifth National Development Plan (FNDP), Sixth National Development Plan (SNDP) and the Revised Sixth National Development Plan (R-SNDP) all documented the existence of CAGs (initially called Sector Advisory Groups/SAGs). These institutional structures were created to support the implementation of government development plans and strategies through the participation of state and non-state actors [25,36,37,38]. Thus, civil society organisations (CSOs) have institutionally been incorporated in the CAGs as a platform for their participation in the development processes of Zambia. Although this existed, clear CAG membership issues regarding CSOs remained vague, hence rendering the institutional arrangements ad hoc. Nonetheless, the documents did not state the categorical procedures for the participation of civil society. The issues that CSOs were expected to table at meetings of CAGs were not stipulated, for instance. Such grey areas

could affect participation and overall quality of engagement at meetings.

Overall, the participation status of CSOs in the current implementation of government plans and strategies remained unclear and fragmented. This was reported to be true of other levels, namely national, line ministry, provincial and district. Document review revealed that a limited number of CSOs were taking part consistently. No structured reports for CAGs were found to give details of issues discussed in meetings. In addition, no incentives were reported to be in place to motivate civil society participation in the WoGM&ES. Some individual CSOs were engaged in selected forums regarding monitoring NDP programmes. Civil Society for Poverty Reduction (CSPR) for instance had been consistent in attending NDP stakeholder meetings. However, the voice of CSPR alone was not enough to demand accountability and good governance practices by government. Consequently, the weakness of CSOs in the country was reported to have led to a poorly performing WoGM&ES. Moreover, there was a suspicion among respondents that when CSOs or individual CSOs operated too close to government, their objectivity in holding government accountable weakened, since they turned into allies of government. This was a dilemma because CSOs are believed to be well placed to make government account for public goods and services, while these CSOs may be compromised by government.

It was established that civil society was not represented appropriately in the coordination and liaison mechanisms of the WoGM&ES. Findings revealed that there were no civil society players in the whole of government implementation framework. While some CSOs were usually consulted on their input in the planning and preparation processes of NDPs, there were gaps in their engagement in the definition and implementation of M&E functions during the NDP implementation. In addition, no CSOs were consulted adequately about the roles they were expected to play in the WoGM&ES. There was no framework to coordinate civil society systematically in the country. As a result, it was not clear in the findings whether civil society had capacity to participate in the enhancement of the WoGM&ES. It was also found that there were no or fragmented participatory mechanisms in place to obtain information from civil society in the formulation of NDPs based on the needs of the citizens. Consultations were held with various stakeholders, including civil society, through meetings, symptoms and workshops. These forums were undertaken at national, line ministry, provincial and district level across the country during the preparation process of the 7NDP, for instance. However, there were no information mechanisms in place to learn which programmes of the NDP had received comments from civil society before, during and after implementation. Only comments on the holistic objectives of the plan were received.

It was reported that the NDPs were made available to the public through the Ministry of National Development Planning (MNDP) website and that some hard copies were disseminated across the country to all Ministries, Provinces and other Spending Agencies (MPSAs). Weak evidence was found that civil society exerted pressure on government for information about its performance in

reducing poverty. Currently, there was limited demand for M&E data from non-state actors because their own M&E was not results oriented or evidence based. Civil society in Zambia was reported to be fragmented, especially when it came to participation in the WoGM&ES. At best, they were working as individual organisations and lacked collective bargaining in demanding results from the government and other development agencies. Even among themselves, CSOs failed to uphold high standards and practice for M&E at all levels.

In addition, the WoGM&ES lacked a strategy for disseminating M&E outputs to the public and CSOs in particular. APRs were sporadically disseminated to civil society. A fragmented arrangement was reported to be in place whereby dissemination of M&E products was done through the national development coordinating committee (NDCC), provincial development coordinating committees (PDCCs), district development coordinating committees (DDCCs) and cluster advisory groups (CAGs). There were plans to strengthen the knowledge and management function to include dynamic sharing of information across a broader spectrum of stakeholders and development players. Civil society was acknowledged as having participated in the preparation of line ministry strategic plans at those levels only to some limited extent. Not all strategic plans were subjected to wider consultations outside the sectors.

The wide publication of M&E information in the media was not practised in the WoGM&ES. Overall, media data in Zambia (especially among government institutions) was apparently not focused on development performance reporting. As a consequence, this led to challenges in information sharing across the WoGM&ES. However, only minimal M&E information on a few interventions was reported in the media (many times, restricted to infrastructure related development). This also happened when there were interests and motivation to pursue on the media side. In M&E, all information is expected to be published so that stakeholders may use it to discuss ways of improving development interventions. The lack of media involvement in the M&E architecture of the WoGM&ES for Zambia did not resonate well with the broader agenda of good governance and popular participation in national development. Furthermore, it was established that civil society in Zambia did not communicate its data needs to the WoGM&ES. There was no formal mechanism in place for M&E information sharing from CSOs to the WoGM&ES.

4.3. Donors

As for donors and development partners, the aspects assessed under the parliament and civil society were equally applicable. The component concerning donors was given a score of 2.0, entailing that M&E elements existed. Development partners (DPs) and donors are key players in the evolution of M&E in countries [14,39]. Questions in the diagnostic checklist included: Is the role of donors recognised? Are there clear procedures for the participation of donors? Do donors participate in joint sector reviews and/ or other working groups? [40,41,42]. As with civil society, the role of donors in the WoGM&ES was recognised. To some extent, there were clear procedures

for their participation. Donors were reported to participate in JSRs and technical working groups (TWGs) to a considerable level. In addition, the reviews of NDPs and APRs showed that although the role of donors was recognised and their participation institutionalised in the context of CAGs and other bilateral and multilateral arrangements, their role in supporting the sustainability of M&E functions was weak and fragmented. Nonetheless, there was considerable acknowledgement of donor support to the strengthening of the WoGM&ES through financial and technical assistance. However, this support was mainly conditional and inflexible, leading to ownership and sustainability challenges [24,25,26,43]. But although this was acknowledged, there was lack of a structural arrangement with regard to the role of DPs. The review showed some evidence of donors participating in JSRs and meetings of CAGs. Surprisingly though, separate M&E systems that were implemented by DPs and donors (that is, to serve their own interests) were referred to. This was regarded as undermining the ownership, strengthening and sustainability the of country's WoGM&ES.

Nevertheless, DPs were acknowledged as playing an important liaison role in the coordination framework of WoGM&ES. They were reported as providing incentives in the form of financial and technical assistance and encouraging government agencies (e.g. MPSAs) to use information from the WoGM&ES [1,5,10,26]. But despite their positive role, DPs were reported as not using the WoGM&ES themselves. This was partly because the WoGM&ES was in its infancy phase and had not meaningfully incorporated DPs in the system. These fragmentations and inconsistencies are weaknesses in the system. This was also reported as a reason for DPs not fully embracing the government system for M&E. No strong evidence was found in which DPs consistently used information from the WoGM&ES. It was reported that some DPs were not helping to strengthen the WoGM & ES, but crowded out or weakened national accountability mechanisms through their partial participation and insistence on maintaining their own separate accountability mechanisms or M&E arrangements.

The coordination of the demand for M&E data and information from DPs was reported to be weak. It was reported that financing from DPs towards M&E related activities was restricted to selected line ministries. Therefore, given the fragmented manner in which the M&E activities of DPs were coordinated, many aspects remained undeveloped. In terms of the influence from DPs on the functioning of the WoGM&ES, DPs still needed to help by providing (flexible or unconditional) financial support for rolling out the WoGM&ES. It was also established that the divergent M&E requirements of DPs contributed to a sense of territoriality among government agencies, thereby discouraging smooth coordination of M&E activities in the WoGM&ES. There were cases such as the health sector in which each development partner wanted to develop its own database to provide information on indicators of their subject. When the types of M&E and reporting requirements for DPs were assessed, it was gathered that DPs needed government statistics and performance data for indicators for their own planning and resource allocation. Usually DPs demanded outcome and impact-level information, which the WoGM&ES was

unable to generate systematically since national surveys were undertaken irregularly. Consequently, DPs used this gap to justify the maintenance of their parallel M&E systems for the projects they supported.

For that reason, government was currently encouraging DPs to use national M&E arrangements and frameworks as a way of harmonising and strengthening the WoGM & ES. Again, this practice by DPs could undermine the building and sustaining of the WoGM&ES for the country. Instead of working to build and strengthen internal systems for M&E, DPs ultimately weakened the line ministry arrangements for M&E and the WoGM & ES. With regard to whether DPs used the WoGM&ES for their own monitoring and reporting needs, it was reported that this was not really the case.

In terms of other mechanisms used by the DPs, it was reported that they engaged in dialogue meetings, which were held periodically, through quarterly and annual reviews (for example JARs in health and education sectors). Thus DPs were reported to be influencing the operations of the WoGM&ES to some extent. For instance, sectors were allegedly influenced at times to focus on collecting data that were specific to the needs of DPs. As a result, data needed for the WoGM&ES to meet the needs of a wider audience was not collected. As to whether the demand for M&E information by DPs influenced the WoGM&ES in producing data and information, it was established that DPs usually financed the production of statistics and other information types vital to their own planning, implementation and reporting requirements. It was also reported that DPs did not coordinate their M&E requirements among themselves. There were many parallel demands for statistics, data, information and reports from various DPs.

5. Conclusion

This research study was about determining the role non-state actors played in strengthening the WoGM&ES for Zambia's public sector. The focus was on investigating the involvement of parliament, civil society and donors in improving the functionality of Zambia's WoGM&ES. Indeed, M&E has become the buzz phrase in the good governance agenda, the world over. Through functional M&E, development stakeholders hold a common view that pursuing goals and desired results become feasible. It is for that reason that governments, individual organisations and single interventions (projects & programmes) adopt M&E as a core function as they deliver goods and services to communities.

The participation of actors outside government was found to be weak and fragmented in both particular and general terms. While there were notable positive engagements from donors, parliament and civil society, a lot more remained to be done towards ensuring that the WoGM&ES for Zambia was favourable. For certain, these actors were recognised as being critical stakeholders in improving both the supply side and demand side of the WoGM&ES for the public sector [44,45,46,47,48,49,50].

Recommendations

Role of Parliament

There is need to enhance the oversight role of parliament at all levels of government business. The study findings have shown that only weak and fragmented linkages existed between parliament and other levels of development structure across government. This is despite the National Assembly having a constitutional mandate to represent the citizens in issues of development and human rights. Parliament makes laws and approves government spending. These roles and responsibilities give parliament a unique development mandate. For that reason, parliament's role in M&E across the WoGM&ES becomes significant. Efforts through innovations and initiatives will need to be promoted so that functional linkages between parliament and all other levels of development are strengthened. Thus, there is need to have M&E products in the form of reports and interactive programmes to give parliament an opportunity to appreciate development changes across the WoGM&ES regularly. Parliament will also be required to restructure itself to respond to this emerging challenge function. Essentially, this may compel redefining the roles and responsibilities of the parliamentary committees and creating new initiatives to support the M&E function within the National Assembly.

Civil society

To make civil society organisations (CSOs) key in strengthening M&E systems, there is need to ensure collaboration and coordination mechanisms are functional between themselves and government. CSOs are an important partner in the development process of Zambia. The work of CSOs has become more widespread as more organisations have come on board in recent years [1,17,18]. Among others, CSOs are involved directly in implementing development interventions in such sectors as education, agriculture, health, child protection, water and sanitation, and community resilience through supporting entrepreneurship among citizens. Other CSOs lobby government and the donor community to act in needy communities so that people have access to decent lives. To that extent, it will be important that deliberate initiatives should be identified and implemented to strengthen the linkages between government and CSOs. In particular, M&E collaboration and coordination efforts between government and CSOs will need to be strengthened. This may be achieved through undertaking a thorough needs assessment to identify practical coordination and collaboration points. CSOs will need reliable M&E information in their advocacy work and in implementing development interventions. Such collaboration will best be done at all levels of government business. Joint M&E plans and actions will be desired to support a functional WoGM&ES. A review and strengthening of the advisory bodies, at national, provincial, district and sub-district levels will be a good starting point.

Donors

To strengthen the role of donors in supporting the WoGM&ES, there is need to develop a joint national M&E work plan. Such an M&E work plan would be a detailed framework that is fully elaborate and costed. As the study findings have shown, donors are involved in

supporting the development of the WoGM&ES through provision of financial resources and technical services. However, owing to the lack of a common M&E action plan, which shows the areas of prioritised collaboration, the work of donors has not yielded much of the desired results. Financing and technically supporting a common plan for M&E will entail strengthening the WoGM&ES.

Further, there is need to avoid implementing parallel donor M&E systems: It was found in this study that donors were in the habit of maintaining their own parallel M&E arrangements. This practice was reported as weakening the WoGM&ES, whereby, instead of collectively supporting the national system for M&E, donors spent money on creating information communications technology (ICT)-based systems that catered only for their work related information needs. In the enhanced WoGM&ES, donors would be expected to work with government through a unified national M&E work plan-and ultimately in supporting the WoGM&ES.

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