

20. Zambia: The SDGs and Developing National Evaluation Capacities

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BACKGROUND

A brief introduction to Zambia

Zambia is a landlocked country in Southern Africa. It has borders with the United Republic of Tanzania and Democratic Republic of the Congo (formerly Zaire) to the north, Malawi and Mozambique to the east, Zimbabwe, Botswana and Namibia to the south and Angola to the west. It measures 752,618 square kilometres. The latest statistics show that Zambia has 15.9 million people (2016),⁸⁹ a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$19.55 billion (0.03 percent of the global economy) (2016),⁹⁰ GDP growth of 2.9 percent (2015)⁹¹ and an inflation rate of 8.8 percent in November 2016.⁹² It is rich in minerals, especially copper. It is classified as a lower middle-income country. Zambia became independent from the United Kingdom on 24 October 1964.

Zambia's focus on the SDGs

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development were adopted by world leaders in September 2015 and came into force on 1 January 2016. Members of the United Nations are to mobilize efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The SDGs are not legally binding but governments are expected to take ownership and establish national frameworks for the achievement of the 17 Goals. In Zambia, the Ministry of National Development Planning (MNDP) has been spearheading the process of implementing the SDGs by focusing on indicators that are related to priority areas of development for the country. Zambia's developmental priority is to reduce the high poverty among its citizens; especially among its youth. According to 2015 data,⁹³ 54 percent of the population live below the poverty line and in rural areas, 76.6 percent of the population live in poverty. The three main

89 Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p.20.

90 <https://tradingeconomics.com/zambia/gdp>.

91 Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p.18.

92 Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p.19.

93 Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p.20.

pillars of the SDGs are also covered by the country's long-term development framework, the Vision 2030 of Zambia.

Post Paris Declaration Development of National Evaluation Capacity

Attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) were priorities for Zambia. However, though much had been done in Zambia before and after the Paris Declaration to implement some of its principles, there have been a number of challenges. Modalities for implementing the Paris Declaration principles in Zambia seem not to have been clearly formulated. The Sector Advisory Groups formed based on the Paris Declaration did not perform as expected.⁹⁴ These groups are now being replaced by Cluster Advisory Groups in line with the integrated approach of the 7th National Development Plan (7NDP). Zambia's lessons of implementing the Paris Declaration and MDGs should be used to enhance the effectiveness of implementing and monitoring the SDGs. It is important that the majority of Zambians should own the process of implementing and evaluating the SDGs, and that challenges related to national evaluation capacities are overcome.

Partners in developing National Evaluation Capacity

The MNDP is coordinating the domestication of the SDGs, working with many national stakeholders including professional associations like the Zambia Monitoring and Evaluation Association (ZaMEA) and Economic Association of Zambia.

The MNDP is also being assisted by United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The Government seeks the assistance of cooperating partners to cover mostly priority programmes for Zambia. These are programmes within established bilateral agreements and partners' specialization. A number of charitable organizations such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation are also interested in assisting Zambia to develop its national evaluation capacity.

Context for strengthening of partnerships between the Government and ZaMEA

Apart from the desire to successfully implement the SDGs, the partnership between the Zambian Government and ZaMEA is being driven by the rising demand by Zambian citizens and other stakeholders for enhanced service delivery and an integrated results management approach to development in Zambia. The new 7NDP takes these demands into consideration as well as the vision of Zambia's long-term development framework (Vision 2030) of becoming a "prosperous middle-income country by 2030",⁹⁵ as well as the SDGs, the African Union Agenda 2063 and other national and international plans, programmes and agreements.

94 Ministry of Finance and National Planning, 2011.

95 Ministry of National Development Planning, 2017, p. i.

Major factors in national evaluation capacity development

there are several factors influencing the development of national evaluation capacities, as follows.

Leadership for national evaluation capacity development: In Zambia, the state President, his Excellence Edgar Chagwa Lungu, and Vice President, the Honourable Mrs. Inonge Wina, are champions of monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The State Cabinet is in charge of implementing all government programmes and plans. It is answerable to the national Parliament. The coordination of the process is being carried out by MNDP.

Good theory of change: The achievement of the SDGs requires a good theory of change. The MNDP, with cooperating partners, is developing a theory of change for Zambia's national evaluation capacity development. The 7NDP itself is premised on theories of change.⁸

Integrated approach: Many of the developmental issues that the ministries deal with are cross-cutting and need to be dealt with in cooperation with various ministries and public agencies. Therefore, the integrated approach is reflected in the new 7NDP.

Speed of evaluation and reporting: It is a waste of time, funds and other resources to produce evaluation reports that are not timely and do not help decision makers to be effective in making decisions and management.

In developing national capacities for evaluation, there is also a need to consider national and international complexities and national specificities; the interests of all stakeholders; the need to enhance the competencies of evaluators, e.g., for SDG implementation and policy evaluations; cooperation between nations in achieving the SDGs and developing evaluation capacities; and continued support by development agencies and cooperating partners to support nations to develop national evaluation capacities.

PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND ZaMEA FOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

The Government of Zambia has engaged development partners to provide institutional capacity-building and financial resources to ZaMEA. In 2015, the Government arranged for joint participation with ZaMEA in a regional conference on evaluation hosted by the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association, and the Government collaborated with ZaMEA to commemorate the International Year of Evaluation (2015). In 2017, ZaMEA participated in the review of the draft M&E policy, which is now (2017) under consideration for adoption by the Cabinet. The Government collaborated with the African Development Bank (AfDB) to engage with ZaMEA as a community of practice to promote the principle of managing for development results in Zambia. With support from AfDB, ZaMEA conducted training for senior government officials and other stakeholders in managing for development results. ZaMEA also supported the Cabinet Office's Reforms Coordination Division in capacity enhancement and coaching in effective monitoring of reform areas. The Government also partnered with ZaMEA to develop an Evaluation Advocacy Strategy.

ZaMEA also collaborated with the Government to convene a Research and Evaluation Coordination Forum in October 2017, the aims of which were to conduct independent

evaluations and research relevant to national development plans and the SDGs, and to coordinate stakeholders in order to develop the evaluation agenda for the national development plan and the SDGs.

South-South partnerships have also been pursued, through which the MNDP cooperates with its South African counterpart, while ZaMEA cooperates with other voluntary organizations of professional evaluators and other development institutions across Africa through the African Evaluation Association (AfrEA) and directly.

ADDITIONAL EFFORTS TO ENHANCE NATIONAL M&E CAPACITY

The MNDP has embarked on an exercise of ensuring that M&E courses taught in Zambia reflect the SDGs. A regional institution, Centres for Learning and Results-Anglophone Africa, was contracted to develop an evaluation training curriculum in 2017. The new curriculum is to be implemented in 2018. ZaMEA is to take leadership in the promotion of the new evaluation course's curriculum, which has been designed to strengthen identified evaluation capacity gaps among stakeholders and leverage capacity enhancement for SDG evaluation.

There are also plans by the University of Zambia to introduce a postgraduate diploma in M&E methods, a Master's degree in M&E methods and a doctoral degree (Ph.D.) in evaluation studies (Moyo, 2016).

CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING NATIONAL EVALUATION CAPACITY FOR SDG EVALUATIONS

Lack of interest and involvement of most citizens in M&E

Despite the above-mentioned efforts, there is not much interest and involvement of most citizens in M&E. Only one non-governmental organization in Zambia seems to be engaged in tracking national budgets and scoring the performance of civic leaders. This is the Society for Poverty Reduction. This should be of concern to the Government as in a democratic system, citizens should be able to participate actively in the formulation of public policies and government programmes and plans. They should also participate in their evaluation. The main challenge that many citizens face in participating in public business is that of language and literacy (reading and writing). The official language in Zambia is English but it is just one of the 73 languages spoken in the country. The majority of citizens speak only their native languages. Some English speakers do not even know how to read or write.

Externally driven M&E initiatives

After Zambia's return to multi-party politics in 1991, much of the formulations of socioeconomic programmes were externally driven. The political system had changed from a socialist to a Western-oriented one. Though the Government has been showing interest in fostering an evaluation culture, it has not been developing a national evaluation system "made in Africa". There is a need for the Government to drive national evaluation capacity development and indigenize M&E in Zambia.

The economic downturn in some countries of cooperating partners, the pull-out from the country of some development agencies and the closure of many of the programmes that depended on such agencies have shown the adverse effects of reliance on external assistance. Also, the terms of reference for most major M&E assignments tend to favour external and a few local consultants since Zambia has still to develop the evaluation profession. Most consultants lack the decades of experience and required financial liquidity status to meet the terms of reference. Partnerships between local and foreign consultants have been one way of solving the capacity challenge. The external firms or consultants will choose to work mainly with experienced locals. However, some of the partnerships end up with teams being supervised by young and less experienced expatriates while assisted by very experienced locals. These locals are usually well-known consultants from universities, academic research institutions and think tanks. Therefore, emerging young and inexperienced local professional do not tend to have many opportunities to build their evaluation skills. Evaluation assignments are not daily occurrences and there is high youth unemployment. Therefore, such practices do not help in reducing unemployment in the country and developing national evaluation capacities.

Even the payments to local independent consultants, where they are lucky to win a contract, tend to be lower. Some of the external commissioners of evaluation assignments tend to drastically lower consultancy fees offered to locals. They tend to offer a small subsistence-level fraction of international rates while still demanding the same high standards of outputs and commitment. The local evaluators having full-time jobs taking part in such assignments think of them as supplementing their incomes and will not vigorously negotiate for better pay with commissioners. Thus, they perpetuate the vicious exploitation of labour in the country. Therefore, local evaluators need the help of the global community of evaluators in order to overcome some of the above challenges.

Lack of financial and technical capacity

Zambia like many developing nations has constraints of local resources to develop the institutional capacity to evaluate the SDGs. Academic institutions have yet to reflect the SDGs and their evaluations in their training courses. Some of Zambia's global traditional development partners are facing economic and social challenges that have adversely affected their assistance to Zambia. They also lack resources and SDG expertise. Therefore, developing the required national capacity is a priority for the Zambian Government.

Other challenges

The management for results approach is not yet linked to the national budget and financial disbursement. Though the MNDP is in charge of national development planning, it is not in charge of the financial management for the public sector; the Ministry of Finance is.

Zambia has still to coordinate academia and think tanks in national research. The integrated management and development advocated in the 7NDP to foster ease of implementing the SDGs has still to be applied.

ZaMEA is a voluntary association and lacks institutional capacity and especially a spirit of volunteering and commitment among its members and leaders.

The African Community of Practice in Zambia is headed by a middle-management official at MNDP without much budgetary and policy influence.

CONCLUSION

Zambia has made much progress in developing national capacities to evaluate the SDGs. The MNDP is tracking the links between the 7NDP and the SDGs. Zambia's lessons from the implementation of developing national evaluation capacities during the MDG era and post Paris Declaration could be used for effective development of national capacities to evaluate the SDGs. Ownership by most Zambians of the process of indigenizing national evaluation capacities to evaluate the implementation of the SDGs is important.

The Government's partnership with all stakeholders is a major factor in national evaluation capacity development. It needs to enhance the participation of all citizens in M&E processes. This can be done by the Government through communicating in major indigenous languages apart from English. Apart from professional evaluation associations, there are many community based-organizations that can be used for national M&E. More needs to be done to understand indigenous methods of evaluation and incorporate them in mainstream evaluation methodologies. This would enable more people to participate in governance.

Further South-South cooperation is also required. Sharing of lessons between associations such as AfrEA and the Latin-American and Caribbean Monitoring, Evaluation and Systematization Network is being encouraged by EvalIndigenous.

Zambia's Government should further enhance cooperation with academia, civil society (ZaMEA), development agencies and the private sector in developing national evaluation capacities. Due to fundamental constraints of resources faced by Zambia in national development, Zambia will still depend on the assistance of cooperating partners like UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA to help fill the gap areas where there is no local capacity.

Priorities for Zambia's national development are being identified. Each nation has its complexities and constraints and should be allowed to have its own priorities for SDG implementation.

There is need to scale up the uptake of evaluation evidence by decision makers. AfDB supports parliamentarians in other countries to develop a culture of evaluation. It has formed the African Network of Parliamentarians. Hopefully, it would help parliamentarians in Zambia to develop a culture of evaluation.

The Government has already established an M&E unit in the Parliament. Although still in its infancy, it is greatly assisting Members of Parliament to source the data required for major decisions. There is high demand for its services. Technical and financial support are required for the unit to make it more effective.

ZaMEA and the M&E Division at the MNDP are also new. The Government recognizes their enormous potential for meeting actual, potential and latent demand for M&E in Zambia from various stakeholders. It also recognizes the institutional challenges face in meeting the demand. All stakeholders require institutional capacity-enhancing support to overcome their challenges.

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