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### An Evaluation on the Effectiveness of M&E in Enhancing the Performance of CDF Funded Projects at the Local Level: A case study of Petauke Central Constituency

<sup>1</sup> Richard Phiri, <sup>2</sup> Dr. Kelvin Chibomba

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Social Research, Information and Communications University Lusaka, Zambia

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Corresponding Author: **Richard Phiri**

#### Abstract

The study evaluated the effectiveness of monitoring, and evaluation on the performance of CDF funded projects in Petauke Central constituency. The study was guided by the following objectives namely; to establish how M&E processes are being done during the implementation of CDF projects at local level, to examine the implementation of M and E in CDF funded projects, to analyse the impact of executing M&E during CDF projects implementation, and to assess the challenges faced in the implementation of M and E during the implementation CDF projects. The theory that guided this study was Results-based theory. The study employed an explorative case study research approach in addressing the research problem. The structured questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. A sample of 100 respondents was used in the research. Purposive and random sampling techniques were used to get the sample for the study. Data was analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis methods.

Findings indicated that the effect of M&E on the performance of the CDF projects can be realized through factors such as enhancing staff training in M&E, promoting local stakeholder interest in M&E as well as engagement of local stakeholders in the implementation process of CDF projects. It was further found that project monitoring has a positive relationship with public projects since project monitoring leads to project usefulness, hence ensuring the performance of the project; this implies that to attain usefulness to CDF project specifically in Petauke Central constituency. Moreover, the study indicated that project evaluation has a positive relationship with the performance of the CDF projects. For instance, achievement of project objectives, goals, development effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability seem to be vital toward attaining project sustainability. The study concluded that monitoring of the project needs to be strengthened toward CDF project performance at local level.

**Keywords:** Constituency Development Fund, Monitoring and Evaluation, Members of Parliament, National Development Plans

#### 1. Introduction

##### 1.1 Background

Project planning, monitoring, and evaluation were originally introduced as activities in project management by consultants in the early 1980s (La Londe, 2018) <sup>[20]</sup> and subsequently gained much attention in recent years as a strategy for project management success (Cowell, 2019) <sup>[6]</sup>. Need for change and development on projects in the years to come (Callender & Mathews, 2020) <sup>[4]</sup>. Project planning, monitoring, and evaluation plans started more with coming up with effective project strategies including reports for funding, and later enrolled as vital elements of control, monitoring, and budgeting. The successful completion of projects across different sectors and industries is one of the most important factors that determine the development and growth of many nations (Maylor *et al.*, 2006) <sup>[23]</sup>. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are important for the successful management of projects (Nyonje *et al.*, 2012) <sup>[29]</sup>. Decades ago, M&E practices were determined by placing emphasis on prudent utilization of resources (Rogers and Williams, 2006) <sup>[33]</sup>.

In Zambia, the recent evolution of M&E in government can be generally traced around the beginning of the New Millennium in the year 2000, and particularly towards the end of the 20th Century in 1999. With this growth in demand for successful M&E, most prominent development stakeholders such as the donor community and local actors including parliament, the

private sector as well as the broader civil society use M&E information to hold governments accountable (Kusek and Rist, 2004) <sup>[17]</sup>. The Zambian Government developed the National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy to provide a framework to measure and track progress in the implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. This arose due to the need for a robust national Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework to guide the National Development Plan implementation and provide mechanisms for objective assessment of programme results (outcomes and impacts) which needed the urgent and coordinated attention of all stakeholders. The policy was implemented in 2019 and was housed under the Ministry of Finance as the custodians. Further, the need for uniformity in planning and reporting for fund utilization necessitated the need for a National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy that would help the Government track spending by various Ministries, Provinces and Spending Agencies (MPSAs) against the planned activities and programmes to drive national development.

It is against this background that many calls have been made to strengthen the role of M&E practices in the implementation of CDF projects at local level. This has been highly emphasized since execution of M&E practices in the implementation process of CDF funded projects will aid in guiding project activities not to deviate from project objectives as well as ensuring that project resources are prudently utilized (Gertler; 2004) <sup>[9]</sup>. It is with this regard that the researcher endeavors to evaluate the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation practices during the implementation of CDF funded projects at local level by taking a case study of Petauke Central constituency.

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

Monitoring and Evaluation systems improve the efficiency and sustainability of project management. Although monitoring and evaluation is a crucial aspect of project performance, many organizations and governments experience numerous challenges in carrying out this critical function leading to poor project performance (Njeri and Omwenga, 2019) <sup>[27]</sup>. According to the 2011 OECD/DAC Monitoring Survey (OECD/DAC; 2011) <sup>[30]</sup> on the implementation of the Paris Declaration (PD) as measured under indicator 11 (Managing for Results), Zambia scored a 'D' for its results-oriented frameworks in 2005, improving to a 'C' in 2007 and maintained its 'C' score in 2011, and this led to a shortfall in reaching the 2010 target of B or A. This could mean that Zambia is short in terms of satisfying the Paris Declaration agreement of having monitorable results frameworks. In addition, the World Bank in its Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF) Report also notes that Zambia's monitoring framework was insufficient. After monitoring and measuring the four CDF principles that include the long-term holistic vision; country-led partnership; country ownership; and results focus, although there were signs of advancement for all, the results focus principle showed the least progress made. This conclusion is crucial for Zambia's M&E reform agenda. The above status for Zambia's country-level M&E system is worrisome especially that the government wants to use its limited resources prudently. This shows the need to close the knowledge and practice gap in monitoring and evaluation practices in CDF projects context. The high

failure rate in Public Projects could be due to the failure to undertake clear monitoring and evaluation. In the context of this study, all the above problems may be attributed to inadequate project monitoring and evaluation. Taking into cognizant the noticed M&E lacunas in the implementation of development projects, especially at local level, the study sought to evaluate the effectiveness of the execution of monitoring and evaluation practices during the implementation of CDF funded projects at local level: A case of Petauke central Constituency.

### 1.3 Objectives of the research study

The general objective of this research study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation practices during the implementation of CDF funded projects at the local level. Specific objectives include the following: To establish how M and E processes are being done during the implementation of CDF projects at local level. To examine the implementation of M and E in CDF funded projects. To analyse the impact of executing M&E in CDF projects implementation. To assess challenges faced in the implementation of M and E on CDF projects

### 1.4 Research questions

1. How are M&E processes being implemented in CDF projects at local level?
2. How is M&E conducted during CDF projects implementation?
3. What is the impact of conducting M&E in the implementation of CDF projects at local level?
4. What challenges are being faced in the implementation of M and E in CDF projects.

### 1.5 Theoretical framework

The theory used in this study is the Theory of Change. This theory arose in the 1990s as a reaction to program theory (Stein & Valters, 2012) <sup>[36]</sup>. In 1995, Carol Weiss developed the theory further and described it as "a theory of how and why an initiative works." She argued that many projects are difficult to evaluate as they are based on poorly articulated assumptions. She proposed that in order to achieve 14 the envisaged outcomes, stakeholders should look at short-term outcomes that will help them achieve their specified targets (Msila & Setlhako, 2013). The theory of change usually yields two products: An outcome map and a list of assumptions about change (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020) <sup>[32]</sup>. An outcome map provides awareness about whether a project will be successful, as well as which interventions should be used to achieve success (Cox, 2009) <sup>[5]</sup>. This approach steers the project's course and the objectives to be met. The theory of change roadmap is refined by monitoring and assessment, while communication aids in the achievement of envisaged objectives and the implementation of improvements. Consequently, it provides success assessments of projects (Msila & Setlhako, 2013). If a contractor clearly outlines the project goals and outcomes the evaluator can track and evaluate the planned results and relate them to the original principle of change (Alcock, 2009) <sup>[1]</sup>. This theoretical framework relates to this study due to the fact that all projects interventions are meant to bring change to the livelihood of the beneficiaries, and that all CDF projects at local level should translate positivity change to the well-being of the people at local level.

## 2. Literature Review

In the 1990s, the government of Mexico launched an innovative conditional cash transfer (CCT) program called "Progresa" and conducted an Impact evaluation as one of the M&E processes on this project. The objectives of this project were to provide poor households with short-term income support and to create incentives to investments in children's human capital, primarily by providing cash transfers to mothers in poor household's conditional on their children regularly attending school and visiting a health center. Schultz (2004) <sup>[34]</sup> found that the program significantly improved school enrollment, by an average of 0.7 additional years of schooling. Gertler (2004) <sup>[9]</sup> found that the incidence of illness in children decreased by 23 percent, while adults reported a 19 percent reduction in the number of sick or disability days. Among the nutritional outcomes, Behrman and Hoddinott (2001) <sup>[2]</sup> found that the program reduced the probability of stunting by about 1 centimeter per year for children in the critical age range of 12 to 36 months.

In Kenya, another study reviewed the use of Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Practices in the implementation of CDF funded projects. A study conducted on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E) Practices and Performance of Selected National Government Constituency Development Fund Projects in Samburu County, Kenya shows that PM&E is embedded in the implementation phase as a very essential and continuous process for improving performance (Sugal; 2017) <sup>[37]</sup>. According to Jackson and Kassam (1998) <sup>[14]</sup>, PM&E is "a process of self-assessment, collective knowledge generation, and cooperative action in which stakeholders in a program or intervention substantively and collaboratively identify the evaluation issues, collect and analyze data, and take-action because of what they learn through this process. This process provides feedback on the progress of the project's implementation for the purposes of adjustment, improvement and keeping the project on track. M&E, however, is an activity that involves several processes that might be hard for ordinary community members to undertake without undergoing training (Engela and Ajam, 2010) <sup>[8]</sup>.

Generally, for Kenya to remain on target for SDGs and Vision 2030, Participatory monitoring and evaluation of NG-CDF projects is a key study area (Mutua *et al*, 2013) <sup>[26]</sup>. Project progress monitoring is an important task in project management.

In May 2012, the Government of the United States of America acting through the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Government of the Republic of Zambia (GRZ) entered into the Millennium Challenge Compact for a grant of US\$354 million for the implementation of the Lusaka Water Supply Sanitation and Drainage (LWSSD) Project ("the Project") to be implemented by the Millennium Challenge Account Zambia (MCA-Zambia). The project was aimed to expand access to, and improve the reliability of, water supply and sanitation, and improve drainage services in select urban and peri-urban areas of the city of Lusaka. This was aimed at decreasing the incidence of waterborne and water-related diseases, generate time savings for households and businesses and reduce non-revenue water. It was expected that 1.2 million people in Lusaka would benefit from the project. The project was to be implemented over a period of

five years from 2013 to 2018. The Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Plan as a tool to manage the process of monitoring, evaluating and reporting progress towards Compact results was planned to be conceived. The plan is guided by principles stipulated in the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Policy for Monitoring and Evaluation of Compacts and Threshold programs (DCI; 2007).

In Canada, monitoring and evaluation has been practiced as performance monitoring and more recently, results-based management since 1977 and has benefited from the flexibility of the government's approach (Divorski, 1998) <sup>[7]</sup>. In the time between Divorski and Lahey's studies of Canada's M&E system, the system evolved considerably to include results-based evaluations to deliver better public services and institute more people-centered policies (Government of Canada, 2009) <sup>[11]</sup>. This was in line with what had been identified as growing trend among members of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), although the Canadian government was noted for the fact that it continued to adapt not because of external pressures, but because it constantly evaluated its M&E system and made changes according to what was seen as required over time (Lahey, 2011) <sup>[19]</sup>.

In another study conducted on the implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation Practices and Performance of Constituency Development Fund Projects in Kiambaa Constituency, Kiambu County, Kenya, it was argued that proper monitoring and feedback given on time helps in workmanship control and therefore enhance the project quality. When every project activity is effectively monitored and the instances of bad workmanship and misappropriation of resources whether labor, funds or materials are quickly reported, it helps achieve good quality projects as desired. Project monitoring keeps track and records all resources used during the implementation phase Uitto, (2014) <sup>[38]</sup>.

Project evaluation investigates the project's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and determines the current project sustainability and relevance. The impact of the project is compared with the project planned objectives. Shapiro, (2014) <sup>[35]</sup> argues that project monitoring is necessary and important as it gives insight to the completion status of the project. A good project can go bad if not monitored and evaluated well. By good monitoring and evaluation, hiccups and delays can be identified quickly and easily by use of created reports periodically. Hence monitoring and evaluation is important in management of CDF projects and should be executed by well qualified persons. Kursave (2013) <sup>[18]</sup> insinuates that control with M&E ensures that all changes made to the set target are incorporated. Focus on efficiency, learning, flexibility and control aspects identifies growth. It is observed that when proper control strategies with M&E are incorporated projects remain on track with the set objectives. Gobeli & Larson (2010) <sup>[10]</sup> also imply that it is important to identify key outcomes and outputs of the projects earlier on and what indicators will be used to measure delivery.

According to a study that was conducted in Katuba constituency by Doreen Nkombo on the effect of CDF on community development, it was stressed that in accordance with the Guidelines, the local council is supposed to carry out regular audit inspections of projects and to monitor project implementation as often as necessary depending on the nature and stage of projects. The local council has the responsibility to prepare progress reports on behalf of the

community and to submit these reports to MLGH. Evaluation of projects is done hand in hand with officers from the appropriate line ministries and government departments upon completion of projects (GRZ 2006b:7).

In 2008, Brazil began its Second Minas Gerais Development Partnership Project, a sector-wide approach project of over \$1.4 billion aimed at improving the efficiency of public resource use, supporting innovations in public management, and supporting the State Government of Minas Gerais in strengthening its M&E system (World Bank 2008a). Funds were disbursed to ten eligible expenditure programmes in five sectors. To better utilize learning loops in this project, extensive results monitoring framework was built into the programme at implementation. These monitoring systems gave managers constant feedback and allowed them to work towards achieving medium-term goals on their way to achieving long-term objectives. The latest Implementation Status and Results Report rated progress towards achieving project development objectives and implementation progress as satisfactory (World Bank 2013b).

Literature shows that M&E is considered a key feature of public service delivery as it assists government to ensure good “governance, accountability, transparency, effectiveness and delivery of tangible results”, as well as to respond to the needs and demands of all its service delivery beneficiaries, (Kusek and Rist, 2004: xi) <sup>[17]</sup>. A study conducted by Okello (2014:1736) <sup>[31]</sup> found that effective service delivery is dependent on the manner in which the “objectives, indicators, inputs, outputs, outcomes, impact and implementation strategies” are structured. This permits the collection of quality data that would serve as input towards the development of policies and implementation of projects. Hence the need for an M&E framework. According to Ntoyanto (2016:14) <sup>[28]</sup>, by monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, service delivery can be ensured. Also, by practicing M&E, funds can be effectively utilised and this could also result in improved performance, more accountability and better and informed decision-making across all spheres of government. This study corroborates with the above studies and highlights that the M&E framework should be considered a critical tool that brings performance processes together for the enhancement of service delivery.

According to a study by Kanyamuna *et al* (2018) <sup>[16]</sup> on the gap analysis regarding monitoring an evaluation legislation in Zambia, he contends that M&E have the following benefits in the implementation of public projects that include CDF funded projects.

Improvement of Policy and Planning; The development parameters for countries are normally defined and facilitated by governments through various policies, plans and strategies. In that case, M&E becomes an important component in helping to inform these processes by providing evidence-based information. M&E has generally come to be considered by the global development community as a powerful tool for gathering and providing evidence-based information crucial in planning and policy-making processes (UNDP, 2002) <sup>[39]</sup>. In fact, M&E systems can produce valuable information that may feed into development policy, planning and budgeting, organisational learning and ultimately improving the effectiveness of development cooperation (Liverani, 2007) <sup>[21]</sup>.

According to a study conducted by World Bank on the Challenging Factors Facing Monitoring and Evaluation in

the World Bank Education Projects in Yemen, it was stressed that the challenges relating to “Technical capacity to implement M&E” represents the highest on the list of challenges and could be considered as the 1st challenging factor, followed by the challenges. M&E contribution to project’s success” come in the 3rd place representing the 3rd challenging factor, challenges relating to “Monitoring and Evaluation System” come in the 4th place. In the 5th place come the challenges relating to “Project management support and response to M&E results” and least challenges facing M&E in the World Bank Education projects in Yemen were those challenges relating to “Reporting requirements by donors as it occupied the 6th and the last place. In general, the results indicated that all kinds of challenges were important (World Bank, 2013) <sup>[40]</sup>.

In Somalia, a research paper on the Strengthening Monitoring and Evaluation to Promote Effective Policy Implementation in Education Sector of Somalia Inadequate technical capacity, knowledge, skills, and competencies of M&E by Jimale Khadija Abdullahi posited that there are some constrains that continue to make it less adaptable to M&E in many sectors that include education. Somalia was still recovering from the effects of civil conflicts that lasted for decades. As noted by Marriott and Goyder (2009), several organizations experience internal challenges in institutionalizing MEL which is not simply to monitoring the activities but also supporting an improved practice and accountability to the beneficiaries based on what is learned. This has been considered hard to achieve in contexts where staff, especially in the NGO sector often perceive M&E as a necessary evil, burdensome, fixed, and rigid (Mueller, 2012) <sup>[25]</sup>.

Governments and organizations worldwide have started recognizing the importance of M&E as an important management tools to track progress of programs and facilitate decision making. However, before developing an M&E system, institutions must first determine their readiness internally. This can be done by conducting a readiness assessment. Readiness assessment focuses on baseline data that indicate the level at which an organization is ready to develop an M&E system. According to the World Bank (2011) report, conducting a readiness assessment is crucial in informing and shaping the efforts to build result based M&E systems and performance matrix. The approach for conducting a readiness assessment is also articulated by Kusek and Rist (2004) <sup>[17]</sup>. The authors stress the importance of carrying out a readiness assessment before the actual development of a system. Kusek, 2004, Mackay, 2006, likens it to a building architecture and posit that just as a foundation is the beginning of construction, readiness assessment is the foundation for constructing an M&E system. Previous studies indicate that most times countries and organizations do not carry out readiness assessment before they implement their M&E systems. For instance, studies done in developing countries like Egypt, Romania, Brazil, Bangladesh, Uganda, Phillipines, Columbia, Chile, and Niger to determine the readiness of such countries to implement M&E indicated that they were not ready (Kannae, 2000; Hage, 2003 <sup>[13]</sup>; Kusek & Rist, 2002; Kusek & Rist 2004 <sup>[17]</sup>; Hage 2002; Mackay 2007). The studies revealed that the countries were characterize by inadequate structures and systems, lack of political will, ownership, incentives, demand and culture of evaluation, as well as insufficient institutional capacity and poor infrastructure



(World Bank, 2004), hence the need for M&E readiness assessment. In Kenya, the above mentioned challenges are also observed within the public sector that is struggling to build capacity to improve performance and accountability to meet the requirements of Vision 2030 and provisions of the Kenya Constitution of Kenya 2010. The Ministry of Health, whose primary role is to “provide the policy framework that will facilitate the attainment of highest possible standard of health, and in a manner responsive to the needs of the population”, is yet to adopt its independent M&E systems for assessing its programs and activities (MOH, 2014) [24]. Jili & Mthethwa (2016) [15] studied the case of the Mfoloji Municipality where they identify and analyse challenges that hamper successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation, using qualitative research design. They explore, describe and interpret perceptions of key role-players involved in monitoring and evaluation system implementation of monitoring and evaluation, using qualitative research design.

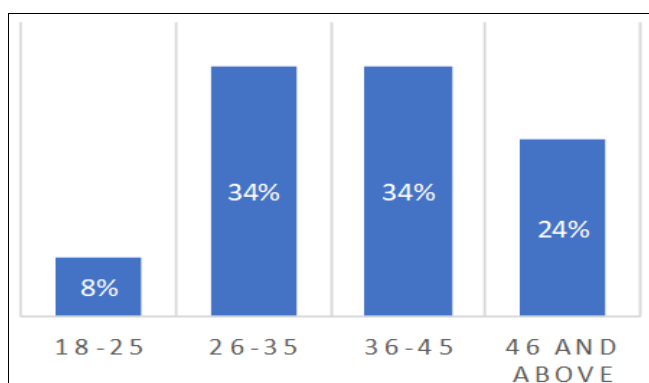
**3. Research Methodology**

**3.1 Research design**

The researcher will endeavor to use an exploratory case study as the research design. A case study is defined as a type of qualitative research design which researchers utilize to investigate a single entity or phenomenon in a specific environment (Booth, 1998) [3]. In this study, a case study design is chosen because this research will be conducted in a specific geographical area of Petauke Central constituency in some selected wards and several people (WDCs members, selected ward councilors and some municipal officials), who are the main research subjects were interviewed. In this study, the researcher will use semi-structured questionnaires and interviews to collect data from various stakeholders who will be able to provide insights on how M&E is executed during the implementation of CDF projects at local level.

**4. Results/Findings**

**4.1 Presentation of research findings**



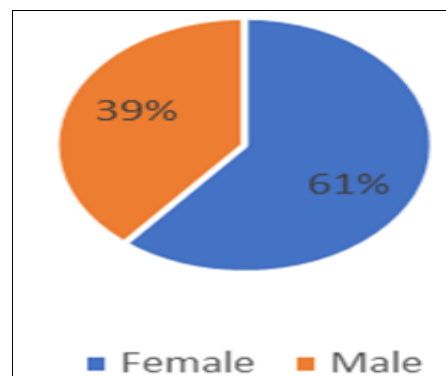
**Fig 1:** Respondents age

The data shows 8% of the respondents were aged between 18-25 years, 34% were aged between 26-35 years, 34% were also aged between 36-45 years and 24% were aged above 46 years. The data reveals a significant representation of younger respondents (26-35) at 34%, indicating that a majority of participants are likely at the early to mid-career stage.

**Table 1:** Respondents highest level of education

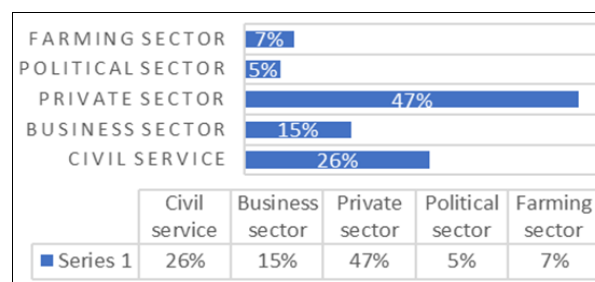
Level of education	Freq	Percentage
Certificate	37	37%
Diploma	52	52%
Degree	8	8%
Masters	3	3%

Over half of the respondents (52%) hold diplomas, followed by 37% with certificates, which suggests moderate educational attainment within the sampled population. Higher educational qualifications are minimal, with only 1% holding a master’s degree, which may limit the community’s ability to handle complex M&E methodologies.



**Fig 2:** Respondents gender

With a Female majority of 61%, gender disparity might influence perspectives on project effectiveness and transparency. In traditional settings, female might dominate project-related decision-making, potentially sidelining women’s perspectives. This female predominance could impact the inclusivity and diversity of feedback gathered and also actively encouraging female participation to provide a balanced view on project needs and outcomes



**Fig 3:** Respondents sector of employment

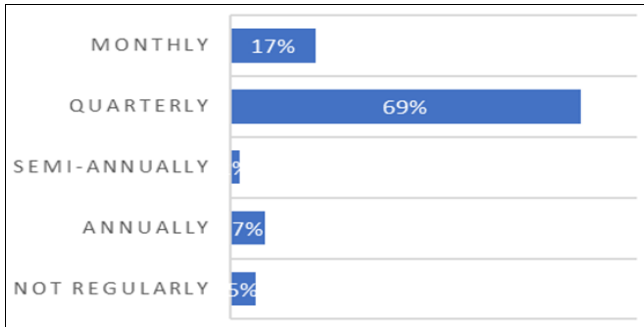
The majority of the respondents are from the private sector (47%) indicating active community engagement in M&E processes by key local private sector stakeholders

**Assessing M&E processes being implemented in CDF projects at ward level**

**Table 2:** Frequently used M&E approach in CDF projects

M&E Method	Freq	Percentage
Participatory M&E	27	27%
Process monitoring	4	4%
Financial monitoring	26	26%
Results based monitoring	43	43%

Result-based monitoring is highly favored (43%), highlighting a focus on outcome measurement rather than solely tracking processes. Result-based monitoring approach at 43% applicability at ward level could ensure CDF projects align with intended objectives.



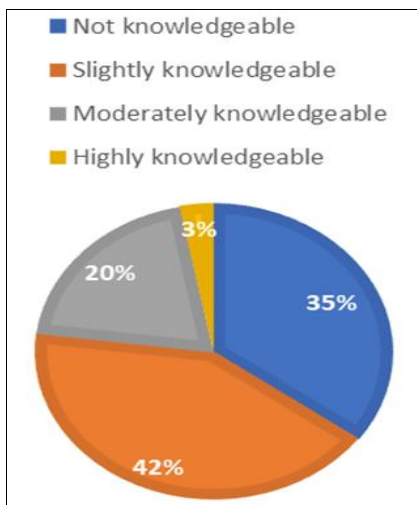
**Fig 4:** Frequency of conducting M&E during CDF project Implementation

The predominance of quarterly monitoring (69%), monthly monitoring stands at 17%, annual monitoring standing at 7%, semi-annual monitoring stands at 2% and the irregular monitoring stands at 5%. The predominance of quarterly monitoring at 69% suggests structured but not excessively frequent evaluation. Quarterly assessments allow for corrective actions within reasonable timeframes, though sporadic issues may go unnoticed between review.

**Table 3:** Effectiveness of M&E methods in enhancing project outcomes

Tyre of Response	Freq	Percentage
Very effective	9	9%
Effective	77	77%
Less effective	14	14%

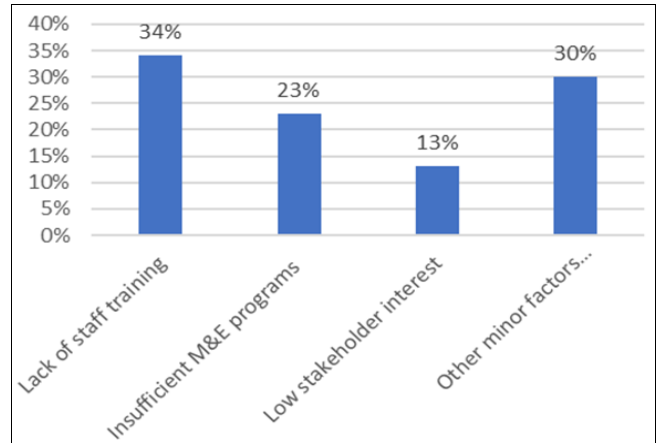
77% of the respondents rated M&E methods as effective. With the majority of respondents (77%) rating M&E methods as effective, there is a perceived alignment between monitoring practices and project success.



**Fig 5:** Knowledge of local stakeholders in M&E of CDF projects

The majority of respondents (42%) stressed there is slight knowledge on local stakeholders in M&E, 35% of respondents stressed that local stakeholders are not

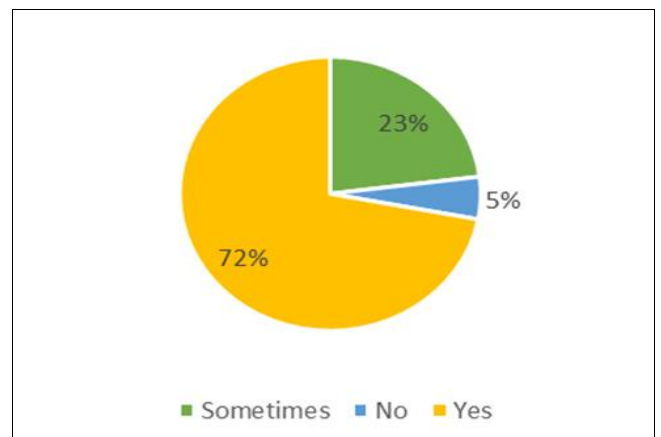
knowledgeable in M&E, 20% stressing that local stakeholders are moderately knowledgeable in M&E, and only 3% of respondents deemed local stakeholders highly knowledgeable, underscoring a critical need for skill development. Limited M&E understanding may hinder effective project evaluation, as uninformed stakeholders might miss essential assessment insights.



**Fig 6:** Factors that contribute to lack of M&E knowledge on local stakeholders

The majority of the respondents (34%) stressed lack of staff training in M&E, 30% stressed other factors such as inconsistencies in M&E implementation, 23% stressed insufficient M&E training programs while the minority group (13%) stressed low stakeholder interest in M&E. In this case, the primary factor is insufficient M&E training (34%), suggesting a training gap for community-level staff.

**Examining the implementation of M and E processes in CDF projects**



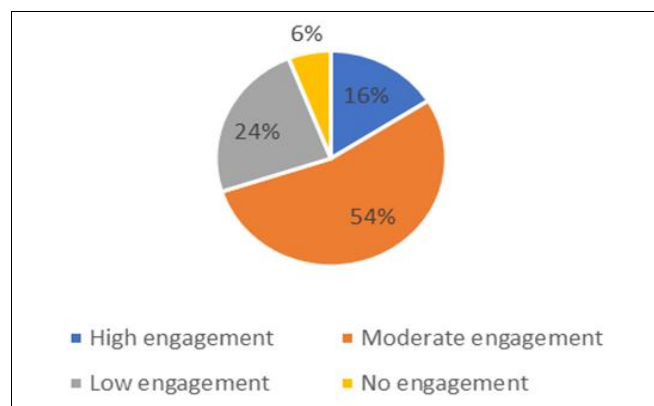
**Fig 7:** M&E execution during CDF project implementation in at ward level

A strong majority (72%) confirmed the presence of M&E during project execution, suggesting active oversight. Consistent M&E during implementation can provide timely insights, allowing for course corrections that keep projects aligned with community expectations. However, sporadic M&E (23%) indicates occasional lapses, which may reduce the process’s reliability.

**Fig 8:** Types of CDF projects with observed M&E

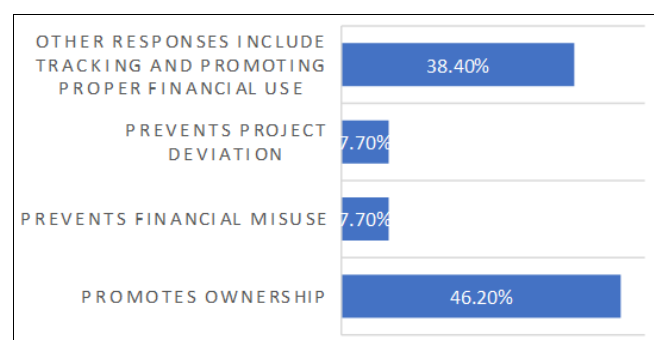
Projects being monitored	Number of respondents	Percentage
Sinking of water points	23	23%
Road construction	15	15%
School building	22	22%
All CDF projects	40	40%

40% of the respondents reported that all primary CDF project types are monitored. Comprehensive coverage of M&E in CDF projects ensures an inclusive approach to M&E, which is essential for equitable resource distribution across project types.



**Fig 9:** Rating the level of stakeholder engagement in the implementation of M&E in CDF projects at ward level

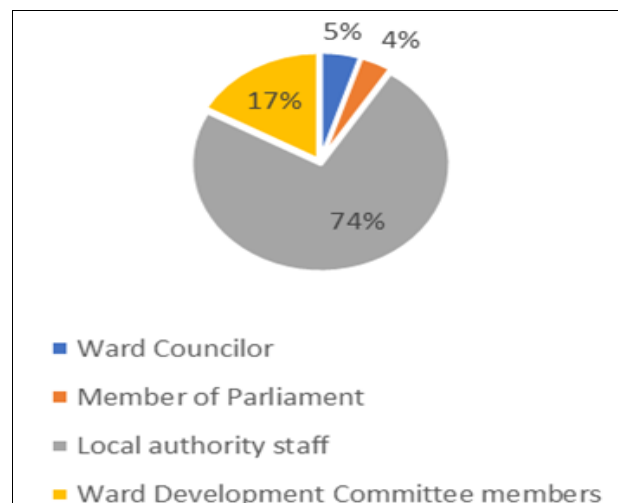
54% of respondents reported moderate engagement of local stakeholders in CDF projects at ward level, 24% reported low engagement of local stakeholders, 16% reported high engagement of local stakeholders while 6% reported no engagement of local stakeholders in CDF projects at ward level. Moderate engagement (54%) reflects stakeholder interest but indicates room for improvement.



**Fig 10:** How high stakeholder engagement in project monitoring influences effective CDF project implementation

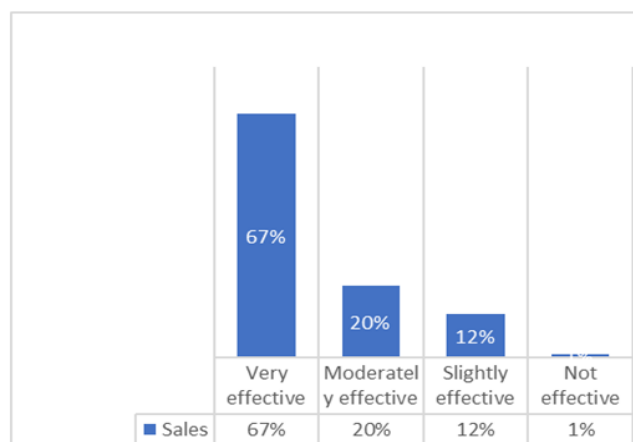
High engagement is seen as a factor in project ownership (46%), which helps prevent resource mismanagement as well as promoting project ownership by local stakeholder.

Ownership fosters community accountability, which is critical in monitoring project funds and reducing waste.



**Fig 11:** Types of stakeholders highly involved in CDF project monitoring

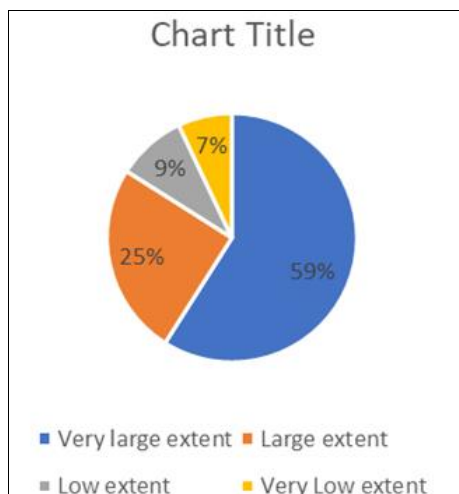
The majority of respondents (74%) reported high involvement of Local authority staff in CDF project monitoring at ward level. High involvement Local authority staff play a crucial role in project monitoring, reflecting a strong institutional presence. Their involvement ensures that M&E activities align with governance standards, but the limited participation of other stakeholders (e.g., community members) suggests a need for broader inclusion.



**Fig 12:** Effectiveness of M&E and how it influences sound CDF projects outcomes at ward level

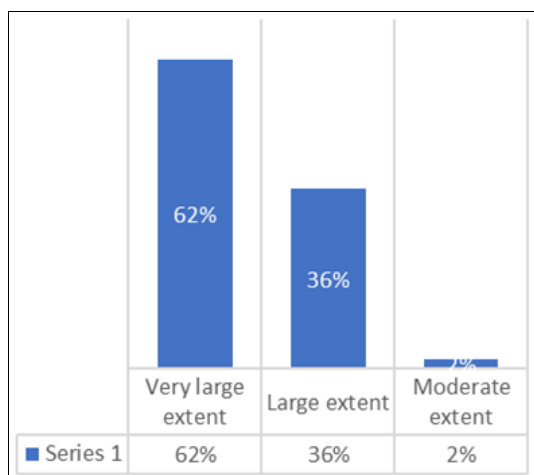
The high perception of M&E effectiveness (67%) suggests it positively impacts project outcomes by ensuring goals are met. Effective M&E promotes evidence-based decision-making, reducing the likelihood of project failure.

### Analyzing the effects of the implementation of M&E on CDF projects performance



**Fig 13:** The Extent to which M&E promotes systematic CDF project management

A significant 59% of respondents find M&E very helpful in promoting systematic management, indicating that monitoring fosters structured project implementation, aligning activities with established guidelines.



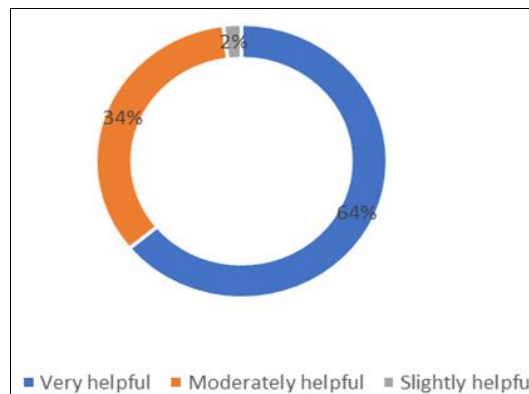
**Fig 14:** The extent to which M&E help to measure CDF project performance

A large portion of respondents (62%) believe M&E is instrumental to a very large extent in assessing performance against standards, indicating its importance in maintaining quality and relevance in project outcomes.

**Table 4:** Effectiveness of M&E in enhancing projects goal attainment during CDF project implementation

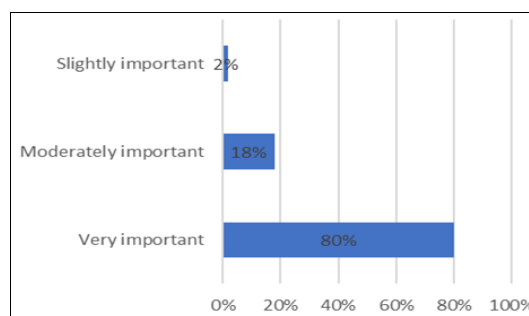
Response	Freq	Percentage
Very effective	71	73%
Moderately effective	15	15%
Less effective	12	12%

73% of the respondents indicated that M&E is very effective in fostering the process of meeting projects goals, signifying the importance of informed monitoring practices. This finding implies that well-informed M&E participants can make more meaningful contributions, guiding projects to meet both immediate and strategic objectives.



**Fig 15:** Helpfulness of M&E in minimizing project failure risks

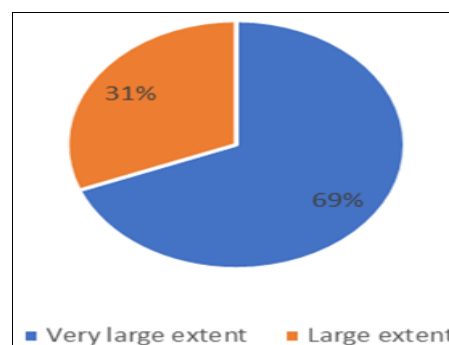
The majority of respondents (64%) rate M&E as very helpful in minimizing risks, which underscores its preventative value in project management. Effective monitoring likely addresses potential issues proactively, mitigating failure risks and enhancing project success rates. By identifying deviations early, M&E enables timely corrective actions, improving project outcomes.



**Fig 16:** The importance of capacity building and training in M&E in CDF projects for stakeholders

A strong majority of respondents (80%) view capacity building as very important, highlighting a recognition that skilled stakeholders can significantly enhance project outcomes. Training in M&E practices equips local stakeholders to handle project monitoring independently, promoting sustainability in the long term.

### Exploring the challenges faced in the implementation of M and E in CDF projects at local level

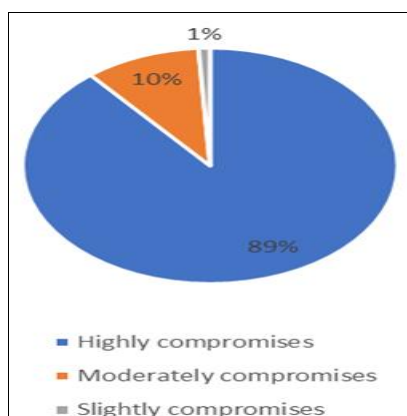


**Fig 17:** The extent to which poor quality data of M&E affect CDF projects success at ward level

A considerable 69% of respondents indicated that poor tracking data of M&E affects CDF project implementation process to a very large extent, which suggests that data



quality directly influences project outcomes. Poor data can lead to inaccurate project assessments, misinforming decision-makers and compromising project success.



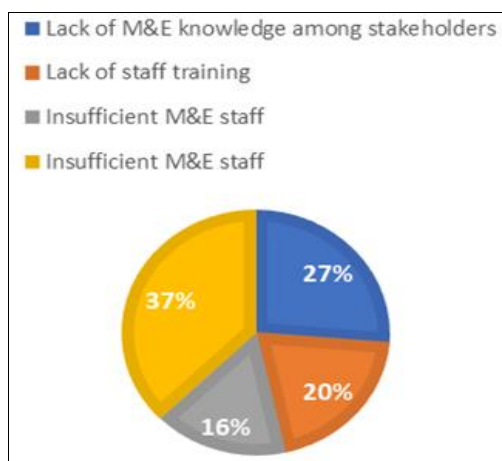
**Fig 18:** The level to which financial constraints on M&E compromises CDF project implementation

89% of respondents see financial constraints as a substantial limitation, indicating that limited funding often hampers M&E activities in CDF projects. Insufficient funds may restrict essential monitoring tasks, such as field visits and data collection, which undermines project oversight. Increasing CDF budgets for M&E or reallocating existing funds could address these financial constraints, allowing for more robust project evaluation.

**Table 5:** The extent to which skills gap in M&E affects successive CDF project implementation

Response	Freq	Percentage
Very high extent	74	74%
High extent	22	22%
Low extent	3	3%
Very low extent	1	3%

74% of respondents reported skills gaps as a major challenge to M&E success. Without the necessary skills, stakeholders may struggle with key M&E functions, resulting in incomplete or inaccurate project evaluations. Addressing skills gaps through targeted training initiatives could strengthen M&E practices, building local expertise to sustain M&E activities independently.



**Fig 19:** Other challenges affecting M&E during CDF project implementation

37% of the respondents identified the insufficient number of M&E staff as a significant challenge. Limited M&E staff hinders effective M&E implementation, as stakeholders may overlook crucial aspects of project monitoring.

### 4.2 Discussion

The study's age distribution highlights a majority of participants in the 18–35 age range (68%). This young demographic reflects an active, potentially innovative population that may bring energy and new perspectives to M&E practices within CDF projects.

The educational background, with a majority holding diplomas (52%) and certificates (37%), points to a moderately educated population involved in CDF projects. Higher education, such as degrees and master's, is limited, suggesting a gap in advanced M&E competencies. The preference for result-based monitoring (43%) suggests a focus on tangible project outcomes, ensuring CDF projects meet specific objectives.

Quarterly monitoring (69%) is the most common, allowing structured assessments within reasonable intervals. With 77% rating M&E methods as effective, there's a strong positive perception of current practices. This finding suggests that M&E efforts generally align with project needs, fostering confidence in project oversight and accountability. Low levels of M&E knowledge among stakeholders (only 3% highly knowledgeable) highlight a critical need for educational initiatives.

With 72% affirming active M&E, there is robust oversight of CDF projects during implementation. However, the 23% reporting sporadic M&E highlights occasional lapses that may undermine project reliability. The high involvement of local authority staff (74%) ensures that M&E activities align with governance standards.

High ratings of M&E effectiveness (67%) in improving project outcomes demonstrate its perceived value. The view that M&E is instrumental in assessing performance (62%, indicating a very large extent) underscores its importance as a benchmarking tool. Effective M&E practices allow for comparisons against targets, helping stakeholders to identify areas that need improvement.

The view that skills gaps in M&E hinders project success (79%) points to a critical need for training and capacity building. Without the required skills, stakeholders may struggle to execute effective M&E, compromising project evaluations. Time constraints, identified by 82% as a significant issue, suggest that limited time affects M&E thoroughness. Insufficient time may prevent comprehensive evaluations, especially in complex projects requiring detailed monitoring.

A lack of M&E knowledge among stakeholders (26%) is identified as a major barrier to effective project monitoring. Without proper M&E understanding, stakeholders may overlook critical aspects of project assessment, reducing evaluation accuracy.

### 4.3 Conclusion

The study was aimed at providing an evaluation on the effectiveness of M&E in enhancing CDF project performance at local level, taking Petauke central constituency as the case study. Based on the data collected, the majority of respondents who participated in this research reported that M&E practices are vital for fostering the success of CDF projects through improved transparency,

accountability, and systematic management. They believed that M&E played a crucial role in keeping projects aligned with local needs, thus increasing public trust.

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