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Examining Effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation Strategies in CDF Projects: A Case Study for Kasama District

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategies in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kasama District, Zambia. Despite substantial financial allocations to the CDF, which amounted to K36.1 million per district in 2025, many projects fail to achieve their intended outcomes due to inadequate M&E frameworks. Previous studies have shown that only 35% of CDF projects meet their objectives, highlighting a critical gap in project management and accountability.

The primary objectives of this research are to establish the current M&E practices employed in CDF projects, assess their effectiveness in enhancing project performance, identify challenges affecting implementation, and evaluate the impact of community engagement on M&E effectiveness. To achieve these objectives, a descriptive research design was utilized, involving structured questionnaires administered to 59 stakeholders, including project managers, contractors, and community members.

Key findings indicate that while 22.03% of projects have a fully operational M&E framework, 38.98% report that their frameworks are still under development. Community participation in the M&E process is often limited, with 57.63% of respondents indicating that community members are only involved in feedback sessions. Despite these limitations, M&E findings have led to changes in project implementation: 54.24% of respondents reported minor adjustments, while 40.68% noted major changes based on M&E insights. Additionally, 83.05% of respondents expressed satisfaction with current M&E practices.

Based on these findings, the study recommends standardizing M&E frameworks across all CDF projects, enhancing training programs for staff on M&E practices, and improving strategies for community engagement. By addressing these areas, the CDF program can strengthen its M&E strategies, ultimately resulting in more effective project outcomes and greater benefits for the communities in Kasama District.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Constituency Development Fund, Community Engagement

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are critical for the success of CDF projects in Kasama District, Zambia. This study explores current M&E systems and their impact on project outcomes, emphasizing accountability and transparency as mandated by the Zambian Constitution (Republic of Zambia, 2016) [34]. Effective M&E practices align development initiatives with community needs (Kusek & Rist, 2004) [20]. The Kasama Town Council plays a vital role in overseeing these projects, advocating for participatory approaches (Kasama Town Council, 2022). This research aims to provide insights that support national and global development objectives, including the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). The CDF was established to empower local communities through financial resources for projects addressing specific needs, such as education and infrastructure. However, many projects fail to meet their goals due to weak M&E systems. In 2025, Zambia allocated K36.1 million to each district for the CDF, yet only 35% of projects in the Eastern Province met their objectives (Chibwana *et al.*, 2020) [8]. In Kasama, 60% of residents felt uninformed about project progress (Kasama Town Council, 2022). Successful

districts like Copperbelt have demonstrated better M&E practices, achieving a 70% project success rate due to dedicated M&E units (Copperbelt Provincial Council, 2021) ^[10]. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of current M&E systems in Kasama and identify best practices for improvement.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite significant CDF allocations, many projects struggle to achieve their objectives due to inadequate M&E systems. Research shows that only 35% of CDF projects in some regions meet their goals, indicating a critical gap in public resource management (Chibwana *et al.*, 2020) ^[8]. In Kasama District, many projects face delays and poor execution due to weak M&E mechanisms, with 60% of residents feeling uninformed about project progress (Kasama Town Council, 2022). This lack of transparency can diminish trust in local governance. The study seeks to examine the effectiveness of current M&E systems in Kasama to improve project implementation and outcomes.

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1 General objective

1. To examine the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation strategies in the management of CDF-funded projects in Kasama District.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To establish the current M&E practices used in CDF-funded projects in Kasama District.
2. To examine the effectiveness of M&E processes in enhancing project performance.
3. To identify challenges affecting the implementation of M&E in CDF-funded projects.
4. To assess the impact of community engagement on the effectiveness of M&E practices in CDF-funded projects in Kasama District.

1.4 Research Question

1. What M&E practices are currently implemented in CDF-funded projects in Kasama District?
2. How effective are the M&E processes in improving project performance?
3. What challenges are encountered in the implementation of M&E in CDF-funded projects?
4. How does community engagement influence the effectiveness of M&E practices in CDF-funded projects in Kasama District?

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Results-Based Management (RBM) serves as the foundation for this study, emphasizing the achievement of specific outcomes through clearly defined objectives (UNDP, 2009) ^[39]. RBM promotes systematic monitoring and evaluation throughout the project lifecycle, enhancing accountability and transparency (Kusek & Rist, 2004) ^[20]. This study aims to identify gaps in current M&E practices and propose improvements based on RBM principles.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview

A literature review synthesizes existing research on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategies in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kasama District, Zambia. It identifies key findings, gaps in

knowledge, and the challenges faced by CDF projects, emphasizing the importance of effective project management and M&E practices for local development (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

2.2 Current M&E Practices in CDF-Funded Projects

Understanding current M&E strategic practices is essential for assessing project management effectiveness. Effective M&E systems ensure accountability and improve project outcomes (World Bank, 2018) ^[44]. Research indicates significant variability in M&E practices across regions. For instance, a study by Muli (2020) found that only 40% of CDF projects in Kenya had formal M&E systems, highlighting the need for robust frameworks. Participatory approaches, where local communities are involved, have been shown to increase project success rates by 25% (Kenya National Audit Office, 2021). However, challenges such as inadequate funding, lack of trained personnel, and insufficient community engagement hinder effective M&E implementation (Ndung'u, 2019).

2.3 Effectiveness of M&E Processes in Enhancing Project Performance

M&E strategies are crucial for enhancing project performance. A study by Karanja (2022) found that projects with well-implemented M&E frameworks were 40% more likely to achieve their intended results. The African Development Bank (2020) ^[2] reported that CDF projects with comprehensive M&E systems had a 35% higher completion rate. Challenges include insufficient funding for M&E activities and a lack of trained personnel, with only 25% of project managers receiving formal training (Muli, 2020). Integrating technology into M&E has shown promise, with mobile data collection tools leading to a 25% increase in data accuracy (Ochieng, 2021) ^[30].

2.4 Challenges Affecting M&E Implementation in CDF Projects

Key challenges affecting M&E implementation include limited capacity and training of personnel, with only 40% of officials adequately trained (Zambia Governance Foundation, 2020) ^[47]. Insufficient funding for M&E activities and community disengagement are also significant barriers (UPND, 2021) ^[41]. Political interference can disrupt M&E processes, leading to project misalignment with community needs (Chileshe, 2021). Addressing these challenges is critical for improving M&E effectiveness.

2.5 Impact of Community Engagement on M&E Effectiveness

Community engagement is vital for the success of CDF projects. Involvement of local communities in M&E processes enhances project outcomes, with studies showing a 30% increase in stakeholder satisfaction when communities are engaged (Muli, 2020). The Zambia National Development Plan emphasizes the need for participatory approaches (Government of Zambia, 2021) ^[18]. However, challenges remain, including limited training for officials on effective community engagement strategies (Zambia Governance Foundation, 2020) ^[47].

2.6 Personal Critique of the Literature Review

The literature review effectively covers local, regional, and global perspectives on M&E practices, relying on reputable

sources. However, it could benefit from deeper analyses of how challenges interact and from more quantitative data to strengthen findings. Additionally, cultural factors influencing M&E practices in Zambia need further exploration.

2.7 Establishment of Research Gaps

Several research gaps exist, including the need for studies exploring the interconnectedness of challenges affecting M&E practices. More research is needed on how cultural factors influence M&E implementation and on the long-term impacts of M&E practices. Additionally, there is a lack of studies focusing on the specific technologies that enhance M&E practices in Zambia.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter outlines the research methodology used to assess the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) strategies in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kasama District, Zambia. It details the research design, sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to systematically describe current M&E practices in CDF projects, allowing for the capture of stakeholder perceptions (Creswell & Clark, 2007) [12]. Structured questionnaires facilitated efficient data collection from a broad participant range (Bryman, 2016) [6].

3.3 Target Population

The target population included project managers, contractors, and stakeholders involved in CDF-funded construction projects, with a goal of including 59 diverse participants.

3.4 Sampling Design

A random sampling technique was utilized to ensure each stakeholder had an equal chance of selection, helping to avoid bias and accurately represent the experiences related to M&E practices (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011 [9]; Trochim, 2006).

3.5 Sample Size

A sample of 59 respondents was selected, providing substantial data for analysis and diverse perspectives on CDF-funded projects.

3.6 Data Collection

Primary data was gathered through structured questionnaires administered in person at construction sites, enhancing rapport and understanding (McBurney & White, 2010) [24]. Secondary data from government reports and academic sources supplemented the findings (Babbie, 2016) [4].

3.7 Data Analysis

Statistical software, STATA was used for data analysis, enabling the creation of statistical tables and visual representations to identify patterns and trends (StataCorp, 2021; Field, 2013) [38, 14].

3.8 Triangulation

While triangulation enhances reliability by using multiple data sources (Denzin, 1978) [13], this study primarily focused on survey questionnaires due to time constraints.

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Challenges included the cost of printing materials and participant hesitance to share honest opinions, potentially affecting data quality (Robson, 2011; McLeod, 2019).

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were followed, including obtaining informed consent and ensuring participant confidentiality (American Psychological Association, 2017 [3]; Beauchamp & Childress, 2013). This approach aimed to create a trustworthy environment for participants.

4. Results/Findings

4.1 Presentation of results on background characteristics of the respondents

a) Gender of the respondents

Table 1: Gender of the respondents

Gender of respondent			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Male	34	57.63%	57.63
Female	25	42.37%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data shows that 57.63% of the total are male and 42.37%, are female.

b) Age range

Table 2: Age range

What is your age range?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
18- 36	27	45.76%	45.76
37- 50	31	52.54%	98.31
Above 50	1	1.69%	100
Total	59	100	

The age distribution of the respondents reveals important insights into the demographic profile of the participants in this study. Out of the 59 respondents, the majority fall into the age group of 37 to 50 years, with 31 individuals representing 52.54% of the total. The second largest group consists of younger respondents aged 18 to 36 years, totaling 27 participants, or 45.76%. Only 1 respondent, accounting for 1.69%, is above 50 years old.

c) Highest level of education

Table 3: Highest level of education

What is your highest level of education?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Secondary	6	10.17%	10.17
Certificate level	6	10.17%	20.34
Diploma level	10	16.95%	37.29
Degree level	16	27.12%	64.41
Masters level	21	35.59%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data shows that out of the 59 respondents, the largest group, comprising 21 individuals, or 35.59%, holds a master's degree. 16 respondents, or 27.12%, have completed a bachelor's degree. 10 respondents, or 16.95%, have attained a diploma, while another 6 respondents (10.17%) have completed secondary education and holds a certificate level qualification respectively.

d) Current occupation of the respondent

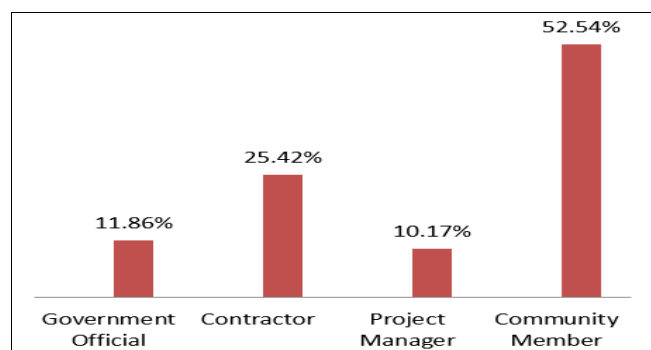


Fig 1: Current occupation

The data shows the largest group, comprising 52.54% of the participants, are community members. 25.42%, are contractors while 11.86% of the respondents, are government officials and 10.17% of the respondents, are project managers.

e) Years of experience in Government Projects

Table 4: Years of experience in Government Projects

Years of Experience in Government Projects	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Less than 5 years	16	27.12	27.12
5-10 years	25	42.37	69.49
11-15 years	10	16.95	86.44
More than 15 years	8	13.56	100
Total	59	100	

The data shows that 42.37% of the respondents have between 5 to 10 years of experience in government projects. 27.12% have less than 5 years of experience in government projects. 16.95% of the respondents have 11 to 15 years experience and 13.56% consists of those with more than 15 years of experience.

f) Have you worked in any Government project, which sector?

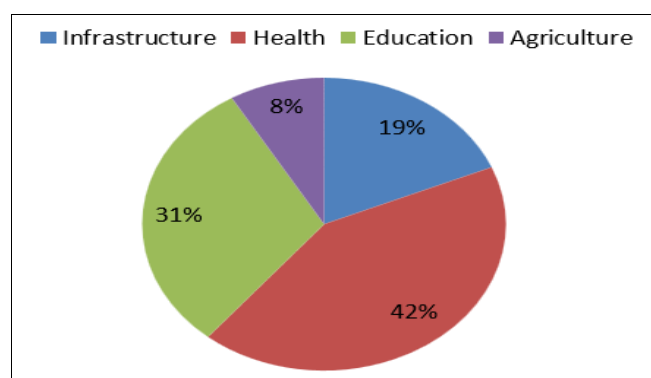


Fig 2: Experience in Government Projects by Sector

The pie chart shows that the largest sector represented is Health, accounting for 42% of the respondents. The second-largest sector is Infrastructure, comprising 31% of the respondents. The Education sector accounts for 19% of the respondents and the Agriculture sector represents 8% of the respondents.

4.2 Presentation of results on objective one: To establish the current monitoring and evaluation practices used in CDF funded projects in Kasama District

a) Formal M&E framework in place

Table 5: Formal M&E framework in place

Does this project have a formal M&E framework in place?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes, it is fully operational.	13	22.03%	22.03
Yes, but it is still under development.	23	38.98%	61.02
No, we are planning to create one.	22	37.29%	98.31
No, we do not have any framework	1	1.69%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data shows that, the largest group, comprising 38.98% of the respondents, indicates that their projects have a formal M&E framework, but it is still under development. The second-largest group, at 37.29%, reports that their projects do not have a formal M&E framework in place, but they are planning to create one. 22.03% of the respondents state that their projects have a fully operational formal M&E framework and (1.69%) of the respondents indicate that their projects do not have any formal M&E framework in place.

b) How frequent are M &E activities conducted in this project?

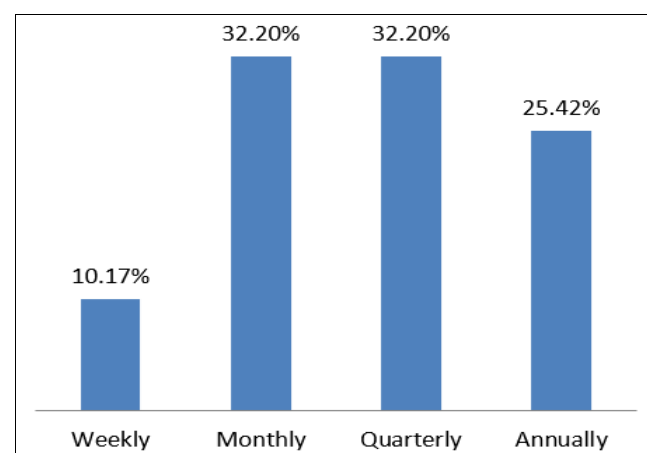


Fig 3: Frequent of M &E activities conducted in this project

The largest proportion, 32.20% of the respondents, indicates that M&E activities are conducted on a monthly basis. 32.20% of the respondents report that M&E activities are carried out on a quarterly basis, 25.42% of the respondents, states that M&E activities are conducted annually and 10.17% of the respondents, indicates that M&E activities are carried out on a weekly basis.

c) Which method do you primarily use for data collection?

Table 6: Methods used for data collection

Which method do you primarily use for data collection?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Surveys (online or paper-based)	1	1.69%	1.69
Interviews (one-on-one)	15	25.42%	27.12
Focus Groups (group discussions)	24	40.68%	67.8
Observations (site visits)	19	32.2%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data provides insights into the primary methods used for data collection within the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects. The most commonly used method, according to 40.68% of the respondents, is Focus Groups or group discussions. The second-most prevalent method, utilized by 32.2% of the respondents, is Observations or site visits. Interviews, either one-on-one or in small groups, are the primary data collection method for 25.42% of the respondents. Only 1.69% of the respondents indicate that they primarily use Surveys, either online or paper-based, for data collection.

d) Are community members involved in the M&E process?

Table 7: Community members involvement in the M&E process

Are community members involved in the M&E process?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes, they actively participate in all sessions	24	40.68%	40.68
Yes, but only in feedback sessions.	34	57.63%	98.31
No, but we plan to involve them.	1	1.69%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data provides insights into the level of community member involvement in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects under study. The majority of the respondents, 57.63%, indicate that community members are involved in the M&E process, but only during feedback sessions. 40.68% of the respondents, report that community members are actively involved in all M&E sessions and 1.69% of the respondents, state that community members are not currently involved in the M&E process, but there are plans to involve them in the future.

e) Primary indicator used to measure project success

Table 8: Primary indicator used to measure project success

What type of indicator is primarily used to measure project success?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Output Indicators (e.g., number of people served)	7	11.86%	11.86
Outcome Indicators (e.g., changes in health status)	18	30.51%	42.37
Impact Indicators (e.g., long-term community benefits)	23	38.98%	81.36
We do not use specific indicators.	11	18.64%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data provides insights into the primary types of indicators used to measure the success of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects under study. 38.98% of the respondents, indicate that they primarily use Impact Indicators to measure project success. 30.51% of the respondents chose Outcome Indicators and 11.86% of the respondents, indicate that they primarily use Output Indicators to measure project success. 18.64% of the respondents state that they do not use specific indicators to measure project success.

f) How does your organization ensure the involvement of various stakeholders in the M&E process?

Table 9: Involvement of various stakeholders in the M&E process

How does your organization ensure the involvement of various stakeholders in the M&E process?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Stakeholder workshops	31	52.54%	52.54
Regular updates and consultations	14	23.73%	76.27
Inclusion in planning stages	11	18.64%	94.92
We do not involve stakeholders.	3	5.08%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data provides insights into how the organizations responsible for the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects under study ensure the involvement of various stakeholders in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process. The most common approach, utilized by 52.54% of the respondents, is through Stakeholder Workshops. 23.73% of the respondents indicate that they ensure stakeholder involvement through Regular Updates and Consultations. 18.64% of the respondents, report that they involve stakeholders during the Planning Stages of the M&E process. 5.08% of the respondents, state that they do not involve stakeholders in the M&E process at all.

4.3 Presentation of results on objective two: To examine the effectiveness of M&E processes in enhancing project performance

a) Has M&E findings led to any changes in project implementation?

Table 10: Has M&E findings led to any changes in project implementation?

Have M&E findings led to any changes in project implementation?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes, major changes were made based on findings	24	40.68%	40.68
Yes, minor adjustments were implemented	32	54.24%	94.24
No, changes were made despite findings	3	5.08%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented provides insights into the extent to which Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) findings have led to changes in the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects. The majority of the respondents, 54.24%, indicate that M&E findings have resulted in minor adjustments being implemented in the project activities. 40.68% of the respondents, report that M&E findings have led to major changes in the project implementation. 5.08% of the respondents, state that no

changes were made despite the M&E findings.

b) How satisfied are you with the current M&E practices?

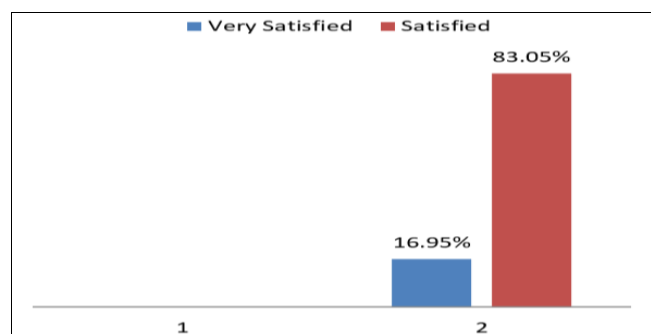


Fig 4: Current Satisfaction of the current M&E practices

The data shows the level of satisfaction with the current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices among the respondents. The majority of the respondents, 83.05%, are "Satisfied" with the M&E practices. 16.95% of the respondents, are "Very Satisfied" with the M&E practices.

c) How well is the current M&E practices align with project objectives?

Table 11: How well is the current M&E practices align with project objectives?

How well is the current M&E practices align with project objectives?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Very Well Aligned	14	23.73%	23.73
Somewhat Aligned	41	69.49%	93.22
Poorly Aligned	4	6.78%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented provides insights into the alignment between the current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices and the project objectives of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) initiatives. 69.49%, indicate that the M&E practices are "Somewhat Aligned" with the project objectives. 23.73% of the respondents, report that the M&E practices are "Very Well Aligned" with the project objectives while 6.78% of the respondents, state that the M&E practices are "Poorly Aligned" with the project objectives.

4.4 Presentation of results on objective three: To identify challenges affecting the implementation of M&E in CDF funded projects

a) The most significant barrier to effective M&E in your project

Table 12: The most significant barrier to effective M&E in your project

What do you consider the most significant barrier to effective M&E in your project?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Lack of financial resources	6	10.17%	10.17
Lack of trained personnel	9	15.25%	25.42
Political interference in project decision	32	54.24%	79.66
Community disengagement from the process	12	20.34%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data highlights the most significant barriers to effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) implementation in the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) funded projects. The most prominent barrier identified by the respondents is "Political interference in project decision", with 54.24% of the respondents indicating this as the most significant challenge. The second most significant barrier, as reported by 20.34% of the respondents, is "Community disengagement from the process". 15.25% of the respondents identified "Lack of trained personnel" as a significant barrier to effective M&E implementation. 10.17% of the respondents cited "Lack of financial resources" as the most significant barrier.

b) How often do you receive training on M&E practices?

Table 13: Training on M&E practices

How often do you receive training on M&E practices?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Every 6 months	5	8.47%	8.47
Once a year	4	6.78%	15.25
Rarely (less than once a year)	28	47.46%	62.71
Never	22	37.29%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data provides insights into the frequency of training on Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices received by the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) project teams. 37.29%, indicate that they have "Never" received any training on M&E practices. 47.46% of the respondents report that they receive training on M&E practices "Rarely (less than once a year)". 6.78%, state that they receive M&E training "Once a year", and 8.47% report receiving training "Every 6 months".

c) Is there a dedicated team for M&E in your organization?

Table 14: Is there a dedicated team for M&E in your organization?

Is there a dedicated team for M&E in your organization?	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes, a full-time dedicated team exists.	4	6.78%	6.78
Yes, but it's part-time or shared with	41	69.49%	76.27
No, but we plan to establish one soon.	10	16.95%	93.22
No, there is no dedicated team.	4	6.78%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented provides insights into the presence and structure of dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) teams within the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) organizations. 69.49%, indicate that their organizations have a "Yes, but it's part-time or shared with" dedicated M&E team. 16.95% of the respondents, report that their organizations "No, but we plan to establish one soon." This indicates that there is an awareness and intention to strengthen the M&E capacity within the CDF projects, and some organizations are in the process of or planning to establish dedicated M&E teams. However, 6.78% of the respondents state that their organizations have "No, there is no dedicated team" for M&E and 6.78% of the respondents indicate that their organizations have a "Yes, a full-time dedicated team exists."

d) Main challenges in implementing M&E processes

Table 15: Main challenges in implementing M&E processes

What are the main challenges you face in implementing M&E processes?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Lack of funding for M&E activities	7	11.86%	11.86
Limited training for staff on M&E practices	26	44.07%	55.93
Insufficient engagement from the community	22	37.29%	93.22
Inadequate tools and resources for data	4	6.78%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented highlights the main challenges faced by the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in implementing effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes. 44.07% of the respondents, is "Limited training for staff on M&E practices." 37.29% of the respondents indicate "Insufficient engagement from the community." 11.86% of the respondents cited "Lack of funding for M&E activities" as a significant challenge and 6.78% of the respondents identified "Inadequate tools and resources for data" as a challenge in implementing M&E processes.

e) capacity rate of your organization to implement effective M&E

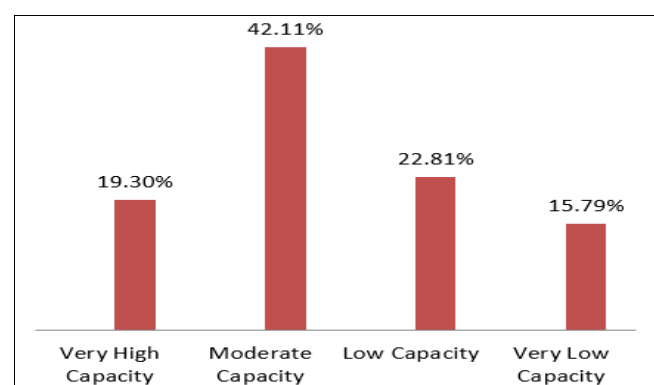


Fig 5: Capacity rate of your organization to implement effective M&E

The data provides insights into the capacity levels of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) organizations to implement effective Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes. The most prominent capacity level is "Moderate Capacity," with 42.11% of the respondents falling into this category. The second-highest capacity level is "Low Capacity," with 22.81% of the respondents. 19.30% of the respondents report having a "Very High Capacity" for M&E implementation and 15.79% of the respondents fall into the "Very Low Capacity" category.

f) What support would most improve M&E implementation in this project?

Table 16: Support to improve M&E implementation

What support would most improve M&E implementation in this project?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Funding for M&E activities	22	37.29%	37.29
Training and capacity building	25	42.37%	79.66
Better community engagement strategies	10	16.95%	96.61
Improved data collection tools	2	3.39%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data highlights the key areas of support that would most improve the implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes within the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects. The most significant area of support, as identified by 42.37% of the respondents, is "Training and capacity building." The second most important area of support, as cited by 37.29% of the respondents, is "Funding for M&E activities." 16.95% of the respondents identified "Better community engagement strategies" as an important area of support to improve M&E implementation. 3.39% of the respondents cited "Improved data collection tools" as an area of support that would most improve M&E implementation.

4.5 Presentation of results on objective four: To assess the impact of community engagement on the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices in CDF-funded projects in Kasama District

a) How crucial is community engagement in your M&E practices?

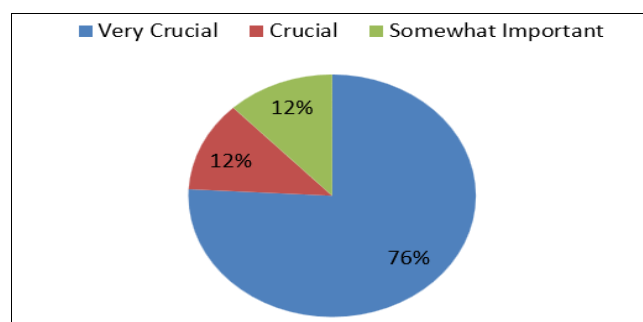


Fig 6: How crucial is community engagement in your M&E practices

The pie chart presented as Fig 6 provides valuable insights into the perceived importance of community engagement in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF)-funded projects in Kasama District. 76% of the respondents, consider community engagement to be "Very Crucial" for the effectiveness of their M&E practices. 12% of the respondents view community engagement as "Crucial," another 12% of the respondents consider community engagement to be "Somewhat Important" for their M&E practices.

b) Do you believe that community engagement improves project outcomes?

Table 17: Do you believe that community engagement improves project outcomes

Do you believe that community engagement improves project outcomes?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Yes, significantly enhances outcomes.	13	22.03%	22.03
Yes, but only slightly.	18	30.51%	52.54
No, it does not affect outcomes.	23	38.98%	91.53
No, it complicates processs.	4	6.78%	98.31
33	1	1.69%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented provides valuable insights into the perceptions of the CDF project stakeholders regarding the impact of community engagement on project outcomes.

38.98% of the respondents believe that "No, it does not affect outcomes," (52.54%) do believe that community engagement has a positive impact on project outcomes, 30.51% of the respondents believe that community engagement "Yes, but only slightly" enhances project outcomes, while 22.03% believe that it "Yes, significantly enhances outcomes." (6.78%) of the respondents believe that "No, it complicates the process," suggesting that some project teams may perceive community engagement as a hindrance to efficient project implementation, rather than a facilitator of better outcomes.

c) Primary strategies used to engage the community in the M&E process

Table 18: Primary strategies used to engage the community in the M&E process

What strategies do you primarily use to engage the community in the M&E process			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Community meetings to discuss progress	32	54.24%	54.24
Surveys and feedback forms distributed	18	30.51%	84.75
Workshops and training sessions for cap	9	15.25%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented in Table 18 highlights the primary strategies used by the CDF project teams to engage the community in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) process. The most prominent strategy, employed by 54.24% of the respondents, is the use of "Community meetings to discuss progress." The second most common strategy, used by 30.51% of the respondents, is the distribution of "Surveys and feedback forms." 15.25%, reported using "Workshops and training sessions for capacity building" as a primary strategy for community engagement in the M&E process.

d) How would you rate the level of community participation in M&E activities?

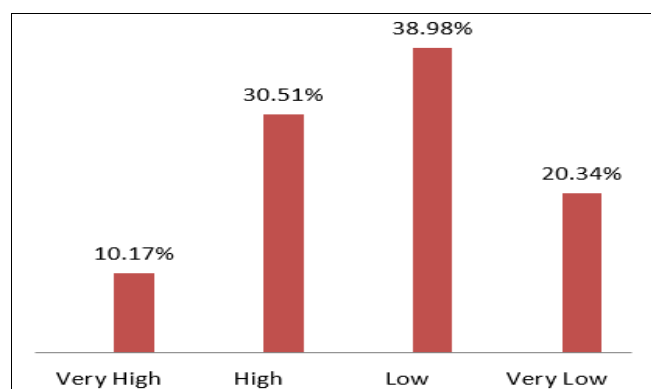


Fig 7: Rate of the level of community participation in M&E activities

The data presented shows the distribution of responses regarding the level of community participation in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) activities of the CDF projects. 38.98% perceive the level of community participation as "Low". 30.51% of the respondents rate the level of community participation as "High", 10.17% of the respondents consider the level of community participation as "Very High", while 20.34% perceive it as "Very Low".

e) Most effective way to engage the community in M&E practices, according your experience

Table 19: Most effective way to engage the community in M&E practices, according your experience

What is the most effective way to engage the community in M&E practices, according your experience?			
	Freq.	Percent	Cum.
Regular meetings and discussions	10	16.95%	16.95
Feedback surveys	28	47.46%	64.41
Participation in decision-making	19	32.2%	96.61
Community-led initiatives	2	3.39%	100
Total	59	100%	

The data presented highlights the perspectives of the CDF project teams on the most effective way to engage the community in Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices. The most prominent strategy, as reported by 47.46% of the respondents, is the use of "Feedback surveys". The second most effective strategy, according to 32.2% of the respondents, is "Participation in decision-making". 16.95%, consider "Regular meetings and discussions" as the most effective way to engage the community in M&E practices and (3.39%) of the respondents identified "Community-led initiatives" as the most effective strategy.

4.6 Discussion of Results

4.6.1 Background Characteristics of Respondents

Gender: Among the 59 respondents, 57.63% are male and 42.37% are female. This gender distribution allows for diverse perspectives on the effectiveness of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) processes in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects, highlighting the importance of including women's voices in development discussions.

Age Range: The majority (52.54%) of respondents are aged 37 to 50 years, while 45.76% are aged 18 to 36. Only 1.69% are over 50, indicating underrepresentation of older individuals, whose views could enrich the understanding of M&E practices.

Education Level: The largest group (35.59%) holds a master's degree, followed by 27.12% with a bachelor's degree. Together, those with degrees represent over 62% of the sample, suggesting a well-educated participant pool that can contribute informed insights into M&E practices.

Occupation: The largest group of respondents (52.54%) are community members, followed by contractors (25.42%), government officials (11.86%), and project managers (10.17%). This diversity in occupations allows for a comprehensive understanding of various stakeholder perspectives on M&E effectiveness.

Experience in Government Projects: The largest proportion of respondents (42.37%) have 5 to 10 years of experience in government projects, indicating substantial practical knowledge. The remaining respondents are distributed across other experience levels, providing a well-rounded view of M&E practices.

4.6.2 Current M&E Practices in CDF Projects

Formal M&E Framework: 38.98% of respondents report having an M&E framework still under development, while 37.29% are planning to create one. Only 22.03% have a fully operational framework, indicating a need for continued efforts to establish effective M&E systems.

Frequency of M&E Activities: 32.20% of respondents

conduct M&E activities monthly, and another 32.20% quarterly. This variation suggests a lack of standardization in M&E practices across CDF projects.

Data Collection Methods: The primary data collection methods include Focus Groups (40.68%) and Observations (32.2%), indicating a preference for qualitative approaches over quantitative methods like Surveys (1.69%). This reliance on qualitative data suggests an emphasis on stakeholder engagement and contextual understanding.

4.6.3 Community Involvement in M&E

Community Engagement: 57.63% of respondents indicate that community members are involved only during feedback sessions, while 40.68% report full participation in all M&E sessions. This highlights a trend towards greater inclusion but also suggests the need for more active engagement throughout the M&E cycle.

Indicators of Success: 38.98% of respondents primarily use Impact Indicators, focusing on long-term benefits, while 30.51% use Outcome Indicators, which measure more immediate changes. The presence of projects without specific indicators (18.64%) underscores the need for standardized evaluation frameworks.

4.6.4 Challenges in M&E Implementation

Barriers: The most significant barrier identified is political interference in project decisions (54.24%), followed by community disengagement (20.34%) and a lack of trained personnel (15.25%). These challenges hinder effective M&E implementation and project success.

Training Needs: A concerning 37.29% of respondents report never having received M&E training, indicating a critical gap in knowledge and skills necessary for effective project management.

4.6.5 Community Engagement Impact

Importance of Community Engagement: A significant majority (76%) consider community engagement "Very Crucial" for effective M&E. However, 38.98% believe it does not significantly influence project outcomes, highlighting a need for awareness and capacity-building efforts.

Effective Engagement Strategies: The most prominent strategies for community engagement include Feedback Surveys (47.46%) and Participation in Decision-Making (32.2%). These approaches foster community ownership and enhance project relevance.

5. Recommendations

1. Standardize M&E Frameworks

Ensure all CDF projects implement fully operational and standardized M&E frameworks to improve consistency and effectiveness across the program. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has developed regional guidelines for this purpose (SADC, 2017) [35].

2. Promote Balanced M&E Approaches

Encourage the use of both quantitative and qualitative M&E methods, including regular surveys and feedback mechanisms. Training and resources should be provided to project teams to enhance data collection strategies (UNDP, 2021) [40].

3. Enhance Community Engagement in M&E

Invest in capacity-building and awareness-raising initiatives to empower community members as active participants in the M&E strategies. This involvement will improve the relevance and utilization of M&E data, as highlighted by the

Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC, 2021).

4. Improve M&E Alignment and Utilization

Ensure M&E practices align with project objectives and that findings are used to inform decision-making and project adaptations. The World Bank (2018) [44] stresses the importance of integrating M&E into project design from the outset.

5. Address Capacity and Resource Gaps

Prioritize training for CDF project teams on M&E principles and provide adequate funding and access to necessary tools. The Zambia Governance Foundation (2020) [47] emphasizes the need for capacity-building initiatives to strengthen local M&E implementation.

6. Foster a Culture of Continuous Improvement

Create a learning environment where M&E findings are analyzed and utilized to improve project design and implementation. The African Development Bank (2019) [1] underscores the need for a results-oriented culture to enhance project effectiveness.

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