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## Monitoring and Evaluation of Local Government Performance in South Africa: A Search for Effective Strategies

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**Background:** Public service delivery in South Africa is a crucial responsibility of the government to maintain and enhance the overall well-being of society. The inadequate monitoring and evaluation models of the municipal government result in poor public service delivery. This poor performance at the local government level is further exacerbated by the strong need for transparency and accountability in public service delivery.

**Objective:** This study assesses the monitoring and evaluation strategies for local government performance and analyses the effective models for monitoring and evaluation to enhance public service delivery in South Africa.

**Method:** This study is qualitative and utilised secondary sources as descriptive research design to assess the strategies and model of monitoring and evaluation in local government. The secondary data was sourced through, textbooks, journal articles, and internet sources, as well as data collected from the South African local government from 2012–2024.

**Results:** The study found that a strong monitoring and evaluation system is essential for improving the performance and enhancing the service delivery of local governments in South Africa. Municipalities should give priority to establishing and formalising efficient monitoring and evaluation methods and systems to promote long-lasting changes.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that implementing a suitable monitoring and evaluation strategy and adopting the most effective model is essential for achieving efficient public service delivery, increased productivity, and enhanced overall performance.

**Keywords:** *Monitoring, Evaluation, Municipality, Local Government, Public Service Delivery.*

## **Introduction**

Monitoring and evaluation are essential for enhancing the performance of South African municipalities. Efficient monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems can effectively tackle problems related to underperformance, insufficient allocation of resources, limitations in capability, and shortcomings in assessment procedures (Mabizela and Zwane, 2023). To attain accountable, efficient, and adaptable monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in local government, municipalities need to foster a robust performance management culture and obtain the requisite policy and technical assistance from the government (Ngumbela, 2024). To establish and maintain monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities within municipalities, it is necessary to have a strong determination and dedication to prioritise and institutionalise these processes (Jili and Enaifoghe, 2023).

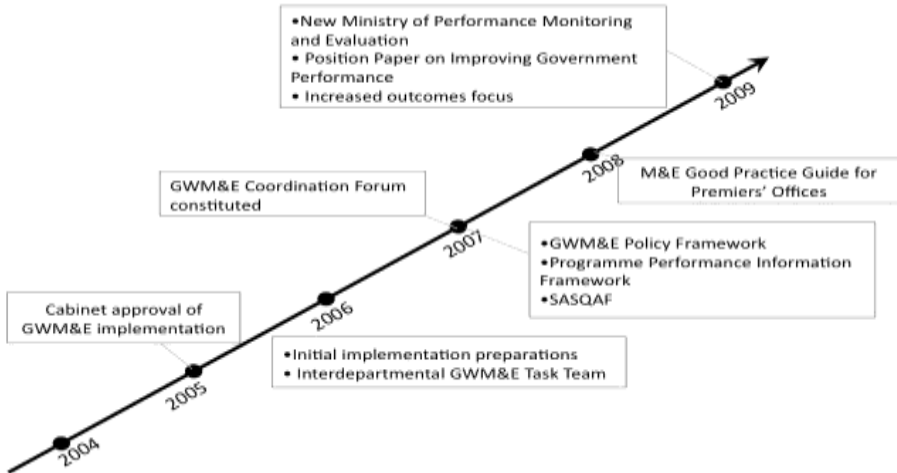
The lack of monitoring and evaluation has been acknowledged as a weakness in the public sector in South Africa. Mthethwa and Jili (2016) contend that state institutions have not properly recognised the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) as a means of managing performance. The main reason for this is the absence of sufficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that can accurately evaluate the performance of the government and service delivery, both before and after the implementation of service delivery initiatives. Matsiliza (2018) states that municipalities are not reaching performance objectives due to a lack of effective monitoring and assessment procedures. Municipalities continue to grapple with the persistent difficulty of adopting monitoring and evaluation in local government as they encounter obstacles in meeting their constitutional duty of providing services. These issues stem from deficiencies in the evaluation and supervision of processes designed to accelerate the provision of services and evaluate their effects. Consequently, this has an adverse effect on the overall efficiency of the municipality.

Therefore, the importance of monitoring and evaluation in the development and delivery of services cannot be overemphasised enough, as they can generate results linked to improvements in municipal performance (Eresia-Eke and Boadu, 2019). In the same context, Nonyane (2019) recognises the government's dedication to improving the overall well-being of residents by providing fundamental services such as water, electricity, housing, and infrastructure. As a result, a variety of policies, programmes, and initiatives were implemented. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a crucial method that municipalities can use to improve efficiency and effectiveness. The absence of monitoring and evaluation procedures has contributed to the general discontent to accurately monitoring progress and reporting on the state of developmental initiatives.

Consequently, the South African Constitution provides for the introduction of monitoring and evaluation policies to ensure that service delivery is smooth and efficient. In other words, a monitoring and evaluation model is needed to improve the performance of governance at the local government level. To meet the increasing need for evidence-based public service delivery and development, it is crucial to effectively integrate monitoring and evaluation as an oversight model. This will help municipalities improve their performance and provide high-quality services. Municipalities are required by the constitution to address a range of intricate and challenging issues related to service delivery (Mubangizi, 2019). Monitoring and evaluation can enhance the implementation of programmes and initiatives, leading to greater success and a substantial impact on the communities being targeted, hence ensuring efficient service delivery.

Hence, Figure 1 as presented provides an overview of the key milestones recorded in the development of a government-wide monitoring and evaluation system. This figure shows the conceptualization of the GWM&E system in 2004 and its approval and implementation in 2005 by the Cabinet. In 2006, an interdisciplinary working group was established as part of the implementation process. In 2007, a broader GWM&E coordination body was established. The Forum facilitated and helped develop the GWM&E Policy Framework in the same year. This laid the groundwork for the new Performance, Monitoring, and Evaluation Department, which subsequently aimed to improve performance.

**Figure 1:** Key Milestones in implementing the GWM&E in South Africa



Source: adopted from Ncabeleng (2021).

Monitoring and assessment play a crucial role in determining the best methods and strategies to use when faced with multiple competing agendas. Monitoring tracks the progress made towards government objectives, whereas evaluation examines the significance of an intervention and the fulfilment of policy imperatives and ultimately justifies the value for money (Masombuka, 2023). Therefore, in this article, monitoring and evaluation remain distinct management functions that play a complementary role in providing information for decision-making.

## Problem Formulation

The influence of M&E on local government performance is not adequately established, making the strategy of M&E an extra burden of little or no benefit at all. The conceptualisation of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) has evolved and mirrored the paradigm shifts that have occurred in governance, especially in public service delivery. However, there is still a gap that exists as the inadequate performance of South African municipalities continues to endure. Municipalities persist in facing a dearth of competent technical personnel, interference from political entities, inadequate financial administration, and a deficiency in organisational structure coordination (Auditor General of South Africa, 2021/2022). In addition, a study conducted by Maepa (2014) discovered that achieving coordination between governance and the need for monitoring and evaluation, especially in the context of evaluation, posed

challenges. Hence, there is a need to assess the strategies for effective monitoring and evaluation to enhance the performance of local government in South Africa.

## **Conceptual Framework**

According to Shongwe and Meyer (2023), there is an increasing awareness that the process of monitoring and evaluation in South Africa should encompass a diverse group of stakeholders, such as community members and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), to improve accountability and foster community development. Policy evaluation and monitoring are crucial in holding politicians and public managers responsible for their actions in the public sector. Additionally, it can be used to monitor and assess the performance, efficacy, and efficiency of a system by analysing whether the desired objectives have been accomplished (Matsiliza, 2012). The United Nations acknowledged that monitoring and evaluation have a mutually beneficial connection. Monitoring yields pertinent information regarding the implementation of a programme or project and clearly outlines the objectives that must be accomplished. Evaluation involves the provision of well-founded opinions and a definitive conclusion regarding the achievement or non-achievement of a certain objective (United Nations Development Programme, 2017).

Monitoring and evaluation are distinct elements, yet their synergy yields optimal results. They should be regarded as a managerial tool that elucidates to all stakeholders the rationale behind specific operations. Engela and Ajam (2010) argue that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is a complex and challenging undertaking that requires a range of skills. Governmentwide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is crucial due to its requirement for a comprehensive comprehension of the interconnections between planning, budgeting, and implementation activities in the public sector, as well as familiarity with sectors both within and beyond the government. When the government structure is decentralised, with authorities and responsibilities divided across three separate realms of authority, the problem becomes much more complex. Robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are essential for this intricate intergovernmental framework due to its decentralised powers and functions, requiring the promotion of cooperation and the prevention of fragmentation.

Monitoring is the ongoing act of checking and ensuring that an organisation achieves the objectives it sets out to accomplish to achieve

success. The purpose of this is to assess if a programme or project has been successful or not and to determine if it has had any impact on the overall success or failure of a company (Matsiliza, 2012). Monitoring is a continuous process that employs strategic techniques to gather pertinent data on specific performance indicators of government interventions. It aims to furnish management and various stakeholders of the institution with information about the potential shortcomings and achievements of an ongoing developmental project or intervention. Additionally, it tracks the progress related to the financial resources allocated to a development project (Uwizeyimana, 2020).

Monitoring and evaluation are essential processes that enhance performance and facilitate the attainment of desired outcomes (Matsiliza, 2012). The South African Department of Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) defines monitoring and evaluation as the process of systematically recording and assessing behaviour or performance to develop strategies for effectively managing performance and achieving the desired goals of an organisation. Performance is the execution of a task to achieve specific results and outcomes. The department emphasises the significance of monitoring and evaluation in aiding the assessment of human resource practices, service delivery, and organisational matters to determine their compliance with constitutional principles (DPME, 2013).

Monitoring is an ongoing process that involves systematically and periodically collecting data on specific indicators. This process provides management and key stakeholders with information about the progress and achievement of goals, as well as the utilisation of allocated funds, on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

On the other hand, evaluation refers to a systematic and impartial analysis of a project's design, implementation, and outcomes. It involves a critical assessment of a programme, whether it is now ongoing or has already been finished. It involves collecting and analysing data on the characteristics and results of a programme. The objectives of this initiative are to assess programmes, enhance their effectiveness, and offer insights to support decision-making in programme development (Wanzer, 2021).

An evaluation should provide precise and pragmatic information, enabling donors and receivers to integrate the knowledge gained into their decision-making processes. Evaluation is the act of assessing the worth or importance of a programme, policy, or action. An evaluation is a deliberately conducted or completed development intervention that is as methodical and unbiased as feasible. Evaluation is the process of

establishing appropriate criteria, evaluating performance based on those standards, comparing the actual outcomes with the expected outcomes, and identifying relevant insights.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is based on the theory of change, a method that explains how a given intervention, or set of interventions, is expected to lead to specific development change, drawing on a causal analysis based on available evidence. The Theory of Change (ToC) is a potent monitoring and evaluation (M&E) instrument that local governments can utilise to improve their performance and attain effective service delivery (Mvuyana, 2023). The Theory of Change (ToC) facilitates the identification of the causal relationships between the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact of a programme. It can be used to ensure that the appropriate activities are implemented to achieve the desired outcomes. Nevertheless, relying solely on monitoring and assessment systems is insufficient to accomplish used goals. Local government officials tasked with implementing programmes should possess expertise in all essential management domains. There are deficiencies in addressing factors that go beyond the traditional Theory of Change, which focuses on evaluating how programme inputs are transformed into outputs and outcomes (Mabizela and Zwane, 2023). Municipalities should establish effective procedures to facilitate the fulfilment of their responsibilities. The project backlog can only be diminished by executing it in accordance with the established goals and objectives outlined in the plans.

Efficient public service delivery can be achieved by aligning all plans, strategies, goals, and objectives of municipalities with those of the national government. Monitoring and assessment are essential for improving the performance of local government. The main objective of this is to furnish data for making informed decisions, enhance efficiency, and showcase outcomes. Local governments should enhance their capacity to accomplish their executive responsibilities by implementing efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

A theory of change for local government must be driven by sound analyses, consultation with key stakeholders, and learning on what works and what does not in diverse contexts drawn from the experiences of the local government and its partners. This theory helps identify solutions to effectively address the causes of problems that hinder progress and guides decisions on which approach should be taken. It serves as a

roadmap, delineating the necessary steps to bring about positive change in communities and organisations.

Nonetheless, a theory of change is only as effective as its execution, making monitoring and evaluation integral components of the process. Although the theory of change has often been criticised for not giving sufficient attention to the wider context in which an intervention is taking place and the nature of the interactions between the intervention and this wider context. Despite criticism, this theory remains relevant as it links to the present study since it is a theory that is interrelated with changes in governmental processes, public policymaking, and the provision of public services. This theory is suitable for the study on the premise that public institutions and administrators are supposed to be adaptive to change to enhance social, economic, and political development.

### **Legislative Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, in terms of this study, namely, monitoring and evaluation, aims to strengthen the principle of transparency. In addition, the objective of the Municipal Finance Management Act is to ensure sound and sustainable management of the financial affairs of municipalities (Hanabe, Taylor and Raga, 2017). To further promote monitoring and evaluation, the Municipal Systems Act 32, 2000, offers the most complete framework for M&E within the local sphere of government (Nelson, 2016). Nelson also adds that Section 5 of the Municipal System Act specifically stipulates that municipalities must regularly disclose their activities to the public, while section 11 requires municipalities to monitor the impact of their programmes, plans, and policies. Therefore, At the local level, the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) requires that all municipalities monitor and evaluate their developmental performances and interventions. Under the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), every municipality must implement a performance management system that contains key performance indicators “as a yardstick for measuring performance, including outcomes and impacts, about the municipality’s development priorities and objectives”. This statement is supported by sections 38 and 41 of Chapter 6 of the Municipal Systems Act, which compels municipalities to set targets to allow for the monitoring and review of performance-based indicators that are linked to the integrated development plan (IDP) of the municipality; and integrate and report on

a set of general indicators that are prescribed by the Minister of Local Government.

### **Purpose of Monitoring and Evaluation**

Globally, M&E practices are essential to measuring the success of both private and public projects (Muhayimana and Kamuhanda, 2020). It is, therefore, necessary to strengthen governance by strengthening transparency and accountability interactions, as well as building a performance ethos within governments so that policy and decision-making, financial allocations, and control can be improved (Nchabeleng, 2021). In this context, the South African Cabinet accepted the Presidency's recommendation to implement and develop a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system in 2005. The system, according to Sethu (2021), which was later acknowledged as a policy framework in 2007, incorporates functions such as monitoring, evaluation, early warning, data collection, analysis, and reporting. According to Engela and Ajam (2010), Mngomezulu and Reddy (2013), Magagula (2019), and Masilo (2021), as part of the legislation, the framework promotes good governance, accountability reports, transparency consultations, and efficiency and effectiveness of projects and programs. As a result of applying this concept of M&E, Masuku (2015), as quoted by Nonyane (2019), has been able to explain the relevance and fulfilment of the system by aligning it with the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 and the Municipal System Act 2000.

Under the National Planning Commission (2012), national and provincial governments must ensure that local governments focus on the features of the NDP that are aligned with municipal responsibilities, thereby improving the effectiveness of the municipality's IDP. Monitoring and evaluation can be argued to be comprised of several best practices, such as the ability to link M&E plans with strategic plans and work plans, the use of participatory approaches, the dissemination of M&E results to stakeholders, and the use of M&E data for project improvement. Since the resources channelled by the country and other donors must be well managed to ensure project performance, monitoring and evaluation of public projects are very crucial. M&E planning is driven by the fact that all activities in the work plan are based on specific strategic outcomes and tracked through appropriate indicators (USAID, 2019). The effective implementation of M&E requires structures in place for effective planning.

For example, using the Montigoe (2012) comprehensive model for monitoring and evaluation system utilisation to support municipalities, any institution can evaluate its practice and identify areas for improvement in terms of process and outcomes. To provide intergovernmental support to municipalities, the model was initially developed for the Department of Cooperative Governance. Therefore, this model builds demand and support for national M&E systems and ensures their successful implementation. Moreover, linking M&E throughout government and with stakeholders outside of government is also critical to promoting accountability and performance in government.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation Model**

The successful implementation of the M&E system utilisation model is dependent on the following factors:

#### **a) *Human Resource Capacity***

Without skilled personnel who effectively execute M&E tasks that fall within their responsibilities, this M&E system utilisation model may not be effective. Thus, understanding the skills and capacities needed in the M&E system and addressing capacity gaps are essential for M&E system utilisation (Khunoethe *et al.*, 2021). In the findings, the issue of the knowledge, skills, and competence of people performing M&E duties for public projects was discussed in detail. An emphasis was placed on the importance of having sufficiently skilled monitoring and evaluation staff who can carry out all activities defined in the monitoring and evaluation work plan efficiently and effectively.

Furthermore, the model will ensure that the following measures are achieved in the Annual Performance Plan 2022-2023 to improve governance and accountability, skilled and capable workforces, and improved oversight:

- Coordination, monitoring, and evaluation of all provincial departments.
- Enhance strategic human resource management performance.
- Implement information and communications technology to improve service delivery.
- Ensure that government communication systems are functional.
- Eradicate fraud, corruption, and acts of misconduct through minimum security standards.

- Improve internal legal services and transversal state law advisory services.

### ***b) Stakeholders Support***

M&E processes for development programmes and policies rely heavily on stakeholder involvement (Tengan and Aigbavboa, 2017). Furthermore, Tengan and Aigbavboa argue that M&E processes can contribute to the design and implementation of programmes, as well as to the collection, analysis, and use of data. In the context of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), a stakeholder is a person who has a vested interest in the success of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process, its results, and its outcomes (Sulemana, Musah, & Simon, 2018).

M&E systems serve their purpose only when they are accepted by all parties with responsibilities related to them or require information from them. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure stakeholder participation during the development of a M&E system to ensure the effectiveness of this model. Through a participatory approach, those who contributed to the development of the system will take ownership and therefore support it. According to the findings, municipalities' poor performance has been attributed to the lack of M&E prioritisation by municipal senior management. For this reason, strengthening the M&E system requires partnerships with internal and external stakeholders. In the end, involving stakeholders in M&E activities creates validity, accountability, and transparency.

Moreover, as a management tool, the SDBIP must be unambiguous, straightforward, and easily implemented. To demonstrate progress towards the achievement of SDBIP targets and in connection with annual IDP objectives, municipalities shall be required to produce performance monitoring reports on an ongoing basis (Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality, 2022-2027).

### ***c) Organisational Culture***

The M&E system utilisation model may be difficult to implement if there is a negative organisational culture regarding data management and information dissemination. A culture that has been strongly established and shared by a broad set of beliefs supported by strategy and structure is an essential element for effective organisations. A culture that has been strongly established and shared by a broad set of beliefs supported by strategy and structure is an essential element for effective organisations.

Three things happen when an organisation's culture is strong: employees know what executive management wants from them in terms of responding to a problem, they believe that the expected response would be correct, and staff are rewarded for demonstrating their values (Tran, 2017).

To achieve the efficient implementation of this model, it is appropriate to take account of an organisational culture. As a result, the institution in each government sector is better able to formulate policy and manage programmes while strengthening organisational culture by creating a senior post as Head of M&E. This means that the M&E unit has sufficient power, and its findings will have an impact on public decision-making, policy changes, or the allocation of resources. This will allow for the effective implementation of the model.

#### ***d) Consequence Management***

The findings identified that municipalities' poor performance is due to a lack of consequence management and that this will continue if municipal officials and political officeholder are not held accountable. In general, the fact that local governments must be held accountable to ensure citizens have access to services and leadership, which are essential for a mature democratic environment, is becoming more evident in both developed countries and emerging democracies. Therefore, the promotion of mutual support, monitoring, and accountability under Chapter 3 of the South African Constitution 1996 falls within the responsibility of national, provincial, and local governments (Ingrams *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, it is proposed that consequence management should focus on the wide local government level beyond the individual level to tackle poor institutional inefficiencies.

#### ***e) IDP and SDIBP Alignment***

The Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) commits municipalities to ensuring that the organisation delivers on the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) and the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) year (Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan, 2020-2021). Therefore, municipalities should start to identify SDBIP as a key management, implementation, and monitoring tool that provides operational content to the end-of-year service delivery targets set in the budget and IDP.

## **Benefits of Monitoring and Evaluation in the South African Local Government**

Monitoring and evaluation intend to manage the current and future results, accomplishments, and impact (Dlamini, 2021). An evaluation is conducted to determine if the undertaken initiatives have been necessary, well-planned, effective, viable, and durable, and whether lessons have been drawn from the decision-making process (Kanyamuna 2019:34-36). Local governments utilise monitoring and evaluation to develop policies and manage finances effectively, as well as to align their interventions with the government's priorities at the national level (National Treasury 2010:5 and Kariuki & Reddy, 2017). Phetla (2017) believes that M&E is a crucial tool for assisting managers in making decisions about programme directions and continuation and ensuring optimal resource use. Besides informing managers' decisions, M&E also generates knowledge and promotes learning within an organisation. To achieve a country's vision and mission, M&E are powerful management tools that can assist government and state institutions.

In other words, the quality of municipal decisions is greatly influenced by the quality of the analysis and advice provided. It is argued by Masilo, Masiya, and Mathebula (2021) that M&E is an enabler in the journey to make the public service more efficient, effective, and responsive to citizens and Parliament. The objective of M&E systems, according to Ojok (2015), is not to replace good management practices but to facilitate decision-making through evidence. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are also identified as important management and planning tools for the South African government by Essels, Potgieter, and van Naido (2021). Therefore, evaluation is crucial to improving service delivery. Mthethwa & Jili (2016) report that municipalities have not yet taken M&E seriously as a performance management tool; however, it is important for municipalities to note that, in addition to providing continuous feedback, M&E systems allow government organisations to identify successful projects, programmes, and policies, as well as what is working and not working, and the reasons why things aren't working as planned, to promote organisational learning.

## **Synopsis of Monitoring and Evaluation in South Africa**

South African municipalities face a major challenge in the knowledge, skills, and competence of people performing M&E duties for public projects. A study by Dipela and Mohapi (2021) titled *“Barriers Affecting Effective Monitoring and Evaluation of Poverty Alleviation Projects Within Waterberg District”* revealed that community projects meant to alleviate poverty are unsustainable due to a lack of technical skills and monitoring. In support, a study by Kariuki and Reddy (2017) titled *“Operationalising an Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System for Local Government: Considerations for Best Practice”* revealed that for municipalities to deliver sustainable services to the public, both political and administrative leadership must work together. The study further indicated that, in addition to possessing the required technical skills and competencies, they must also be able to exercise discretion and sensitivity when carrying out municipal monitoring and evaluation duties.

A study by Mthethwa and Jili (2016) titled *“Challenges in implementing monitoring and evaluation (M&E): The Case of the Mfologozi Municipality”* further revealed that M&E of public projects presents a major challenge for municipalities due to the lack of knowledge, skills, and competencies required. Naidoo (2012), as quoted by Noyane (2019), reveals that this is all due to the many M&E employees in the South African government who do not possess the necessary knowledge or experience. It is therefore evident that the success of the M&E system implementation depends on well-trained personnel. As a result, municipal M&E systems (including plans, indicators, and tools) cannot be developed without the knowledge, skills, and competence required for those performing duties related to the M&E of public projects. Consequently, due to the lack of M&E skills and competence, it is difficult, if not impossible, to track progress and draw lessons from performance information if officials do not possess the skills and competence to design and implement a proper M&E system.

Lack of M&E prioritisation by the municipal senior management has also contributed to the poor performance of municipalities. According to Nyamambi (2021), M&E is not seen as a priority by senior management; there is no legislative or regulatory framework for M&E; there is a lack of human resources; there is a lack of training or resources for M&E in municipalities; and there is a lack of funding or resources. Insufficient evaluation capacity and insufficient M&E specialists are among the challenges municipalities face in implementing an M&E system. As a result, South Africa’s growth and development strategy fails to align with

most municipalities' integrated development plans, resulting in poor alignment of priorities.

In addition, it is confirmed by Dlamini (2021) that there are not enough experts to implement monitoring and evaluation and there is no cooperation among staff members. The value of M&E is rarely understood by political and administrative leadership in municipalities, making it difficult for M&E to have a significant impact. M&E is often not championed by senior management, nor is it aligned with policy priorities, planning, and budgeting (Phillips et al, 2014). A municipality, which is mandated by law to deliver efficient and effective services to the community, can cement or destroy trust depending on whether such priorities are present or absent. Municipal cooperation, coordination, synergy, collective decision-making, and planning are largely facilitated by trust, whereas mistrust is an effective means of division and conflict. Even though M&E sometimes appears highly technical, with methods difficult for non-specialists to grasp, evidence-based policymaking (including budget decisions), policy development, management, and accountability can all benefit from monitoring information and evaluation findings. According to Ahenkan et al. (2013:208), efforts to support responsible, responsive, and effective community-level government for poverty reduction have been hampered by the lack of stakeholder involvement and the infrequent availability of procedures and structures governing community engagement in monitoring and evaluation of development interventions. Alfred (2015) further stated that the lack of public education, the shortage of cooperation among management and beneficiaries, and the inadequate distribution of information on infrastructure projects contributed to a low level of interest from stakeholders in project monitoring.

Furthermore, planning processes that fail to incorporate performance management into an integrated development plan (IDP) and service delivery budget implementation plan (SDIBP) are also a cause of the poor results in municipalities. Consequently, the affected municipalities are not informed of areas that need improvement for better service delivery through monitoring and evaluation processes. Therefore, SDBIP must be an annually adopted document setting out projections of revenue to be brought in by the municipality, as well as operating and capital expenditures for the municipalities (Asha and Makalela, 2020).

Finally, municipalities' decline across the country is partially due to a lack of consequence management. This will not stop until municipal officials and political office-bearers are held accountable. An audit by the Auditor General (2019/2020) indicates that just over a quarter of the 257

municipalities in the country are in such dire financial straits that they cannot meet their obligations soon. Several reasons were cited in the Auditor General's (2020/2021) report for the dire situation, including endemic corruption, poor leadership, insufficient capacity, little to no consequence management, and a general disregard for financial legislation. For local governments to improve, municipal leadership must be held accountable. It has become the norm that government officials and political officeholders are suspended or removed from office and often transferred to other government roles if they are not held accountable. The situation will only worsen until those in power are prosecuted and imprisoned.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

The study explores the contribution of monitoring and evaluation strategies and models towards improving municipal performance and effective service delivery and the link between monitoring and evaluation as well as performance. A critical point emerged from the findings monitoring and evaluation are significant since they produce accurate data regarding progress on the state of development initiatives in public service delivery. The study revealed that the growing demand for evidence-based service delivery and development requires effective and successful implementation of monitoring and evaluation as an oversight mechanism to enable municipalities to enhance their performance and achieve quality service delivery. It was also discovered that, in accordance with the constitutional mandate, municipalities must deal with a variety of complex and difficult service delivery problems.

In addition, the findings from secondary sources of data revealed that monitoring and evaluation strategies can make it possible for programmes and initiatives to be carried out more successfully and to have a significant influence on the targeted communities to ensure effective service delivery. It was also discovered that the theory of change (ToC), as the theoretical underpinning for this study, aids in facilitating the development of meaningful and attainable goals for the provision of public services. Therefore, the adoption of the theory of change in monitoring and evaluation assists municipalities in identifying how challenges regarding public service delivery can be addressed while using an integrated approach to ensure sustainability. The study identified human resource capacity, stakeholder support, organisational culture, consequence management, and IDP and SDIBP alignment as monitoring

and evaluation system utilisation models for effective and efficient performance of local government.

## **Conclusion**

At the global level, capacity and commitment are associated with the performance of municipal governments in fulfilling their objectives through their respective institutions. The findings showed that the lack of coherence between the municipality's performance and its plans has led to several difficulties for performance management. In addition, the expected development of the municipality was not aligned with the necessary performance required to deliver it. As a result, the monitoring and evaluation of policy results is meaningless as local authorities continue to fail in their performance and service provision. Based on the findings, Motingoe's (2012) comprehensive M&E system utilisation model is recommended to solve these weaknesses and provide municipalities with effective support. In identifying the elements of the M&E system utilisation model for municipal support, it was crucial to take into consideration the statutory framework, theory of change, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as the data collected from secondary data. For the municipal system to deliver the required outcomes, the interests of communities must be prioritised. Effective collaboration with civil society organisations, NGOs, and businesses, as well as collaboration between municipalities and with provincial and national departments, is needed to underpin improved municipal service delivery. Therefore, this model will improve intergovernmental relations.

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