

The Challenges of Practicing Monitoring and Evaluation in Utility Service Delivery: Employee Perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (Lwsc) in Kafue District, Zambia

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ABSTRACT

The research examined the Challenges of practicing Monitoring and Evaluation in Utility Service Delivery: Employee Perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia. The study employed a program theory and qualitative approach. Data was gathered from 32 participants in Kafue district through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with LWSC staff and customers. Content analysis was applied to analyze the captured data into respective themes which were established. The study established M&E system and practices such; field visits, customer complaint resolution, work plan, strategic planning, Performance Management System (PMS) and Real time meter reading as being used by LWSC. Challenges such as limited skill set in M&E, data management, inadequate budget allocation for M&E, use of professionals to conduct assessments, lack of trainings in M&E and lack of engagement with customers were identified as hurdles for practicing M&E at LWSC in Kafue District. Recommendations included: planning for M&E personnel or M&E focal point at least at regional level if funds are not available to cascade the function to branch level, planning for capacity building and training in M&E related matters, continuous reviewing of the processes, continuous review of the processes, procedures and tools as time evolve, specifically plan and budget for M&E activities and holding engagement sessions (i.e. at least once or twice per year) with customers to gather feedback pertaining service delivery.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Service delivery, Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company, Kafue District, Zambia

I. INTRODUCTION

The key purpose of this chapter is to introduce the notion of this study, which is the challenges of practicing monitoring and evaluation in utility service delivery: employee perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia. The study focused on challenges of practicing monitoring and evaluation which LWSC faces in utility service delivery in Kafue. The study used a qualitative approach to offer a well-articulated position of the challenges that hamper execution of M&E at LWSC using qualitative data to capture valued understandings into the subject.

1.1 Background to the Problem

Advancement of present-day M&E at universal level can be tracked from the 1980s as well as 1990s (Basheka and Byamugisha, 2015). Universally, the aspiration to yield results-driven M&E schemes and outlines originated in view of desiring to establish anticipated progress in relation to developmental milestones for respective nations. Alike to tendencies worldwide, there is a progressive dispersal of M&E. Largely, occurrence inclusive development of M&E in a couple of African countries has been ongoing while being in preliminary stages of putting in place their designated M&E systems.

Monitoring and Evaluation presents an opportunity for many developing countries to offer

solutions to the issues identified and embark on setting up a mechanism that will help to alleviate the lack of basic needs. Setting up and executing a tracking mechanisms may sometimes face interference from within and outside institutions (Kanyamuna2013, MorraImas&Rist 2009). Such interference could be aligned to politics of the ruling government making it vital to put in place a functional tracking and assessing systems to assist. In most instances Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) are perceived as one yet different. In a bid to establish if desired outcomes are attained or not, information is gathered; effects of the project are assessed through the monitoring process while evaluation pulls information captured by the tracking mechanism set up as a way of scrutinizing tendencies regarding the consequences and impacts of the interventions implemented in specific periods. Mande K (2022), it is widely accepted that monitoring and evaluation can improve performance of public institutions/projects/programs, however, there are significant hurdles that must be addressed in order to effectively implement M&E. Hardlife & Zhou (2013) confirms that having a functional M&E in an organization enhances service delivery to citizens.

At global level, Sworo E. (2023) cited Mackay (2017) reports on World Bank government funded projects in Washington that M&E is critical in enhancing better project performance on government projects. The emphasis of importance of M&E was stressed after identifying that majority of the participants pinpointed that M&E practice was missing in several projects they were involved.

On the African continent level, Kamau & Mohammed (2015) confirms that there is a correlation between M&E and project performance in that consequences of the performance are attributed to the execution of the assessing the projects. Generally, the efforts of M&E involvement in a project are key to project performance.

In Zambia, Aldoset al (2022) reports that many of the issues related to Water Supply and Sanitation Sector (WSS) provision of services were directly linked to administration measure instituted and backed outline of the law. Emphasis is made that poor administration measure translates to poor provision of the services. Further, poor administration further shrinks the holding of the duty bearers responsible to their cause of action for the provision of services. Kaufmann & Moreno (2015), adds that administration lacking proper management cannot establish strong budget to run

their interventions and track progress. Millennium Challenge Cooperation (2023), LWSC did not improve maintenance practices leading to the institution's fiscal marker remaining stagnant. Lesa (2017) reports that 70% of the valve meters in Kafue failed owing to frequent burst pipes, leakages and intermittent water supply. It is against this background that this study focused at investigating the challenges of practicing monitoring and valuation in utility service delivery: employee and customer perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia.

1.2 Research Problem

Amongst the value M&E adds to projects is improved planning, management, and execution through providing curative actions to the discrepancies from the intended standard. Ministry of National Development Planning (2019), there is an existence of National Monitoring and Evaluation Policy which aims at making the function of M&E stronger among various stakeholders in Zambia. However, the situational analysis for the policy established that a gap (i.e. insufficient and inappropriately skilled M&E staff, lack of systems for generating data, poor management of information) exist for an effective execution of M&E across many Ministries, Provinces and other Spending Agencies (MPSAs). Such gaps pose substantial challenges to execution of an M&E of any organization and chances of not taking appropriate curative actions remains high.

In Zambia, the law that supports the development and strengthening of M&E legislation has been found to be weak (Vincent et al, 2019). With such a trend if allowed to continue would result into failure to resolve pertinent matters relating to accountability, feedback and learning from what the projects/programs do. Vincent at al (2023), adds that the policies and legislations are clear regarding what needs to be developed and executed across various scales. They have, however, remained in draft form to a larger extent are barren. Despite the crucial role M&E holds in improving performance, it is intricate, interdisciplinary and expertise demanding process. Donors and NGOs require monitoring on the prudent utilization of the monies disbursed for the project implementation, change in the welfare of the individuals brought by the project using a result-oriented M&E mechanism, which is also deemed for performance improvement. It is therefore critical to establish the minimum standard

guidelines for instituting M&E to assess improvement and efficacy, therefore, a need to investigate the challenges of practicing monitoring and evaluation in utility service delivery: employee and customer perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia. As a result, the importance of this research is anchored on its potential to offer evidence-based understandings that will frontier a more specific direction aimed at addressing LWSC pressing matters on having an effective M&E execution.

1.3 Research Objectives

- i. To examine the current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices employed by LWSC in Kafue District.
- ii. To examine key institutional, technical, and stakeholder-related challenges that hinder effective M&E in utility service delivery at LWSC.

1.4 Research Questions

- i. What M&E practices does LWSC use in Kafue district use?
- ii. What are the key hindrances to effective M&E in utility service delivery at LWSC?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The base for decent service delivery in developed nations is having a proper practice of M&E in respective institutions. Consequently, the results from the study will be used to inform LWSC in Kafue to institute appropriate actions with the aim of reducing the challenges and improving performance. Also the study will be useful in water and sanitation sector as well as intentionally craft activities with a practical M&E lens applied. World Bank (2004), argues that as a tool for improvement, M&E can be useful for public officer bearers, personnel in developmental sector inclusive humanitarian and other institutions. M&E is vital as it is used to plan for the activities/projects, identify the gaps in implementation, improve on the quality of services provided, capture and share evidence based learning as well as helps developers to become transparent and accountable to the concerned populace they serve

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The preceding chapter of this research paper provided the introduction, background of the study, research problem, research objectives and justification of the research. This chapter will cover the evidence of other related studies done, outlined

per respective theme patterning to challenges in practicing Monitoring and Evaluation which have been locally and internationally published. This chapter further highlights review of related literature to the current study and theoretical framework.

M&E systems and practices are cardinal in aiding to holding the service providers accountable for service delivery. A study on promotion of sustainable approaches regarding provision of service for supply of water conducted in Vietnam by Bank (2020), reviewed that, “using a result-based M&E approach, project results indicated improvement in; infrastructure investment, timely delivery of project deliverables.” The findings led to setting up of an anonymous end-user feedback platform contributing to an improved trustworthy and means of holding the service provider responsible for the service provision.

A community based water project study conducted in Tanzania by Mgoba and Kabote (2020), on assessing the efficacy of participatory M&E advanced that the participatory M&E as an approach is helpful in realizing the set outcomes of a project.

In Zambia, SAIPAR (2021), conducted an analysis targeting six NGOs focusing on the relevance of their participatory development methods. The analysis pointed out that in order to have steady flow of information in institutions from the employees to the end users and vice versa, it is cardinal to ensure an increased moments of practicing M&E approaches.

Studies suggest that effective implementation of M&E across various organization in different countries worldwide has been faced with numerous challenges. A study on Innovation Policy Learning from Korea: the Case of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) conducted by World Bank Group (2023) revealed key challenges which include; lack of leadership commitment to learn hinders the adoption of M&E systems; low priority of business innovation policy relative to other policy domains; difficulty in coordinating between ministries and agencies to streamline M&E of innovation policy; lack of organizational capacity and expertise to design and deploy M&E and to use M&E for the purpose of learning; and limited resources for M&E infrastructure and capacity building.

Additionally, a study in Ghana by Tengan & Aigbavboa (2016), on evaluating barriers to effective implementation of project monitoring and evaluation revealed several factors hindering effective implementation of M&E which

included weak institutional capacity, limited resources and budgetary allocations for M&E, weak linkage between planning, budgeting and M&E, weak demand for and utilization of M&E results and finally, poor data quality, data gaps and inconsistencies. Mmapfuti and Boitumelo (2021), conducted a study in South Africa on barriers affecting effective monitoring and evaluation of poverty alleviation projects within Waterberg district. Findings identified a lack of knowledge and training, as well as poor management and supervisor support as contributors towards weak M&E.

In Zambia M&E function has some central recognition, but it is not fully developed. An assessment on the Demand-Side of the Monitoring and Evaluation System of the Health Sector in Zambia conducted by Kanyamuna et al (2018), reveals that the organizational framework to undertake M&E in the health sector was in place but not yet fully operationalized. Equally, M&E champions exist but not adequate to make an impactful case for M&E. This status is similar to the water and sanitation sector which this study is focusing on.

The study used a Program Theory and a theoretical framework. A theoretical framework can be defined as a plan that directs on how the research will be conducted based on selected theories. The study was guided by the Program Theory by Leonard Bickman. Sedani (1999), a program theory consists of a set of statements that describe a particular program, explain why, how, and under what conditions the program effects occur. Further, the theory can be utilized to stipulate the necessities needed to attain the anticipated project consequences and foretell the results of the project.

The theory anchors its assumptions in the design of the program, activities and its implementation. The focus is on ensuring that that the desired project/program results are achieved. It provides a reasonable account of how and why the tasks to be undertaken will yield the anticipated outcomes or benefits. Therefore, the theory becomes the pillar for success of the project or program. The theory further has the capacity to enhance the simplification of certain assessments, adds to social theory as well as attain agreement in assessment scheduling. Additionally, the theory can be applied to improve policymaking and magnify the scope of offering resolutions to identified project concerns.

In the context of this study, the program

theory was relevant because it focuses on understanding why the program succeed or failed, such as inadequate funding, responsiveness, staff skill set, leadership/management, institutional capacity, policy implementation can influence an institution to have a sustainable M&E system. Wholey (1987) pinpoints that the program theory categorizes program resources, tasks and anticipated outcomes. Further, it spells out the causal effects linkage of the program hierarchy (goal, objectives, outputs, activities) as well as the resources needed.

By adopting the Program Theory, the study explored how LWSC in Kafue district can appreciate the challenges the institution has been facing in practicing M&E. McClintock (1990) underscores that the theory can quicken the manner in which decisions are executed through strengthening and broadening options of fast tasks and resolutions to escalating project challenges thereby increasing the probability of attaining the planned outcomes. Rossi (2004) adds that, the theory contains an institutional strategy patterning to handling how to capture, arrange, allocate resources and how to forecast project tasks in a bid to comprehensively craft and sustain the planned the objectives.

Thus, program theory is well-suited for this study as it offers outlining merits of information that lead to extra clarifications relating to management influence on the agreed system for executing M&E, staff capacity building, tools for M&E as well as relevant participants in projects.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative research design. Corner et al. (2019), contends that qualitative research explores and provides deeper insights into real-world issues and problems by gathering participants' perceptions, experiences, and behaviour. Further, Corner et al. (2019), qualitative research responds to the "hows" and "whys" instead of how much or how many. Welman et al. (2005), adds that qualitative studies are appropriate in the description of small groups, communities and organisations. As such, the research gathered, recorded, organized, analyzed data using descriptive methods in order to investigate the challenges LWSC in Kafue is facing in operationalizing M&E.

The guiding paradigm for the study was interpretivism research philosophy. Saunders et al (2015) defines research philosophy as assumptions

and beliefs that govern the way we view the world. Healy and Perry (2000), underscores that, when applying this philosophy, it is imperative for the researcher to be an interested participant within the topic being explored. Irshaidat (2019), is of the view that interpretivism research philosophy upholds collective reasoning, including norms, oversees actions as well as ensuring that there is a link between the researcher and participants of the study in order to have a clear understanding of matter being examined.

In context, this philosophy is appropriate to the study as the researcher depended on the narratives and perspectives shared by the participants to understand the challenges LWSC faces in practicing M&E in Kafue district. Additionally, the philosophy allows the researcher to obtain richer context of groups of data from minor numbers of participants. Mostly detailed interviews were utilized to obtain the data.

The study was conducted in Kafue (i.e. Commercial Division located in Estates) as it directly deals with the customers. Furthermore, the research specifically focused on Lusaka Water and Sanitation Company (LWSC) as an institution. The population which participated in the study consisted of LWSC employees working in various sections including; planning, evaluation, customer service, engineering, sewerage, customer service and billing section at LWSC in Kafue and customer who have been serviced for a minimum number of five (5) years. Burns and Grove (1993), defined a population, “as all elements (individuals, objects and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study.”

The study followed this sampling procedure (non-probability) to determine the sample;

- a. Those willing to participate
- b. Should have worked at LWSC in Kafue for at least five years (5) years
- c. Must be a current employee at LWSC in Kafue
- d. Head of the various sections at LWSC in Kafue will be requested to take part.
- e. Should have been a customer for LWSC for a minimum of 5 years.

This study followed a descriptive research method using purposive sampling technique as it is relevant when selecting the most informative sample points (participants) in relation to the

subject matter at hand. Only qualitative data was captured through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-person interviews. Houghton, et al. (2017), stresses that FGDs are helpful in getting feedback and comprehensive impressions as well as matters of discussion relating to a group or organization under the study. Electronic and printed materials in relation to the study especially for LWSC reports were reviewed with a view of responding to pre-determined research questions.

Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) was used to analyze the data according to specific themes which were established. Hsieh and Shannon (2005), defines, Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) as a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns. Berger (2001), further adds that, “QCA pays attention to unique themes that illustrate the range of the meanings of the phenomenon rather than the statistical significance of the occurrence of particular text or concepts common in quantitative data analysis.”

The study used open ended questionnaires to capture data from 32 respondents. Validity was ensured through careful design and discussion of the data collection tool with the supervisor. Ethical guidelines, voluntary participation and confidentiality were adhered to.

In order to warrant trustworthiness in the study, several measures were considered. In line with Creswell (2007), the notion of trustworthiness appraises the excellence of the qualitative research based on credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability

IV. RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

This section highlights the demographics of the thirty-two (32) respondents. It identifies the genders and method used for data collection.

4.1.1 Gender of Respondents

Table 1 below shows the gender of the respondents. Of the thirty-two respondents who were engaged in the study, seventeen were female while fifteen were male. A conclusion can be drawn that both genders were represented, with a higher proportion of females than males.

Table 1: Gender for Respondents

Gender	Frequency
Females	17
Males	15
Grand Total	32

Source: Field Data, 2025

4.1.2 Data Collection Method.

The table below shows the data collection method used to engage respondents who

participated in this study. The respondents were drawn from staff at LWSC and customers from three (3) compounds.

Table 2: Data collection method

Participants	Data Collection Method	Number of participants
LWSC	FGD	6
LWSC	In-person Interviews	2
Customers	FGD	24
Total		32

Source: Field Data, 2025

4.1.3 Minimum number of years serviced by LWSC

The graph below shows the minimum number of years the respondents were serviced by

LWSC. The findings showed that all the respondents were serviced for more than five years with the longest being twelve years and the least being seven years.

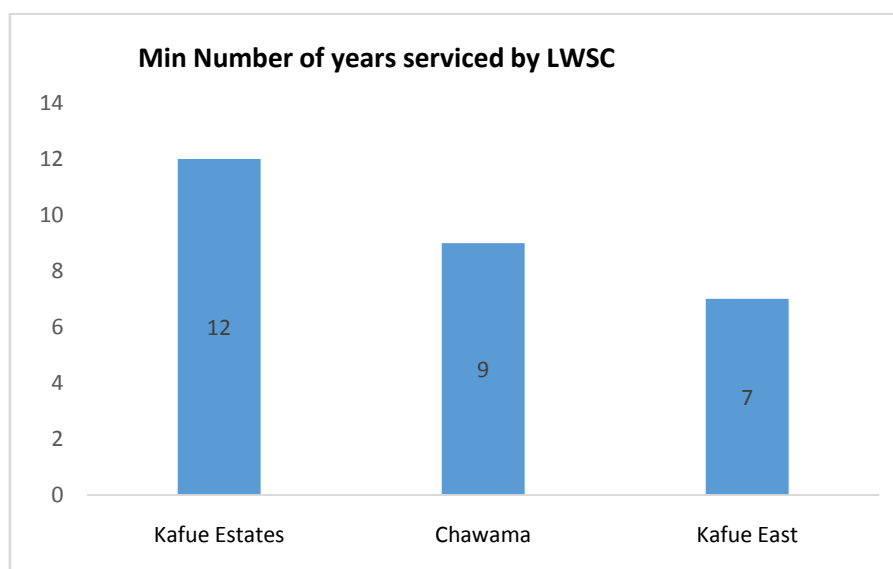


Figure 1: Minimum number of years serviced by LWSC

4.1.4 Level of Education of Respondents

The graph below illustrates the level of education the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate the highest level of education they attended based on Zambia's education system. The findings showed that the respondents' level of

educational varied, with one completing primary level, five completing junior secondary level, six completing senior secondary level and twenty completing tertiary level. Tertiary level respondents were seen to be the majority (20), while primary level seen as the least (1) the minority.

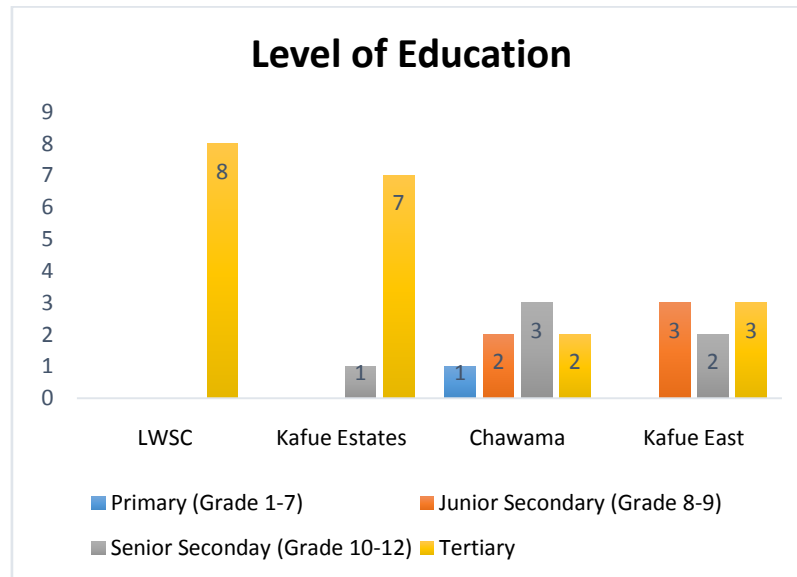


Figure 2: Educational Level of Respondents

4.2 Research Question One: What M&E systems and practices does LWSC use in Kafue district use?

This research question focused on the Qualitative Findings on the M&E practices that LWSC uses in Kafue district. The results highlights different themes such as field visits, customer complaint resolution, work plan, strategic planning, Performance Management System (PMS) and Real time meter reading.

Under this research question, themes that were established included;

Theme One: Field visits

Category: Frequency

Evidence from Interviews:

“We (staff from the branch) do field visit almost on a daily basis.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“LWSC has a sole responsibility of field visits, dealing with customers, data collection from customers, billing/revenue collection, customer service aspect.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

The field visits are cardinal to LWSC routine works if they are to offer quality services to their customers. This indicates that LWSC pays particular attention to ensuring that field visits are conducted in accordance to planned frequency.

Theme Two: Customer complaint resolution

Category: Complaint Resolution

Evidence from Interviews:

“When a customer walks in here (Kafue Office – Commercial division) at the office with a complaint, it is registered/logged into the system and the customer is given a reference number.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“Almost every time, we check what is on the system, we go and visit those customers to check what their complaint is, come back to close the complaint and give them feedback.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“We have regulators like National Water Supply and Sanitation Council (NWASCO) and Zambia Environmental Management Agency ZEMA who monitors us (LWSC).” FGD LWSC – Kafue)

Interpretation:

When dealing with customers’ complaints, each complaint is addressed distinctively until it is closed while following the enshrined processes and procedures implying that there is an orderly way handling complaints.

Theme Three: Work plan

Category: Activity Planning

Evidence from Interviews:

“Work plans helps us know what we need to do from which period to other on a daily basis.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“We have work plans in place for a week, month, sometimes quarter.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

Interpretation:

The staff felt that work plans help them to generate a daily report and see what they have done for that specific day, suggesting that LWSC attaches some degree to executing the activities as scheduled.

Theme Four: Real time meter reading

Category: Efficiency

Evidence from Interviews:

“Real time meter reading - this is where meter readings are digitally captured and we are able to monitor how data is being captured. The captured data is supported with a meter reading photo.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“Billing system - we are trying to improve on billing efficiency. Whenever a meter reading is taken a Short Message Service (SMS) is sent to the customer. This enable the customer to query the reading before effecting the billing on them.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“Currently LWSC has made further strides (Real time meter reading) in ensuring that every meter reading taken is supported by a picture.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

The staff are content and confident regarding how meter readings are taken as well able to closely monitor the entire real time meter reading, suggesting high efficiency in capturing and sharing meter readings to customers resulting to an improvement on the billing aspect.

Theme Five: Strategic planning

Category: Cooperate Governance

Evidence from Interviews:

“The M&E committee is actively involved before the planning itself. They evaluate the setting of the cooperate objectives, departmental objectives and these are submitted to the M&E unit” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

“A Cooperate plan which supports the strategic plan is also assessed annually.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

LWSC incorporates comprehensive M&E planning with involvement of various professionals at different levels of implementation in order to have an organization strategic plan which runs a full cycle of five (5). This is an indication that there is long term direction for operation developed in place.

Theme Six: Performance Management System (PMS)

Category: Result Based Management

Evidence from Interviews:

“PMS is very effective especially when it comes to upgrading staff who are capable of handling a particular task.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

“PMS has helped management to see who is capable of doing what task and assign them to right tasks.” (FGD LWSC – Kafue)

Interpretation:

Staff are aware of their target they ought to meet and how they contribute to the overall outcomes of the organization, suggesting that their individual result is a source of motivation to attract an upgrade leading to high productivity in the organization.

4.2 Research Question Two: What are the key hindrances to effective M&E in utility service delivery at LWSC?

This research question focused on the Qualitative Findings on the Challenges that LWSC faces in implementing M&E in Kafue district. The results highlights different themes such as M&E structure, use of professionals, inadequate finances and lack of trainings in M&E.

Under this research question, themes that were established included;

Theme One: M&E structure

Category: Composition VsOperationalization

Evidence from Interviews:

“From my perspective the M&E unit/structure does exist and it is functional. It is centrally located at HQ.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

“M&E is effected for each project undertaken. I am not just sure at what point the committee comes in each project.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

“We have a lean structure which is not adequate for presence to monitor day to day operations.” (KII LWSC M&E Unit- HQ)

Interpretation:

While some staff commended that the M&E unit is in existence and functional on a centralized basis, others criticized its ability to satisfactory execute its mandate owing to the lean composition. This indicates a need to adequately resource the M&E unit.

Theme Two: Use of Professionals

Category: Assessments (Baseline, Midterm, Endline)

Evidence from Interviews:

“Practice of getting professionals is okay but in my view there should be continuous training. M&E is a specialization, so there should be that continuous training of the staffs that are involved in M&E so that there is no compromise.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

They (M&E Committee) have to do the M&E for Luangwa, Chongwe, Kafue within one week and sometimes may need to lodge which is a cost for the company. (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

With the staff acknowledging the presence of an M&E committee in a bid to support a lean M&E structure in executing the mandate of the unit, this may compromise the quality of work being done as the committee members are not specifically trained in M&E, suggesting a need to specifically training personnel which will lead the execution of assessments.

Theme Three: Inadequate Finances

Category: Staff Recruitment

Evidence from Interviews:

“I know that sometimes they would want to expand the personnel in M&E but there is a constraint of limited funding.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

“I know that they have requested for an increase in personnel but this has been shot down because of limitation of funds.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

With staff recognizing the aspect of limited funds to expand the M&E unit, this therefore, implies a need to specifically plan and budget for M&E activities as well as recruitment of more personnel in M&E unit.

Theme Four: Lack of Trainings in M&E

Category: Capacity Building

Evidence from Interviews:

“We have advanced in terms of the systems we are using now. I doubt if at all the staff have been trained in managing the systems we are using.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

“For instance, financial package of pastel today, for one to evaluate the quality of data, there is need to be at a certain level of expertise. This is why I am insisting that the training aspect has to be throughout.” (KII LWSC - Kafue)

Interpretation:

The staff felt that not all the staff are capable of using the advanced systems being used by the organization, suggesting a critical need to ensure that the staff are adequately trained

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of the study on the Challenges of practicing Monitoring and Evaluation in Utility Service Delivery: Employee Perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia provides valuable insights of challenges in practicing M&E. The findings of this qualitative study in Kafue District, Zambia, revealed multidimensional challenges and perspectives.

In addressing the first objective - to examine the current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices employed by LWSC in Kafue District, findings revealed that field visits, customer complaint resolution, work plan, strategic planning, Performance Management System (PMS) and Real time meter reading are the M&E systems and practices in utility services used by LWSC. The use of Performance Management System (PMS) which is a result-based M&E approach is supported by a study conducted in Vietnam by Bank (2020), on rural water supply and sanitation project which indicated that improved project results in relation to timely of deliverables. Further, use of work plan and strategic planning approaches by LWSC aligns with a community based water project study on assessing the efficacy of participatory M&E conducted by Mgoba and Kabote (2020), which affirmed that participatory M&E is helpful in realizing the set outcomes of a project. The findings emphasize that the M&E practices and systems can aid the organization to improve project results and achieve the desired outcomes.

In investigating the objective to identify key institutional, technical, and stakeholder-related challenges that hinder effective M&E in utility service delivery at LWSC, findings revealed that having a centralized M&E structure, use of professionals, inadequate finances and trainings are the institutional and technical barriers LWSC is facing in relation to M&E implementation. These findings are justified by a study on Innovation

Policy Learning from Korea: the Case of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) conducted by World Bank Group (2023), which revealed similar barriers which included lack of organizational capacity and expertise to design and deploy M&E as well as limited resources for M&E. The findings are further supported by a study on barriers affecting effective M&E conducted by Mmaphuti and Boitumelo (2021), who pinpointed lack of knowledge and training as contributors towards weak M&E. Therefore, the findings emphasize the importance of strengthening the M&E structure to adequately have presence to monitor day to day operations.

By providing the discussed challenges and barriers, the study offers an insight through which M&E can be facilitated or mired within water and sanitation service utility institution. Furthermore, in line with the findings of the present study, there is undoubtedly a chance of weak M&E execution at LWSC owing to many challenges. The consequences of weak M&E could be significantly affecting the projects/programs implementation and tracking at LWSC. Research has shown that having a functional M&E enhances service delivery for the citizens (Hardlife& Zhou, 2013). Additionally, research has indicated that M&E involvement in a project is key to project performance (Kamau & Mohammed, 2015). Therefore, having a weak M&E system may lead to poor decision making, incorrect allocation of resources, challenges in showcasing impact, limiting chances for improvement and a comprised project/program implementation tracking at LWSC in Kafue district.

At LWSC, where M&E plays a critical role in tracking progress against set targets, inadequate support of the M&E unit with sufficient skilled personnel and budget allocation poses a substantial challenge. Lack of outlining support systems in place, such as weak institutional capacity, limited resources and budgetary allocations for M&E, weak linkage between planning, weak demand for and utilisation of M&E results and poor data quality (Tengan&Aigbavboa 2016), LWSC may still struggle to effectively execute M&E. This absence of addressing the M&E challenges affects the quality of service provision as well as impedes LWSC determinations to build a sufficient M&E workforce adequate for presence to monitor day to day operations.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of the findings

The results and findings of the study reveal that M&E practice at LWSC in Kafue is hampered by a substantial number of challenges. These challenges range from;

- i. Limited skill set in M&E: this is a big challenge. The M&E unit/structure is only located at Head Quarters with on two (2). There is no representation of M&E at branch or region level.
- ii. Budget allocation for M&E: there are no specific budget lines for specific M&E activities which is hampering the practice of M&E.
- iii. Use of professionals: the use of M&E committee which is composed of a cross cutting professional members from various departments to conduct major assessment for institution is also another challenge
- iv. Lack of Trainings in M&E: there are no trainings in M&E for staff at branch level yet these are the ones who are ensuring that data collected on a daily basis.

6.2 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research examined the Challenges of practicing Monitoring and Evaluation in Utility Service Delivery: Employee and Customer Perspectives at Lusaka Water Supply and Sanitation Company (LWSC) in Kafue District, Zambia. The study employed a program theory and qualitative approach. Data was gathered from 32 participants in Kafue district through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with LWSC staff. Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the captured data. Addressing challenges like Limited skill set in M&E, Data Management, Budget allocation for M&E, Use of professionals, Lack of Trainings in M&E and Lack of engagement with customers is critical.

6.3 Recommendations

- i. M&E Unit/Structure: Plan for M&E personnel or M&E focal point at least at regional level if funds are not available to cascade the function to branch level.
- ii. Limited skill set in M&E: Plan for capacity building and training in M&E related matters. The trainings should be conducted to both permanent and contracted staff.
- iii. Data Management: Continuous review of the processes, procedures and tools as time evolve.

- iv. Budget allocation for M&E: Specifically plan and budget for M&E activities
- v. Sensitization: LWSC to plan for engagement sessions (i.e. at least once or twice per year) with customers to gather feedback pertaining service delivery. Also this can be an opportunity for LWSC to explain the systems the institution has put in place to enhance service delivery e.g. real time meter reading.

6.4 Recommendation for Further Research

This study was only conducted in Kafue District; other studies should involve other districts where LWSC operates in order to obtain more holistic information on these challenges.

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