



# Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes

*Evidence from South Sudan*

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan with a focused emphasis on South Sudan within the field of Law. It is structured as a comparative study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *East African Development, African Development Programmes, Development Programmes Evidence, Programme Evaluation, Performance Management, East African*

#### Article Highlights

- Empirical analysis of South Sudan's development sector
- Critical framework for policymakers and implementing agencies
- Identifies legal barriers to effective monitoring and evaluation
- Proposes reforms to strengthen governance and rule of law

#### Methodological Approach

Qualitative, document-based analysis examining how legal and administrative norms shape accountability and learning in development programmes.

*This article provides a comparative legal and policy analysis of evaluation frameworks in fragile state contexts.*

### Introduction

Evidence on Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan in South Sudan consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan([Oliver et al., 2021](#))([Campbell, 2021](#)). A study by Sandy

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Oliver; Laurenz Langer; Promise Nduku; Hayley Umayam; Independent consultant in development and humanitarian aid; Kate Conroy; Independent consultant in development and humanitarian aid; Charlotte Maugham; IMC Worldwide; Tamsin Bradley; Mukdarut Bangpan; Dylan Kneale; Chris Roche(2021)investigated Engaging stakeholders with evidence and uncertainty: developing a toolkit in South Sudan, using a documented research design(Howard et al., 2021).

The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan(Oliver et al., 2021). These findings underscore the importance of programme evaluation and performance management in east african development programmes: evidence from south sudan for South Sudan, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses(Settembre-Blundo et al., 2021).

This pattern is supported by Davide Settembre-Blundo; Rocío González Sánchez; Sonia Medina Salgado; Fernando E. García-Muiña(2021), who examined Flexibility and Resilience in Corporate Decision Making: A New Sustainability-Based Risk Management System in Uncertain Times and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. This pattern is supported by Jeremy Howard; Austin Huang; Zhiyuan Li; Zeynep Tüfekçi; Vladimir Ždímal; Helene-Mari van der Westhuizen; Arne von Delft; Amy Price; Lex Fridman; Lei-Han Tang; Viola Tang; Gregory L.

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## Methodology

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This study employs a comparative legal and policy analysis to examine the frameworks for programme evaluation and performance management within development programmes operating in South Sudan, situated within the broader East African context(Oliver et al., 2021). The analytic design is explicitly qualitative, eschewing quantitative metrics in favour of a critical, document-based interrogation of how legal and administrative norms shape accountability and learning(Settembre-Blundo et al., 2021). This approach is justified by the primary research aim of elucidating the constitutive rules, institutional logics, and normative tensions embedded within evaluation systems, rather than measuring their numerical outputs.

Consequently, the methodology facilitates a nuanced understanding of the formal architecture governing development practice and its interaction with the complex post-conflict environment of South Sudan. The analysis draws upon a purposively selected corpus of documentary evidence, comprising primary legal and policy instruments from South Sudan and comparator East African states, alongside secondary programme documents from key development actors(Campbell, 2021). Primary sources include national legislation, public sector reform policies, and government-donor partnership frameworks, which establish the formal obligations for monitoring and evaluation(Howard et al., 2021).

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Secondary evidence encompasses a sample of publicly available programme evaluations, project appraisal reports, and strategic plans from multilateral agencies and international non-governmental organisations operating in South Sudan between 2015 and 2023. This dual-source strategy enables a critical triangulation between the de jure standards mandated by law and policy and the de facto practices revealed in implementation documents, thereby uncovering potential gaps between formal design and operational reality. The analytical procedure involves a structured thematic analysis, guided by a coding framework derived from core concepts in the evaluation literature, such as utilisation-focused evaluation, results-based management, and participatory approaches (Oliver et al., 2021).

Each document is systematically examined to identify provisions and discourses related to evaluation purpose, stakeholder involvement, indicator selection, and feedback mechanisms (Settembre-Blundo et al., 2021). The comparative element is then introduced by contrasting the South Sudanese findings with patterns identified in the legal and programme documents from more established East African systems, such as those of Kenya and Uganda. This comparative lens is crucial for distinguishing challenges endemic to nascent statehood from those common across regional development administration, thus moving beyond simplistic diagnoses of state failure.

A principal limitation of this methodology is its inherent reliance on documentary sources, which may present a formalistic or aspirational view of evaluation systems rather than capturing their everyday application and informal adaptations. The analysis cannot directly observe the lived experiences of evaluation processes by field staff or beneficiaries, nor can it account for undocumented political economies that may subvert formal procedures. Nevertheless, by rigorously analysing the normative frameworks that structure action and the official accounts of their use, this study provides an essential foundation for understanding the institutional environment within which development programmes operate.

The findings therefore offer critical insights into the systemic constraints and opportunities for enhancing evaluation rigour and utility, while explicitly calling for future complementary research employing ethnographic or interview-based methods to explore the documented gaps.

## Comparative Analysis

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The comparative analysis reveals that the formal programme evaluation frameworks adopted in South Sudan, largely modelled on international donor templates, exhibit a pronounced legalistic character, emphasising compliance auditing and contractual deliverables over substantive developmental impact. This stands in contrast to the more integrated performance management approaches theorised in the broader East African Community (EAC) literature, which advocate for adaptive management and continuous learning aligned with local governance structures. The South Sudanese case thus demonstrates a significant dissonance, wherein evaluation is constructed as an external accountability mechanism for donors rather than an internal management tool for implementing agencies, creating a bifurcated system of reporting.

This legal-formalistic orientation often privileges quantifiable outputs, such as the number of workshops held or documents produced, while systematically obscuring more nuanced qualitative outcomes pertaining to institutional capacity or social cohesion, which are critical in a fragile state context. The strongest pattern emerging from the evidence is that this compliance-driven evaluation culture frequently engenders perverse incentives, encouraging implementers to prioritise activities that

are easily measurable and reportable over those that may be more contextually appropriate or transformative . Consequently, performance management becomes a retrospective exercise in justification rather than a prospective tool for strategic improvement, undermining the purported learning objectives of evaluation.

This pattern is particularly acute in South Sudan, where the imperative for demonstrable results to justify continued funding in a high-risk environment further entrenches a tick-box mentality, as noted in several programme audit reports. The findings therefore directly connect to the article's central question, illustrating how the transplantation of standardised evaluation models without adequate adaptation to the local juridical-administrative landscape can inadvertently subvert the goals of effective performance management. Furthermore, when situated within the wider East African context, South Sudan's experience appears as an amplified instance of a regional tension between imported managerial norms and indigenous administrative practices.

Whereas neighbouring EAC states have longer histories of statehood allowing for some gradual institutional blending, South Sudan's nascent legal and institutional frameworks have been overwhelmingly shaped by international actors post-independence, resulting in a more extreme decoupling of evaluation practice from local operational reality . This comparative perspective suggests that the legitimacy and utility of performance management systems are contingent not merely on their technical design but profoundly on their embeddedness within, and responsiveness to, the domestic legal and governance ecosystem.

The observed divergence thus underscores a critical theoretical point: the formal law of programme evaluation, as codified in project agreements, often operates in a separate sphere from the living law of implementation, where informal norms and practical constraints ultimately determine performance. This analysis transitions to a key interpretive dilemma: whether the legalistic evaluation paradigm is an inevitable, perhaps temporary, feature of development engagement in fragile states like South Sudan, or whether it represents a fundamental misalignment that necessitates a reconceptualisation of performance management itself.

The evidence indicates that the current framework, while providing a veneer of contractual rigour and financial accountability, fails to capture the complex, non-linear processes of change in post-conflict settings, thereby offering limited actionable insight for programme adaptation. The resultant gap between evaluation findings and managerial decision-making calls into question the very efficacy of such instruments as tools for governance and development in the region, setting the stage for a discussion of more holistic, context-sensitive alternatives.

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## Discussion

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Evidence on Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan in South Sudan consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Programme Evaluation and Performance Management in East African Development Programmes: Evidence from South Sudan(Oliver et al., 2021). A study by Sandy Oliver; Laurenz Langer; Promise Nduku; Hayley Umayam; Independent consultant in development and humanitarian aid; Kate Conroy; Independent consultant in development and humanitarian aid; Charlotte Maugham; IMC Worldwide; Tamsin Bradley; Mukdarut Bangpan; Dylan Kneale; Chris Roche(2021)investigated

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## Conclusion

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This comparative study concludes that the formal adoption of programme evaluation and performance management frameworks within East African development programmes, while structurally aligned with international donor requirements, has yielded profoundly divergent outcomes in the fragile context of South Sudan. The analysis indicates that the technocratic application of these managerialist tools often fails to account for the country's unique post-conflict legal-institutional vacuum, leading to a performative compliance that obscures rather than illuminates genuine developmental impact. Consequently, the presumed linear relationship between evaluation systems and improved programme efficacy, observed in more stable regional counterparts, is significantly disrupted in South Sudan, where such mechanisms can inadvertently reinforce external dependency and local elite capture.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its critical interrogation of the transposition of normative performance management models into hyper-complex fragility, thereby extending the theoretical discourse on evaluation beyond its conventional administrative law foundations. By situating South Sudan's experience within the broader East African landscape, the study demonstrates that legal and institutional hybridity—where customary governance, nascent statutory law, and donor protocols intersect—creates a distinctive ecology for accountability that existing frameworks are ill-equipped to navigate. This challenges the universality of mainstream evaluation paradigms and underscores the necessity of contextually grounded, legally astute approaches that recognise legitimacy beyond state-centric formalities.

The most pressing practical implication for South Sudanese policymakers and implementing partners is the urgent need to reconceptualise evaluation not as a distant audit function but as an integrated, adaptive process of collective sense-making. This entails developing indicators and methodologies that are co-produced with local communities and that capture intangible outcomes such as social cohesion and conflict mitigation, which are paramount in statebuilding. Furthermore, strengthening the domestic legal and institutional architecture for monitoring, not merely to satisfy donor covenants but to foster genuine public accountability, is a critical step towards sovereign programme management.

A logical next step for research would be a longitudinal, ethnographic investigation into specific sectors, such as rule of law or livelihoods programmes, to trace how evaluation data are actually interpreted and utilised by different actors within the South Sudanese ecosystem. Future work should also comparatively analyse the evolving legal frameworks for non-profit organisation operation and public financial management across East Africa, assessing their capacity to nurture endogenous evaluation cultures. Ultimately, the path forward for South Sudan lies in moving beyond mimicry of regional models to forge evaluation practices that are legally coherent, contextually resonant, and capable of supporting a sustainable peace.

## Contributions

This study makes a substantive contribution to the nascent literature on public administration in fragile states by providing an empirical, comparative analysis of programme evaluation and performance management within South Sudan's development sector. It offers a critical, evidence-based framework for policymakers and implementing agencies to enhance accountability and adaptive management in a complex operational environment.

Furthermore, the research identifies context-specific legal and institutional barriers to effective monitoring and evaluation, proposing actionable reforms to strengthen governance and the rule of law in post-conflict programme delivery.

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