

African Centre for Project Management

PGD-Monitoring and Evaluation

Assignment 3

By

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MODULE 3 Questions:

Q1: Explain the value of M&E in about 100 words and outline key planning steps for setting up an M&E plan (10 marks)

Value of Monitoring and Evaluation.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a very essential function of project management. Proper M&E has the potential to raise the chances of overall project/programme or policy success and boosts organization reputation (Barr, Rinnert, Lloyd, Dunne, & Henttinen, 2016). First, M&E is crucial for strategic management. Through M&E information is obtained and used to inform the setting and adjustment of goals, objectives and ultimately strategies or policies to ensure high quality performance (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003). In addition, the success or even failure of one programme if highlighted through M&E can contribute to the body of knowledge in that particular field and hence strengthen the programming capacity of stakeholders (Frankel & Gage, 2007). Furthermore, M&E supports operational management by providing important information for proper coordination and control of resources thereby cutting costs through streamlined strategies based on best-practices (UNDP, 2009). M&E also contributes to capacity building, self-reliance and confidence among stakeholders like beneficiaries, staff and partners (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). Finally, M&E is a tool for accountability and transparency. It provides evidence of demand and supply of goods and services and ultimately justify the need for further funding and support (PATH, 2011).

Planning steps for an M&E plan

A monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan is an important document that spells out the procedures and resources for assessing and tracking the progress and results of an intervention, project, programme or policy (IFRC, 2007). Though an M&E plan is a reference document developed prior to implementation and helps in monitoring an intervention, it is not cast in stone. It is rather a living document that should be referred to and updated on a regular basis (Frankel & Gage, 2007). An M&E plan includes both documents created during project planning like the logical framework or theory of change, it also requires that new documents like data collection tools are created

(Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). The following is an outline of the step-by-step process of developing and M&E plan (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014).

- **Step 1:** Identify the programme goal and objectives: This is usually derived from the already created logical framework or theory of change for the project or programme.
- **Step 2:** Define indicators: With consultation from various stakeholders, relevant indicators are set to include both process and outcome indicators.
- **Step 3:** Define data collection methods and timelines: In consultation with programme staff and donors and other stakeholder, a table is created showing sources of data, data collection methods, and timing of data collection.
- **Step 4:** Identify M&E roles and responsibilities: Probably this will include a combination of M&E staff, research staff, and program staff. Collaboration and teamwork should be emphasized to avoid lapses and unsure quality data collection.
- **Step 5:** Create an analysis plan and reporting templates: This will outline what data is needed to create what information, what statistical tests have to be done and which software will be used.
- **Step 6:** Plan for dissemination and donor reporting: A description is made about how and to whom data will be disseminated.

Q2: Describe the relevance of stakeholder participation in M&E (10 marks)

There are various approaches of M&E. Specifically, the Participatory monitoring & evaluation (PM&E) approach has stakeholder involvement at its core. Participation is defined as a process of involving stakeholder in decision-making, resource allocation, implementation and management of a project, programme or policy (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). More often, participatory M&E is affected by socio-cultural and political undertones since various stakeholders have different levels of power and interests (Busjeet, 2003). However, PM&E is still very relevant in project management, more so in the current context dominated by multi-disciplinary interventions. The relevance of stakeholder involvement through PM&E is multifold as described below:

- First and foremost, stakeholder participation builds the capacity of all parties to influence project success (UNDP, 2009). In the participatory process, stakeholders learn to assess, analyze, suggest solutions to challenges, and indeed take appropriate action. Inherently, PM&E ignites and reinforces self-development initiatives in local communities through a

gradual strengthening of local awareness about pertinent issues and available options. Stakeholder participation inevitably enhances local learning, management skills and capacity hence strengthening existing individual and organizational capacities (Vernooy, 1999).

- Secondly, stakeholder involvement is a means to ensure transparency at all levels from the beneficiaries, implementers, overseers and funders of the project or programmes (UNDP, 2009). PM&E offers an opportunity to ensure that both local and national government personnel and institutions and as well non-governmental organizations and their staff are held accountable for their actions and inactions (IFRC, 2007). This at times also applies to entities in the private sector in the event of public-private partnerships.
- In relation to the above, participatory M&E especially donor involvement can potentially influence funding agencies to re-assess their assumptions, and priorities by interfacing with the reality faced by the other stakeholder especially the beneficiaries (Frankel & Gage, 2007). This can lead to paradigm shifts so that resource allocation is done to more progressive courses of action as informed by the context.
- On the other hand, stakeholder participation is relevant for collective celebration of success and consensus to build on what has worked well (Vernooy, 1999). This is key for organizational growth and learning. As a ripple effect, PM&E can ensure that the impacts of an intervention influence and re-orient policy and programme design since it's based on broader consensus (UNDP, 2009).
- Stakeholder participation ensures timely, reliable, and valid information for management decision-making (Hilhorst & Guijt, 2006). If it's the case that all stakeholders are involved, PM&E reduces the need for consultations once all stakeholders agree on a way forward.
- Needless to mention, stakeholder involvement in M&E evokes the feeling of ownership (Barr, Rinnert, Lloyd, Dunne, & Henttinen, 2016). Once allowed to participate, most stakeholder develop a perception of ownership of the process. This definitely empowers the beneficiaries to make their own decisions about the future.
- Stakeholder involvement in M&E ensures that reforms are made (UNDP, 2009). PM&E is fundamentally a decentralized process therefore it reverses the top-down development model which tends to centralize and standardize decision making. The success of PM&E usually promotes institutional reforms towards a more participatory structure.

- Last but not least, PM&E creates linkages between different stakeholder groups (Vernooy, 1999). Since the process is mutually consultative, it builds consensus among staff and partners about project/programme goals, objectives and strategies. This often leads to symbiotic and synergetic implementation of interventions.

Q3: It is imperative that sufficient resources are allocated to the conduct of M&E in a program. discuss this assertion in about 350 words. (10 marks)

All processes in M&E require a considerable amount of resources like human, financial and material for example. Staff, stationery, information technology (IT) gadgets, logistics, to ensure smooth running of the various processes like data collection, analysis, data quality assessment (DQAs) and dissemination of lessons (IFRC, 2007). All these aspects of M&E are usually expensive to set-up and carry out. For that reason, some people feel that it is inequitably costly to conduct M&E. For M&E to be deemed effective, the process must result quality reports grounded on scientific methods and properly implemented (UNDP, 2009). This therefore means that if M&E is given insufficient resources, there is a likelihood that it will result into forced compromises leading to “cutting corners” which eventually jeopardizes the quality of the process. Secondly, allocating sufficient resources to M&E can builds donor confidence and other trust by stakeholders that their investment and interests will be monitored throughout the process of project implementation (Barr, Rinnert, Lloyd, Dunne, & Henttinen, 2016). Some donors actually recommend that a certain percentage of the project budget is earmarked for M&E activities (IFRC, 2007). This ensures that the M&E plan is made explicit and also costed along with the project work plan. In essence investing in M&E is one way of ensuring effectiveness and efficiency which are essential for ensuring value for money. Proper M&E ensures a good return on investment (UNDP, 2009). This is possible through regular reviews and recommendations for change of course in case there is slow or no progress. In so doing, there will be a reduction in losses. Furthermore, during the process of evaluation there is an opportunity to initiate and assess innovation and document success stories and lessons learnt (Frankel & Gage, 2007). There is an opportunity to review and replace conventional modes of operation with more nuanced and cost-effective strategies (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003). The programme team can also leverage on the success stories to lobby for more funds (Barr, Rinnert, Lloyd, Dunne, & Henttinen, 2016). There is also an opportunity to incorporate lessons learnt in subsequent projects and interventions

thereby ensuring that resources are better utilized henceforth (Sedrakian, 2016). However, the total cost of M&E should neither overweight or outweigh the cost of the whole intervention.

Q4: What are the key considerations and questions that both monitoring and evaluation seeks to answer? Explain giving project examples. (10 Marks)

Since both monitoring and evaluation fundamentally pursue an assessment and corrective goal, yet they are technically different processes, they have similar considerations and questions though constructed from different temporality perspectives. The monitoring perspective is more of a continuous and prospective view while the evaluation perspective is more static and retrospective. In this following discussion, the key considerations are divided into those internal to the organization and those that are external.

Considerations and questions internal to the organization.

- As M&E takes place, internally the lens is focused on an understanding of the organizational capacity in terms utilization of internal processes (IFRC, 2007). The goal is to always find out how well the staff in the organization are working with regard to resources (financial, human and material), overall organization leadership, and management. For example, during monitoring of project implementation of an Adolescent Sexual and reproductive health Programme, the M&E team can focus on whether the project staff are following the finance and procurement policies as they buy reproductive health commodities for distribution to beneficiaries. Similarly, during evaluation, keen interest can be put on whether the project team was compliant to internal policies and controls.
- Secondly, during the process of monitoring the signs of teamwork and collaboration are interrogated (IFRC, 2007). There is a deliberate attempt to examine how well individual staff and the generally the entire organization is working with others. By extension, the relationship with partners and other stakeholders is scrutinized for example with wider advocacy movements, within coalitions and alliances.

Considerations and questions external to the organization

- The first external question for both monitoring and evaluation is the relevance or acceptability of the intervention (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). During monitoring, attention is paid to the possibility that the project has ceased to be relevant to the intended beneficiaries. For example, in a project aiming at empowering youth with vocational skills,

if during the second quarter of implementation, it is discovered that all enrolled participants have dropped out, there is reason enough to dig deep and find out why. Similarly, if at the end of the project, none of the participants who completed the full course in carpentry reports using those skills but rather all of them are engaged in other trades, then there is reason to believe that the project was not relevant in that context or at least to that particular cohort that was selected for the training. Therefore, it is imperative to evaluate if projects are designed to be relevant to different demographic sections of the community.

- Both monitoring and evaluation aim at assessing effectiveness of interventions. Whereas the monitoring function strives to ensure corrections are made where ineffectiveness is identified, the evaluation function delimits if the intervention was effective or not (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). For example, in a project aiming at prevention of malaria in a rural community, if one of the activities was to train people on the use of insecticide treated mosquito nets. Then, a month after the training, an observation was made that over 50% of the households use their mosquito nets as netting for poultry houses. In this scenario, from a monitoring perspective, the training was not effective. If the situation is not improved by conducting refresher training and distributing of more mosquito nets, definitely at the end, the evaluation report would indicate that the utilization of mosquito nets is still low and malaria prevalence is still high and therefore the intervention was not effective.
- Related to effectiveness is the concept of efficiency. Both monitoring and evaluation are concerned about efficiency. That is the cost-effectiveness in the use of resources which may include: finances, time, materials and human resources (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). While conducting monitoring, at times input indicators are also tracked to assess the return on investment. During monitoring, assessment of how much inputs have been used in a project enhances the understanding of how efficient a project is. On the other hand, summative evaluation inherently questions whether the resources invested in the intervention were actually put to good use. For example, while monitoring a project for improving access to safe water in a rural community X in South Sudan, the project M&E team can look at whether the cost of borehole repairs is logically fair compare to the number

of users fetching water. This can be reviewed through indicators comparing utilization of different water sources across the project area. During evaluation, the cost per capital for provision of safe can be used to compare the different water points installed.

- Lastly, another concept of consideration is impact. Impact is the measure of the fundamental effect on people's lives or the welfare of the community as a result of the intervention (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). Both monitoring and evaluation attempt to measure a project's impact. During monitoring, incremental progress is measure towards achieving the output, outcome and ultimately the impact. For example, in a project for reduction of child mortality and morbidity due to measles, at monitoring stage, the project team will monitor how many children are immunized fully. For evaluation., the focus is more in relation to assessing how much of the observed impact is as a contribution or attributed to the intervention.

Q5: Explain the relationship between *change assumptions*" and *impact* in a project. (10 Marks)

Change assumptions are the positive conditions that are necessary for a successful cause-and-effect relationship between different levels of results (Frankel & Gage, 2007). Therefore, during the planning of an intervention, as stakeholders think of the overall impact of the project, they consider the prerequisites for these changes (Hobson, Mayne, & Hamilton, 2014). In so doing they are assuming that once those conditions are fulfilled, the results will be achieved. On the other hand, impact is the effect that the activity carried-out has had on have on people, practices, organizations and systems (OECD, 2002).

Therefore, in practice, the process of developing a results map/chain, will always have these assumptions. When we say that if X is present, then whatever we are doing will lead to Y, we have made some latent assumptions. What change assumption are or are not is never easy to define or understand. However, they are not always valid and are often implicit (Frankel & Gage, 2007). Nevertheless, they are necessary. Often change assumptions are context-specific, hold true for a certain period of time, in a specific place and at times for certain people within the framework for

achieving the impact of the intervention (UNHCR, 2002). However, they are usually premised in some form of empirical evidence other than an individual's predisposition (Frankel & Gage, 2007).

The relationship between change assumptions is somewhat temporal in nature. In a theory of change (ToC) process, change assumptions are made about the causal links between outcomes at different levels up to the level of impact (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003). Some of these assumptions are operational also called implementation assumptions, for example the assumption that health workers will turn-up for a scheduled training for respectful maternity care or that the trainer has incorporated all learning needs of the participants for the training. In addition, there are also strategic assumptions also known as full pathway assumptions made for example that the training will change the health worker's attitude towards mothers in labour which will in turn change their professional conduct (Frankel & Gage, 2007). There are also purpose-level change assumptions made. For example, assuming that midwives will be able to attend to women in labour if they have all the necessary medicine and supplies in the maternity clinic. All in all, assumptions are made to clear-up the thought process towards the achievement of an impact.

In general, we make assumptions in project work because clarifying assumptions in a shared thought process can contribute in several ways to having the best results and impact of interventions in the following ways.

First, examining change assumption results into formulation of more effective project teams. During the process of project design, explicit discussions reveal the assumptions held by people and groups based on their values (Frankel & Gage, 2007). Out of this, differences are identified and if solved, collective energy is generated. Often times, simply understanding different assumptions is enough to boost the prospects of achieving project the goal and therefore impact. Secondly, change assumptions help in improving the design of an intervention and bolstering innovation (Bakewell, Adams, & Pratt, 2003). Identifying the change assumptions that are most likely to affect project success can act as a wake-up call for new options for action. This can lead project teams to choosing the most critical pathways into which to focus planning efforts.

Furthermore, an understanding of the change assumptions can lead to more effective coordination and result-focused action (UNDP, 2009). By teasing out the various perspectives in which individuals and organizations assume the change process, the project team can come to a consensus on how to coordinate different actions.

In addition, clear change assumptions form a strong basis for adaptive management. Focusing on critical assumptions can help with risk management (IFRC, 2007). Focusing on critical assumption helps project teams to identify what needs to happen or not in order to achieve the desired change. Generally, monitoring outputs, assumptions and processes collectively enables the project team to respond to new information in a timely manner and to adapt the strategies to suite the new realities.

Lastly, with regard to attribution of impact to an intervention, clear change assumptions help the evaluation team to clearly state to what extent the observed impact is a result of fulfilled assumptions or actual intervention efforts (UNDP, 2009). This is likely to increase credibility. Generally, a set of well-articulated change assumptions can raise trust among donors and other key stakeholders who may not even be directly involved in the design or intervention.

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