**MODULE 3 ASSIGNMENT:**

1. **Why is choosing the right question important in Monitoring and Evaluation**?

It is important to ask the right and relevant evaluation questions in order to guide and strengthen the program. The evaluation questions are directed by what the funders wish for the program to achieve as such the question should be able to answer the program intent. A donor or funder with interest to ensure a certain target group has access to HIV testing facility, such as the group of MSM, the question would have to answer or respond to the question of what proportion of MSM are accessing HIV testing services . As such the evaluation question must be very specific in order for the program to address that requirement.

Furthermore questions must address certain expectations of targets to address program questions such as ‘what success would look like. Questions must be right and relevant to that context. The measurements of success or progress may be addressed differently in denoting by numbers reached or qualitatively. The evaluation question would then have to be written in a specific way to denote that which is of interest to the program. In the example of MSM accessing HIV testing services, a typical question of ‘Did the program reach out to 25% of MSM?’ This address the question as to whether targets were not and allows interrogation of results to determine if they were not met, what were the reasons for such. This allows changes in interventions to be made. If this question was nor asked it may cause the program to miss critical components of their study as process gaps would not be addressed.

The success of the program depends on useful questions that will lead to useful answers. The right questions depend on the type of evaluation. There are questions suitable for process versus outcome type evaluation. It is important to then determine at the planning phase, whether stakeholders are interested in process or outcome in order to ask the right questions. A typical process question would be focused on population reached by intervention or whether clients were satisfied by the intervention. If the program interest of monitoring and evaluation is in the outcome, questions leading to intended outcomes would be important.

Questions should address whether the program was appropriate for the intended use; its effectiveness and efficacies, in the way it was carried out. Efficiencies should address how well the program was executed taking into consideration inputs & outputs. A typical question to address this would be ‘what is hindering the initiative to achieve the set objectives?

**2. Using Archival data has its own bottlenecks. Name five and explain how to overcome them.**

Archival data is data that is existing as it would have been collected in the past. It has advantages but there are some bottlenecks that come with using this kind of data.

One of the bottlenecks that one can experience in using this kind of **data is the verification** thereof. Data will have been previously collected by a different person for a different purpose. For this reason the data may not always match that is required for the current research. A typical example may be using old school records for a particular study that requires demographics such as gender and age, only to find the existing records recorded gender and perhaps school grade and not necessarily the age. This would force the researcher to use age estimates based on existing trends. This will ultimately cause biasness and provide false conclusions. Since the information is in the past, it provides a bottleneck in that the researcher cannot verify such data.

One may question the **data validity** archival data validity. Different data methods collection are used for different requirements. Credible data would have to be collected in consistent manner agreed by the research team and as such this cannot be guaranteed with archival data. The data may not be collected in the acceptable standard to the current researcher thus creating bottlenecks of incomplete information

It may be **time consuming to organize data** in the form that the researcher requires as the information content may be bulky and not structured in the form that is required. A situation where a psychology study is conducted from hospital archived data on suicides, would naturally be packed together with all other death records. For the researcher to sieve those pertaining to suicide he would have to spend time and go through all records to find those of interest, related to suicide. This can be a bottleneck even though there is advantage in that the information is readily available.

Issues of **misinterpretation of existing data** should be considered when using archival data. The data was collected from a different context and so a new researcher using the data has to draw conclusions from only what is available to him or her. The credibility of the research then largely depends on the understanding of the person at hand, the information is not real life

3. Why is research important component in monitoring and evaluation? Give and explain four.

Research is an important component in monitoring and evaluation as it helps address and answer some key evaluation questions. Research enables a broader aspect of topics in the issue or program at hand thus assisting in providing more data to that of monitoring and evaluation.

Research can provide a platform **for testing relevance** before the actual implementation thus adding value to program design. Where there is an initiative for routine HIV monitoring in a certain Organization, Research may assist guide further initiatives. An example is doing research on archival data from existing sources such as hospitals to gather information on typical demographics for the population that typically access HIV services such as testing or maybe ARVS. Having conducted such research would assist in pre-empting approaches to suit that population, based on their e.g. age gender. If the research would not be done prior to program implementation there would be a risk of designing the program in a manner that is not suitable to that population at hand. Research in M&E helps in improving on implementation and programming strategy and also the modality of evaluation.

Generally research conducted as part of monitoring ad evaluation is an important aspect of identifying lessons learnt. Lessons learn provide insight at the planning stage. The information obtained can be used to inform procedures for specific intended use and assist in duplicated effort by programmers repeating the same study that was conducted before.

Research can help provide baseline for monitoring and evaluation. An example is that of the Malawi case where a research study was conducted to derive learnings for improving capacity for monitoring: Monitoring well-being outcomes among Kizazi Kipya project beneficiaries: Key findings from the baseline evaluation.

**Reference:**

https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/sub\_landing/files/20080430\_JC1769\_Organizing\_Framework\_Functional\_v2\_en.pdf

Handbook on monitoring and Evaluating for results – United Nations Development Program Evaluation Office, 2002