Africa Institute of Project Management Studies

(AIPMS)

**Course:** Monitoring & Evaluation

**Level:** Postgraduate Diploma

**Course Assignment:** Module 6: assignment

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**Module 6 Questions:**

**Q 1:** Explain the value of considering the implementation capacity and what steps to take therein while developing an M&E plan in an organization. (20 mrks)

**Planning** can be defined as the process of setting goals, developing strategies, outlining the implementation arrangement and allocating resources to achieve the goals. It is important to note that planning involves looking at a number of different process; for example, identifying the vision, goals, or objectives to be achieved, formulating the strategies needed to achieve the vision and goals, determining and allocating the resources (financial and others) required to achieve the vision and goals, outlining implementation arrangement, which include the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress towards achieving the vision and goals *UNDP (2009).*

**Monitoring** can be defined as the ongoing process by which stakeholders obtain regular feedback on the progress being made towards achieving their goals and objectives *UNDP( 2009).*

**Evaluation** is a rigorous and independent assessment of either completed or ongoing activities to determine the extent to which they are achieving stated objectives and contributing to decision – making UNDP (2009)

**M & E Plan** is guide that explains the goals and objectives of an M & E strategy and its key elements. An M & E plan is like a road map that helps to define, implement, track and improve a monitoring and evaluation strategy within a particular projects or group of projects. It states everything that needs to happen from project planning phase until the project reaches its goal and create the intended impact *TolaData (2019).*

Akintunde Akinleye (2012) defines and M & E plan as a document that helps to track and assess the results of the intervention throughout the life of a program. It is a living document that should be referred to and updated on a regular basis.

Therefore, developing an M&E plan should be done during the initial stages of the development of the program/project. The reality, however, is that often M&E plans are developed after the program is already in place.

The responses to question will present the steps that should be followed when drafting the M&E plan. These steps are not necessarily independent from each other, rather many may be developed or need to be considered in conjunction with others.

**Step 1: Introduction**

The introduction to the M & E plan should include:

1. Information about the purpose of the program the specific M & E activities that are needed, and why they are important.
2. A development history that provides information about the motivations of the internal and external stakeholders and extent of their interest, commitment and participation. *Nina Frankel & Anastasia Gage (2016).*

**Step 2: Description and frameworks**

1. The program description should include:

* **A problem statement** that identifies the specific problem to be addressed (this concise statement provides information about the situation that needs changing whom the situation affects, and the situation’s causes, magnitude, and impact on society)

1. The program goal and objectives:

* **The goal** is a broad statement, about desired long-term outcomes of the program. For example, improvement in the reproductive health of adolescents or a reduction in unwanted pregnancies in X population would be goals.
* **Objectives** are statements of desired specific and measureable program results. Example of objective would be to reduce the total fertility rate to 4.0 births by year X or to increase contraceptive prevalence over the life of the program.
* Descriptions of the specific interventions to be implemented and their duration, geographic scope, and target population.
* **The conceptual framework**, which is a graphic depiction of the factors thought to influence the problem of interest and how these factors relate to one another.
* **The logical framework** or results framework that links the goal and objectives to the interventions. *Nina Frankel & Anastasia Gage (2016).*

**Step 3: Define Indicators**

The M&E plan must include useful M&E indicators and data collection systems so that it will contribute to effective program management and be useful for program decision-making. Indicators should be consistent with international standards and your program’s reporting requirements (e.g., PEPFAR, UNAIDS). Indicator selection should consider what is feasible and realistic to collect, this includes considering data availability and identifying data sources *TolaData (2019.)*

**Step 4: Define Data Source**

The data sources identified must provide you with the information you need to measure your indicators. You are already familiar with different types of data sources (which we will touch upon in the next slide), however, it is important to consider those data sources that exist at the time you are developing your M&E plan and whether or not new data sources/collection mechanisms need to be developed (and whether or not that is feasible, practical & realistic) *TolaData (2019).*

**Step 5: Monitoring Plan**

Specific program component that will be monitored such as provider performance or the utilization or resources, how this monitoring will be conducted and the indicators that will be used to measure results *Nina Frankel & Anastasia Gage (2016).*

**Step 6: Evaluation Plan**

Evaluation plan provides the specific research design and methodological approaches to be used to identify whether changes in outcomes can be attributed to the program, for instance, if a program wants to test whether quality of patient care can be improved by training providers, the evaluation plan would identify a research design that could be used to measure the impact of such an intervention *Nina Frankel & Anastasia Gage (2016).*

**Step 7: Information Products, dissemination and use**

Once data are collected and analyzed, they should be used to inform decision- making and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the program. The results of the analysis should be disseminated to all relevant stakeholders and share with implementers through systematic feedback mechanism.

**Step 8:** **Implementation and mechanism for updates**

The capacities needed to implement the efforts described in the M & E plan should be included in the document.

A mechanism for reviewing and updating the M & E plan should be included. This is because changes in the program can and will affect the original plans for both monitoring & evaluation *Nina Frankel & Anastasia Gage (2016)*

**Values of considering M & E Implementation capacity**

Something that often is neglected when preparing to develop an M&E plan is to assess the M&E technical capacity of a health program/project. When preparing the M&E plan, you must at least consider the existing data collection systems and staff capacity in M&E. The program may have an M&E unit with staff trained in M&E methods that will be responsible for leading the development and coordination of the M&E plan. If not, there may be strategically located individuals who are motivated, committed and competent and have an interest in M&E. It is important to identify those people even if they do not have a formal M&E position.

The scale of program funding and the proportion of resources devoted to M&E is another important consideration when you start to develop your M&E plan. Obviously, the M&E effort should not be more costly than the program itself. One rule that has been suggested is that 10% of resources should be devoted to M&E. Costs that should be considered are those related to the cost of data collection systems and information dissemination and use of those for M&E coordination. M&E expenses may be higher in the first year because of the resources needed to improve or establish information systems. If new systems or special studies are to be conducted by outside agencies, these costs and their timeline must also be considered Those developing the M&E Plan also need resources such as indicator guides, M&E guidelines (manuals, textbooks, etc), communication tools.

These factors must be considered throughout the development of your M&E plan so that it is realistic and appropriate for your programs needs *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Q2:** Explain the main qualitative features of an M&E plan, which distinguishes it from any other plan in M&E. (10mrks)

Throughout the process of developing the M&E plan, the end users and their information needs must be addressed (fulfilled?) to ensure utilization of the M&E plan.. If you have involved stakeholders from the beginning in the development of your M&E plan, you will have a clear understanding of who the users of M&E findings are and what their information needs are.

In the M&E plan, you should articulate a plan for disseminating and utilizing M&E findings. Program information/data may be prepared and presented during strategically timed user meetings and/or workshops. You should consider who would attend these meetings/workshops and tailor the information to their information needs for decision-making/program improvement.

Annual report and review meetings are also effective ways to review program progress and to use results to identify areas for improvement and/or program adjustments and to see which aspects of the program are most successful *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

Below responses to this question will explain in detail the main qualitative features of an M & E plan, which distinguishes it from any other plan in M & E.

**Stakeholders Involvement**

Program and project must be designed, planned and implemented using a participatory approach where all stakeholders are involved throughout the program/project lifecycle *CIDA (YEAR?).*

Stakeholders include everyone who will use the information generated from the M&E plan. This may include several levels of stakeholders from the international (e.g., donors) and national levels (e.g., Ministries) to sub-national (e.g., provinces, districts) and program levels (e.g., program managers and service providers). It is important that they be consulted from the outset to ensure a clear understanding of the program’s goals and objectives, to ensure that their perspective and user needs will be met, to learn about existing data collection systems and their quality, to understand what indicators are being used currently and to determine the capacity for data collection and use *Sohail Agha (YEAR?)*

**Utility –** **Serve practical information needs of intended users**

It must be useful and serve that practical and strategic information need of the intended users for decision making purposes (from assessing program performance to allocating resources, etc.). Intended users may include those at the highest central levels making decision about national programs to those making decisions to improve programs at district level *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Feasibility – be realistic, prudent, diplomatic & frugal**

The M & E plan should be realistic and practical. To the extent possible, it should make the best use of existing data collection systems. If new data collections system or studies are involved, resources (cost and technical capacity) must carefully be considered *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Propriety – conducted legally, ethically, and with regard to those involved in and affected by the evaluation.**

Data collection, special studies included in the M & E plan must abide by regulations and protocols that consider the rights of those involved in and affected by M & E activities *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Accuracy – reveal and convey technically accurate information**

The M & E plan should provide technically accurate and useful information for decision making and program improvement *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Capacity and resources for M & E plan**

Before we get into the key steps in the process of developing the M & E plan, let’s focus on the capacity and resources necessary for M & E. This is something one will need to consider throughout the process of developing ones M & E Plan.

* Technical capacity for M & E

This will include establishing M & E unit, strategically located individuals who are motivated, committed, competent and interested in M & E Plan. The role of M & E unit include; the unit itself may be responsible for actually developing (I.e. writing the M & E plan) but doing so required building consensus stakeholders and coordinating multiple activities. The M & E unit might be responsible for disseminating an annual M & E repot to all stakeholders and coordinating a review of results to assess program performance and make adjustments.

* Scale of program funding and resources for M & E Plan

**Planning for Mid –Course Adjustment**

Program changes can and will occur. You must be prepared for them and be able to adjust your M & E plan accordingly. When developing M & E plan, you should be aware that program changes can affect the way activities are monitored. It can affect the integrity of your impact evaluation design.

Having internal M & E capacity will facilitate adjustments to your M & E plan because changes can be made internally rather than depending on external capacity which would be expensive (require additional costs).

By regularly reviewing program progress and results with stakeholders, you will be able to identify areas for adjustment in a timely way. Remember to be open and flexible and able to make tradeoff when necessary *Sohail Agha (YEAR?).*

**Avoid duplication of data collection and report**

It is advisable to avoid duplication of data and reporting the same. At first glance, duplicated data may not pose a challenge. But in fact, it can become a serious issue. For example, if a customer appears more than once in your CRM, it not only takes up additional storage but also leads to a wrong customer count. Additionally, duplicated data weakens marketing analysis; it disintegrated a customer’s purchasing history and consequently, makes the company unable to understand customer needs and segment customer *Irene Mikhailouskaye (2018).*

**Capacity building activities (training) on use of tool**

Once roles and responsibilities have been determined, it is important to specify any M & E training requirements. For longer-term projects/programmes or those with significant training needs, it may be useful to create an M & E training schedule (planning table) *IFRC (2011).*