**African Centre for Project Management**

**Post Graduate Diploma-Monitoring and Evaluation**

**Assignment 3**

**By**

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**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)**

Monitoring and Evaluation(M&E) adds value to interventions in the following ways.

First, M&E assists project teams to objectively assess the extent to which the program is having or has had the desired impact effectively (Frankel & Gage, 2016).. Furthermore, without M&E project teams would find it difficult to make informed decisions about the needed corrections. Relatedly, M&E helps implementers to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources. This is done by realizing mistakes early and providing solutions moving to another stage of the project. Lastly, M&E helps project/programme teams to meet organizational reporting obligations and assure donors of the value for money and could justify further funding (Frankel & Gage, 2016).

Key planning steps for setting up an M&E plan

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plan. This is the fundamental document that details a program’s objectives, the interventions developed to achieve these objectives and describes the procedures that will be implemented to determine whether or not the objectives are met. It shows how the expected results of a program relate to its goals and objectives, describes the data needed and how these data will be collected and analyzed, how this information will be used, the resources that will be needed, and how the program will be accountable to stakeholders. (Frankel & Gage, 2016). The followings are the key planning steps involved in setting up an M&E plan.

**Step 1:** Identify your Program Goals, Objectives and evaluation audience

First and foremost, we need to identify our program goals and objectives if they are not stated in the log frame. We also need to know who the evaluation audience or stakeholders are. There may be multiple audiences, each with their own requirements The evaluation audience include the people or organizations that require an evaluation to be conducted, the funding agency, and may also include partner organizations, the project team, and the project’s beneficiaries. (IFRC, 2011)

**Step 2:** Define the evaluation questions

Secondly, evaluation questions should be developed up-front, and in collaboration with the primary audience(s) and other stakeholders who you intend to report to. Evaluation questions go beyond measurements to ask the higher order questions such as whether the intervention is worth it, or could have been achieved in another way. All in all, evaluation questions should lead to further action such as project improvement, project mainstreaming, or project redesign among others.

**Step 3:** Identify the monitoring questions

More still, in order to answer evaluation questions, monitoring questions must be developed that will inform what data will be collected through the monitoring process. Monitoring questions are quite specific in what they ask, compared to evaluation questions. For example, for an evaluation question of "What worked and what did not?" you may have several specific questions such as "Did the workshops lead to increased knowledge on Village Loans and saving Scheme?" or "Did participants form saving group?".

**Step 4:** Identify the indicators and data sources

The next step is to identify what information you need to answer your monitoring questions (indicators) and where this information will come from (data sources). Data sources could be participant themselves, people’s homes, or even literature (IFRC, 2011).

**Step 5:** Identify who is responsible for data collection and timelines

It is paramount that we assign responsibility for the data collection so that everyone is clear of their roles and responsibilities. This also allows new staff to come onto the project and get a sense of who is responsible for what, and what they may have to take on and when. Collection of monitoring data may occur regularly over short intervals, or less regularly, such as half-yearly or annually. It is also important to know the cost of the planned activities to avoid unnecessary data.

**Step 6:** Identify who will evaluate the data, how it will be reported, and when

This step is optional but highly recommended, as it will round off the M&E plan as a complete document. it is important to identify who will be making this ‘subjective assessment’. In most cases, it will be the project team, but in some cases, you may involve other stakeholders including the target group or participants. You may also consider outsourcing a particular part of the evaluation to an external or independent party. For an evaluation to be used, it is important to present the findings in a format that is appropriate to the audience.

**Step 7:** Review the M&E plan

Once you have completed your M&E plan, highlight data sources that appear frequently. For example, you may be able to develop surveys that fulfil the data collection requirements for many questions. Also consider re-ordering the M&E plan in several ways, for example, by data source, or by data collection timeframe. (IFRC, 2011)

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

The stakeholders of a development intervention are the organizations, groups or individuals who have a direct or indirect interest in a certain issue, a development intervention or its results. These different stakeholders usually have different interests and look at the issue from different perspectives. They often have different expectations of the development intervention. The engagement of stakeholders should start during planning and continues to be relevant for monitoring and evaluation in the following ways;

Stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation can produce effective communication for various other objectives. These include, facilitation of communication of ‘early wins’ to increase support and enlist engagement of those who are not yet engaged, ensure access of early products and services of initiatives for intended beneficiaries, mobilize additional resources to fill resource gaps, and ensure effective use of lessons learned in future decision making. (Asoka, Thomas, & Stephen, 2009)

Furthermore, with regard to sustainability, the stakeholders, who set the vision and the prioritized results to realize that vision during the planning stage, have the best ideas on how the results would continue to remain relevant to them. They must therefore be involved in identifying the information or feedback that is needed during implementation, which determines the parameters for monitoring and evaluation that is to say, having set the vision, priority results and initial parameters for monitoring and evaluation, the key stakeholders are best placed to ensure that the programmatic initiatives planned would deliver what was intended and the way it was intended. (Asoka, Thomas, & Stephen, 2009)

Stakeholder participation throughout the programming cycle ensures ownership, learning and sustainability of results.it builds local capacity and ownership to manage and sustain project achievements. Increases likelihood of acceptance and utilization of findings. It is important to note that continued stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation cannot be assumed. It must be institutionalized. Specific measures have to be built into programme and project management processes to ensure continued and effective involvement of stakeholders.

More still, Monitoring and Evaluation shows that involving Stakeholder improves project impact. It empowers them to analyze and find solutions for their own situation (as “active participants” not “passive recipients”). They are empowered through trainings on M&E hence gaining knowledge which helps them to suggest solutions for their own problems.

Furthermore, involving Stakeholders in Monitoring and Evaluation provides has other operational benefits. It ensures direct field input to facilitate management decision making to execute corrective actions. Involving Stakeholders in M&E also builds collaboration between beneficiaries, staff and partners. Stakeholder participation also helps to reinforce accountability to beneficiaries.

Last but not the least, Stakeholder participation in Monitoring and Evaluation helps an organization to save money and time in data collection compared to using project staff. More money and time is saved when trained stakeholders usually beneficiaries are tasked to collect the data since they own the project and don’t need to be paid for their services. Time is saved since more people are involved to when using only project officers.

**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)**

Monitoring and Evaluation 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. Such resources include human resources. It is indeed very paramount that sufficient resources (both financial and human resources) are allocated to the conduct of M&E in a programme. Inadequate resources lead to poor quality M&E. To ensure effective and quality monitoring and evaluation, it is critical to set aside adequate financial and human resources at the planning stage. Human resources are critical for effective monitoring and evaluation, even after securing adequate financial resources. For high-quality monitoring and evaluation, there should be: dedicated staff time for effective M&E and the staff should be dedicated for that function. The staff entrusted with monitoring should have required technical expertise in the area. Skilled personnel are costly to acquire but are necessary for proper implementation of the activities. This only means that a reasonable amount of financial resources should be dedicated to M&E for effective implementation of the activities.

Costly as it may seem, Monitoring and evaluation is an important aspect in the life of a project and its improves achievement of goals and can raise the profile of the project (Asoka, Thomas, & Stephen, 2009). Proper investment in M&E ensures that there is incorporation of the views of stakeholders, particularly the target population and can be a further mechanism to encourage participation and increased ownership of a project. Used carefully at all stages of a project cycle, monitoring and evaluation can help to strengthen project design and implementation and stimulate partnerships with project stakeholders. (Asoka, Thomas, & Stephen, 2009). Nonetheless, the M&E effort should not be costlier than the program itself. One rule that has been suggested is that 10% of resources should be devoted to M&E. The required financial and human resources for monitoring and evaluation should be considered within the overall costs of delivering the agreed results and not as additional costs.

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

The following are the key considerations for both monitoring and evaluation.

1. Relevance/acceptability: this consideration is related to the extent to which the intervention or initiative or project and its intended goal, objectives, outputs or outcomes are commensurate to the needs of intended beneficiaries. Here, the monitoring and evaluation question would be how relevant a project is to the target community. For example, in a resilience recovery project aimed at empowering farmers with better farming saving skills, relevance would relate to how the farmers feel the approach use and the skills being provided match their traditional and contemporary agricultural aspiration (IFRC, 2011).
2. Effectiveness is the second consideration. Here the question is whether the project team is achieving the intended objectives. for example, in a project aimed at preventing teenage pregnancy where there is distribution of emergency contraceptives, the question of effectiveness would be in relation to whether there is a drop in teenage pregnancies as indicated in the Antenatal registers (IFRC, 2011).
3. Efficiency is another consideration that related to whether resources are used in the most cost-effective matter. The focus would be on whether there is reflection of value for money, time and other resources (IFRC, 2011). For example, in a project aiming at providing clean water to rural communities, the question of efficiency could be formed around the determination of the cost per capita for providing water using either one strategy or the other.
4. Impact is another consideration focused on by both monitoring and evaluation. Questions can be derived from whether what the project impact is on people’s lives. Impact mainly assesses the changes in human development and people’s well-being that are brought about by development initiatives, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. For example, in relation to changes is disease burdens is certain population, improvement in literacy rates or improvement is standards of living. The questions about impact relate closely to contribution or attribution which measure to what extent the observed changes in the target population are as a result of a certain intervention (IFRC, 2011).

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

Impact

Impact is defined as intended and unintended long-term changes in environmental benefits and human living conditions resulting directly or indirectly from an Organization’s interventions. Often, impact takes more than the lifetime of a project to occur, and depends on the presence of several external conditions over which the project has limited or no control (Kersty, Mayne, & Joha, 2014).

Change Assumptions

A change pathway/ impact chain can be useful because it reveals the interrelationships between activities, outcomes and impacts and therefore also your change assumptions or theory about how you think change will be achieved. These assumptions are often implicit rather than explicit so you may not even be aware of them. You could test them against existing theories of change, evidence and/or your practical experience or the experience of other groups. The more well-founded your change assumptions at the start the greater your impact is likely to be. (Kersty, Mayne, & Joha, 2014).

The relationship between Change Assumption and Impact in a Project

Well-founded change Assumption helps one to track project outcomes and impacts and works out the contributions of the project to the desired impacts and the contributions by other factors. Mapping out your change pathway and identifying your change assumptions can help you work out what contribution you can make and what contributions other actors need to make. As well as helping you track outcomes and impacts, M&E can also help you test how well founded your change assumptions are, and whether you need to modify your project design (PETA, 2018). In addition, clarity of assumptions is said to create better data collection practices as well as realistic expectations among participating stakeholders. (James & Anne, 1998).Assumptions are of paramount importance since the values, the vision and the whole philosophy is embedded in them (Vogel, 2012). Working with a Theory of Change thinking not only boosts important processes of monitoring and evaluation and learning but it can also help to better grasp and measure impact of complex projects addressing challenging fields of work. Theory of Change makes teams think critically and work creatively, which can bring an innovative spirit to the development initiatives (Vogel, 2012). Persistent improvement and polishing of the underlying assumptions can lead to feasible programs appropriate for challenging contexts (Vogel, 2012)

References

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