

**ASSIGNMENTS: 8**

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| **Student ID:** | **Aipms/290/2019** |
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| **Assignment Number:** | **8** |
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| **Assignment Brief:** | **Q1:** In the context of enhancing use of knowledge from M&E, describe the key steps to developing M&E knowledge products. (10 mrks)    **Q2:** Describe 5 key ways by which M&E knowledge may be shared with critical stakeholders. (10 mrks) |

The benefits of using information from monitoring and evaluation are multiple. The value of a monitoring and evaluation exercise is determined by the degree to which the information is used by intended decision makers and a wider audience. This module is intended to help key program Managers, project staff, M&E specialists, and communications officers in development discipline to effectively apply information from monitoring and evaluation in their daily work for accountability, improvements in performance, decision making and learning.

The module addresses examples of the use of evaluative evidence, available tools and means for effective knowledge and information sharing, and practical guidance to support publication and dissemination of evaluation information.

# **WHY USE MONITORING AND EVALUATION**?

Each monitoring and evaluation activity has a purpose. Prudent project and program management places great importance on monitoring and evaluation because, when done and used correctly, they strengthen the basis for **managing for results**, foster **learning** and **knowledge generation** in the organization as well as the broader development and evaluation community, and support the public **accountability** of the concerned program.

In many international development organizations such as UNICEF, DANIDA, DFID and UNAIDS, knowledge gained from monitoring and evaluation is at the core of organizational learning process (**Monitoring, evaluation & learning- MEL)**. In this context, Monitoring and evaluation provide information and facts that, when accepted and internalized, become knowledge that promotes learning.

The above cited organizations use and apply learning from monitoring and evaluation to improve the overall performance and quality of results of ongoing and future projects, programs and strategies. The key role of knowledge generated from monitoring and evaluation is making results based management (RBM) work. For development programs to be effective, learning must therefore be incorporated into the core function of a program unit through an effective learning and information sharing system.

Experiences from real field work attest to the fact that in addition, findings and lessons from monitoring and evaluation can be used for partnership building and advocacy. For example, if evaluations highlight achievements and good practices, they can be used to solicit support for an institution‘s work and share the vision and strategy for such institution‘s support for greater partnership

A systematic use of monitoring and evaluation not only enhances a program‘s credibility as a public benefits organization (PBO), but also promotes a culture of results-orientation and transparency within the organization and amongst its partners. Knowledge generated from monitoring and evaluation becomes a public good.

As an organization worthy of its good name, every public benefits organization should strive to be a leading knowledge-based institution and thus, embrace its role in effectively sharing and disseminating such knowledge to contribute to the local, national and global efforts in eradicating poverty and its related consequences.

**LEARNING AND GENERATING KNOWLEDGE FROM MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

**ACCOUNTABILITY FOR LEARNING**

The increasing focus of major development programs on qualitative results and outcomes has shifted emphasis from inputs, outputs and processes to development results at the outcome level. When the focus is on outcomes, which are influenced by multiple factors and are beyond the direct control of such organizations, the traditional view of assigning accountability to individuals for delivering outputs is no longer adequate. Accountability for outcomes encompasses results based management (RBM). Learning constructively from past mistakes and experiences must thus be a critical part of such organizations.

United Nations Children Education fund (UNICEF) avers that Monitoring and evaluation can only play a significant role in the accountability process if measures to enhance learning are put in place. Through regular exchange of information, reporting, knowledge products, learning sessions and the evaluation management response system, information from monitoring and evaluation can be fed back into the learning process and planning.

Development programs therefore need to focus on learning from monitoring and evaluation to make a meaningful contribution to sustainable outcome achievement, accountability and to innovation- encouragement for better results.

**Applying knowledge in project planning and programming**

One of the most direct ways of using knowledge gained from monitoring and evaluation is to inform ongoing and future planning and programming. Lessons from evaluations of programs, projects and initiatives and management responses should be available when new outcomes are being formulated or projects or programs are identified, designed and appraised.

At the time of revising or developing new programs, projects, policies, strategies and other initiatives, programs should call for a consultative meeting with key partners and stakeholders to review and share evaluative knowledge in a systematic and substantive manner.

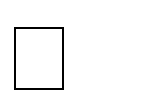
Institutionalization of the learning process can be achieved in part by better incorporating learning into existing tools and processes. Knowledge from monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated in the following:

* + - * **Project revisions**—Monitoring and evaluation should together answer a number of useful questions such as whether the project initiatives are relevant to development needs, the project implementation is on track (outputs are being delivered on time), the strategy and logic of the results chain are working, the partnership strategy is efficient, and the project is reaching its target beneficiaries as intended.

In addition to answering these questions, evaluation provides information as to ‗why‘things are working or not working. Such information should be incorporated in the improvements of the project strategy and trigger adjustments in a timely manner. When budget or other revisions are made to the project document, the lessons associated with the purpose of such change should also be stated. Good documentation of lessons and their internalization in project revisions help a lot in managing for results and foster a culture of systematic learning.

* + - * **Replication and up scaling**—Evaluation of pilot initiatives is a must before such initiatives are replicated or scaled up. Lessons on what has and has not worked should inform the replication process. Again, good documentation of lessons and their internalization in the replication and up scaling processes will help programs ensure that mistakes are not repeated.

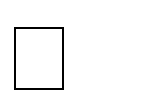
Monitoring and evaluation lessons should be incorporated into the formulation of:

New program documents: Local, in-country or global programs are best formulated taking into account results achieved and lessons learned from regular reporting tools, internal reviews, and relevant evaluations, including project and outcome evaluations and independent evaluations conducted from time to time. It is also helpful to consult reviews and evaluations conducted by other programs in a similar thematic or subject area to find out whether any lessons can be drawn from their experiences. It is good practice to document the sources of such evaluative information in a program document as a future reference and for transparency purposes.

**CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE IN DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION**

As a good programming practice, organizations should ensure that their evaluations contribute to a better understanding of development effectiveness in the development community beyond its own horizons. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations from evaluations should be widely shared and made available to potential users, as dissemination to audiences beyond the program and its immediate stakeholders can increase the impact of evaluations in important ways.

For this purpose, evaluation reports should be made available to a wider audience. However, users often find evaluation reports too long and not easily accessible. Therefore, lessons and knowledge from the evaluations can be ‗packaged ‘in the form of a **knowledge product** to meet the needs of a wider audience.

In order to effectively target a broader audience, there should be a thorough analysis of who the potential users of evaluation knowledge and lessons are: what they do,

* what their information needs are,
* how their learning takes place, and
* What kinds of communication and knowledge products are most suitable to achieve the objective of sharing knowledge?

The M&E learning unit within the organization should designate an individual (for example, a communications officer or knowledge management officer) to lead the process and coordinate activities to ensure effective sharing and dissemination of evaluation reports, lessons, knowledge and knowledge products.

The following are some of the key ways of sharing information from evaluations.

* + - * Upload evaluation reports and other knowledge products based on evaluations on the **organization’s public websites**. Ensure that the reports and the knowledge products are written clearly and made available in the most commonly used local languages.
      * Organize a meeting with interested stakeholders to discuss lessons from the evaluation(s).
      * Incorporate evaluation findings and lessons learned in the organization‘s existing publications, such as annual reports, newsletters or bulletins.
      * Present findings and lessons at the annual stakeholders meeting of the organization, review meetings and forums with media.
      * Develop a brochure for Program‘s activities and accomplishments.
      * Develop a brief with a concise summary in a plain language and widely circulate.
      * Publish an article for an academic journal based on the evaluation findings.
      * Present a paper at a conference related to the evaluation subject area.
      * Invite local researchers and academics to discuss the data collected for the evaluation or to discuss evaluation methodology applied.
      * Share findings, recommendations and lessons learned at training sessions and workshops for Program staff, government counterparts and other partners. Training should focus on areas such as how to improve the quality of projects and skills development.
      * Share lessons through knowledge networks within and beyond the organization.

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS AND DISSEMINATION**

This sub-module provides guidance on how to develop a useful knowledge product and how to disseminate the products:

Knowledge products can take many different forms depending on the audience and their information needs. For meaningful learning and knowledge sharing, knowledge products should be of high quality with a clearly identified audience and purpose. The characteristics of a good knowledge product, including a good publication, are listed in the box below. Keeping these characteristics in mind before the starting analysis or preparing a knowledge product will help organize the evidence in an orderly fashion.

**Practical steps for developing knowledge products & dissemination**

The **dissemination** is as important as the development of knowledge products. Only an efficient system of dissemination will ensure that the target recipients receive the monitoring and evaluation feedback that is relevant to their specific needs.

Some of the most commonly applied dissemination methods for monitoring and evaluation products include: printed reports, HTML or PDF copies of the products shared on the internal and external Internet sites and through e-mail messages and list-serves, and CD-ROMs. The media can be a powerful partner in disseminating findings, recommendations and lessons from evaluation. In many countries, the media has played a critical role in advocating for accountability and addressing sensitive issues.

The following are practical steps for developing knowledge products from monitoring and evaluation and disseminating them.

**Step 1: Identify target audiences and their information needs**

Some of the commonly identified key target audiences for evaluation reports and knowledge products are the following:

* Program staff and colleagues in country offices and other units
* Government counterparts who may or may not be directly involved in the project under evaluation but can facilitate the policy changes recommended by the evaluation or otherwise aid in the country-level advocacy of the concerned Program.
* Development partners, key UN organizations, NGOs, and academic and research institutions in-country.

Other networks of evaluators (for example, a national evaluation association)

Those responsible for knowledge sharing and dissemination should assess the information needs of the various groups, including when the information is most needed and is likely to serve as an ‗agent of change.‘ For example, government counterparts may find certain information from an evaluation particularly useful in making critical policy decisions.

When planning for a monitoring and evaluation exercise, the M&E unit should be aware when the

‗window of opportunity ‘for decision making arises and make the information available in a manner that is appropriate for the technical and functional needs of the target audience.

**Step 2: Collect stakeholder contact information**

The success of every dissemination effort is highly dependent on the recipient contact information gathered during the monitoring and evaluation processes. For example, the evaluation team members meet with key stakeholders and national counterparts who, regardless of their degree of involvement in the evaluation topic, constitute a critical audience and should be informed about the knowledge generated from evaluation.

The contact information of these individuals should be gathered by the evaluation team and shared with those responsible for disseminating and sharing the knowledge

**Step 3: Determine types of products that meet the audience’s information needs**

In addition to publishing information from regular monitoring reports and evaluation reports, a mix of knowledge products can be developed to meet the information demand of different groups. A systematic assessment of the needs and demand for specific products among targeted audiences can be undertaken to ensure the relevance and value of the products. The following are some examples of communication means and products for evaluation:

* Evaluation executive summary—Evaluation reports should include a succinct, yet comprehensive and information-rich executive summary. This summary can be used as a stand-alone product to enhance the readership of the evaluation.
* Evaluation brief—this should be a three- to five-page non-technical summation of the executive summary to increase general interest without overwhelming the reader.
* Evaluation blurb—this is a one-paragraph description designed to increase the visibility of published content and announce the report publication on the webpage and via electronic announcements and list serves.

It is the responsibility of the organization/Program to ensure relevant and high quality knowledge products are produced in a timely manner.

**Step 4: Identify language requirements per product and audience**

In order to optimize the impact of knowledge sharing and dissemination efforts, knowledge products should be translated into local languages whenever possible. If resources are limited, the Organization may determine language requirements per knowledge product or per audience group.

At a minimum, the evaluation brief should be translated into the most widely used local language. Additionally, the language used in the product should be appropriate for the technical levels of the targeted audience. It is best to avoid technical jargon and heavy acronym usage.

**Step 5: Determine efficient forms and dissemination methods per evaluation knowledge product**

Most evaluation reports and knowledge products can be shared as an electronic copy. In order to enhance the efficiency in terms of time and cost, the organization‘s public webpage and the e-mail list should be strategically used as means for dissemination. For example, the evaluation reports should be uploaded on the organization‘s internal and external webpage with a blurb that summarizes the key information in the report.

Additionally, knowledge from monitoring and evaluation can be shared widely by incorporating them in existing reports and publications, such as the country office‘s annual report or other key reports, brochures and news bulletins.

**Step 6: Monitor feedback and measure results of dissemination efforts**

There should be a feedback and learning mechanism for the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy and quality of the particular knowledge product. For example, the Program may conduct a quick survey among the recipients of the knowledge products or develop a feature on its website where users can provide their feedback directly online.

In analyzing the feedback, the following should be asked: ―To what extent has the monitoring and evaluation information been used in programming and policy making within and beyond the organization?‖; ―Has such information been made in a timely manner to effectively influence decision-making processes?‖; ―Have the products reached both direct and indirect audiences in an efficient manner and were they easily accessible?‖; ―Did the audience find the knowledge products useful?‖; ―If not, why not?‖; and ―What could be done better next time?‖

Lessons from the experience should be reflected in the future evaluation knowledge sharing and dissemination efforts so that evaluations in the organization will continue to be relevant and contribute to organizational learning and the enhancement of a global knowledge base in development.

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