**AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT STUDIES**

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**LECTURER :**

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**ASSIGNMENT : ASSIGNMENT 3**

**QUESTION : ATTACHED**

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| **LECTURER’S COMMENTS** | **MARKS SCORED %** |
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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.**

Monitoring and Evaluation are in most cases seen as one though they are different. Monitoring is a process of getting information and using such information to assess project effects and it is aimed at determining whether or not the intended objectives have been met. Evaluation draws on the data and information generated by the monitoring system as a way of analyzing the trends in effects and impact of the project. Therefore, this part of the essay will explain the value of monitoring and evaluation as well as outline key planning steps for setting up a monitoring and evaluation plan.

According to Gage and Dunn (2009) at programme level, the purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to track implementation and outputs systematically, and measure the effectiveness of programmes. It helps determine exactly when a programme is on track and when changes may be needed. Monitoring and evaluation forms the basis for modification of interventions and assessing the quality of activities being conducted.

Monitoring and evaluation can be used to demonstrate that programmme efforts have a measurable impact on the expected outcomes and have been implemented effectively. It is essential in helping managers, planners, implementers, policy makers and donors acquire the information and understand they need to make informed decisions about programme operations.

Frankel and Gage (2007) adds that, monitoring and evaluation helps with identifying the most valuable and efficient use of resources. It is critical for developing objective conclusions regarding the extent to which programmes can be judged a success.Monitoring and evaluation together provide the necessary data to guide strategic planning, to design and implement programmes and projects, and allocate, and re-allocate resources in better ways.

A monitoring and evaluation plan is a document that helps to track and assess the results of the interventions throughout the life of a program. It is a living document that should be referred to and updated on a regular basis. It is important to develop a monitoring and Evaluation plan before beginning any monitoring activities so that there is a clear plan for what questions about the program need to be answered.

According to Sulemana and Ngah (2012) the first step to creating monitoring and evaluation plan is to identify the program goals and objectives. If the program already has a logic model or theory of change, then the program goals are likely already defined. However, if not, the Monitoring and evaluation plan is a great place to start. Once the program’s goals and objectives are defined the second step is to define the indicators for tracking progress towards achieving these goals. Program indicators should be a mix of those that measure process, or what is being done in the program, and those that measure outcomes.

After creating monitoring indicators, the third step is to define data collection methods and timeline. It is important to decide on methods for gathering data and how often various data will be recorded to track indicators. This should be a conversation between program staff, stakeholders, and donors. These methods will have important implications for what data collection methods will be used and how the results will be reported.

The next element of the monitoring and evaluation plan is a section on roles and responsibilities. It is important to decide from the early planning stages who is responsible for collecting the data for each indicator. This will probably be a mix of monitoring and evaluation staff, research, and program staff. Everyone will need to work together to get data collected accurately and in a timely fashion. Once all of the data have been collected, someone will need to compile and analyze it to fill in a results table for internal review and external reporting. The last element of the monitoring and evaluation plan describes how and to whom data will be disseminated. Data for data’s sake should not be the ultimate goal of monitoring and evaluation efforts. Data should always be collected for particular purposes (Sulemana and Ngah, 2012).

According to Shah et al. (2006) The process of monitoring and evaluation at project level should involve the following key fundamentals: Firstly, you should know your interventions’ desired results well (goal), next is to know the strategies that you will employ to meet your objectives. Then know the strategies for realizing the desired results (activities). The next step is to know and allocate resources for monitoring and evaluation (budget and other needed inputs). After that, you should know your target beneficiaries or clients. Next is to select your indicators well for the project levels, these can either be input, output, outcome or impact indicators. Finally, the last step is to identify the appropriate frame that you will use.

In conclusion, monitoring and evaluation is important for one to asses that their project is achieving the set targets. For instance, by monitoring the development of the project one will easily understand whether strategic changes need to be made and act accordingly. Projects at all levels, whether they consist of multiple integrated projects or single interventions should include a monitoring and evaluation work plan. Such plans will guide the design of monitoring and evaluation,highlight what information or data need to be collected, describe how best to collect it and specify how to disseminate and use the results of monitoring and evaluation.

**Q2. Describe the relevance of stakeholder participation in M&E.**

The term project stakeholder refers to an individual group or organization who may affect, be affected by or perceive itself to be affected by a decision, activity or outcome of a project. Project stakeholders are entities that have an interest in a given project. These stakeholders may be inside or outside an organization which: Sponsor a project or have an interest or a gain upon a successful completion of a project, may have a positive or negative influence in the project completion.

The United Nations Population Fund, Division for Oversight Services (2004) states that participation by stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation means sharing a common understanding and involvement in the decision-making process of the project. Participation by stakeholders leads to empowerment and to joint ownership of the project. To increase participation, the project should start with a consultation process that moves to negotiations and ends with joint decisions. Participation by project stakeholders has many benefits and advantaged, among them are: Ensure that the project plans are a reflection of the real needs and priorities, develops an environment of trusts by allowing the voices of the stakeholders be heard and their issues be known makes the project accountable to the stakeholders.

The Project Management Institute (2013) adds that, stakeholder participation enables the voices of the stakeholders to be heard by doing that the level of trust in the relationship increases, promotes transparency in the actions of the project and ensures that the project is held accountable for its actions, increases ownership by stakeholders who feel the project is taking in account their views and motivates them to sponsor the project, which ultimately leads to sustainability, and lastly it is a key strategy to win support to the project, to gain commitment to the project, and ultimately to increase the chances for sustainability after the project has been completed.

According to African Development Bank (2001) all projects have stakeholders, even the very smallest initiatives. The major reason that most project management approaches give for doing stakeholder management is that it helps you understand more about the people who will be affected by the project. This then enables you to plan communication and engagement strategies to head off any problems.

Newton (2005) highlights four reasons why stakeholder participation is important in monitoring and evaluation and these include: Free Resources; “Proactive stakeholders effectively provide an extended team of additional resources (for free!),” he writes. You can involve your stakeholders in any number of project tasks and delegate all kinds of things to them. Want to do a presentation to Marketing but don’t have the time? Ask your most engaged Marketing stakeholder to do it for you. Need some help with the project budget? Get an enthusiastic stakeholder from Finance to talk you through it.

Tap into their skills and interest in the project. Anything from attending meetings, drafting communications and carrying out other stakeholder engagement activities with their peers is fair game. Reduce and Uncover Risk; Good stakeholder management reduces some risks and makes other risks, which may otherwise by unnoticed, transparent. The more you engage your stakeholders, the more you can minimize some risks, like poor take up when a new piece of software is launched for internal use.

Increase the Perception of Success; Irrespective of actual project outcome, stakeholders who have been engaged and whose expectations have been managed are far likelier to perceive a project as a success than those who have been ignored. Lastly is easier Project Closure; It eases benefits realization and the transition phase at the end of a project when deliverables are handed over to their owners. This is very true – it is far easier to hand over deliverables to someone who knows a bit about them than to someone who is hearing about the project for the first time. The more you work with your stakeholders during the project, the more prepared they and their teams will be to receive the deliverables (Newton, 2005).

According to Alfred (2015) the engagement of stakeholders enlisted during planning continues to be relevant for monitoring and evaluation stages for the following reasons: 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. 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.

Stakeholder participation in monitoring and evaluation can produce effective communication for various other objectives. These include: facilitate 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 (Alfred, 2015).

In conclusion, monitoring and evaluation should be an essential element of every program, providing a way to assess the progress of the program in achieving its goals and objectives and informing stakeholders and program designers about the results. Providing stakeholders, the chance to participate in monitoring and evaluation. becomes an opportunity for development organizations to focus better on their ultimate goal of improving poor people’s lives and broadening involvement in identifying change of which a clearer picture can be gained of what is really happening on the ground.

**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.**

In monitoring and evaluation, resources are set for use continuously in monitoring activities and periodically for evaluations. In some instance we have seen projects allocate resources for monitoring only. Monitoring and evaluation activities need time and money. Finances are used to pay salaries for monitoring and evaluation personnel, training in monitoring and evaluation related issues, buying software and hardware resources and so on.

Taylor-Powell et al. (2008) argue that resources necessary for monitoring and evaluation may also include what is use to hire evaluation and EBC expertise, buy evaluation reference materials and facilitate evaluation champions. But we need to validate that indeed what we invest in monitoring and evaluation improves its results utilization. It is well known that a well-funded monitoring and evaluation process will leave little to chance in their effort to collect quality data that would help improve utilization.

According to UNAIDS (2008) the most effective monitoring and evaluation systems are the ones that match the system’s purpose and design with the project’s ability to implement it in terms of its capacity. A part of this capacity is the resources allowed for use in monitoring and evaluation. These may be categorized into three; financial capacity to do monitoring and evaluation, human capacity to do monitoring and evaluation (people skills and knowledge) and physical capacity to do monitoring and evaluation (equipment, technology and machines).

Inadequate resources lead to poor quality monitoring and evaluation. To ensure effective and quality monitoring and evaluation, it is critical to set aside adequate financial and human resources at the planning stage. 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. Financial resources for monitoring an evaluation need to be estimated realistically at the time of planning for monitoring and evaluation. This helps the organization and its partners to be more realistic in budgeting and also reduce the risk of running out of resources for evaluation at the end of implementation.

Douglah et al. (2003) suggest that in building capacity for monitoring and evaluation several strategies and interventions need to be utilized in order to improve the performance and these include the following; leadership development, sufficient allocation of resources, team building, coaching, mentoring, exchange visits, technical assistance, and short and long-term training.

IFAD (2002) in their guide for project monitoring and evaluation suggest that the key areas to be considered from project’s resources are financial capacity to do monitoring and evaluation and human capacity to do monitoring and evaluation. They say that budget limitations are consistently one of the greatest constraints to implementing monitoring and evaluation and they suggest financial allocations for areas such as direct monitoring and evaluation staff salaries; training and employing local monitoring and evaluation experts to consult and facilitate; indirect salary allocations of management and field staff to support monitoring and evaluation; outsourcing costs for services such as data collection, data analysis, or training; travel budgets to support monitoring and evaluation meetings, retreats, field visits, etc.; consulting to support baseline, midline and end line evaluations, as well as action research; communications costs including website development, newsletters, etc.; publications and media development costs to ensure you have high-quality materials to share with various monitoring and evaluation clients.

Tilbury (2007) highlights that physical capacity to do monitoring and evaluation include; equipment, technology and machines. These influences utilization of monitoring and evaluation result by the quality of data gathered and establishing communication channels to ensure that clients are kept informed of progress and initial findings in simple languages understandable by the intended users. Data arrangement and presentation may cause misunderstanding making it impossible to use.

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 monitoring and evaluation staff should be dedicated for the function and also there should be skilled personnel who are technical expertise in that area.

The above is a clear demonstration that monitoring and evaluation systems will succeed when organizations consider having sufficient resources allocated to its functions. This was verified by a study by CLEAR (Centre for Learning on Evaluation and Results) of African monitoring and evaluation systems in 2012 in which they noted that the weight of resources allocated to monitoring systems in Ghana, Kenya and Benin is demonstrated by the extensive reporting mechanisms in place. They noted that lead agencies collate information from other departments and that this action is dependent on capacities of these departments to collect quality information. The study concluded that in all these cases, considerable human and financial resources are put into development of these departments (CLEAR, 2012).

In conclusion, resource allocation in monitoring and evaluation is indicated by; monitoring and evaluation budgetary allocation, hiring qualified monitoring and evaluation Personnel, access to monitoring and evaluation reference material, allowing use of organizational asset for monitoring and evaluation activities, funds for training in monitoring and evaluation and allocating fund to contract monitoring and evaluation experts. It is therefore important that management of project organizations pay attention to the provision of resources for monitoring and evaluation activities since these resources influences the usability of the data the systems collect.

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

In many international development organizations such as DANIDA, USAID and DFID, it is mandatory for the secretariats to present an evaluation plan to its Executive Board with each country, regional and global program document considered for approval. The evaluation plan is a component of the monitoring and evaluation framework and should include those evaluations that can be foreseen at the end of the program planning stage.

The European Environment Agency (2015) states that the plan should be strategic, including a selection of evaluations that will generate the most critical and useful information for the program in decision making. The initial evaluation plan should, at a minimum, include all mandatory evaluations. The evaluation plan is not a static document. It should be reviewed as part of the monitoring and evaluation framework and refined as needed during program implementation. For example, as new projects are designed and the needs for evaluations are identified, these new evaluations should be added to the evaluation plan.

According to Prince- Kelly et al. (2015) in deciding what to evaluate, the program monitoring and evaluation units should first determine the purpose of the evaluation and other factors that may influence the relevance and use of proposed evaluations. In general, for accountability purposes, at least 40-50 percent of the entire program portfolio should be subject to evaluation. Evaluations generally require significant resources and time. Therefore, every evaluation must be justified and used in an optimal way. Program units together with key stakeholders should consider the following points in developing an evaluation plan:

Uses, purpose and timing of evaluation—Evaluations should be proposed only when the monitoring and evaluation unit and stakeholders are clear at the onset about why the evaluation is being conducted (the purpose), what the information needs are (demand for information), who will use the information, and how the information will be used. Such information can be derived from a shared vision of success, as expressed in the results or outcome model at the planning stage. The intended use determines the timing of an evaluation, its methodological framework, and level and nature of stakeholder participation. The timing of an evaluation should be directly linked to its purpose and use.

Resources invested—An area (thematic or programmatic area, outcome or project) in which the concerned program has invested significant resources may be subject to an evaluation as there may be greater accountability requirements. The likelihood of future initiatives in the same area—Evaluations are an important means of generating recommendations to guide future work. An evaluation enables the program unit to take stock of whether the outputs have contributed to the outcome and whether the organization has crafted an effective partnership strategy (Prince- Kelly et al., 2015).

Anticipated problems—Evaluations can help prevent problems and provide an independent perspective on existing problems. When selecting an outcome for evaluation, look for those with problems or where complications are likely to arise because the outcome is within a sensitive area with a number of partners. Need for lessons learned—What kinds of lessons are needed to help guide activities in this country or other countries or regions in the region?

Alignment and harmonization—Planned evaluations should be aligned with national, regional and global development priorities. This ensures that proposed evaluations will generate important information to help the program better manage for results in a changing context. Opportunities for joint evaluations with governments and partners should be actively pursued (Prince- Kelly et al.,2015).

The same criteria for selecting outcomes should be applied to selecting project evaluations. It is strongly recommended that evaluations should be completed for pilot projects before replication or upscaling projects that are going into a next phase, and projects ongoing for more than five years for accountability and learning purposes.

Ayers et al. (2012) state that monitoring, as well as evaluation, provides opportunities at regular predetermined points to validate the logic of a program, its activities and their implementation and to make adjustments as needed. Good planning and designs alone do not ensure results. Progress towards achieving results needs to be monitored. Equally, no amount of good monitoring alone will correct poor program designs, plans and results. It is for this reason that information from monitoring needs to be used to encourage improvements or reinforce plans. Information from systematic monitoring also provides critical input to evaluation. It is very difficult to evaluate a program that is not well designed and that does not systematically monitor its progress.

The key questions that monitoring seeks to answer include the following: Are the pre-identified outputs being produced as planned and efficiently? What are the issues, risks and challenges that we face or foresee that need to be taken into account to ensure the achievement of results? What decisions need to be made concerning changes to the already planned work in subsequent stages? Will the planned and delivered outputs continue to be relevant for the achievement of the envisioned outcomes? Are the outcomes we envisaged remaining relevant and effective for achieving the overall national priorities, goals and impacts? And what are we learning? (Ayers et al., 2012).

Like monitoring, evaluation is an integral part of program management and a critical management tool. Evaluation complements monitoring by providing an independent and in-depth assessment of what worked and what did not work, and why this was the case. Rolling out an intervention and monitoring the same over a period of time requires as a matter of good practice that programs take stock of the situation through an external evaluation.

According to Child Trends (2007) the benefits of using evaluations are as follows: A quality evaluation provides feedback that can be used to improve programming, policy and strategy, Evaluation also identifies unintended results and consequences of development initiatives, which may not be obvious in regular monitoring as the latter focuses on the implementation of the development plan. And also Information generated from evaluations contributes to organizational learning as well as the global knowledge base on development effectiveness. Therefore, Effective monitoring and evaluation is important as it provides evidence to base such changes through informed management decisions.

**Q5. Explain the relationship between change assumptions and impact in a project.**

A theory of change is a logic model that presents a comprehensive, visual description of how and why a potential change is expected to happen. It is one of three logic models that are recommended as part of quality project design. The theory of change is the most strategic of these three: the “high-level map” of the changes you hope to see. A theory of change logic has the following components; a long-term change, preconditions statements, pathways of change and assumptions statement.

Barnett and Gregorowski (2013) state that a theory of change logic has the following components: Long-term change, which states the desired lasting impact that the intervention aims to support. Preconditions statements, which are the intermediate changes that must occur to reach the long-term change. Preconditions statements can be grouped into domains of change, which are broad strategic areas of intervention that directly contribute to achieving the long-term change. Pathways of change, which map the connections between the preconditions. Most initiatives have multiple pathways contributing to the long-term change. And assumptions statements, which identify the risks that could impact project implementation.

Assumptions are a particularly important component of a theory of change. Assumptions identify the locally specific risks and conditions that are present in your project’s context. While teams might have an idealized model for how change will occur, in reality there are all sorts of risks that can interrupt the change logic. Assumptions attempt to manage these risks by identifying what conditions must hold true for change to occur. If your assumptions hold true, your desired changes are more likely to occur. If they do not, your project will face challenges (Barnett and Gregorowski, 2013).

James (2011) adds that all projects are designed and funded for purposes of achieving a positive change in the lives of the intended beneficiaries or community. This is the essence of the programming concept “pathway to change”. Although change can be complex, it can be helpful to present your program and strategy in the form of a change pathway, or an impact chain. This is a description of how your project activities will contribute to your desired outcomes (your objectives); which will in turn contribute to final impacts (your aims/goals).

According to Stein and Valters (2012) a change pathway/ impact chain can be useful because it reveals the interrelationships between activities, outputs, 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. If you have not already done so it’s worth taking time in your Organization to discuss them to see whether you are all in agreement, whether they seem plausible, or whether you might need to investigate them more. You could test them against existing theories of change, evidence 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.

White (2009) states that impact is the long-term result situation on successful completion of a project over a period of time. It is always the desired best end situation for any program/project. Examples of impact situations include; decrease in HIV transmission rates (prevalence), decrease in HIV incidence, decrease in human rights violation among the police, Increase in life expectancy across a given population, Reduced HIV mortality among a community targeted by a project/program.

Monitoring and Evaluation for Sustainable Communities (2014) cites an example by assuming that raising awareness about climate change will change peoples’ behaviors and hence reduce carbon emissions. In practice there are factors other than peoples’ awareness that influence behavior such as agency, capacity, resources, social norms, infrastructures, technologies, cultural norms and government policy. Therefore, a project based solely on this change assumption runs the risk of not meeting desired outcomes. Conversely community groups are sometimes hugely ambitious and assume they have the capacity to achieve their objectives when in fact change generally requires action by a range of actors. 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.

In the example above, you might decide to interview participants after an event or course, and ask them open questions about what factors they think might help and constrain them from changing their behaviors, as well as which sources of information they trust, such as organizations, websites and the media.

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