**POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

**Module 3 Assignment**

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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)**

According to Singh, Chandurkar, & Dutt (2017) the value of Monitoring lies in the fact it provides real time information of the progress of the project in terms of completing its activities and achieving its immediate outputs. Thus, assisting stakeholders to see if an ongoing project is proceeding on track. In case the project is not moving in its intended direction, midcourse correction can be done. In addition, analysis of monitoring results helps to improve strategies and targeting and by doing so, enabling decision makers to effectively utilise project resources for maximum output. Another value of monitoring is that it helps understand project implementation barriers or challenges in real time and suggest course correction measures.

Evaluation is valuable firstly because it helps to see whether the targeted objectives and goals have been achieved or not, and secondly, it helps to see whether the achievement is because of the project interventions. In addition, while monitoring facilitates mid-course correction in attainment of project outcomes, evaluation helps analyse deviations from planned objectives and goals and facilitates organisational learning by doing.

**The key planning steps for setting up an M&E plan may be summarised as follows** (Kusek & Rist, 2004)(Gudda, 2011)(Singh et al., 2017)**:**

The first step is to set up the goal or aim of the M&E plan. A statement of expected results or the conditions that are to be achieved. It is about knowing your intervention‘s desired results.

The second step is to formulate objectives to achieve the plan’s goal. In other words, the strategies to be employed for meeting the goal should be clearly defined.

The third step is to list the activities that will be undertaken to achieve each objective. These are the strategies needed to realize the objectives’ desired results.

The fourth step involves the identification of sources of required resources and other inputs, and make appropriate budget allocation for each activity.

The fifth step relates to taking into consideration the project clients’ needs and involve them in the plan’s formulation. This requires a good knowledge of the target beneficiaries’ expectations.

The sixth step in making an M&E plan is to identify and select appropriate indicators for the plan’s implementation. The indicators inform what information to seek so that the practitioner knows that the condition is achieved. All the project levels should be covered: inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact.

The final step is to decide on the appropriate M&E framework to guide the plan. This choice will be influenced by the project’s aim, design and its implementation circumstances.

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

A project stakeholder is an individual whose involvement is integral to the success of the project. Examples include the sponsors, the subject matter experts, project implementers, clients and so on (Thomas, 2015). For Gudda (2011), even with a good M&E design, experience shows that success during implementation depends heavily on a sense of ownership by all stakeholders. The beneficiaries’ sense of ownership of the project provides a stimulus to transparent management and good information about progress. Singh et al. (2017), believe their participation necessary and advantageous because for the following reasons: Engaging stakeholders offers new ways of assessing and deriving learning from the project, it makes the M&E process more inclusive and responsive to the needs and expectations of the stakeholders, it also ensures accountability to its beneficiaries and increases transparency of the process, it empowers the project beneficiaries and inculcates a sense of ownership, and finally it helps to build the beneficiaries’ commitment and increase their understanding of the design, planning and implementation of the project.

**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)**

There are several reasons why it is important to allocate adequate resources to M&E activities. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss some of these motivations as suggested by NCVO-Knowhow (2016) and Kithinji, Gakuu, & Kidombo (2017). The later argue that money spent on M&E has potential to maximise the ability to help beneficiaries and should not be thought of as additional spending.

The first main justification for adequate resource allocation to M&E is that the quality of its results and its success depend on it. M&E systems succeed when organizations consider having sufficient resources allocated to its functions, and this financial capacity is critical for any quality M&E work to be undertaken. The credibility of information gathered from M&E system that is underfunded would be questioned. It will be assumed that it is more likely that crucial data may have been left out. Utilization of such data may not be meaningful. To avoid this outcome, considerable human and financial resources are needed to build capacity of departments gathering information for M&E. These resources will cover hiring qualified M&E Personnel, access to M&E reference material, authorisation to use of organizational assets, training in M&E, and contracting M&E experts.

A second reason for assigning sufficient resources to M&E relates to the number of conflicting interest areas in an M&E exercise. The variety of these components vary according to the scope and complexity of the exercise. However, it is important to make budgetary allocation to each of these components if the whole plan is to be achieved. Some of these are: Firstly human resource costs. They include issues like salary for internal staff, stakeholder engagement activity costs, external consultancy fees and other expenses (subsistence, travel, and accommodation). Secondly data collection related costs. These often takes up the most time and budget for any evaluation. Different types of data collection methods and sources require different amounts of effort, time and technical expertise. Thirdly, costs related to how the findings will be shared and used. Different groups of people will have different interests in the findings and you may need to engage with them in different ways and will have resource implications. Fourthly, the physical capacity to do M&E. this include equipment, technology and machines. These influence the quality of data gathering, arrangement and presentation.

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

The key questions that monitoring seeks to answer include the following (Frankel & Gage, 2016):

Are the pre-identified outputs being produced as planned and efficiently? This question relates to monitoring if the planned targets are being reached with available resources. An example will be USAID wanting to know how many sex workers have been reached by a program in a certain year, in a certain country.

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? M&E should aim at taking into consideration all possible unexpected factors that may influence the project implementation. These include assumptions and other active risk factors that may affect the project’s results. The European commission civil development fund in Ethiopia (2017) cites examples such as project stakeholders behaviours, certain economic, social, political and environmental conditions.

What decisions need to be made concerning changes to the already planned work in subsequent stages? This question relates to the possible project adjustments during the implementation phase in view of outputs being generated. Evaluation produces information that can be used to improve the project. Information on how different aspects of a project are working and the extent to which the objectives are being met are essential to a continuous improvement process (Fretching, 2010).

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? M&E results should be relevant to the local context’s priorities and show how the project is making a long lasting impact. An example is that of The National Council of Population and Development wanting to know if the programs being carried out in Province A are reducing unintended pregnancy among adolescents in that province in line with the national policy of reducing on teenaged pregnancy by a certain percentage.

What are we learning? This question relates to what new information the M&E exercise is generating. The lessons learned can be a valuable source of knowledge for adjusting the current project course or designing of future projects. One illustration is that of HIV/AIDS-related indicators developed and refined by UNAIDS after learning lessons from implementing programs in high HIV prevalence developing nations.

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

The European commission civil development fund in Ethiopia (2017) defines change assumptions as the conditions that are outside of the project’s control, and must exist or take place for the project to be successful. Examples of these are the actions of certain project stakeholders, certain economic or social conditions such as the absence of conflict, the political conditions such as stability, and conditions of climate. These are essential conditions that are in the external context and should be given key consideration in planning a project. During the impact evaluation stage, the documented assumptions will be taken into consideration while assessing either a project did not succeed due to factors outside its control, and what was the actual impact of the project.

According to Evaluation Office of UN Environment (2017), impact is defined as intended and unintended long-term changes in environmental benefits and human living conditions resulting directly or indirectly from an intervention or a project. Impact changes can be positive or negative, intended or unintended and often depend on the presence of several external conditions over which the project has limited or no control (assumptions). For these reasons, it is often not possible to measure actual impact of a project, but only to estimate its likelihood. Therefore, in planning the evaluation of impact changes, it is important to consider the necessary adjustments the project may take in relation to assumptions. This will assist the evaluation to make an informed judgment on how likely it is that the project will contribute to intended impact.

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