**PGD001 – Postgraduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation**

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**MODULE 3 Questions:**

**Q1:** Explain the value of M&E in about 100 words and outline key planning steps for setting up an M&E plan (10 mrks)

Monitoring and evaluation assesses whether the intended results are achieved as planned, what corrective action are needed to ensure delivery of the intended results, and whether initiatives are making positive contributions towards human development.

As an essential management, M&E supports an organization‘s commitment to accountability for results, resources entrusted to it, and organizational learning. It also sustains the overall program management processes and make an essential contribution to the ability to manage for development results. In monitoring and evaluation, one has regular pre-determined opportunities to validate the logic of a program, its activities and their implementation and to make adjustments as needed.

To set up an M&E Plan, the critical steps[[1]](#footnote-1) one has to take into consideration are;

1. Identify Program goals and objectives: The first step to creating an M&E plan is to identify the program goals and objectives. Some of the defining program goals starts with answering three questions:

* What problem is the program trying to solve?
* What steps are being taken to solve that problem?
* How will program staff know when the program has been successful in solving the problem?

1. Understand the strategies that you will employ to realize the objectives ad activities. The strategies should show a clear chain link on causal effect of inputs-activities-outputs-objectives. Further, the strategies should imply innovative approaches which are cost-effective with higher influence or effect on outcomes.
2. Identify project beneficiaries/ clients. It is important to know who the project supports and what value it will bring to them. Are you benefiting a specific group of people, a community, a particular geographic area? Most importantly, how is your project truly addressing their needs? Don’t assume that you know everything about the beneficiaries, talk to them, ask questions, this will help you better define your project objectives, and improve the design of your project. Plus, this is also a way to ensure community engagement, interest and participation.[[2]](#footnote-2)
3. Define indicators: The next step is to define indicators for tracking progress towards achieving those 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 i.e indicators should be selected at all project levels namely, input, output, outcome and impact
4. Define data collection methods and timelines: At this step, you decide onmethods for gathering data and how oftenvarious 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.
5. Identify M&E resources including roles and responsibilities: Decide on the budgets and who is responsible for collecting the data for each indicator. This will probably be a mix of M&E staff, research staff, and program staff. Everyone will need to work together to get data collected accurately and in a timely fashion.
6. Analysis, reporting and dissemination. The data collected is analysed and reviewed internally before reported and disseminated for learning including to the donors. Thus, there should be clear analysis, reporting template and dissemination plans for a good M&E Plan
7. All the information should be summarised in an appropriate monitoring and evaluation framework to guide the project

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

Participatory monitoring and evaluation seeks to involve all key stakeholders in the process of developing framework for measuring results and reflecting on the projects’ achievement and proposing solutions based on local realities (Coupal, 2001:2). The engagement of stakeholders enlisted during planning continues to be relevant for monitoring and evaluation stages for the following reasons:

It is important to engage stakeholders especially at the planning just like in other stages: This is because 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. This means, the project plans are a clear reflection of the real needs and priorities. Through involving them, one is able to identify 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. This develops and environment of trust by allowing the voices of the stakeholders be heard an their issues be known. 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.

Chamala (1995) identifies efficiency as a benefit resulting from stakeholder participation. He states that ‘involving stakeholders and subsequently empowering them is an effective path for solving resource management issues sustainably’. Participation contributes to effectiveness in projects through community ownership of the process (Kelly and Van Vlaenderen 1995; Kolavalli and Kerr 2002). Price and Mylius (1991) also suggest that participation increased project ownership by the beneficiaries and that it ensured project sustainability. Participatory development is thought to enhance project sustainability, improve project effectiveness and efficiency, bring inclusivity in development as well as build social capital and empower poor people.

Participation is instrumental in having better designed projects, ensuring benefits reach the intended beneficiaries and that effectiveness in terms of cost and time is assured. It also aims at reducing incidences of corruption and ensuring equitable distribution of project benefits (Mansuri, 2004).

Regional Partnership for Resource Development (2009) argued that participatory development begins a process of empowerment which enables the project stakeholders to take responsibility in designing and implementing their own initiatives and in the process this leads to project sustainability. If development is to be effective, the major project stakeholders should be involved by forming project implementation committees to oversee the activities of the various phases of the project cycle including but not limited to initiation, planning, budgeting and procurement (Mulwa, 2008). For any development to be meaningful, participation by all interest groups is inevitable.

**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 mrks)

Monitoring and evaluation is critical for any effective delivery of project. More often, competing interests will determine how and what resources are allocated in an organization. It is important that at least 5% of total project cost be allocated to support M&E due to the importance attached to it. These resources are set for use continuously in monitoring activities and periodically for evaluations. Therefore, resources should be allocated for both monitoring and evaluation for effective learning from progress and periodic reports. Apart from the monitoring and evaluations activities that need time and money as an input, finances are used to pay salaries for M&E personnel including consultants; trainings in M&E related issues, buying software and hardware resources and so on. Taylor-Powell et al. (2008) argues that resources necessary for M&E may also include what is used to hire evaluation expertise, buy evaluation reference materials and facilitate evaluation champions. While allocating resources in M&E activities, there should be deliberate value for money, what we invest in M&E improves its results utilization. A well-funded M&E process will leave little to chance in their effort to collect quality data that would help improve utilization. Besides this, scholars have argued that there is need to create ownership of M&E process so that clients and stakeholders do not feel that evaluation has been designed by funding agencies and so it is addressing their interests rather than the concerns and priorities of the client (Guijt, 1999; Segone. 2008). This signals the need to rethink evaluation as a process and seek solutions to problems inherent in M&E process. To bridge the gap between data gathering in an M&E process and utilization of this information, organizations have to build capacity for evaluations.

To support institutional learning, data and report archiving is critical which inclusion of softwares that support the archiving processes. Similar cases, will be considered when conducting program learning activities and dissemination workshops both in and out of an organization. All this implies the need to increase resources for proper accountability and sustainable processes, thus strengthened M&E systems.

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

**The following are key considerations for M&E:**

Consider the uses, purpose and timing of monitoring and evaluation – It is important to understand why monitoring and 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. Through this, one is able to plan on continuous monitoring of project progress and plan for timing of evaluations if need be

Good M&E system should consider investment of resources – An area (thematic or programmatic area, outcome or project) in which the concerned program has invested significant resources may be subject to more monitoring and evaluation due to greater accountability requirements.

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.

What lessons are to be learnt – Consider the lessons which will help guide activities e.g in a program/ country or other countries or regions in the region etc

How well are the monitoring and evaluation activities aligned with the strategic thinking for the organization, national and regional or global development priorities should also be considered.

**On the other hand, every effective monitoring and evaluation will answer the following questions;**

* 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?
* What are we learning? What needs to be improved? Which strategy can be changed and how? How has the learning influenced planning of other projects?

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

Change Assumptions are change pathways / impact chains which reveals the interrelationships between activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts and therefore shows the theory of how you think the change will be achieved. More often, the assumptions are implicit thus one may not be aware of them and if they are bringing about the change. It is important therefore for any organization to discuss these assumptions and assess if there is need to give them critical thought. These assumptions can be tested against existing theories of change, evidence and/or practical experience or the experience of other groups. And, as a result it implies that when the change assumptions are well-founded they are likely to create a higher impact on the projects/program. For instance in the below example, we can link the causal relationship of the results in the chain link based on some underlying assumptions. If the assumptions change, however, these can affect the realization of the expected results regardless how well the lower level activities were implemented.

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| **PROGRAM ELEMENT** | **RESULT** | **INDICATOR** |
| **Impact** | **Reduced maternal mortality in Uganda** | **Maternal mortality rate** |
| **Outcome** | **Increased accessibility and quality SRHR services** | **% of target population receiving quality SRHR services** |
| **Output** | **Number of trained SRHR service providers** | **# of PAC service providers trained** |
| **Activity** | **Training of health providers on SRHR** | **# of comprehensive SRHR training courses conducted** |

The above example assumes that training health providers about sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) will increase the accessibility and quality SRHR services and hence reduce maternal mortality. In practice, there are factors other than training health providers that influence accessibility and quality such as equipment, hospital capacity, resources, technologies, behaviour of patients and government policy. Therefore, a project based solely on this change assumption runs the risk of not meeting desired outcomes. It is important to always ensure that you map out the change pathway and identifying change assumptions to help you work out what contribution you can make and what contributions other actors need to make. Besides 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.

1. United Nations. Template for M&E plan. Retrieved from: <http://www.un.cv/files/Template%20for%20M&E%20plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://en.unesco.org/youth/toptips/planner/identification> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)