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| Post-Graduate Diploma in Monitoring and Evaluation |
| Module 3 Assignment: Planning to Monitor & Evaluate |
| Martina Lappo |
| Strategia Netherlands |

**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 allow all involved stakeholders to increase the efficiency of the services provided and two different moments of the programme cycle: the “during” and the “after”. By accompanying all phases of the project, these two characteristics of programme management increase the efficiency and the effectiveness of the interventions, allowing mistakes to be ratified or to be learned from in future activities (Pandey, 2008). Additionally, Pandey (2008) further highlights how without a well-set Monitoring and Evaluation system present since the inception point of the logical framework, the experience and legitimacy of the project might reveal themselves to be weak from the get-go.

Considering such value for Monitoring and Evaluation, a plan for their implementation needs to be put in place, so to allow the project to be run as efficiently and effectively as possible. Before doing so, the group or the individual setting it needs to be very aware of the programme’s intended goal at the broadest of levels, so that then they will be able to identify the most appropriate strategies that allow the organisation to meet their objectives and carry out their activities. Furthermore, when constructing an M&E plan, one should clearly have in mind the indicators per each input, output and outcome, they will certainly set the pace of the monitoring plan as well as the scope for the evaluations.

Once the analysis of the logical framework is done, the acting staff should also always remember the target population of the intervention – aka the beneficiaries, how they can contribute to the evaluation and eventual outcome of the project. Moreover, one should not forget to include the stakeholders’ involvement and its prerequisite demands.

Overall, when setting up a Monitoring and Evaluation plan, one should keep in mind all the conceived notions that make up the interventions (impact, outcome, input, etc.) as well as the engagement of actors beside the implementing organisation. It surely needs to be a well-rounded approach.

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

Stakeholder participation is essential to the success, effectiveness and sustainability of a project and its monitoring and evaluation framework. For this reason, they need to be involved at all levels of the programme cycle, from the conception up to the final ex-post evaluation phase.

As Barbera (2016) stated, a good project requires an *active*, therefore transversal and cross-cutting, participation of the stakeholders, that would promote local ownership. Through said ownership, communities would feel empowered, resilient and capable of continuing their development process without assistance. This, however, cannot take place just during the last phase of the implementation period. Instead it should well incorporated in the logical framework and the proposal through a thorough stakeholder analysis.

Incorporated within the entire programme cycle, stakeholders’ engagement should include activities such as: disclosure and dissemination of information and results, consultations and participation in decision-making processes, dispute resolution and grievance redress, etc. (UNDP, 2017). This, would include not only a fluid implementation, but also a monitoring framework that could rely on trustworthy stakeholder feedback and an evaluation that would need to take into consideration a small margin of error regarding stakeholder’s ease.

Specifically within a Monitoring and Evaluation framework, stakeholders should be actively included by creating a feedback mechanism that would allow freedom of expression as well as clarity. To do so efficiently, an M&E officer should be aware of the context in which they work and decide on the best feedback collecting mechanism – suggestion boxes, focus groups, KAP, etc.

Stakeholders should never be set aside as they might reveal discrepancies in the implementation that technical stuff would not catch.

**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.**

Monitoring and Evaluation allow the project to be accountable, to support operational and strategic management, to create knowledge, and to empower not only the recipients of the interventions, but also the organisation, who learns newer and more innovative approaches to its work (Graaf, 2007).

In order to have such a powerful Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism resources of various kinds need to be allocated specifically to it. Just like when planning for the implementation of a project, the resources allocated for Monitoring and Evaluation should be both financial and human.

Financial resources of the project, ideally in place by the beginning of the implementation period, should definitely consider a percentage allocation for the monitoring activities and the evaluation work to be carried out. Both monitoring and evaluation require funds and the organisation, the partners, and the stakeholders should all be aware of that and not neglect it.

According to Graaf (2007), Monitoring and Evaluation is an investment that needs to be done and, most importantly, considered from the beginning, allocating from 5 to 10% of the funds to these mechanisms. Naturally, an organisation should collect the funds for M&E not from one particular project but from various, as it should be an integral part of *all* interventions. When discussing the overall budget with the donor, an organisation should make it a point in the agenda to present Monitoring and Evaluation frameworks and their needed budgets, so to exchange on expected needs and results with the stakeholders from the beginning.

Beside financial security, a functioning Monitoring and Evaluation framework should rely on skilled staff that allocates specific amount of time to the M&E plan and should have been given defined tasks. Whether officially an Monitoring and Evaluation officer or just part of the project team, one should always keep an eye on good and/or bad practices and should be keen to reflect on the ongoing activities and how they could influence the outcome and impact of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation has often been overlooked when allocating both kinds of the above-mentioned resources. These however needs to be lost and all members of the organisation should ensure that everyone works towards better inclusion of these mechanisms.

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

Monitoring and Evaluation are forces that pull themselves and the project together in a flurry of self-reflection and could possibly redirect the project, the staff and the organisation altogether on an new direction, or it could perhaps help them realise that the intervention is on the right track afterall.

First of all, it is crucial to say that both monitoring and evaluation seek to track and analyse the steps taken by the project and its staff to bring about change and ensure a certain positive impact within a community.

Both monitoring and evaluation should be able to indicate whether the pre-identified outputs can be carried out as planned. For example, a project that aims at providing 15000 children with polio vaccines in a rural area of Chad would very much benefit of a monitoring framework as it would perhaps indicate that the target would not be fulfilled within the indicated area, and a a baseline evaluation perhaps would have enabled the organisation to prevent this *faux pas*.

Moreover, both monitoring and evaluation would indicate the risks and challenges that an organisation could face and/or foresee during an intervention. For example, a Knowledge, Attitude and Perception (KAP) survey on natural disaster prevention in urban areas in Haiti would enable an organisation to notice that the majority of the population does not rely on government institutions to come in assistance. Through this analysis, the organisation might want to implement capacity strengthening activities that would enable the perception of the Haitian citizens to change and the government authorities to respond in a more efficient manner in the case of natural disaster.

If the project, as it often is the case in development intervention, has different phases, monitoring and evaluation allow to answer the question to whether the intervention is ready to entre the new step. For example, if a project in Northern Uganda foresees the first year of a project as capacity building, the second of community mobilisation, and the third of infrastructure construction, an M&E framework including quantitative surveys as well as pre- and post-tests would enable the technical staff to see whether the project is on track and ready to embark onto the next phase as predicted.

Lastly, but only on this paper and not in the overall necessity of Monitoring and Evaluation, an M&E mechanism would allow the organisation to introspect on the lessons being learned or learnt by the end of the project. An evaluative report containing testimonies, stakeholders’ and donors’ feedback, as well as final data from the entire intervention, would serve the organisation, its partners, donors and colleagues a great opportunity to apply new (or the same) practices to future projects.

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

Change assumptions within a project are not only linked to the impacts, but also to the outcome, outputs, activities and inputs.

Change assumptions start at the vary base of the project, with activities carried out by the financial and human resources made available, and allow the project staff to make assumptions that *if* the activities go as planned and *if* the stakeholders are as involved and delivering the appropriately positive feedback, the outcomes will take place. Consequently *if*  the outcomes are achieved, and therefore a change has taken place, an overall impact will arrive.

Such relationship has become more and more obvious and hard to ignore. So much so that in the last years, international institutions such as the European Union and its organs have adapted the Logical Framework of project proposals to include the change needed and its motivations (Barbera, 2016).

Furthermore, one needs to keep in mind that although the change assumptions always tend towards the positive side of the scale during the conception of the project, it should be noted that *if* the activities do not attain the aimed target or *if* the communities are not cooperative, the changes to the objectives and consequently the desired impact will not be those envisaged. For this a careful, adapted and contextual monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be established and needs to be actively involved in the implementation of the project at all stages/phases of the intervention.

**References**

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