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**MONITORING & EVALUATION DIPLOMA**

**MODULE 2 - ASSIGNMENT 3**

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1. ***Why is choosing the right question important in Monitoring and Evaluation?***

Monitoring and Evaluation is a process/technique which is used to track and assess a project/program while it is been ongoing (monitoring) during and the end of the project/initiative (Evaluation).

It is a mechanism control which is used in projects to know if projects are conducted and delivered based on the goals and objectives set.

However, the importance of questions before, during and after the initiative is crucial to its success. It is what helps monitor and evaluate a project/program.

Our study pack in pages in (module 3 in pages 3, 4, 5, 9 & 10-11) says that: *the questions you ask will not only help your evaluation, but your program as well. By the choice of your questions, you are defining why you are trying to change. And choosing your evaluation questions, evaluation by analyzing the community problem or issue you are addressing and deciding how you want to affect it. As a practitioner you will want to know the effects of what you are doing on the lives of participants or the community.*

*The question asked here: why is it necessary to choose the questions carefully? The answers are indicated as follow:*

* *It helps one to understand what effects different parts of your effort are having.*
* *It shows you where you need to make changes.*
* *It highlights unintended consequences and guide one future choices*
* *It provides focus for the evaluation and the program, and determine what needs to be recorded in order to gather data for the evaluation.*

This website (Learning for sustainability, Will Allen) tells us this about the importance of evaluation question: *A small number of evaluation questions help provide this focus. These are not questions that are asked in an interview or questionnaire, but high level research questions that will be answered by combining data from several sources and methods. These, in turn, need to be focused with appropriate evaluation questions that are driven by funders, project participants and other key stakeholders.*

*A useful starting set of key evaluation questions to guide initial analysis are:*

* *Is the research delivering on outputs and outcomes as planned? (efficiency and effectiveness)*
* *Have applied activities and their delivery methods been effective? Are there aspects that could have been done differently? (process effectiveness)*
* *Is the wider project story being told? What range of outcomes (intended and unintended) has the research project contributed to – taking account of each of social, economic, environmental and cultural considerations (impact)*
* *How has the project influenced the stakeholder community, and what capacities has it built? (impact)*
* *Is the project being delivered on budget? What aspects of the participatory elements of the project could be done differently next time to cut costs while still delivering achievements? (efficiency)*
* *Is the project impacting positively on key groups and issues that have been identified as important in project design? (impact)*
* *Is there evidence that the initiative is likely to grow – scaling up and out – beyond the project life? (sustainability)*
* *To what extent did the initiative deliver against the needs of key stakeholders? Were the size, scale and approach taken for each need appropriate? (impact & efficiency)*

One can say that, the type or design of questions will direct how the gathering of information will be and, what is expected and also how the result of the evaluation will look like.

Careful and structured questionnaires will lead to the result of the evaluation and clearly indicate if the objectives and goals have been achieved or if there is need to adjust the program.

1. ***Using Archival data has its own bottlenecks. Name five and explain how to overcome them.***

What is the archival data? And what are the bottlenecks one can face when searching or needing to use it?

As indicated in our study pack, (E&M module 2, page 145), “*Archival data refers to the information that is already existing in someone files, which was originally generated for reporting or research purpose. It is often kept because of legal requirements, for reference or as an internal records. It is a result of completed activities. It is not a subject to change, and therefore known as fixed data.”*

What is a bottleneck? It can be describe as a difficulty, a constraint to get something done or achieved, it as initially planned or wanted.

According to Kanbanise website definition, “*a bottleneck is a work stage that causes an interruption to the flow of work and delay across production process, the workflow bottleneck can be a computer, a person a department or a whole work stage. Unfortunately, a bottleneck is often known and acknowledged only after it has caused a blockage.”*

And how do these bottlenecks affect access to archival data? It is important to indicate that the sources of archival data, their usage and how these bottlenecks are encountered. The archival as defined earlier, are existing information which can be sourced from public records such as census bureau, cities and town clerk offices, federal and states departments and ministries, police records, in various levels of courts), government agencies, and some research organizations, and academia.

So when and how can we face bottlenecks in sourcing archival data? During the process of sourcing for information, one can meet everywhere and anywhere. For example, when searching for information from government agencies. It is not always easy because, they do not have a really good system of keeping records. And when they do have, it is not properly stored, most of times without order and sometimes in an abandoned local where no one really goes. One can give some bribe or offer lunch to the clerk to access to the information.

Another example is when the data is stored in coded language in the computer, and if one is not knowledgeable, one can request the service of an expert to assist and get access to the information.

An example of a bottleneck is when the project team working with volunteers who did not have any ideas on how to source in archival data. In this case, the project manager will have to give his/her volunteers a training on how and where to source for information and clearly teach on the types of information needed. Once they know what they are looking, the bottleneck will ease off.

Another case of bottleneck is when one need to get access via internet, or a special sites when access is given to few selected categories of people, another option will be to go to sites that have or offer similar information.

Another example, will be the case of information kept by generation of traditional rulers in a particular community based on some cultural settings. This also can be a little difficult and as it can be another type of bottleneck. But one can overcome the situation by getting to know the people of the community and their tradition, the custodian of the tradition to get access to the information. In this case, there can be some traditions one need to observe also so that the information is released. The end result is the access to the information.

From the above examples, it is observed that, access to archival data or any types and search information can be frustrating, discouraging but a best and nice approach in dealing with human beings will go a long way to give you access to unexpected, and reliable information.

1. ***Why is research important component in Monitoring and Evaluation? Give and explain four.***

It is relevant to explain what a research is. The research is the process of investigating, fact-finding, probing and analysis, etc... It is a process that it is used in all areas of mankind.

And how does is it applied in M&E? Most of websites visited on M&E are describing how a research is important on the topic. This statement just confirms how a research is important in M&E.

(Wise step website)said that, *The main purpose of research is to get deep into the topic so that something helpful can be churned out which can be helpful for a program. Working on a research project will be obviously challenging and also rewarding.* For example (1), when one puts the best of his/her expertise and skills in it.

The module 3, page 142,143 says that “*the heart of an evaluation research is to gather information about the program you are evaluating, analyzing, to determine what it tells you about the effectiveness of what you are doing. And somehow, you have to become a cultural detective to understand your initiative as every evaluation is an anthropological study*.”

For example (2), it is important and mandatory to know deeply the community or target group on which the program is dedicated. The information such as environment, economic, legal, social demographic, and political.

Another point of a research is collecting data and managing M&E project records, as stated by (wise step website) ,*for example(3) during the construction of village tub wells, the project manager will need to keep records about the materials purchased and utilized. The labour force employed and their contracting details, the specific screens and pumps fitted, the depth at which water was found and the flow rate. And the keys indicators might be just the number of wells successfully completed, their average costs and flow rates*

Research helps in the decision-making process, for example (4)*,* a good research in M&E requires proper timing and effort. It prepares one for taking important decisions which further necessitates the same from all the participants involved in the process.

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is also another important part of monitoring and evaluation ( M & E module 2 study pack) stated that, *For example, CBPR which is a research done by community members so that the result both come from and goes directly back to the people who need them most. Employing community –based participatory research for the purpose of either evaluation in long-term change can be a good idea for reasons of practicability, personal development and politics.*

Chitra, Reddy said that, *believe it or not, but it is the truth. We have been habituated to adaptability to new things, as our desires and wants increases day by day.*

*As our demands increases, the requirement of research also rises. It can also be said that research is what that makes our lives easier. It is just the result of the curiosity or anew new innovative idea.*

*When we have any problem, get an idea or are confused by many questions what do you think will the next big thing?*

*It will nothing but research. This helps us in many ways and is a complete solution to humans. Now when we humans, are satisfied without any problems, this results in the advancement of the society. So research overall helps in the advancement and development of the society.*

Hampshire.edu tells us that “*Research is a process of systematic inquiry that entails collection of data; documentation of critical information; and analysis and interpretation of that data/information, in accordance with suitable methodologies set by specific professional fields and academic disciplines.*

*Research is conducted to evaluate the validity of a hypothesis or an interpretive framework; to assemble a body of substantive knowledge and findings for sharing them in appropriate manners; and to generate questions for further inquiries.”* *For those who work in disciplines found in the schools of cognitive and natural science research is a process by which a hypotheses is generated (e.g. through aggregation, observation, experimentation) and information is collected (e.g. through aggregation, observation, experimentation) to interpret or evaluate the hypotheses.”*

From all the comments so far collected and based personnel knowledge in M&E, one is tempted to say that, Research is not only an important component of Evaluation and Monitoring, but part of today’s world be public or private or in technology, medicine, science, etc… and sector of our life.

Wise Steps concluded this by saying that” *a research work is done by all age group whether students, academia, and all in order to understand the society, its rules and policies.*

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Study pack module 3 (page 142/143)

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