**ASSIGNMENT 3**

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

It is essential to choose the right questions in M&E as this involves measuring main impacts and effects resulting from intervention such as positive or negative, intended or unintended, direct or indirect. The questions should be concerned with economic, social, environmental and other development indicators. The types of questions you choose depend on the program goals, objectives and output indicators. There are general and specific evaluation questions, as a rule of thumb one should avoid vague and complex evaluation questions as in most cases there is a scope, time limitations and allocated budget. It is not feasible to address all questions no matter how important therefore, program team and management should decide which questions is priority. Likewise, prior to choosing questions it could help to review similar programs, evaluation questions, data collection methods and interview techniques. Below are some important factors to consider for selecting questions:

* Are there resources available to answer adequately selected questions (such as labor, method of data collection, sources of data, sufficient and competent evaluation team)?
* Do you have sufficient time to answer questions?
* Which stakeholders to interview and identify the method
* Who among the project team and audience will use the results/findings of the final report?
* Would selected question will be considered as interesting and not answered adequately elsewhere?
* Would selected questions contribute to learning and new knowledge about program?

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

Archival data is information that has already been collected and/or documented at the local, state or national levels. Research publication, scientific papers and their findings could also be referred for archival data. Archival data records are kept by governmental and other agencies, and normally is part of the operation of an institution or organization. As M&E expert, one can use archival data (freely available) for general information about population of study, for data comparability purposes or due to lack of time and given resources.

For instance, census data on population demographics, economy and environment collected on a regular basis and usually can be found in government websites. However, it is not always the case especially with underdeveloped or developing countries data is not regularly updated or consistent due to the budget insufficiency or other reasons. Therefore, prior to using or siting their data, it is important to verify if data was collected systematically, period of data collection, its methodology and sample size.

However, there are few disadvantages of using archival data that one should be aware of before relying or using the data.

* Data reliability and accuracy
* Relevance of data
* Methodology used or the way things were measured may have changed over time
* Data representativeness
* Methodology and design could reflect the biases of those in power

Therefore, prior to applying or using archival data one should first of all *ensure* *if data is still valid* and *not outdated*, this can be done through internet search for more recent studies or contacting official representatives or authors to verify if published study is the most recent. In addition, data accuracy should be verified through *identification of specification, methodology used and margin of error applied*, if archival data is used for data comparison and analysis. Finally *relevance*, ensure that concept used and units of measurement are the same or similar to your study.

**3.Why is research important component in monitoring and evaluation? Give and explain four.**

Research is essential component for the design and implementation of monitoring and evaluation system for learning purposes. However, in most cases projects cannot afford it due to budget and time restrictions and availability of in-house specialists. Below are four essential benefits of the research in M&E:

1. Research leads to a team’s ability to learn about program long-term impacts and incorporate findings into new program design

Though mid-term or final evaluations help program team during its implementation or close to an end to find out how much of the change in conditions was a result of the program however, research or in-depth study of the specific subject or topic about the program through control and treatment groups helps to incorporate findings into the design of new program phase for upcoming years through lessons learned and impacts (positive or negative) caused by the programe. In addition, it explores and answers questions such as: were some groups better off as a result of the programme compared to others/ or those who were not program participants/beneficiaries?

1. Research helps to prove/validate program’s Theory of Change

Most program documents contain Theory of Change (ToC) which defines long-term goals, description of “how” and “why” change should happen, outcomes and assumptions made at the beginning of program. If program plans to conduct impact research, ToC will guide research design and questions, and helps to plan and implement research. It combines logical process, mapping critical reflection on assumptions and interpretations.

1. In-depth study of beneficiaries

Research provides empirical evidence for organizations and development practitioners to reflect about their commitment, unexplored or unintended impacts and changes of the aid/assistance into the life of beneficiaries, their attitudes and perspectives as well as impacts into a local economy and lead to comprehensive discussions of a mechanism. On the other hand, it can explore better understanding of beneficiaries’ accountability to assisting agency or NGO which cannot be explored through regular M&E activities.

1. Post-project sustainability research/study

To inform future programing based on lessons learned, policy design and contribute to general knowledge about implemented program and to learn about the role of stakeholder and how each of them contributed to sustainability, post-project sustainability study is planned after the end of program. It differs from traditional mid-term and final evaluations as it is conducted after minimum of six months or one year of program completion. For instance: health programs focused on child growth or nutritional impacts measure to what extent implemented strategies and approaches were effective for the child growth could measure after specific period of time. Also, such studies are beneficial for broader development community and donor governments especially to those who promote sustainable development goals (SDGs).

References:

Isabel Vogel,“ESPA guide to working with Theory of Change for research projects”, para A, p 4;

Miranti Dewi (2017) , Doctoral Thesis › Doctor of Philosophy, Aston University, “An in-depth case study of beneficiary accountability practices by an Indonesian NGO”, chapter 1, p17

Note: also relied on my own experiences for the past ten years