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**INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLANNING  
ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN RWANDA: A CASE OF  
SELECTED NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN  
GASABO DISTRICT**

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Strategy

## **INFLUENCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION PLANNING ON PROJECT PERFORMANCE IN RWANDA: A CASE OF SELECTED NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS IN GASABO DISTRICT**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on project performance in Rwanda a Case of selected NGOs in Gasabo District.

**Methodology:** Descriptive survey design was used; the targeted population of the study was 72 NGOs based in Gasabo district, Kigali. From each NGO two respondents (M&E Specialist & Finance Manager) was picked purposively hence the total target population was 144 respondents. A sample size of 106 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. The study used both primary and secondary data where questionnaires were used for data collection. Cronbach's alpha test was utilized in assessing reliability of research instrument. Data collected was processed through SPSS version 21. Data analysis involved statistical computations for averages, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics and Correlation (using the Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation) was used to analyze the data and establish the relationship between the dependent variables and the set of independent variables. In this way all necessary measures to ensure project performance is enhanced, are taken care of under M&E planning.

**Findings:** Findings indicated that all participating institutions were privy to the M&E plans developed by AVU. On average, 92% of the respondents gave plausible reasons why they thought M&E planning influences project performance in reference to the projects under study. Spearman correlation showed a positive significant correlation coefficient of 0.8 between M&E planning and project performance.

**Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy:** Based on the findings that M&E planning has high correlation with project performance, it is here by recommended that a well thought out M&E plan needs to be in place and be fully implemented if project performance is to be enhanced.

**Keywords:** *Monitoring, Evaluation, M&E Planning, Project Performance*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Monitoring is an ongoing function that employs the systematic collection of data related to specified indicators in Public projects. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is described as a process that assists project managers in improving performance and achieving results. The goal of M&E is to improve current and future management of outputs, outcomes and impact (United Nations Development Programme, 2002). Williams (2000) asserts that monitoring provides management and the main stakeholders of a development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of expected results and progress with respect to the use of allocated funds. According to Ballard et al., (2010), monitoring and evaluation is a process that helps program implementers make informed decisions regarding program operations, service delivery and program effectiveness, using objective evidence.

Monitoring, whilst seen as an on-going management function, and evaluation as the post event function, which feeds information back to management for the next event, is too simplistic a distinction. In monitoring one is evaluating, as one is making a judgment about progress and intervening based on this judgment (UNDP, 2010). Similarly, when one does an evaluation, he does it based on monitoring data, and judgments can best be made with these insights. In practice, the sequencing is not as linear as one following the other, but more dynamic depending on the situation (Khan, 2001).

As part of the broader efforts to institutionalize Managing for Development Results (MfDR), most Governments such as Sri Lanka, Canada, and USA among others have taken specific steps to strengthen Results-based M&E System at their national level. The Results Based M&E system have received top-level political support in these Governments. The progress for projects, programs, sector performance and institutions have been reviewed on a quarterly basis and the forum has served as a guiding and troubleshooting forum with top level political commitment. Institutionalization of M&E has meant creation of M&E system with policy, legal and institutional arrangements to produce monitoring information and evaluation findings have been judged valuably by key stakeholders (Benington & Moore, 2011).

The Canadian M&E system has invested heavily in both evaluation and performance monitoring as key tools to support accountability and results-based management. Additionally, the current state of the M&E system has evolved over time, as the central designers have recognized that the development and implementation of M&E is long term and iterative therefore putting emphasis on the “process” of implementation as an important mechanism in itself in developing an “evaluation culture” or “results culture” in an organization and across the entire system (Lahey, 2009).

Government M&E systems in Africa operate in complex terrain. To some extent they are hostages to other forces in government, nevertheless given a results-driven reform agenda, incentives can be put in place for the evidence generated to support developments in delivery, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation are consistently designed to support valued change in people’s lives, particularly the underprivileged. In effect, the tools of governance are aligned to citizenry, not internal bureaucratic desires.

The significance of results placement for government is extensively deliberated, and finds manifestation in public management and development literature (Behn, 2003; Benington and Moore, 2011; OECD, 2005; Perrin, 1998).

In Ghana, after several years of implementing the national M&E system, significant progress has been made (Clear, 2012). However, challenges include severe financial constraints; institutional, operational and technical capacity constraints; fragmented and uncoordinated information, particularly at the sector level. To address these challenges the Clear report argues that the current institutional arrangements should be reinforced with adequate capacity to support and sustain effective monitoring and evaluation, and existing M&E mechanisms must be strengthened, harmonized, and effectively coordinated (Pollitt *et al.*, 2009).

Project M&E performance can be measured and evaluated using a large number of performance indicators that could be related to various dimensions (groups) such as time, cost, quality, client satisfaction, client changes, business performance, health and safety (Cheung *et al.* 2004). Time, cost and quality are, however, the predominant performance evaluation dimensions. Another interesting way of evaluating project performance is through common sets of indicators (Pheng & Chuan, 2006). The first set is related to the owner, users, stakeholders, and the general public; the groups of people, who will look at project performance from the macro viewpoint. The second set comprises the developer and the contractor; the groups of people who will look at project performance from the micro viewpoint of indicators, and could be influenced by various project characteristics. For example, Dissanayaka and Kumaraswamy (1999) found that project time and cost performances get influenced by project characteristics, procurement system, project team performance, client representation's characteristics, contractor characteristics, design team characteristics, and external conditions. Similarly, Iyer and Jha (2005), identified many factors as having influence on project cost performance, these include; project manager's competence, top management support, project manager's coordinating and leadership skills, monitoring and feedback by the participants, decision-making, coordination among project participants, owners' competence, social condition, economic condition, and climatic condition. Elyamany *et al.* (2007) introduced a performance evaluation model for construction companies in order to provide a proper tool for the company's owners, shareholders and funding agencies to evaluate the performance of construction companies in Egypt.

In Rwanda, the late 90's after the Genocide saw the introduction of the NGO Coordination Act, this was aimed to bring the fast growing and largely unstructured civil society under government's control. This move forced NGOs to organize themselves into a group that could engage with government. The result was the promulgation of a law, the NGO Coordination Act, which provided a framework that was more conducive for NGOs. The law recognized the NGO Council, an umbrella organization for registered NGOs and the NGO Coordination Board (CB), which facilitated engagement between the sector and the government. As a developing country, Rwanda receives a large amount of foreign assistance, most of which is distributed through NGOs. Many of these NGOs have offices in Kigali and operate at all levels. Many conduct high-impact; high-resource

projects, and operates in the fields of health, refugees, environment, human rights, education, and key aspects of international development. Currently, the activities of NGOs in Rwanda are controlled by the NGO Co-ordination Board, which is a State Corporation established by an Act of Parliament, the Non-Governmental Organizations Co-ordination Act No. 19 of 2000. The NGOs use a number of approaches in addressing their objectives and these are categorized into three broad areas of advocacy, service provision and capacity building although a number of GOs employ more than one strategy. The study focused on international NGOs with offices located in Gasabo District for easy access.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Globally in organizations, project monitoring and evaluation is activity seen as a donor requirement rather than a management tool (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). The success of projects plays a key role in achieving organization growth and development. Most project managers appreciate that monitoring and evaluation of projects is important if the project objectives and success is to be achieved. Project monitoring and evaluation exercise adds value to the overall efficiency of project planning, management, and implementation by offering corrective action to the variances from the expected standard (Kahilu, 2010).

Organizations especially NGOs, implement project M&E just to cope with demands and pressures from funding agencies rather than as a measure to contribute to project performance (Kusek & Rist, 2004). Very few organizations have faith in M&E partly because its influence on project performance is not well understood despite many studies having been done (Ndunge, & Mulwa, 2012). There is inadequate information on how M&E planning influence project performance. Simply put, the influence of M&E on project performance is not adequately established making organizations view the practice of M&E as an extra burden of little or no benefit at all.

Although M&E is an integral tool in managing and accessing the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of projects, there has been an increased need for development community, governments, and agencies to respond to calls for projects to be successful with evidence of proper M&E systems, (IFAD, 2002). There is a growing need for development organizations to assess aid effectiveness and to measure the results of development interventions based on their intended objectives. UNDP (2009) for example stipulates that it is no longer acceptable for governments, official development agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations to simply report how much money has been invested or what outputs have been produced. This was demonstrated in an International Conference on Financing for Development hosted by development partners in Monterrey in 2002, where they agreed to focus on managing for development results, an approach that advocates for a stronger orientation of M&E systems towards development results (World Bank, 2008).

This increased focus of donors and borrowers on impact has resulted in a high demand for expertise in M&E systems; with NGOs required to submit M&E results frameworks and performance management/monitoring plans (PMP) as prerequisite to funding. M&E

planning forms the roadmap towards achieving the set objective since without proper planning there can be no success. This study therefore sought to establish the influence of M&E planning on project performance.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Theory of change**

The theory of change, first published by Carol Weiss in 1995, is defined quite simply and elegantly as a theory of how and why an initiative works. It focuses not just on generating knowledge about whether a project is effective, but also on explaining how and what methods it uses to be effective (Cox, 2009). The theory of change provides a model of how a project is supposed to work. In other words, it provides a road map of where the project is trying to reach. Monitoring and evaluation tests and refines the road map while communications help in reaching the destination by helping to bring about change. Further, the theory of change provides the basis for arguing that the intervention is making a difference (Msila & Setlhako, 2013). This theory suggests that by understanding, what the project is trying to achieve, how and why, project staff and evaluators will be able to monitor and measure the desired results and compare them against the original theory of change (Alcock, 2009).

This theory however falls short since project success is much more complex (Babbie & Mouton, 2006). It is important to understand success beyond just knowing “what works”. Experience has shown that blindly copying or scaling an intervention hardly ever works (Mackay, 2007). An important task for monitoring and evaluation is to gather enough knowledge and understanding in order to predict – with some degree of confidence – how a project and set of activities might work in a different situation, or how it needs to be adjusted to get similar or better results, hence influencing project performance (Jones, 2011).

### **2.2 Theory of Effective Project Implementation**

Theory of Effective Project Implementation according to Nutt, (2006) puts a series of steps taken by responsible organizational agents to plan change process to elicit compliance needed to install changes. Managers use implementation to make planned changes in organizations by creating environments in which changes can survive and be rooted (Nutt, 2006). Implementation is a procedure directed by a manager to install planned changes in an organization. There is widespread agreement that managers are the key process actors and that the intent of implementation is to install planned changes, whether they be novel or routine. However, procedural steps in implementation have been difficult to specify because implementation is ubiquitous (Nutt, 2006).

A study by Edward Njenga (2013), On Factors Influencing performance of Monitoring and Evaluation of Development Projects (A Case Study Of Machakos District), found that monitoring and evaluation budget, stakeholders participation, M&E plan, source of funding (donor) and training in M&E had a positive relation with the probability of implementing M&E which was significant at 95% confidence level. However, M&E guidelines were found to have no effect on implementation of M&E. Based on the results

the study concluded that performance of Monitoring and Evaluation is important in providing the feedback mechanism of economic development interventions.

### **2.3 Empirical Literature**

Most scholars of project monitoring and evaluation argue that planning for M&E should be done just at the very point of project planning (Kohli & Chitkara, 2008) while a few contend that it should be created after the planning phase but before the design phase of a project or intervention (Nyonjeet *al* 2012). Despite this difference in opinion however, almost all scholars agree that the plan should include information on how a project should be assessed (Cleland & Ireland, 2007)

Literature also reveals that there are important considerations for an M&E plan: Brignall & Modell (2010) categorizes these considerations into resources - how much money and time will be needed to conduct the activities. Capacity - does the project have internal capacity to carry out the proposed monitoring and evaluation activities; including analysis of data collected? Other considerations made and also acknowledged by Armstrong & Baron (2012) are Feasibility- Are the proposed activities realistic? Can they be implemented? Timeline - Is the proposed timeline realistic for conducting the proposed activities? Ethics - What are the ethical considerations and challenges involved with implementing the proposed activities and is there a plan in place for addressing those considerations? Has a protocol been submitted for review to a research ethics committee? With these considerations, it can be said that M&E planning is complete in terms of coverage for the purposes of giving an oversight on project direction during implementation.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Descriptive survey design was used; the targeted population of the study was 72 NGOs based in Gasabo district, Kigali. From each NGO two respondents (M&E Specialist & Finance Manager) was picked purposively hence the total target population was 144 respondents. A sample size of 106 respondents was determined using Yamane's formula. The study used both primary and secondary data where questionnaires were used for data collection. Cronbach's alpha test was utilized in assessing reliability of research instrument. Data collected was processed through SPSS version 21. Data analysis involved statistical computations for averages, percentages, and correlation and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics and Correlation (using the Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation) was used to analyze the data and establish the relationship between the dependent variables and the set of independent variables. In this way all necessary measures to ensure project performance is enhanced, are taken care of under M&E planning.

### **4.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Period of existence and primary objective of organizations**

The period of existence of institutions that participated in the study varied between 9 years to 53 years (Table 4.1).

**Table 1: Period of existence of institutions in the study**

Years of existence	Frequency		Total	Percentage
	Funder	Implementer		
Less than 10yrs	14	10	24	25.8
10-15	12	12	24	25.8
16-20	10	14	24	25.8
21-30	8	9	17	18.3
31 & above	2	2	4	4.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Table 1 shows that majority of the institution in the survey had been in existence for the 16years and above. Particularly it was noted that 24 had been in existence for up to 20 years. Seventeen institutions have been in existence for up to 30 years while only 4 institutions have been in existence for more than 31 years. The implementing institutions is established through a charter by 17 African governments. It has the mandate of significantly increasing access to quality higher education and training through the innovative use of information communication technologies.

#### **4.2 Monitoring and evaluation roles and responsibilities**

All respondents in the survey played a part in monitoring and evaluation of the 72 projects under review. The roles and responsibilities of individuals varied according to the institutions they represented. Respondents from NGOs, the implementing institution consisted the actual project team having a project manager responsible for project planning and financing. The team also had project officers responsible for coordinating Information Communication Technology (ICT), officers responsible for data collection and officers responsible for documentation and liaison and communication. NGOs also had support staff to handle administration and logistical requirements of the projects.

**Table 2: Role of respondents in the projects**

Category	Role in the project	Freq.	%
Implementer	Project planning	24	25.8
	Project financing	12	12.9
	Data collection and documentation	10	10.8
	IT coordination	22	23.7
	Administration & logistics	2	2.1
	Liaison and communication	5	5.4
Funder	Project financing & project planning & Liaison and communication	3	3.22
Beneficiary	Liaison and communication, Data collection and documentation & Administration & logistics	8	8.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>93</b>	<b>100.00</b>

On the other hand, from funding institutions, respondents stated that their role was supervisory and also to work with NGOs regarding project planning and financing and also to act as contact persons between their own institutions, IAEA or AfDB. The various



beneficiary institutions, for the projects; NGOs had the role of reporting data to contact persons on project implementation. Thus, the roles of the respondents for the beneficiary institutions were liaison and communication, progress report preparation and documentation from within their institutions and reporting to NGOs coordination body.

#### 4.3 Value of Monitoring and Evaluation at NGOs

Table 3 shows the proportion of respondents who said monitoring and evaluation contributes to the success of the project. Out of the 93 respondents interviewed, 82 (88.2%) reported in the affirmative while only one apiece, either did not know whether M&E contributes to project performance or thought otherwise.

**Table 3: Role of M&E in project success by number of respondents**

	Frequency	Percent
Valid		
Contributes to success	82	88.2
Doesn't contribute	10	10.8
Don't know	1	1.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The respondents who said M&E contributes to project success gave a number of reasons. Most of the respondents said monitoring and evaluation promotes 'evidence based decision-making' (9): M&E strengthens the production and use of objective information on implementation of project. It also enhances the basis for decision making, to enable managers to make evidence-based project decisions in the interest of achieving project results. This was followed by those who said monitoring and evaluation 'promotes accountability' (7): through M&E project staff are held accountable based on agreed outputs and expectations and assessed through the control, monitoring and evaluation systems. M&E also addresses compliance with norms and procedures, and physical and financial implementation of the project. The rest of the respondents said monitoring and evaluation promotes managing for results (5): monitoring and evaluation of projects focuses on measuring results as planned at any particular instance and generates lessons for improving planning of future projects. Evaluation results also offer opportunities to correct project mistakes early enough.

Secondary data analysis, which also corresponded to the M&E Officer's response, revealed that the roles of the M&E Unit at NGOS are to: Ensure effective planning and management of monitoring and evaluation systems; Evaluate project progress and performance on activities based on indicators outlined in project logical framework; Conduct beneficiary impact assessments and assess project effectiveness from the perspective of the beneficiaries served by the project; Make necessary recommendations on the way forward to improving project outputs; and Ensure donor regulations are met in implementation of project activities According to the NGOs project implementation team, M&E activities have significant bearing on the success of the projects because the periodic reporting on the project by various players allows opportunities to gauge project performance against project plans. Such opportunities allowed for adjustments in implementation which otherwise would have been impeded by various situations in

beneficiary institutions. The Projects Manager had this to say: “Monitoring is largely about ‘watching’ or keeping track and may well involve observing key features of the project related to performance indicators. Evaluation involves making careful judgements about the worth, significance and meaning of projects”.

#### **4.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Plans and Project Performance**

The survey revealed that all respondents, 18 for MNP and 13 for VUCCnet(100%), were privy to the M&E plans of the two projects. Much as not all respondents participated in formulating M&E plans, they were privy to them during M&E trainings. Both M&E plan for MNP was formulated soon after project launch while for VUCCnet was formulated just after finalizing the project plan. The M&E plans were developed by the implementing institution, NGOS. As given by responses from NGOS , a number of considerations were made in coming up with M&E plans, which included: Finances - how much money and time was needed to conduct the activities; Capacity – if the project had internal capacity to carry out the proposed monitoring and evaluation activities; including analysis of data collected; Feasibility – If the proposed activities were realistic and could be implemented; Timeline – If the proposed 39 timeline was realistic for conducting the proposed activities; Ethics – If there were ethical considerations and challenges involved with implementing the proposed activities. That notwithstanding, the main parts of the M&E plans as given by the frequency of despondences for both the MNP and VUCCnet projects in the survey were: Objectives of the project (23) Determination of project performance (21), project indicators (19); outputs and outcomes (19). Others include conceptual measures and definitions, along with baseline data; Monitoring schedule i.e. data collection schedule, how often the beneficiary institutions needed to report on project progress; A list of data sources to be used; and the cost estimates for the monitoring and evaluating activities. From the forgoing, it can be seen that consideration was given to achievement of project outputs, outcomes and goals. Implying that the M&E plan was meant to guide the tracking of achievement of results and provide information on what is happening in the project through data collection. Further analysis of these M&E plans, for both projects revealed that they were drafted to show steps in conducting M&E and use the results of M&E to determine project performance. The steps of conducting M&E in these plans were (i) Identification of indicators to be measured, (ii) Setting target values for indicators (iii) Performing measurements (iv) Comparing measured results to the pre-defined standards, (v) Making necessary changes.

On the question of whether M&E plans helped understand project expectations, all respondents answered in the affirmative. As regards rating influence of M&E plans on project performance, on average the 18 NGOs respondents rated it at 7.7 out of 10 while the 13 respondents rated it at 8.1 out of 10. As alluded to earlier, NGOs projects was implemented after the plans, scored higher most probably because it benefitted from lessons learnt from.

#### 4.5 Correlation analysis between M&E planning and Project Performance

To further determine the influence of M&E planning on project performance statistically, the relationship that exists between these two variables was statistically assessed using correlation analysis.

Data from MNP showed positive correlation between M&E planning and project performance with a correlation coefficient of 0.8.

**Table 4: Spearman Correlation for the NGOs project**

	Project performance	M&E Planning
Project performance (r) (p) Sig. (2 tailed)	1.000	0.80**
M&E Planning (r) (p) (2 tailed)	0.80** 0.025	1.000

## 5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Summary of the study

With a response rate of 90% and above, this study found out that monitoring and evaluation planning as a tool of M&E indeed has influence on project performance. All respondents in the survey confirmed having been privy to the M&E plans of respective projects under study. Respondents from NGOs and funding institutions participated in the formulation of M&E plans while beneficiary institutions used the plan during M&E training. Secondary data analysis confirmed that M&E plans stipulate the kind of data required to gauge project performance. This was also echoed by other respondents. In addition, M&E plans identify who should do what, when and how. M&E plans, also detail roles and responsibilities of staff regarding project implementation. As a result, M&E planning offers yet another opportunity to re-examine the entire project design adjusting it further to meet set objectives. These are the most crucial aspect of M&E planning that made respondents rate it high (average of 7.9 out of 10). Correlation analysis between M&E planning and project performance also indicated the highest magnitude of positive correlation (average of 0.8).

### 5.2. Conclusions

It has been seen in this study that monitoring and evaluation has a direct influence on project performance. Specifically it can be concluded that M&E planning is the blue print of project monitoring and evaluation that lead to influencing project performance. Without an M&E plan it would be very difficult to conduct any meaningful project monitoring and evaluation tasks, as there would be no organized way of doing that, no identified key performance data to collect, no schedule to collect data, no delegated responsibilities and no agreed upon method of data analysis. The M&E plan details capacities needed, necessary resources and more importantly, the kind of data required to

monitor performance of projects. In the M&E plan, a schedule to collect identified data is devised, including who should collect this data, how often and in what format. Based on the M&E plan, necessary training can be conducted for identified staff, a baseline survey conducted and an appropriate information system developed. It is in the M&E plan that details of various tasks are identified and outlined in such a way that they complement each other in enhancing project performance. According to this study, therefore, for monitoring and evaluation to have influence on project performance, there has to be an M&E plan that guides what should be done and how it should be done to keep project performance in check.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings that M&E planning has the highest correlation with project performance, it is here by recommended that a well thought out M&E plan needs to be in place and be fully implemented if project performance is to enhanced.

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