



Advocacy for Monitoring and Evaluation in Community Development Projects in Africa

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ABSTRACT

Much of retrospection and reassessment of past undertakings and activities is necessary so to gain confidence in future tasks and ensure success. Review is mandatory and important in development projects. Many projects and programs suffer losses because of lack of or inefficient and ineffective monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation helps in identifying the problem before hand or in time, hence, taking precautionary and even corrective measures in time. To win the favour of the donors and creditors, the evidence that the projects and programmes initiated are succeeding is inevitable. The type of evaluation depends on the object being evaluated and the purpose of the evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated in the planning of a project or programme. The monitoring and evaluation process may be presented in several phases. Methodology adopted was review of literature and the conclusions were made based on arguments elicited in the paper.

Key Words: *monitoring, evaluation, community, development, project, Africa*

THE CONCEPTS OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Most African countries like a new site for construction, a lot of activities are taking place at the same time. Just like an amateur in any vocation much of retrospection and reassessment of past undertakings and activities is necessary so to gain confidence in future tasks. Even with the most experienced practitioner re-examination of the applied intervention is essential for provision of insight on the best alternative to be used in future. Omission of monitoring and evaluation in a project is like driving a car without checking petro, oil and water; the car has high chance of halting on the way and never to move again because, may be one or more of its driving component has either gotten exhausted or malfunctioned or demanded replenishing. Hence, a project without monitoring and evaluation may stall any time without warning. Many projects undertaken in Africa are new in the African context though they may be a replica of the same from their land of origin. An inexperienced person needs frequent and intense verification of his/ her workmanship than the experienced, though review is mandatory and equally important to all, however, it is less urgent to the experienced than to the inexperienced.

Many projects and programs in Africa have suffered tremendous loses because of lack of or inefficient and ineffective monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring and evaluation serves as a cautionary measure for eminent disaster in project and programme management. Monitoring and evaluation helps in identifying the problem before hand or in time, hence, taking precautionary and even corrective measures in time.

In monitoring and evaluation the project and programme progress and success are measured. Most countries in Africa depend on donor and loan driven economy. To win the favour of the donors and creditors, the evidence that the projects and programmes initiated are succeeding is inevitable. Such evidence may only be provided through the feedback process gained through monitoring and evaluation.

Monitoring entails ardent observation of the progress of the project or programme as per the initial plan. Evaluation on the other hand ascertains the degree to which the project or programme activities are leading to achieving the original goals and objectives; culminating to value judgment of the worth of the interventions, and hence, the entire project or programme. Monitoring and evaluation focus on project or programme specific goals and stages. The object of monitoring and evaluation must be specific and measurable. Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999:20) define programme evaluation research as “the use of social research procedures to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs that is adapted to their political and organizational environments and designed to inform social action in ways that improve social conditions.” Monitoring and evaluation complement each other; hence it is not easy to put a clear demarcation between the two. Nuguti (2009), summarize the explanation of monitoring and evaluation by emphasizing the role played by monitoring and evaluation which includes collecting and canalizing information to be used by policy makers and others in planning and management (Nuguti, 2009, p5).

Monitoring and Evaluation unlike basic research, it is applied research and it is expected that the solutions obtained through the process are utilized for the benefit of the project or programme concerned. Monitoring and evaluation data should help in making informed decisions regarding the project or programme. Monitoring is a nonstop process from the inception of a project throughout all its stages and processes. Similarly evaluation is carried throughout the phases of a project, though at various stages or for diverse motives.

Monitoring and evaluation provides a flat form for understanding a project or a programme, thus, the likelihood of its success. Monitoring and evaluation will identify project or programme success or failure, the reasons for the state of affairs, suggestions for the course of action to be taken or elucidation and consequently, the probable success.

Monitoring and evaluation should be incorporated in the planning of a project or programme. For the success of the monitoring and evaluation resources need to be provided for the same; which may include: personnel, materials, time, funds etc.

TYPES OF EVALUATION

Evaluation may be classified in types depending on the object being evaluated and the purpose of the evaluation. There are two main types of evaluation, that is, formative and summative evaluations. The purpose of formative evaluation is to monitor the project progress to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by project staff to improve interventions delivery. Formative evaluations seek to improve the aspect being examined. The formative evaluation looks at the entirety of the project implementation, which includes the inputs, context and processes in relation to project or programme realization.

Summative evaluations focus on the results of the project or programme processes. It assesses the outcome or impact of project or programme. Summative evaluation examines the short term and long term effects of the project interventions.

CONCEPTUALIZATION, INITIATION AND ACTUALIZATION OF PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring and evaluation are part and parcel of the project hence they should be part of the project design. Monitoring and evaluation takes place in all stage of project cycle, hence, the need for their planning in advance and utilization of the information gained thereof. The nature of monitoring and evaluation to be carried on the project need to be identified in advance together with the method to be utilized in data collection and analysis. At the stage of conceptualizing the project, the need assessment data is used to evaluation the necessity of the

project culminating in formulation of the project objectives. It is on the basis of the objectives the project is designed, implemented and eventually monitored and evaluated.

The clear link between project design and monitoring and evaluation is the project logical framework matrix (log frame matrix) (Ogula, 2002, p8-9). The project log frame matrix summarizes systematically the long term and short term objectives, the immediate results, the necessary actions, the resources required, the favourable conditions to yield the results, the pointers to success and ways of ascertaining the success. The matrix connects the project conceptualization, initiation, actualization and finally monitoring and evaluation. The following table (Table1) demonstrates the elements of a log frame matrix.

Table1. A Logical Framework on the Implementation of Tree Planting Project

Narrative Summary	Performance Indicators	Means of Verification	Critical Assumption
Goal To improve the tree cover at Nairobi Hills	Number of number of trees planted Number of trained people on tree planting Number of people being trained on tree planting Minimize logging	Observation of the site Discussion with stakeholders Interview the project officials	The government is committed in supporting the tree planting The neighbouring community is concerned with tree planting The project management and the neighbouring community cooperate
Objective To equip the concerned community with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for effective tree planting and preservation	Improved tree cover on the area The area covered by trees More people trained on tree planting More trees planted	Review the documents on the project Interview with subject teachers Observations	The neighbouring community cooperate The government support the project
Output Increased tree cover	Get 100% tree cover Reduction of logging by 90%	Observation of the site Project documents	The planted and existing trees are preserved
Activities Train people on tree planting, monitor tree planting activities undertaken, carry out evaluations, plant more trees, preserve existing trees	Number of people trained on tree planting Monitoring activities carried out per year	Training reports People enrolment for training records Monitoring reports Evaluation reports on the project activities	Financial and material resources are provided in time There is cooperation between the project management and concerned communities People are willing to learn on tree planting and preservation
Input Personnel, materials, funds	Number of people available for training on tree planting Number of people enrolled for the training on tree planting Amount of money allocated for training personnel The cost for training one person Amounts facilities and equipment's for the project	Applicants records Enrolments records The budget Accounts records Facilities and equipment inventory	People are available for training Adequate funds availed Financial, human and material resources provided on time

The monitoring and evaluation fit well within the logical framework matrix. Monitoring and evaluation should ascertain the appropriateness of the inputs in addressing the project identified needs; they should determine whether the planned activities are leading to the desired outputs. And finally the monitoring and evaluation processes should establish the extent to which the project is achieving its long term goals and objectives.

PROCESS OF PROJECT MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring and evaluation process may be presented in several phases. The following are the phases:

- i) Identifying the basis on which project was designed: Understanding the project first forms the basis for monitoring and evaluation. Evaluating the need, necessity, situations and circumstances surrounding the inception of the project forms the basis for future monitoring and evaluation. Getting the background information of the project, that is, the baseline information is mandatory for monitoring and evaluation. This does not matter whether a baseline survey was carried out prior to the establishment of the project or not.
- ii) Stating the purpose for carrying out the monitoring and evaluation: The purpose for monitoring and evaluation could be for improving the implementation process or for value judgment and determination on the future of the project. The purpose is implied by the type of the evaluation to be carried out, that is, either formative or summative evaluation.
- iii) Establishing the design and methodology: Choose the appropriate design and approach for the monitoring and evaluation. The design and approach or model will determine the procedures for sampling participants, instruments selection, method for data collection and analysis.
- iv) Selecting the instruments for data collection: The selection of the instruments to be used will be determined by the design and methodology adopted. The instruments may include among others: questionnaires, interview guide, observation schedule/ check list, document analysis guide among others. The instruments should be prepared and administered in line with the information needed and conformity to ethics of monitoring and evaluation process. Where possible triangulation of instruments should be encouraged.
- v) Procedures for collecting data: At this stage the determined methods and instruments are applied to obtain the needed information or data.
- vi) Processing the collected data: The data collected is classified or coded to enable interpretation.
- vii) Analysing the collected data: The processed data is manipulated to respond to the monitoring and evaluation purpose.
- viii) Interpreting the findings: Alternative ways of understanding the results are presented and their implications.

CONCLUSIONS

- i. Project monitoring and evaluation is necessary for the success of the project.
- ii. Failure is eminent to projects without monitoring and evaluation.
- iii. Monitoring and evaluation ensure timely interventions to projects and programmes.
- iv. Monitoring and evaluation reports help donors and sponsors to make informed decisions.

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