

Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation Systems in Project Implementation: A Case Study of Integrated Nutrition Project in NGOMA District, ZAZA Sector

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Abstract: *This study aimed to determine the importance of M&E Systems in project implementation, Case study of Integrated Nutrition project implemented in Ngoma, Zaza sector. M&E systems are composed with multiple components and this study focused on four components among others: M&E plan, Logical Framework, Budget and stakeholders analysis. The study was guided by four objectives: to establish extent to which the use of M&E framework effects the level of project implementation, to assess extent to which logical framework effects the level of project implementations, to assess extent to which Budgeting effects the level of project implementation and to assess the extent to which stakeholder analysis effects the level of project implementation. The study was carried out in Zaza Sector of Ngoma district, Western province of Rwanda. Zaza sector comprises 4 cells and 52 villages. The target population included One YWCA M&E staff, One sector social affairs, four cell leaders 55 village leaders and 162 Community volunteers, then, the total target population will be 223 participants all working on the integrated nutrition project in ZAZA sector. It emerged that M&E plan had significant effect on project implementation. Respondents expressed that the stakeholders should spearhead M&E plan should be worked out and applied during project implementation elaboration of M&E plan. There was need for incorporation; it should be formulated from logical framework that has been worked out in advance. It agreed that Logical framework had significant effect on project implementation. Stakeholders should be involved during its formulation in an analytical and practical approach and should therefore be worked out in a well-planned workshop to achieve the immediate goal. Empowered stakeholders should work it out prior to the formulation of M&E plan. It was noted that a well worked out Budget could result into effective implementation of the project. The budget should not only be matter of bill of quantities. It should reflect other costs precisely. It should not serve self-interest of anybody. Stakeholders should receive feedbacks from audit reports, monitoring and evaluation results from line Ministries. It was realized that a well-balanced stakeholder analysis would affect early completion of the project. Composition of stakeholders is crucial, because it affected their performance. They should be involved in the entire process of project planning, implementation and completion. The key stakeholder include line ministries (Ministry of Health, Ministry of agriculture, Ministry of local government, and Ministry of gender and family promotion), YWCA, Ngoma district, Zaza Sector and below governmental structures from cells to villages.*

1. Background of the study

This chapter comprises the background of the study, the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study. It considers in addition, the research objectives and questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, definition of significant terms, and organization of the study.

According to Otieno (1999), Monitoring is viewed as a process that provides information and ensures the use of such information by management to assess project effects and their impact. It aims at determining whether or not the intended objectives have been met. Evaluation draws on the data and information generated by the monitoring system as a way of analyzing the trends in effects and impact of the project. In some cases, it should be noted that monitoring data might reveal significant departure from the project expectations, which may warrant the undertaking of an evaluation to examine the assumptions and premises on which the project design is based.

Nina and Gage (2007) explain M&E as a continuous process that occurs throughout the life of a Project and to be most effective, they add that M&E should be planned at the design stage of a program, with the time, money and

personnel that will be required calculated and allocated in advance. Therefore, monitoring should be conducted at every stage of the program/project, with data collected, analyzed and used on a continuous basis. Evaluations are usually conducted at the end of programs. However, they should be planned for at the start because they rely on data collected throughout the program, with baseline data being especially important.

Different countries have adopted aspects of this approach. (Gladys et al, 2010) For instance, Sri Lanka came up with the Managing (Management) for Development Results (MfDR) approach. The approach includes a management cycle of setting directions, planning, implementation, and delivering and reviewing the results, which then feed back into the cycle to improve planning and to making ongoing improvement.

In Africa, Ghana came up with a commission the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) as a regulatory policy to assimilate the principle of M&E operations. NDPC adapted the Results Based Monitoring and Evaluation System (RBMES) and Results Based Budgeting (RBB) in the M&E process. This was purposely to ensure cost effectiveness, institutional capacity strengthening, promotion of good governance and accountability as well as

credibility to the partners and government. In Rwanda, (Sebago 2009) The Government of Rwanda (GoR), instituted the National Monitoring and Evaluation System (NMES) in 2008 in order to monitor and evaluate the performance of the Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy (EDPRS).

In 2015, Policy for implementing results based performance management in the Rwandan Public Service based on the Results Based Management (RBM) concept was developed. (MIFOTRA, 2015) Under this Policy, a common monitoring and evaluation framework was established for monitoring and evaluating progress across all sectors and institutions in the implementation of the results under the National Development Framework. The policy specifies that, the NMES informs the national planning process providing it with evidence on the implementation of the National planning framework and informing decisions for adjustments to National, sectorial and institutional planning documents as the case may be.

In spite of the previous, (Ake and Brewin, 2016) at all levels, there are various challenges that constrain M&E activities including, lack of harmonized M&E in many projects, inadequate attention to M&E in terms of priority setting, very limited budget allocation and an operating environment that does not effectively demand good quality data, etc. Therefore, the current study have an interest on the effect M&E Systems may have specially on implementation of the projects in the current system where there is no harmonized M&E in many projects, there is a possibility that this may affect negatively on the level of implementation of such projects. This creates difficult challenges in both institutions and in the community at large, hence the gap that requires to be explored.

2. Statement of the problem

Rwanda has made advances in recent years. It is one of the countries that have achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals, and has done particularly well in reducing the number of people living in poverty. In spite of these positive developments, food insecurity and childhood stunting continue to pose a challenge to many households. (MOH, 2016) The Ministry of Health together with its development partners is putting a lot of effort into finding solutions to these problems through national policies and strategies. It is in this context that the integrated nutrition project is implemented through decentralized Government of Rwanda systems, structures, and local civil society organizations in Ngoma district. The Integrated nutrition project focus on capacity building as well as nutrition and WASH-service delivery with the purpose of improving the nutritional status of women of reproductive age and children aged under 5 years.

Researchers observed that the implementation of the integrated nutrition project face multiple challenges. There have been many challenges in the implementation at the decentralized structures, which include inappropriate implementation of the projects resulting in some projects areas not being completed as planned, management

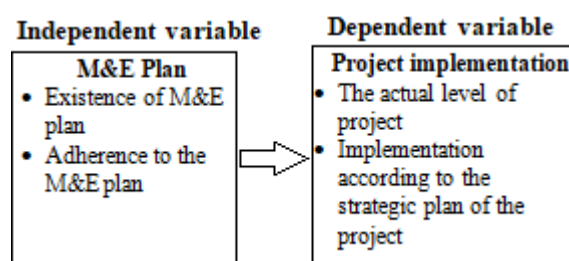
capabilities of some committee members being questionable and inconsistencies in reporting.

An investigation was conducted on the M & E systems of integrated nutrition projects during implementation phases; this was attributable to the approaches adapted in M&E practices. Here stakeholders made field visits to view the projects being implemented and referred to such visits as M&E of projects implementation. In most cases the elements of M&E Systems was not and has not been evidently emphasized hence the need to establish a process that will enhance the impact of M&E systems of Integrated nutrition project in Zaza Sector. The study therefore aims to explore into the effect of M&E Systems for effective implementation, of integrated nutrition project.

3. Objective of the study

To assess the effect of M&E plan on Project implementation.

4. Conceptual Framework



5. Research Design

The study used a cross sectional survey design where both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. Under Qualitative approach, it focused on how monitoring and evaluation systems have been used all over the period of project implementation. While quantitative approach employed the use of Questionnaires and direct interviews from the respondents. The rational for selecting this design was to enable the study compare and relate the independent variable and dependent variable as indicated in the in the conceptual frame work

6. Population of the Study

The study population comprised 61 administrative staff for the integrated nutrition program: YWCA M&E staff, sector social affairs, cell leaders, village leaders, and 1250 Community volunteers. The total targeted population was 1311 participants working on the integrated nutrition project in ZAZA sector.

7. Sample size determination

Sampling refers to the process of choosing a sample of elements from a total population of elements (Amin, 2005). The "best" sample design depends on survey objectives and on survey resources. The researcher selected the most economical design that provides a desired level of precision.

The sample size reached 306 respondents working with the integrated nutrition project, these included: 61 administrative staff, 1250 community volunteers. This is because the target population in total is not easily accessible; therefore, the sample's results was generalized to the total population.

Well's formula below helped to calculate the sample size (n).

Where:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

N=Population size,

n = the minimum sample size

e= Permissible error = 0.05, (Rothagi, 1984).

Table 1: Sample size and sampling techniques used in the study

Category	Target population	Sample size	Sample method
Administrative staff	61	1311	Random sampling
Community volunteers	1250	$1+1311(0.05)^2$ 306	
Total	1311	306	

Source: Researcher, 2018

8. Data Collection instruments

In this study researcher were used questionnaire technique, interview and documentation technique.

9. Research findings and discussion

9.1 Effect of M&E plan on project implementation

Respondents were interviewed about the effect of M&E plan on project implementation they were given an opportunity to select from lowest scale of very low to highest rating of very high the results. Their response to various components is in the following Table 4.4 showing frequency and percentages.

Table 2: Effect of M&E plan on project implementation: findings from community volunteers

	Very low		Low		Average		High		Very high	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Existence of M&E plan	2	1%	3	1%	14	5%	87	29%	198	65%
Program description	1	0%	2	1%	17	6%	90	30%	194	64%
Adherence to M&E plan	4	1%	3	1%	37	12%	73	24%	187	62%
Reporting schedule and tools	3	1%	5	2%	29	10%	99	33%	168	55%
Inclusion of indicators definition and targets in the M&E plan	1	0%	2	1%	40	13%	71	23%	190	63%

Source: Primary data, 2018

From Table2, the findings are explained systematically according to each of the components embodied in the M&E plan.

Existence of M&E plan

Ninety four percent (94%) which includes High: 29 % and very high: 65% confirmed that the existence of M&E plan affects drastically project implementation. They suggested that it should be developed in consultation with stakeholders at all levels. Respondents stated that M&E plan clarify the purpose of the program, the specific M&E activities that are needed and why they are important; and development history that provides information about the motivations of the internal and external stakeholders and the extent of their interest, commitment and participation. This is key for project implementation because it provides clear picture of program's goal is a broad statement about the desired long-term outcome of the program.

Program description

Ninety three percent (93%): High: 30% and very high: 63%; confirmed that program description in M&E plan influence at high level project implementation.. They suggested that M&E plan should be considered as living document and revised whenever a program is modified or new information is needed. They said that M&E plan would help to have a

sight or anticipate relationships between activities, outputs, and outcomes that are key for project implementation.

Reporting schedule and tools

Eighty eight percent (88%): High: 33% and 55% : very high; confirmed that reporting schedule within the M&E plan influence at a high rate project implementation. They added that M&E plan is the fundamental document that details a program's objectives, the interventions developed to achieve these objectives and describes the procedures that will be implemented to determine whether or not the objectives are met, the schedule in which it will be done and the tools that will be used to collect information about the progress toward achieving those objective. It shows how the expected results of a program relate to its goals and objectives, describes the data needed and how these data will be collected and analyzed, how this information will be used, the resources that will be needed, and how the program will be accountable to stakeholders.

Inclusion of indicators definition and targets in the M&E plan

In the M&E plan, indicators are defined and targets are set and all of that effect project implementation at a high level. Eight six percent (86%): High: 23% and Very high: 63% confirmed that the inclusion of indicators definition and targets in the M&E plan have a high effect on project

implementation. In addition, they said that one of the most critical steps in designing an M&E plan is selecting appropriate indicators and setting targets. That the M&E plan should include descriptions of the indicators and targets set that will be used to monitor program implementation and measure achievement of the goals and objectives.

10. Conclusion

It was observed that M&E systems should be properly elaborated and adhered to. Implementers should be part of M&E systems elaboration; the budget should be clearly defined. M&E plan should have clear defined timelines that reflects the timeline, targets and indicators. It was preferred that logical framework should be formulated in workshop where by Stakeholders should play their roles. It should be worked out prior to formulation of M&E plan. It should reflect realities in terms of goals, inputs, outcomes and timelines of the project.

It was emphasized that budget should be realistic and address actual needs. It should reflect all the components of the expected outcomes and should be free from external effect. It was preferred that stakeholders' roles be clearly defined. In details, consider the interest of the community and relevant institutions. That should be in harmony with the government development policies.

11. Recommendations

The study established that those charged with the responsibility of carrying out implementation comprising officials need training on M&E systems to get appropriate skills and knowledge, consequently it was recommended that they should get trainings within the necessary knowledge in order to enhance their capacity to make components of those systems useful to implementation of the project. It was established that the M&E systems have effect on project implementation. Therefore, it is important that further research be undertaken to put in place a framework that would ensure that there are mandatory components of project strategic plan and implementation process that is clearly defined.

Further research should therefore be undertaken to establish how these projects can be budgeted for sustainability. Integrated nutrition projects' funds were in most cases for project implementation up to completion. It is up to the community or institution to sustain the operationalisation the project. Often the community or institutions may not have the capacity to sustain the project. Therefore, there is need for further research to determine how the stakeholder analysis can be applied to sustain the operationalisation of the project.

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