

# Monitoring & Evaluation Practices and Performance of Global Environment Facility Projects in Kenya, A Case of UNEP

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**Abstract:** *This descriptive study examined Monitoring and Evaluation routine at UNEP Global Environment Facility Projects in Kenya and its effect on Project Performance. The broad aim of this study was to ascertain the influence of the practices of monitoring and evaluation on the performance of UNEP GEF Kenyan chapter projects. The specific aims of this research were to determine influence of planning process, technical expertise, stakeholder involvement and Management involvement on performance of UNEP GEF projects in Kenya. The study found that planning process and technical experts practices applied optimally while stakeholder involvement and management participation had low-level application.*

**Keywords:** Monitoring and Evaluation, Project Performance, Technical Expertise, Stakeholder involvement

## 1. Introduction

Project management is considered to be the most successful approach when it comes to managing changes in projects. This entails techniques as well as tools that facilitate the control along with delivery of the activities of a project within predetermined deliverables, timeframes and budget (Shapiro, 2011). Monitoring and evaluation is a critical element in project management as it assists the project managers to determine whether the project goes as planned. Moreover, the practice furnishes the management with the information that is used in decision making. In addition Monitoring and evaluation (M & E) is essential to all projects, regardless of the size since it highlights areas that need improvement.

Furthermore, the practice of M & E ensures that the project/program results at the levels of impact, outcome, output, process along with input can be quantified so as to offer a framework for accountability and at the same time assist in making informed decision at program and policy levels.

United Nations Development Programme- UNDP (2012) sees M & E practices as part of design programmes as it ensures that there is logical reporting; the process that interconnects outcomes and demonstrates accountability, quantifies efficiency and effectiveness, guarantees effective resource distribution, stimulates learning that is continuous along with enhancing better decision making.

However, even though monitoring and evaluation practices implementation have substantial cost, time as well as human resource implications, they are very vital for successful projects and should not be overlooked at the beginning of the process (Khan, 2013). It is then important to ensure that the management and the donor agencies apprehend and are overly focused to these overheads and are subsequently committed to implement the recommendations arising from monitoring and evaluation (Dyason, 2010).

The activity of monitoring supports both the project managers and staff in understanding whether the projects are progressing as predetermined (Houston, 2008). Therefore, monitoring offers the background for minimizing time along with cost overruns, while at the same time ensuring that the required standards of quality are attained in the implementation of the project. On the same note, evaluation is a tool for assisting project planners and developers in assessing the extent to which the projects have attained the objectives that are set forth in the documents related to the project (Crawford and Bryce, 2013).

## 2. Literature Survey

A study conducted by Mackay & World Bank. (2007) in Washington, indicated that planning for monitoring and evaluation was critical in enhancing better project performance on government projects. The focus of this study was on the government projects that are majorly sponsored by World Bank. The study sought to determine how better governments can be arrived at through monitoring and evaluation of projects. This study employed the use of descriptive statistics with the findings being that a majority of the respondents indicated lack of M & E practices in the various projects which they formed part of.

Besides that, a study that was conducted by Singh, Chandurkar, & Dutt, (2017) highlighted that monitoring and evaluation was the major driving factor in development projects. This study aimed at determining M & E effects on development projects. However, the recommendation that was given in this study was that the management should provide full support and should fully engage themselves in the monitoring and evaluation process as this will help them in coming up with sound and informed decisions.

Nevertheless, previous researchers have mentioned that few studies have been done on M & E of project performance from the Kenyan chapter. However, these few studies did not widely focus on monitoring and evaluation as a major

influence to the performance of projects (Magodu, 2013; Crawford & Bryce, 2013). This study will strive to address the knowledge gap to determine M & E practices, and project performance of UNEP GEF projects carried out in Kenya.

### 2.1 M & E planning process

A study carried out by Muhammad et al (2012) on project performance, with the variables, Project Planning, Implementation and Controlling Processes done in Malaysia College of Computer Sciences and Information, Aljuf University, noted project management offers an organization with control tools that advance its capability of planning, implementing, and controlling its project activities. On the other hand, research conducted by Clarke (2011) found that organizations that have developed comprehensive strategic/operational plans makes the most progress with regular monitoring of their work.

### 2.2. Technical expertise

Utto (2010) emphasizes that human capital training needs is paramount for reliable monitoring and evaluation, stipulating that staff working must have the necessary technical expertise in M & E for them to guarantee monitoring and evaluation results that are of high quality. Employing an M & E practice that is effective requires management to selectively appoint the right skills while enhancing the capacities by further developing the skill on a regular basis.

### 2.3 Stakeholder involvement

Stakeholders must be involved in discussions on how, why and what project activities are to be implemented. On the same tune, Njuki, Kaaria, Chetsike, & Sanginga (2013) suggested that in order to improve project outputs, outcomes, and the results, there was need to integrate the local stakeholders.

### 2.4 Management participation

Yong and Mustaffa (2012), in their study that was conducted in Malaysia found that management participation especially in monitoring and evaluation practices was critical to the performance of projects. Ahmed (2008) ostensibly noted that a project manager has the capacity make critical decision, and has the power to reinforce changes to the project.

## 3. Problem Definition

Poor project performance attributes to limitations in application of monitoring and evaluation as a component of project management cycle. In order to boost performance of projects, M & E practice is enforced as a donor requirement where 10% of overall project budget is reserved for purpose of M & E. However, despite this fact, review of specific aspects of the practice of M & E and effect on project performance has been limited to a few projects, with most studies that touch on this concept taking a generalized approach. For the studies that have taken a generalized perspective of M & E, their findings were that projects that

have weak or lack specific monitoring and evaluation practices on average record low rating performance as measured by scope, timeline and resource utilization. According to the GEF 2015 annual report, 55% of GEF projects rated satisfactory range for M & E design and 52% for M & E during implementation.

## 4. Methods/ Approach

### 4.1 Study Design

The study took the form of descriptive study design. This research design was appropriate to explore M and E practices that influence project performance. The use of descriptive design helped in providing quantitative data from the population and insight to research problem whilst highlighting the relevant variables.

### 4.2 Target population

The unit of analysis for the study was the 46 UNEP GEP projects (UNEP, 2016). Conversely, the unit of observation was 52 respondents comprising of 15 project managers, 32 support staff and 5 M & E department staff who works in the 46 projects implemented by UNEP.

### 4.3 Sampling procedure

Because of the relative small size of the respondents, census method of sampling was used.

### 4.4 Data collection procedure

A semi-structured questionnaire was used in data collection.

### 4.5 Data analysis and presentation

The regression model equation presented below was used in data analysis. The model was used in this study to establish the relationship between M & E practice and project performance

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

Where Y = project performance

$\alpha$  =Constant term,

$\beta$ =Beta coefficients,

X1= Planning process,

X2= Technical expertise,

X3= Stakeholder involvement,

X4=Management participation

$\epsilon$  = Error term.

## 5. Results/ Discussion

A majority, 75% of the respondents were arguably in agreement that project plans contained M & E plans with (70%) of respondents confirming utilization of detailed planning processes. Consequently, organizations that have developed comprehensive strategic or operations plans make most progress with regular monitoring of their work, and this is according to Clarke (2011).

On the other hand, there were high levels of technical expertise and this is as reported by a majority of the respondents with staff training being the most valued aspect in the various UNEP GEF projects under study. According to Uitto (2010), human capital training is paramount for reliable monitoring and evaluation; an aspect that has an effect on performance.

When it comes to stakeholder's involvement, the findings revealed low level application of stakeholder analysis, stakeholder feedback and communication strategy developed to address flow of information. A majority of the respondents reported to strongly disagree with the claim that there was high levels of stakeholder involvement in monitoring and evaluation, and this led to poor performance of UNEP GEF projects. To improve project performance on the aspect of outputs, outcomes, and results, there was need to integrate the local stakeholders, and this is as reported by Njuki, Kaaria, Chetsike, & Sanginga (2013).

Last but not least, a small percentage of respondents agreed to visible support and commitment by management towards project implementation (26%). The implication of this is that there was poor project performance as a result of lack of management participation, and this is in line with findings by Yong and Mustafa (2012), who confirmed that management participation is one of the critical element for good project performance.

## 6. Conclusion

The study found that planning process and technical experts M & E practices are optimally applied, while stakeholder involvement and management participation have low level application. Project managers must consider these practices by ensuring an adaptable planning process implementation, M & E in order to improve project performance. This study indicates that effective application of these practices has a significant effect on project performance. It was, therefore, concluded that M & E planning process, M & E technical expertise, stakeholder involvement along with management participation in M & E have a positive and significant effect on performance of UNEP GEF project in Kenya.

## 7. Future Scope

Data for this study was collected from a relatively small population, and this poses limitation of generalization of our findings to the general donor funded projects. Future studies should consider adopting a relatively large sample population in their research as this will help in generalization of the findings. Last but not least, the study did not offer enough control for a number of obvious project management performance confounding factors.

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