

Influence of monitoring and evaluation on implementation of community based health projects in Homa Bay County

¹Kennedy Okoth Otieno, ²Dr. Jessica Akinyi Ogombe, (PhD), ³Dr. Stephen Okelo (PhD)

¹School of Open, Distance and eLearning University of Nairobi, P.O Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

²School of Open, Distance and eLearning University of Nairobi, P.O Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

³School of Open, Distance and eLearning University of Nairobi, P.O Box 30197-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence of monitoring and evaluation on completion of community based health projects. The study adopted descriptive survey research design, targeting all the 57 health-related Community Based Projects in the county. The target population of this study was 171, with a sample size of 120 and achieved a response rate of 100%. The study adopted both stratified sampling and simple random sampling method to pick the respondents from each Community Based Organization. Both questionnaires and interviews were used to collect primary data while document analysis was used for secondary data. The study found that there is a strong positive correlation M&E practices and project implementation which is statistically significant.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Implementation, Community based Health projects.

I. INTRODUCTION

Projects are separate to business-as-usual activities, requiring individuals to come together temporarily to specialize in specific project objectives. The temporary nature of project indicates a particular starting and finish (Horine, 2005). Globally, effective project implementation is looked at in many ways to include a large variety of criteria. Further, the project is usually targeted for use by some client, either internal or external to the organization and its project team. It seems reasonable; therefore, that any assessment of project implementation effectiveness should at least include these four measures among others.

Within this environment government, organizations rethink their strategies, redesign their structures and adjust their management practices in order to anticipate frequent changes and to respond proactively to meet anticipated demands. As an organization, the South African Police Service is able to transform itself to affect, forecast and activate rather than merely respond to environmental forces. There is no proven plan of action for achieving the organization's desired outcomes within a dynamic environment without a project (Schaap, 2006). A successful project and the equally successful implementation of the project are the most reliable signs of good management. Schaap (2006) contends that managers are mainly comfortable with planning activities than with implementation, organizing, leading and control.

There seems to be consensus among various writers regarding the obstacles on Implementation of strategies (Kamanda, 2006). Identified additional implementation obstacles such as failing to periodically alter the plan or adapt it to changes in the business environment, deviation from original objectives and lack of confidence about success. The hardware aspect of the Health component involved the rehabilitation of health clinics in the region. These programs are providing life-saving and rehabilitative programming in the sectors of child protection, education, health, livelihoods, nutrition, shelter, food aid, and WASH (WFP, 2012).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Monitoring and evaluation are thinly distinct elements within the project management cycle but are highly dependent and mutually of significant importance to project sustainability (UNDP, 2007). Monitoring is the process through which the essential aspects of project implementation such as reporting, usage of funds, record keeping and review of the project outcomes are routinely tracked with an aim of ensuring the project is being implemented as per the plan (Mackay, (2007). Monitoring is undertaken on a continuous base to act as an internal driver of efficiency within the organization's project implementation processes and its main agenda is to develop a control mechanism for projects (Crawford and Bryce, 2003). Evaluation is a definite and systematic approach geared towards reviewing an ongoing project to ensure that it meets the goals or objectives that were fundamental to its undertaking (Uitto, 2004). Monitoring and evaluation should offer comprehensive and relevant data that will support decision making.

Project evaluation serves various purposes; first, to inform decisions for project improvement by providing relevant information for decision making concerning setting priorities, guiding resource allocation, facilitating modification and refinement of project structures and activities and signaling need for additional personnel (Mulwa, 2008). Secondly, evaluation provides a process of learning. By learning from the past, one is able to improve the future. Further, evaluation helps project managers to develop new skills, open up to the capacity of constructive self-criticism, to objectivity and to improve on future planning as a result. Through evaluations the organization in extension conducts a SWOT analysis since the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the projects are taken into account (Spaulding, 2014). Evaluation creates future benchmarks to guide evaluations of other projects. It also helps in creating a knowledge bank for management which is an ideal trend in contemporary world where organizations are leaning towards knowledge management in project management (Calder, 2013). Lastly through evaluations, project managers are able to access how projects fared in terms of meeting the budgetary limits as well as in terms of efficiency.

A monitoring and evaluation system is a component designed to screen, track and make a comparison of the project outcomes against the stated or planned targets (Cummings and Worley, 2005). It is a comprehensive undertaking that offers guidance in the screening and tracking of an ongoing project, recording data and systematically evaluating the data for comparison purposes in line with the project's set goals and objectives (Kerzner, 2013). M&E system is an integral system of reflection and communication supporting project implementation that should be planned for and managed throughout a project's life. Key aspects of monitoring and evaluation are the setting up of the system, implementing the system, involving all stakeholders and communicating the results of the monitoring and evaluation process. A monitoring and evaluation system should be as relevant as possible to the organization to ensure its reliability and independence (Garg, 2006). An effective monitoring and evaluation system should be able to offer conclusive information that can effectively be utilized towards better project success (Mulwa, 2008). Through the system, any stakeholder should be able to identify the potential benefits of the project, ways of enhancing screening and tracking of the project as well as offer an outline of the successes, challenges and opportunities for future projects undertakings.

In order to foster the support of the employees, an effective monitoring and evaluation system should seek to enhance the communication and interaction among the personnel which will help to build up teamwork within the project (Blackstock, Kelly, & Horsey, 2007). Similarly, the involvement of the project stakeholders should not be downplayed as these are the people who own and are directly affected by the project successes and impacts. Effectiveness of the M&E system focuses on expected and achieved accomplishments, processes, examining the results chain, contextual factors and causality, in order to understand achievements or the lack of achievement. Project objectives of a development project should be consistent with the requirements of beneficiaries and organization's strategies, and also the extent to which they are responsive to the organization's corporate plan and human development priorities such as empowerment and gender equality. Development initiatives and its intended outputs and outcomes should also be consistent with national and local policies and priorities (Sipopa, 2009). Monitoring and evaluation activities enable the stakeholders determine whether the body undertaking project implementation has adequate legal and technical mandate to implement projects on their behalf (Soludo, 2006). Post completion assessment is done to correlate between plans and real impact of the project. Evaluation looks at what the project managers planned, their accomplishments so far and how they achieved them (Mulwa, 2008).

This can be done at the early stages of the project life or at the end of the implementation Resources allocated to projects should be used economically since they are limited. When running a project and are concerned about its replicability or about going to scale, then it is very important to get the efficiency element right. Use of monitoring and evaluation system

is therefore a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of project delivery processes (Hansen and Kryder, 2008). They describe monitoring and evaluation system as the assessment of project success and use objective factors, including time, cost and quality objectives, and subjective factors, which are concerned with the assessment of stakeholders' satisfaction. Successful project managers diligently and regularly review progress against the schedule, budget and quality elements of the project. Regular reviews allow problems to be identified early so that corrective action can be taken to keep the project on track. The reviews can provide a clear and adequate provision for monitoring and evaluation events (Hansen and Kryder, 2008).

Monitoring and evaluation budget can be obviously delineated within the overall project costing to give the monitoring and evaluation function the due recognition it plays in project running (Mackay, 2007). Efficiency of project planning improves overall Monitoring and evaluation of project, management and implementation and therefore various projects are started with the sole goal of changing positively the socio-political and economic status of the residents of a given region. The project information must be obtained in an orderly and sequential manner as the project is on-going (Mulwa, & Nguluu, 2003). Monitoring is done in accordance to the prior set targets and all its activities are as predetermined during the planning phase. These activities ensure that everything is on track and can let the project managers detect early enough when deviations occur. If monitoring is conducted as expected, it is a very important management tool that acts as a basis for project evaluation since through it the concerned parties establish the sufficiency and adequacy of the available resources and whether they are optimally used and in the case of human resources if they are competently constituted so as to do what was planned (Hansen and Kryder, 2008).

Basically, project monitoring involves a careful and ongoing assessment of how the project is being implemented against initially set plans, activities, and other deliverables. It is important to ensure project sustainability and for this to be achieved, four essential dimensions must be considered; Institutional sustainability is where functional institutions will be self-sustaining after the project ends, Household and community resilience focuses on resilient communities which are readily able to anticipate and adapt to change through clear decision-making processes, collaboration, and management of resources internal and external to the community, Environmental sustainability considers that an environmentally sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, avoid over exploitation of renewable resources and preserve biodiversity and Structural change where the structural dimensions of poverty are addressed through the empowerment of poor and marginalized rural households (Gerry-Johnson, 2005). Other factors, such as external policies and institutional context, will also have a direct influence on project monitoring and evaluation, but are typically outside project control (Kolb and Frohman, 2007). For example, the sustainability of community based projects-supported interventions is likely to be compromised in areas characterized by weak institutions, lack of markets, lack of income-generating opportunities, or in fragile states experiencing civil conflict.

The following strategies could be effective to ensure sustainability of the project. Projects must systematically identify, analyze and respond to risks in a way that ensures continuation of project benefits after completion of the project. Projects should seek ways to strengthen the capacity of individuals, households, communities and formal and informal institutions that will help them cope with future shocks (Bowen, 2005). Projects should cause 'no harm' to the environment and should meet "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Monitoring and evaluation helps to determine and measure the impact of an intervention. Impact refers to the direct or indirect, intended or unintended positive or negative changes produced by a development intervention. Measuring the impact involves ascertaining the effects of an activity on economic, social, environmental and other development indicators. Assessment of impact is important because it generates useful information for decision-making process and supports accountability for delivery of results.

i. Theoretical Framework:

The study was based on Resource Based View and Stakeholders Theory. The theoretical foundation of Resource Based View (RBV) dates back to 1950's Penrose's view of an organization as a pool of resources and articulation of the same by Wernerfelt in 1984 (Penrose, 1995; Wernerfelt, 1984). RBV is relevant to the study in that in order for project implementation to be successful, the organization's resources are fundamental determinants of performance.

Cleland (1986) introduced stakeholder thinking in project management with identification and recognition that projects have diverse stakeholders with their own objectives, interests and expectations which at times conflict with each other.

Arising from the stakeholder’s theory, there is need for project managers to adopt appropriate leadership style and management strategies for both internal and external stakeholders as a way of enhancing project performance. This theory is therefore deemed fit to guide this study.

ii. Conceptual Framework:

Monitoring and evaluation practices were conceptualized to have a direct influence on implementation of community based health projects in Homabay County. Thus results based monitoring, summative evaluation, continuous actions and base line influence project product delivery, sustainable project benefits, delivery within budget and running projects. The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1.

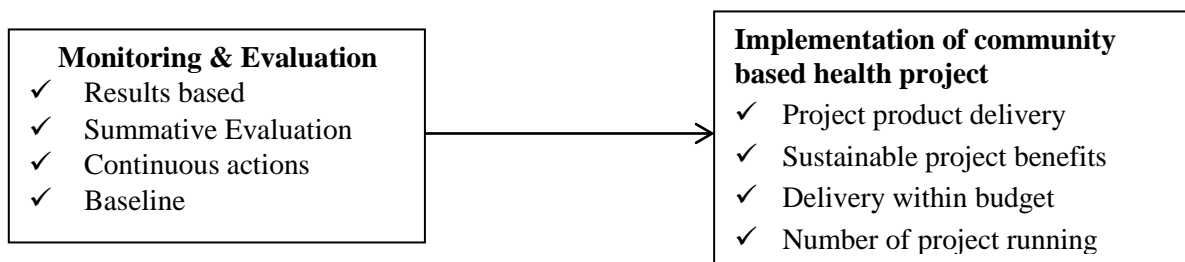


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

i. Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of this study was to determine the influence of monitoring and evaluation on implementation of community based health projects in Homa Bay County.

ii. Research Design:

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design concerned with conditions, practices, structures, differences or relationships that exist, opinions held, processes that are going on or trends that are evident.

iii. Target Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique:

The study targeted a population of 171 respondents who are directly concerned with implementing health projects at community. The study targeted all the 57 health- related CBOs in the county. The entire population of this study was Chairmen, Treasurers and Managers from each of the 57 CBO projects. To determine the sample size from the study population, Yamane (1967) equation for determining sample size was used and sample size of 120 respondents obtained. The study adopted both stratified sampling and simple random sampling method to pick the respondents from each CBO. Stratified sampling enabled the researcher to classify the anticipated respondents in their respective sub counties while simple random sampling was used to pick the respondents within the CBO.

iv. Data Collection Instruments and Procedure:

The researcher chose to employ both questionnaire and interview for data collection (triangulation). Questionnaires and interview schedule was used to collect primary data. The researcher used structural interview as a tool of data collection. Structural interview entails administration of an interview schedule by an interviewer. This contributes to depth openness and detail. The interview provides the researcher with the opportunity to interact with and gather data directly from their research participants to understand phenomena from their perspective (Bulawa, 2011).

A pilot study was first conducted to test the instrument’s reliability and validity, the completeness of responses, and analyze the various measures within the instrument. The pilot study helped to check the quality of data that obtained from questionnaire. Both quantitative and qualitative techniques were used to process using SPSS and analyze the collected data.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

i. Background Information:

The study achieved a response return rate of 100% where majority of the participants were male 73(60.8%) with female participants represented by 47(39.2%). Further, majority of the study participants were aged between 31 to 40 years 37(30.8%) with another 34(28.3%) aged between 41 to 50 years while another 32(26.7%) were between 25 and 30 years. Similarly, majority of the respondents 64(53.3%) had tertiary diplomas and certificates as their highest level of education with another 27(22.5%) reporting that they had undergraduate degree. In terms of duration of service at their respective organizations, majority of the study participants 47(39.2%) had been in their respective projects for more than 9 years with another 39(32.7%) reporting having been in their respective projects for between 4 and 6 years.

ii. Monitoring and Evaluation and Community Health Project Implementation:

The extent to which Monitoring and Evaluation influenced implementation of community health projects was measured using 5 items on a 5-point Likert scale. The responses were rated as 1 = not at all, 2 = less extent, 3 = moderate extent, 4 = great extent and 5 = very great extent. Frequencies and percentages for each response against each item were computed. Further, the item means and standard deviations were computed the findings as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Monitoring and Evaluation

Statement	No Extent	Low Extent	Neutral	Moderate Extent	Great Extent	Mean	STDEV
Results and feedback from M&E are timely	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	17 14.3%	27 22.4%	76 63.3%	4.49	0.739
User assessment of outcome/product is very useful	0 0.0%	5 4.1%	15 12.2%	29 24.5%	71 59.2%	4.39	0.862
There is sponsor evaluation of the investment	5 4.1%	7 6.1%	2 2.0%	42 34.7%	64 53.1%	4.27	1.056
Corrective action on deviations is clearly shown	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	20 16.3%	44 36.7%	51 42.9%	4.16	0.921
Project product meets project objectives and user descriptions	0 0.0%	2 2.0%	12 10.2%	37 30.6%	69 57.1%	4.43	0.764

The findings show that Monitoring and Evaluation practices are moderately done in the implementation of community health projects. Specifically, the study found that results and feedback from M&E are timely (Mean = 4.49 ± 0.739) to a great extent with majority of the respondents 76(63.3%) indicating that this was to a great extent with another 27(22.4%) indicating that this was to a moderate extent. Similarly, the study found that project product meets project objectives and user descriptions (Mean = 4.43 ± 0.764) to a great extent with majority of participants 69(57.1%) indicating that this was largely to a great extent while 30.6% indicated that this was to a moderate extent.

The study further found that user assessment of outcome/product is very useful (Mean = 4.39 ± 0.862), there is sponsor evaluation of the investment (Mean = 4.27 ± 1.056) and that corrective action on deviations is clearly shown (Mean = 4.16 ± 0.921) to a moderate extent. This shows that such M&E practices are not practiced to the optimum thus affecting implementation of community health projects.

These factors of M&E were also reported by the interviewees during the detailed interviews with the managers, treasurers and chairpersons. One of the project Chairpersons said that:

Other effects of M&E on implementation of community health projects are control of resources, completion of project within specific timeline and budget, implementation of activities as well as report writing. These activities are necessary for successful implementation of community health projects. [Interview: Chairperson 2, on 29th October, 2018]

Thus, the chairpersons were able to outline significant values incorporated through M&E.

iii. Effect of M&E on Implementation of Community Health Projects:

The influence of M&E on implementation of community health projects was established through a regression analysis. M&E was measured as the aggregated score on M&E scale while implementation of the projects was also measured as the aggregate score on the implementation of projects scale for individual respondents. Participants scored a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 25 on M&E scale as well as on the implementation of projects scale Table 2.

Table 2: Regression between Monitoring and Evaluation and Implementation

Model Summary					
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.802 ^a	.644	.636	1.780	
Coefficients ^a					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	
1	(Constant)	6.072	1.778		3.416 .001
	Monitoring and Evaluation	.746	.081	.802	9.215 .000

a. Dependent Variable: Project Implementation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Monitoring and Evaluation

The study found that there is a strong positive correlation between M&E practices and project implementation ($R = 0.802$; $p < 0.05$) which was statistically significant. This shows that as M&E increases, there is increased success in the overall project implementation. Further, M&E explains up to 64.4% ($R^2 = 0.644$) of variance in implementation of community health projects.

This view also emerged from the interviews as one of the project managers stated that:

M&E influence implementation as it helps in aligning activities with the available resources enhancing control measures to resource mobilization. It also helps in tracking progress and offer recommendations for adjustments where necessary. [Interview: Manger, 24th October, 2018]

This statement goes further to underline the significance of M&E on implementation of projects.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that monitoring and evaluation is an important factor in the successful implementation of community health projects and there is need for coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation practices. Consequently, the study recommends that for project managers, monitoring and evaluation should be well defined and implemented to ensure effective implementation of projects.

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