

# MONITORING AND EVALUATION PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE OF YOUTH PROJECTS IN NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN KENYA

<sup>1</sup>GIDEON MAINA KIRORI, <sup>2</sup>DR. NGUGI KARANJA

<sup>1,2</sup>JOMO KENYATTA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNOLOGY, NAIROBI, KENYA

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**Abstract:** In the 21st Century, among the major challenges around the globe are the social and economic challenges facing the youth. NGOs in Kenya and globally among other stakeholders have come up with various programs/projects aimed at addressing youth related socio-economic challenges. However, despite these efforts, the overall picture of youth projects performance in developed or developing countries has remained limited, information is rare or scattered in various places and efforts to collate it are minimal. Therefore, timely data on youth projects which can be quickly transformed into actionable information aiding informed decisions on what is working or not is key. This can be achieved through effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices. This study goal is to explore the influence of M&E practices and performance of youth projects. Precisely, the study pursued to establish the influence of M&E Planning, M&E Operationalization, M&E Reporting, M&E Dissemination and the performance of youth projects in NGOs in Kenya. The study is centered on theory of change, program theory, realistic evaluation theory and theory of constraints. The unit of observation was 102 youth projects completed in a period between 2013 and 2017 both years inclusive and unit of analysis was 10 NGO in Kenya, registered and listed by the NGO Coordination Board as at January 2019. The respondents were the key informants in every project and stratified random sampling technique was adopted. Primary data was gathered using structured questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted to pre-test the validity and reliability of data collection instruments. The data collected was analyzed using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20 software which produces results for both descriptive and inferential statistics. The study employed regression and correlation analysis in order to establish the relationship between the study variables. The results obtained exhibited that there was a positive linear relationship between M&E Practices; M&E Planning, M&E Operationalization, M&E Reporting and M&E Dissemination (independent variables) and performance of youth projects (dependent variable) in NGO in Kenya. The study concluded that the way M&E practices are being conducted in an organization determines whether the projects will achieve the desired projects outcomes or not and the organizations that invest in ensuring effective M&E practices enhance project performance. Consequently, it is recommended that M&E practices should always be done with highest consideration of professionalism, expertise and standards to ensure capturing of all important elements necessary to ensure successful implementation, monitoring and measurement of the youth projects milestones. The study also provided insights necessary to ensure synchronization of tactics and cooperative working on M&E practices on youth projects that reflect, match and measure the key objectives while providing an overall picture on the performance. The findings of the study can be used as a source of reference for other researchers.

**Keywords:** Effectiveness, Evaluation, Impact, Monitoring, Performance, Project, Sustainability.

## I. INTRODUCTION

M&E practices have in the recent past been extensively embraced in various fields by government and nongovernmental organizations to ensure achievement of highly sustainable projects outcomes and goals. There has been widespread use of M&E practices because they are critical components in project management to assist all the stakeholders involved to be able to assess whether an ongoing project is on track to achieve the expected benefits (Mugo & Oleche, 2015). Youth globally are among the most vulnerable sectors of the population and hence have remained a priority for government and NGOs targeted through programs, projects and policies not only in Kenya, but across the globe aimed to tap their potential in socioeconomic development, empowering them to improve their lives or to tackle their socioeconomic related challenges. According to GoK report (2014), 35% of the Kenyan population comprises the youth and the Constitution of Kenya 2010, defines a youth is an individual in the republic of Kenya aged between 18 - 35 years.

Consequently, performance of youth project/project is critical in order to ensure a sustained tackling of their needs to ensure community development, peace and other societal transformation needs are met. The NGOs have been known to apply M&E practices in their programs/projects to demonstrate results, accountability and more importantly provide lessons and in this case, how youth project performance can be enhanced (KPMG, 2014). However, information on the performance and sustainability of the projects/programs has remained scanty. Persistent risks and challenges have continued to be faced by Kenyan youth which could be tackled by sharing information on what is working or not in order to enhance strategies development by state and non-state actors. Kareithi and Lund (2012) observe that massive interest of NGOs projects performance has been experienced from the stakeholders leading to analysis of the M&E practices being adopted and the need to strengthen the existing practices for better performance.

The NGOs in Kenya have come up with various programs/projects to address numerous challenges facing the youth in Kenya, aimed at improving their socio-economic status. Thus, NGOs have invested significantly to make their M&E practices more effective and efficient to enhance performance of their projects. However, despite these efforts in NGOs, the overall picture of youth projects performance in developed or developing countries has remained limited, information is rare or scattered in various places and efforts to collate it are minimal (UNICEF, 2012). This is a major concern in Kenya where youth bulge; more than 20% of a country's population is comprised of the youth and information on which projects are working or not is required. A sustained high performance of the youth projects in Kenya is vital to mitigate risk and challenges the youth are facing while at the same time help them to unleash their full potential (Kempe, 2012).

According to Waithera and Wanyoike (2015), statistics reveals high proportion of youth projects about 75% are currently non-operational despite heavy investments of resources. Gaitho (2015) notes that in Kenya, data on youth projects in NGOs are scarce. Such limitations inhibit the ability to make informed decisions based on what is working or not for the youth projects. Various stakeholders have indeed raised concerns in regard to performance of NGO youth projects especially due to lack of satisfactory synchronization of tactics and cooperative working on M&E practices that reflect, match and measure the key objectives (KPMG, 2014). The NGO Coordination Board website as at February 2019, indicate about 8500 registered NGO in Kenya. Though not all are active and involved with youth projects, a lot of donor funding and support has been provided for youth projects. However, information on NGO youth projects in Kenya is limited and youth challenges are not reducing. Thus, there was a need to find out how M&E practices affects the performance of youth projects in NGOs in Kenya to provide a local context on the raised concerns. The study was timely and focused to provide the information required to harmonize approaches and joint working on M&E practices of youth projects in Kenya and elsewhere that reflect, match and measure the key objectives. As a result, insights necessary to develop appropriate M&E practices, strategies and policies that work for the youth projects are availed.

Phiri, (2015) affirms that embracing M&E planning positively enhance the performance of projects contributing significantly to high degree towards achievement of the desired results and impact. The M&E Plan developed during the process helps ensure highly reliable process, to identify challenges early enough and how risks will be mitigated. Every project that intend to achieve its planned objectives must have an articulated M&E plan that will ensure timely data gathering and analysis on the identified indicators. According to Wachaiyu (2016), a clear M&E policy go a long way in ensuring M&E operationalization enhancing projects success. Mulandi, (2013) point out that major challenges during M&E operationalization includes low data quality, inadequate resources, weak institutional capacity and lack of findings use. Kimani, (2018) affirms that there is a significant correlation between reporting and project sustainability and that

projects should enhance reporting in a timely manner for informed decision making. Obure (2008) ascerted that data must be collected and analyzed regularly on the objectives and intermediate reports provided for them to be useful. According to Mworira (2010), M&E findings accessibility and dissemination greatly influence the use and should therefore be reinforced to ensure optimum utilization and should be enhanced by stakeholders’ involvement. The results should be widely distributed to all internal and external stakeholder through the appropriate channels.

## II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design which is a design to gather data from a sample with a view of examining them statistically and generalizing the results to a population (Cooper & Schindler 2011). This research design was used to establish the cause and effect link between the dependent variable and the independent variables.

The study targeted population was the youth projects as the unit of observation performed by NGOs in Kenya as the unit of analysis and are registered and listed at the NGO Coordination Board website as at January 2019. The sampling frame of the study consisted of 136 youth projects that had been implemented by ten (10) selected NGOs in Kenya in 2013-2017. The respondents were the key informants in each project. The study adopted stratified random sampling techniques to select desirable sample size of youth projects that have been completed in 2013-2017 by the 10 selected NGO in Kenya. This type of sampling ensures inclusion of sub groups which otherwise would be omitted entirely by other sampling techniques due to their small number of population, (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). Using a statistical formula, the sample size of the respondents in the study was found to be 102 key informants in the youth projects across the regions from the selected NGOs. Stratified random sampling was then used to select the respondents. Table 1 below shows the sampling frame and the sample size.

**Table 1: Sample Frame and Sample Size**

Serial	Name of NGO	No. of Youth Projects completed in 2013 - 2017								Sample Frame (Total Projects)	Sample Size (75% of Sample Frame)
		Nairobi	Coast	Central	Rift Valley	Western	Nyanza	Eastern	North Eastern		
1.	CARE Kenya	2	-	3	2	3	3	2	3	18	13
2.	FHI 360	2	3	2	-	2	2	-	-	11	8
3.	Generation Kenya	3	3	2	2	2	2	3	-	17	13
4.	International Rescue Committee Kenya	3	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	9	7
5.	Mercy Corps	3	2	-	3	2	2	3	3	18	14
6.	Pathfinder’s Kenya	3	3	-	-	2	3	-	-	11	8
7.	Techno Serve	3	-	3	3	2	2	-	-	13	10
8.	VSO Kenya	2	3	2	2	2	-	2	-	13	10
9.	World Vision	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	19	14
10.	Youth Alive-Kenya	4	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	7	5
<b>Total</b>		<b>27</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>102</b>

For this research, a standardized questionnaire was the main instruments used to collect primary data for measuring each variable of the study. The questionnaire had both quantitative and qualitative questions. The qualitative questions were open ended with the essence of capturing the actual facts about the subject matter. Likert scale was adopted for the quantitative questions to measures the level of agreement for which 5= Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 =Neutral 2 = Disagree 1 = Strongly Disagree. The secondary data, both qualitative and quantitative was also gathered from other external sources such as libraries or the internet/websites collected by reviewing published researches, reports, journals, government records. The raw/primary data was collected by administering structured questionnaires through drop and pick latter to enable the respondents have enough time to respond to the questionnaires to the key informant persons in the identified youth projects in the selected 10 NGOs in Kenya that included M&E Officers, project managers, assistant

project managers and the supervisors. The study also used emails to administer questionnaire to those who could not be reached physically. The confidentiality of the key informant persons was assured and any other ethical requirement was observed. The researcher sought approval from the university before carrying out the study.

The rule of the thumb suggests that 5 – 10 % of the target sample should constitute the pilot test (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). The pilot study was conducted on 14 projects which represented 10% of the sample population which were not included in the final study. Kothari (2004) argues that before using questionnaire as a data collection method, it is always advisable to conduct pilot study with the study questionnaires. The pilot study was conducted on direct communication and interviews with the M&E Experts. This was in order to have the experts fill the questionnaires during the interaction, assess how long it took to complete the survey instrument and to have them comment on various aspects of the research question such as appropriateness of the questions, clarity or ambiguity of definitions, appropriateness of the scale and clarity of instructions. The questionnaire was adjusted in accordance with the input that was provided.

The study used internal consistency to measure reliability of the newly constructed research instrument. Using SPSS software, the data collected from pilot study was computed for reliability. The threshold for this test was considered to be 0.7. Variables with Cronbach Alpha less than 0.7 were considered to be unreliable while Cronbach coefficients of above 0.7 were considered reliable (Cronbach, 1951). The study reviewed existing literature to ensure the indicators used in the questionnaire were based on existing knowledge to ensure content validity. Lastly, to ensure criterion validity, all independent variable was assessed on how they correlated with each other and with the dependent variable.

Data gathered from the questionnaires was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS version 20 to produce both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis involved getting mean, standard deviations and frequencies/percentages. To ascertain the link between independent and dependent variables this study applied inferential statistics that included correlation and regression analysis. Pearson correlation was used to ascertain the link in term of strength and direction of the relationship while ordinary least square regression analysis was used to measure the relationship between variables. Regression analysis was applicable as it provided the magnitude, direction and significance of the relationship between M&E practices and performance of youth projects initiated by NGOs in Kenya.

The following study multiple linear regression model was tested;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Performance of youth projects in NGOs in Kenya

X<sub>1</sub> = M&E Planning

X<sub>2</sub> = M&E Operationalization

X<sub>3</sub> = M&E Reporting

X<sub>4</sub> = M&E Dissemination

and,  $\varepsilon$  is error term,  $\beta_0$  represents the constant while  $\beta_{1,2,3,4}$  are regression coefficients. The presentation of the analyzed data included use of graph(s) and tables to appreciate for example, patterns that emerged from the data providing basis for discussion as well as enhancing easier interpretation and understanding of the research findings.

### III. FINDINGS

The Data analysis was done per objective and the analysis includes descriptive statistics featuring the survey response rate and demographic characteristics. A total of 102 questionnaires were administered to the key informants in the youth projects in the 10 NGOs in Kenya and out of which, 74 were successfully filled and returned. This constituted 72.5% response rate. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate of more than 50% is adequate for analysis and reporting. The percentages, means, frequencies, standard deviations, Cronbachs Alpha coefficients or reliability and correlations are also computed and presented. The study combined Cronbach Alpha score was .860 which was above the recommended Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.7 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2009). This implied that all the research data whether considered separately or as a whole was reliable. Simple linear regression technique was used to test the relationships.

The results showed that R Square value for all the variables was .724 and according to Hamilton et al, 2015, for R square values to be significant, they should be higher than .70. The ANOVA results indicated a p-value of 0.000 at 0.05 level of significance which indicated that there is a statistically significant relationship between all the independent variables and the dependent variable. Also the F value calculated from the data at 0.05 level of significance is equivalent to 45.296 which is greater than the F-critical (F-statistics found in the table) of 2.50 indicating that there is statistically significant relationship between all the independent variables and dependent variable. Therefore, the obtained F-value and p-value (F=45.296, p=0.000) are both statistically significant to correctly interpret the results. This indicated the appropriateness of the model used to link the independent variables and dependent variable. Thus, the ANOVA results indicated that the independent variables; M&E Dissemination, M&E Reporting, M&E Planning and M&E Operationalization were significant predictor variables of dependent variable; Projects performance.

#### IV. DISCUSSIONS

The objectives of the study were to establish how M&E planning, operationalizing M&E policy, M&E reporting and M&E results dissemination influence performance of youth projects in NGOs in Kenya. The study revealed that there was a significant relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices and projects performance.

Consequently, this had an influence on projects performance since the way the monitoring and evaluation practices are conducted determines whether the youth projects in the NGOs achieves their goals and objectives or not. The study revealed that monitoring and evaluation planning influence performance of youth projects by large extent and is undertaken during the project planning stage. The planning involves undertaking of baseline surveys required to establish the current state and to set target in order to ensure that all the likely success and impact of the project is captured at evaluation. A vital concern during project planning is to make sure that the stakeholder's requirements and anticipations are determined and agreed upon to ensure support for the project as well as factoring the budgetary resources requirements for necessary M&E human capacity and equipment. It was also revealed that ethical and legal requirements need for youth projects during planning phase is done in order to enhance success.

Additionally, the findings on monitoring and evaluation operationalization revealed that it influenced performance of youth projects by large extent. Consequently, proper M&E operationalization is considered critical to enhance project performance. It is noted that M&E operationalization involves broadly communicating the M&E plan to all key stakeholders and specifically to those using it. It also involves tracking and collecting data on the identified indicators to aid and inform the on the extent to which intended results are being achieved. There is also a strong sense for capacity building and resources mobilization to operationalize and maintain M&E plan focused. However, diverse responses on the appropriateness and effectiveness of tools for data collection and analysis on the identified indicators in M&E plan as well as in the level inclusiveness of stakeholders during operationalization could only imply that there was a need for reviewing on the way they are being implemented.

Furthermore, the study revealed also that monitoring and evaluation reporting influence performance of youth projects by large extent. M&E findings reports aids in reviewing the progress of the project towards achievements of intended results as well as to effectively communicate lessons. To enhance effective reporting, templates/standards for report formats are available depending on intended users to ensure they are provided in the correct format and are users-friendly. However, the timeliness in regard to data analysis and interpretation of the findings is a concern that can hinder performance of the youth projects due to lack of timely data for planning and decision making.

Finally, study findings also established that monitoring and evaluation dissemination influence performance of youth projects by large extent. M&E results effectively communicated or distributed to key internal and external stakeholders raise awareness and helps to build a positive perception about the project enhancing performance. However, variant responses on the appropriateness of dissemination channels indicated that there was need to review if they were well matched with the target users. Also, M&E dissemination was noted to be more of an accountability issue than for other uses such as for making decision, planning and reflections to lobby for youth-friendly policies or legislations. Consequently, there is need to advocate for these two other critical benefit.



## V. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the study concluded that all the independent variables; M&E Planning, M&E Operationalizing, M&E Reporting and M&E Dissemination influence performance of youth projects (dependent variable) in NGOs. This finding was established through correlation and regression analysis which revealed that there was a positive significant linear relationship between monitoring and evaluation practices to performance of youth projects. Therefore, the study concluded that the organizations that invest in ensuring effective and efficient monitoring and evaluation practices enhance project performance.

The ability to make informed decisions and information sharing to state and non-state actors on what is working or not will be enhanced for strategies development, planning and programs/projects implementation to improve performance and sustainability. The study also provided insights necessary to ensure synchronization of tactics and cooperative working on M&E practices on youth projects that reflect, match and measure the key objectives while providing an overall picture on the performance.

## VI. RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTIONS

The study findings established that M&E planning is an important component during project planning stage that ensures development of M&E plans geared towards assessing progress towards achievement of desired youth projects objectives and goals. Consequently, it is recommended that M&E planning should always be done with highest consideration of professionalism, expertise and standards to ensure a plan to capture the all the important elements necessary to ensure successful implementation, monitoring and measurement of the youth projects milestones. The study also was revealed on the need to review tools for data collection and for stakeholders' participation during M&E operationalization. As a results, is recommended that the tools should be reviewed at least once after M&E operationalization to confirm if they are still appropriate and effective and inclusive participatory of stakeholders to increase sense of results ownership. The study also revealed concerns on the lack of timeliness in regard to data analysis, interpretation and reporting. Thus, it was recommended that all the reporting lines are clearly outlined and the set-out timelines for providing reports observed at all times.

The study revealed inappropriateness of M&E dissemination channels. The study recommended that the channels/outlets used to share the M&E findings are review regularly to ensure that they are appropriate and properly matched to the targeted users both internally and externally. Further, M&E findings dissemination was noted to be more of an accountability issue than for other equally important uses such as for making decision, planning and reflections to lobby for youth-friendly policies or legislations. Consequently, it is recommended that this other critical benefits be equally advocated in NGOs to bring more value to M&E practices considering the amount of time and resources invested in the whole process. The study has investigated M&E practices which are broad and a number of other relevant issues did not feature. The study recommends the need for examining the influences of technology on M&E practices in enhancing effectiveness and project performance. This has not been covered in the study and it is very relevant to the current situation and trends. Further, future research will need to be carried in other sectors or countries in order to establish if the link between M&E practices and project performance can be generalized.

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