MONITORING AND EVALUATION RESEARCH

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Introduction

Governments, national and international organizations undertake developmental projects or social interventions, and need to conduct research to assess the outcomes of such projects and programmes. This strategy is called Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) research. Monitoring and evaluation are important management tools to track project progress and facilitate decision making that may be geared towards re-strategizing or scale-up. Most funders require evaluation report on the projects they fund, but the greatest beneficiary of an evaluation is the community of people among whom the organization works. The principle underlying monitoring and evaluation is the attainment of return on investment to the extent that development projects are guided to ensure value for money and efforts.

By closely examining the goals of a project, an organization can design programmes and activities that are effective, efficient, and able to yield powerful results for the community. Monitoring and Evaluation research is not a method of data collection or analysis as often understood by some individuals. Conceptualizing M&E only on the basis of data gathering and analysis limits the scope of an enterprise that employs a holistic approach in examining the entire gamut of project life-cycle. Research methods such as observations, experiments, surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and other methods of data collection can be used in evaluation research, just as they are used in basic research. However, results generated through these methods and others can only make meaning when the three cardinal elements of monitoring and evaluation namely; time, quality and quantity are fused in an attempt at understanding the whole essence of M&E practice.

Meaning and Purposes of M&E

Although the term "monitoring and evaluation" tends to go together as if it is only one thing, monitoring and evaluation are, in fact, two distinct sets of organizational activities, related but not identical.

Monitoring can be defined as a continuing function that aims primarily to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing intervention with early indications of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results. An ongoing intervention might be a project, program or any other kind of support that will lead to an outcome. Monitoring helps organizations track achievements by a regular collection of information to assist timely decision making, ensure accountability, and provide the basis for evaluation and learning (World Bank, 2007).

Monitoring is the systematic collection and analysis of information as a project progresses. It is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a project or organization. It is based on targets set and activities planned during the planning phases of work. It helps to keep the work on track, and can let management know when things are going wrong. If done properly, it is an invaluable tool for good management, and it provides a useful base for evaluation. It enables an organization to determine whether available resources are sufficient and are being well used, whether its capacity is sufficient and appropriate, and whether the organization is doing what it planned to do (Shapiro, A. 2004; McCurdy and Shapiro, E.S. 1992).

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an on-going or completed project, program, or policy, particularly in terms of its design, implementation and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision making process of both recipients and donors (World Bank, 2007).

Evaluation is the comparison of actual project outcomes and impacts against the agreed strategic plans. It investigates what the organization set out to do, what it has accomplished, and how it accomplished it. It can be **formative** (taking place during the life of a project or organization, with the intention of improving the strategy or way of functioning of the project or organization). It can also be **summative** (learning from a completed project or an organization that is no longer functioning) (Shapiro, J. 2002)

Common terms used in monitoring and evaluation include the following:

1. Inputs: The financial, human, and material resources used for the development intervention. Examples include: *technical expertise, equipment, funds.*

2. Activities: Actions taken or work performed; for example, *training workshops conducted.*

3. Outputs: The products, capital goods, and services that result from a development intervention. Examples include: *number of people trained, number of workshops conducted.*

4. Outcomes: The likely or achieved short-term and medium-term effects or changes of an intervention's outputs, for instance, *improved skills, new employment opportunities* as a result of specific intervention through some output.

5. Impacts: The long-term consequences of the programme; it may be positive and negative effects, such as *improved standard of living.*

6. Indicators: are signs, signals or pointers that provide information about the state, condition or level of project implementation. They provide insight into what, how and when things are happening or have happened.

The commonality of M&E is that they are geared towards learning from what is or has been done on a project and how it is being done, by focusing on a number of strategic questions (World Bank, 2007):

- **Relevance**: Do the objectives and goals match the problems or needs that are being addressed?
- **Efficiency**: Is the project delivered in a timely and cost-effective manner? It tells us that the input into the work is appropriate in terms of the output. This could be input in terms of money, time, staff, equipment and so on.
- **Effectiveness:** This is a measure of the extent to which a developmental programme or project achieves the specific objectives of a project. To what extent does the intervention achieve its objectives? What are the supportive factors and obstacles encountered during the implementation?
- **Impact**: What happened as a result of the project? It tells an organization whether or not what it did made a difference to the problem situation it was trying to address. This may include intended and unintended positive and negative effects.
- **Sustainability**: Are there lasting benefits after the intervention is completed?

Steps for designing a monitoring and evaluation system depend on what one is trying to monitor and evaluate. The following is an outline of some general steps that may be taken in thinking through at the time of planning M&E activities as provided by the World Bank document for its Small Grants programme (2007):

1. **Identify who will be involved in the design, implementation, and reporting**. Engaging stakeholders helps ensure their perspectives are understood and feedback is incorporated.
2. **Clarify scope**, purpose, intended use, audience, and budget for evaluation.
3. **Develop the questions** to answer what you want to learn as a result of your work.
4. **Select indicators**. Indicators are meant to provide a clear means of measuring achievement, to help assess the performance, or to reflect changes. They can be either quantitative and/or qualitative. A process indicator is information that focuses on how a program is implemented.
5. **Determine the data collection methods**. Examples of methods are: document reviews, questionnaires, surveys, and interviews.
6. **Analyze and synthesize the information you obtain**. Review the information obtained to see if there are patterns or trends that emerge from the process.
7. **Interpret these findings, provide feedback, and make recommendations**. The process of analyzing data and understanding findings should provide you with recommendations about how to strengthen your work, as well as any mid-term adjustments you may need to make.
8. **Communicate your findings and insights to stakeholders and decide how to use the results to strengthen your organization's efforts**. Monitoring and evaluation not only help organizations reflect and understand past performance, but serve as a guide for constructive changes during the period of implementation.

Logical Framework in Monitoring and Evaluation

Logical framework, also referred to as conceptual framework, embodies the theory of change. It tells the story of a project at a glance and should be in place before a proposal is finalized (Philliber Research Associates, 2007). An experienced Monitor and Evaluator is able to know the extent of fluidity and coherence that inhere in the story line. As a corollary, conceptual framework ensures that a disarticulated proposal is promptly identified and that way lends itself to criticisms that may necessitate adjustments and alterations. It is also used as a verification tool to interrogate issues about whether and how changes will occur, the degree of changes to anticipate and for whom, the likely time that changes should occur and the specific points of intervention (Philliber Research Associates 2007, quoting Blanc and Gambone 2004).

Several reasons account for the creation a logical framework in the course of project proposal writing and/or prior to project implementation. These include:

a) laying bare the likely expectations pertaining to a project vis-à-vis the resources that are or may be available for execution of relevant projects or interventions. Thus, notwithstanding the claims that may exist in the body of a proposal, the framework serves as a means to confirm the feasibility or veracity of such initial declaration by prospective project implementers;

b) improving programmatic planning by re-examining prior assumptions and how far they are consistent with the proposed intervention. Consequently, the framework may suggest the need for further articulation of the intervention process in order to ensure achievement of maximum effect on intended beneficiaries;

c) revealing the extent to which each step fits into the overall project process, particularly with regard to the adequacy of the activity-outcome chain; and

d) being used as a tool for ensuring accountability and prudence in project development and implementation.

It is important to note that a good logical framework should be **plausible** to the extent that the 'story' is right and convincing to project stakeholders including funders, monitoring personnel and implementers. That would translate to activities possessing the capacity to generate expected results or outcomes as the case may be. Another notable feature of a well-thought out framework is **feasibility** of the story as it pertains to available human and material resources. It is also an avenue to showcase the **meaningfulness** of a project in terms of whether intended outcomes would be worth the efforts (MacArthur Foundation, 2005). A typical conceptual framework is presented below.

A Typical Conceptual Framework Table

Project Goal	Objectives	Activities	Indicators				Sources of Data
			Process	Output	Outcome	Impact	
Overall long- term aim of project	Short-term disaggregated aim of project towards achievement of the goal	Tasks aimed at achieving the objectives	On-going actions	immediate short-term results	Intermediate short term results	Long-term results	Verifiable information sources
	SMART criteria emphasized						

As part of a proposal, the researcher should be able to include a conceptual framework that demarcates the project document into separate but interdependent units for the reasons adduced earlier. **The project Goal** which is situated on the first panel is usually a loose, vague and ambitious statement of what the project intends to achieve in the long run. Although for some projects, this is achievable within the project life cycle, most often the goal of a project which is to be measured by its impacts is realized or seen to have been realized long into or after project activities (Nwokocha, 2011). It will certainly be a tall order for a project whose goal is to significantly change attitude and behavior of a certain people about a phenomenon to expect relevant behavior modifications with few months of intervention. Indeed, given that such change may likely impinge on cultural beliefs and practices which people would have been socialized into from childhood, it is easy to understand the seeming imperative of resistance to change when contemplated. The project story must be sensitive to this reality and to that extent should embody only the feasible.

The **Objectives of a project**, in simple terms, are defined road maps towards achieving the overall goal. In other words, a decomposition of the long-term goal into compact, definitive and do-able short term aims. Consequently, project objectives should be comprehensive enough to fully capture the goal in all its ramifications. Hence, careful and efficient implementation of these objectives will culminate in goal attainment. It is important to state here that a good objective must successfully scale the **SMART** scrutiny. Thus, for the purposes of conceptual framework, each of the objectives is expect to meet the Specificity, Measurability, Appropriateness, Realistic and Time-bound criteria. We note at this juncture that each of these five elements is as important as others and must be jointly satisfied not only in the course of designing a framework but also project execution.

Objectives that are **specific** would reveal, not in any order, the period, quantity, location and, probably, intended beneficiaries. These details are necessary to give direction to funders, implementers and target groups. When stakeholders are on the same page with regard to information on a project, the chances of friction and disagreement are minimized. For instance, it communicates better if a project objective reads ‘to train 320 teachers in 40 public schools in

Kontagora LGA of Niger State on craft-making in the first 6 months of project'. Using this same example, the claims are clearly **measurable;** we can measure the number of teachers, public schools and duration of proposed task. In addition, type of school and the location as stated in the sample objective are all verifiable. The important thing here is that the objective should not accommodate any iota of ambiguity. Discussing whether an objective is **appropriate** supposes an alignment with the goal. Hence, if the goal is to 'empower teachers in Kontagora to be self-reliant', then the above objective would likely suffice as one sure way of achieving that. The same would not be said of our thematic objective for another project whose goal is to reduce the rate of examination failure among secondary school students in Kontagora LGA. In the latter example, the link between goal and objective is lost and therefore inappropriate.

In terms of being **realistic**, an objective should be feasible or doable and not over-ambitious and in some cases impossible. For instance, proposing a one-off 45-minute advocacy visit to a community as an objective for reducing poverty by 50 percent in two weeks is quite unrealistic. Such claim to impossibility would make light the work of proposal assessor in readily rejecting the entry as both baseless and frivolous. While the timing of an academic research towards award of degrees and diplomas may be silent in the objective, proposals for interventions and funded projects must indicate clearly the time or period within which the project is expected to be completed. To be sure, unless an objective is **time-bound** the task of monitoring and evaluation is difficult to undertake and at best less fruitful (Nwokocha, 2011). Imagine a scenario whereby an M&E Consultant is commissioned to monitor and evaluate a project with open-ended timeless objectives. S/he comes back disappointed by the repeated '*but we have not said we would not do it*' as answer to several questions related to non-completion of project activities. Armed by the timelessness of stated objectives, a dubious project implementer may truncate the entire process through that negative technicality that grants him/her some protection from other disappointed and probably disillusioned stakeholders.

Project **Activities** occupy the third panel of the framework. It simply showcases detailed tasks and actions to be carried out in order to achieve stated objectives. In other words, how objectives would be translated into definite micro and macro efforts. While goal and objectives may be classified as mental constructs or propositions, activities are real physical actions that derive from those initial constructions. Proposing training of 320 teachers as we indicated earlier will hardly add value to intended beneficiaries without having these teachers actually trained. Thus, preparations for the training in terms of logistics, the training itself and post-training actions all constitute project activities. Usually, each objective is deconstructed into a series of realistic activities.

The framework above shows **indicators** at four levels – process, output, outcome and impact. These indicators are pointers or signs revealing events and change dynamics within the context of a project. The arrows in the framework table suggest that **process indicators** are tied to project activities. Process indicators try to answer the question related to 'what is being or will be done as part of project implementation?' Going by our famous example, notifying the Niger State Ministry of Education about the intended training, selecting public schools and choosing teachers to be training particularly with regard to numbers, recruiting trainers, procuring training materials, the actual training among other tasks would constitute elements of process indicators.

The **output and outcome indicators** relate closely to the project objective being discussed in terms of the craft-making skills acquired by the teachers as a result of the training. The output indicators focus on the immediate change brought about by the training in the short-run. The outcome indicators relate to the intermediate short term changes as a result of a project. As we noted earlier, unless the project is extensive it would be impossible or at best very difficult to measure the impact. **Impact indicators** are associated with project goal and relate to the long term effect of an intervention. Thus, emphasizes the lasting impactful consequence of the training on affected teachers such as revenue generation through sale of products of these crafts that may eventually result in self-reliance and reduction in household poverty.

The column on **Sources of Data** is where information about project activities is stated. These may include receipts, reports, documents, records of events including attendance list of participants, transcript of interviews and group discussions among others. It is also meant to highlight data sources for addressing indicators such as observation and findings from various qualitative and quantitative data. This aspect of the framework gives direction, meaning and essence to monitoring and evaluation practice which depends primarily on verifiable and accessible facts. In what follows, we present a conceptual framework with a typical project story to buttress the example in the earlier table.

A Conceptual Framework Table with a Typical Project Story

Project Goal	**Objectives**	**Activities**	**Indicators**				**Sources of Data**
			Process	**Output**	**Outcome**	**Impact**	
To significantly reduce maternal mortality in Oyo State in 5 years	1. **increase maternal health facilities by 60% in each LGA in the first 6 months of project,** 2. increase sensitization visits to each LGA by 35% in the first quarter of 2016, 3. reduce the cost of maternal health services for all the women attending antenatal care in the state to 0% from July 1, 2016,	a. Advocacy visits to communities & LGAs for support b. Build health facilities in communities c. Equip hospitals with modern facilities d. Employ competent staff	-Signing of MoU with communities and LGAs -Procuring land for the building of maternal health facilities - Awarding of contracts .-Commencing of project -Purchasing of equipment -Call for applications for employment -Employment of personnel	1. % increase in maternal health facilities available in each LGA 2.% increase in sensitization visits to LGAs 3. % decrease in the cost of antenatal care 4. % increase in access to ITNs by women attending antenatal clinics, etc.	Increase in number of pregnant women that has access to maternal health facilities for antenatal care	Marked reduction in maternal mortality in Oyo State	receipts, reports, documents, hospital records, transcript of IDIs and FGDs, notes etc.

	4. Increase access to Insecticide Treated Nets (ITNs) by 90% of women attending antenatal clinics in the state by December 2016, etc	***Note that these activities relate to objective-1 only. Space would not allow us to state the activities for other objectives.***		***Please note that only output-1 relates to objective-1.***			

Study Design for Monitoring and Evaluation Research

The designs adopted for monitoring and evaluation research are similar to the road maps employed in conventional social science research. The researcher's decision on the choice of study design ought to be dependent on the purpose of a particular monitoring and evaluation activity. For instance, **Needs Assessment** which aims to identify gaps and limitations related to a development context would necessitate adoption of the exploratory research design. This approach would enable the researcher elicit credible information on what is lacking or needs to be done in a project or intervention environment.

For **Baseline Evaluation** and **Process Evaluation (or Monitoring)** Research, the **descriptive design** is considered most appropriate. These types of evaluation would require a clear description of what exists or what is happening with regard to project implementation respectively. While results of a baseline research are used to identify keys issues necessary for project planning and design, findings from process evaluation are directed at tracking project performance, and that way provide insight into what could be done to achieve improvement.

In a number of cases, **Mid-term Evaluation** serves as a platform for showcasing outcomes of a project or intermediate results. Essentially, identifying the medium term results of a project culminates in undertaking a cause and effect analysis. Hence, the **explanatory design** is usually recommended for the purposes of eliciting relevant information for such a contextual appraisal.

To effectively measure the long term effect of an intervention through **Impact Evaluation** research, **experimental or quasi-experimental study design** is usually recommended. The idea is to draw out the differences between two groups (or periods) with similar characteristics after an intervention is applied to one and not the other.

It is important to note at this juncture that what we have described above represents a basic analogy of study designs for monitoring and evaluation. However, depending on the objectives or focus of a project, a combination of design methods may be adopted. We often see researchers state that they employed 'descriptive survey', 'exploratory cross-sectional survey' among other study designs for their studies. In virtually all cases, the cross-sectional design is adopted over and above the longitudinal design because of the swiftness that inheres in the former. In a rapidly changing development environment such as Nigeria, a longitudinal approach may account for

obsolescence of data and indeed a dislocation of the whole essence of a monitoring and evaluation exercise.

Data collection methods

In Monitoring and Evaluation, we have the opportunity of collecting data using different but relevant methods. Indeed collecting quality data is essential in M&E of projects because without data, we would not have the information to communicate to various stakeholders. So there is always need to collect the right kind of data using the right kind of data collection methods. All the methods of data collection discussed in this book may be used to collect information of M&E of projects. A brief synopsis of some of the methods is provided below since various chapters of this book have already treated the methods in details.

Surveys

Surveys are a good way of gathering a large amount of data, providing a broad perspective. Surveys can be administered electronically, by telephone, by mail or face to face. A well thought out questionnaire that captures both quantitative and qualitative data is essential for a successful monitoring of projects. With an effective questionnaire that engages all the relevant indicators found in the log-frame, there will be no problems reporting M&E findings to various stakeholders. To conduct an effective interview, the researcher should make sure that the interviews are clearly understood by the respondents; also the interviews should be brief so as not to tire the respondents out. More importantly, the interviews should capture the indicators that the programme or project wants to change or modify. It is therefore pointless asking questions that have completely no relation to the intervention carried out in the project. It is also important to actually know what is it that is being monitored; whether the Outcomes, Outputs, Activities or anything else.

Observation

This could be an effective way to collect M&E data. All it requires is for the person conducting monitoring and evaluation to simply see or view or observe how things are going on or how tasks are being performed with respect to the project implementation. This technique requires someone who has a good eye to see whether there is actually progress or not. Observation should explain why certain things are working and why others are not just through seeing what is happening. Good observers make good M&E personnel because they don't always need to collect numerical figures to properly understand the programme implementation processes.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus groups or group discussions are useful to further explore a topic, providing a broader understanding of why the target group may behave or think in a particular way, and assist in determining the reason for attitudes and beliefs. They are conducted with a small sample of the target group and are used to stimulate discussion and gain greater insights. Focus groups are advantageous because they are: useful when exploring cultural values and health beliefs; can be used to examine how and why people think in a particular way and what influences their beliefs and values; to explore complex issues; to develop hypothesis for further research; and do not require participants to be literate. Discussions with a group of beneficiaries is entirely advantageous because it not only allows the person responsible for M&E to interact with the

beneficiaries but also gives him a first-hand understanding of their views on certain matters in the project implementation, and what may be the challenges they are facing.

In-Depth Interview

As the names implies, this method involves questioning and deeply probing an individual on specific activities, phenomena or the implementation of a project. It produces a well-rounded picture of events, values or benefits and challenges of a project. A variant of this is the *key-informant interview*, which is an interview of someone in a position to observe or affect what is happening in a project. Well-informed interviewees add tremendous value to the M&E process by providing nuanced data on the social phenomenon as well as rich insights to help understand the data at hand.

Documentation

Documentation is a descriptive process of recording all aspects of the project process, the study participants, the context and procedures, the purpose of the intervention, record of activities, etc. The use of documentation provides an ongoing record of activities. This can be records of informal feedback and reflections through daily journals, diaries or progress reports. The challenge of documentation is that it requires an ongoing commitment to regularly document thoughts and activities throughout the evaluation process. But it yields rich data on the entire project activities, challenges and effectiveness.

Creative strategies

Dramas, exhibitions, drawings and videos are imaginative and attractive alternatives that have been used to demystify the evaluation process. Using creative arts in evaluation offers opportunities for imaginative ways of understanding programs and creating evaluation knowledge. The creative arts may be used in designing, interpreting, and communicating evaluations. The direct perception and understanding a creative arts approach is helpful to the evaluator in gaining a deep understanding of the program. In addition, this approach is a useful means of connecting with participants' experience in an evaluation.

Creative strategies are advantageous because they provide an opportunity for participants to portray experiences through different art forms which often reveal insights that they may not have been able to articulate in words. They also offer accommodation for people who learn in different ways, who have different cultural backgrounds and/or who are less articulate; it can be a most useful means of engaging them in an evaluation and offering them a voice. They can be used in conjunction with more traditional approaches.

Triangulation

Triangulation is used to address the validity of the data or findings. Triangulation methods use multiple forms of data collection, such as focus groups, observation and in-depth interviews to investigate the evaluation objectives. Utilizing multiple data collection methods leads to an acceptance of reliability and validity when the data from the various sources are comparable and consistent. Using more than one person to collect the data can also increase its reliability. Additionally, theory triangulation provides new insights by drawing on multiple theoretical perspectives (Western Australian Centre for Health Promotion Research, 2010).

Report Writing in Monitoring and Evaluation Research

Report writing in M&E is as important as data collection, and perhaps more. Collecting valid and reliable information for project analysis is usually demanding; producing an M&E report should emphasize the same level of rigor. To be sure, a well collected data set, wherein the researcher had observed all the necessary rules and precautions in the course of instruments design and field work will make less meaning if the message is not conveyed appropriately. A badly written report may, in fact, question the credibility of the entire research process and must be guarded against. There are important factors to consider in writing an acceptable report, which are discussed below.

Format – this is an important report element that may vary from one organization to another. Where it is organization specific, the researcher is expected to follow stated format irrespective of his/her assessment of its adequacy. However, in a large majority of cases, reports begin with the Executive Summary that is preceded only by preliminary pages such as Table of Contents, List of Acronyms, List of Figures and Tables. The summary highlights the most important points in the whole report document and should be able to convey the entire message in a couple of paragraphs. The main body of the report which follows usually comprises Background to the study, Literature review, Methodology employed, Results, Discussion of findings, Recommendations, Conclusion, References and Appendixes.

Audience and Language – the common practice is for the consultant to submit M&E reports to the organization funding the M&E activity. Most Terms of Reference (TOR) will include reports as one of the deliverables of a consultancy. However, it should be borne in mind when preparing a report that the organization may not necessarily be the only one that may have access to the document. It is indeed safer to produce a report that would be friendly to all manner of stakeholders. Therefore, the M&E researcher should ensure that reports are not only written in simple English, but also should avoid use of professional jargons for ease of communication. In addition, the use of high level statistics, complicated graphs and diagrams rather than add value to the report diminish it in terms of relevance and acceptability. Reports should not embody redundant, clumsy and repetitive statements which make them boring, unnecessarily too long and inelegant. The essence of brevity as a virtue in M&E report production must be prioritized, which together with fluidity of presentation attracts a busy Chief Executive to spear time out of a tight schedule to read through it.

When to write report – an efficient M&E consultant does not have to wait till the end of the field process to begin report writing. It should actually commence with onset of data collection, at least the preliminary notes. The advantage of early reporting cannot be overstated and includes easy recall, re-reading, and avoiding pressure of deadlines among others. Most consultancy contracts clearly specify dates upon which reports are expected to be submitted by the researcher. However, in a number of instances, consultants fail to deliver as agreed and take it for-granted on the premise that they had busy schedules. Failures at meeting deadlines raise credibility issues particularly when it is a recurring behavior. We state at this juncture that there may be genuine cases of delays which ought to be communicated promptly to the organization that engaged the consultant.

Length – unless the terms of contract stipulated the length of research report, the consultant is at liberty to submit an M&E report that possesses all the necessary ingredients. Within the context of such freedom, the consultant is expected to include only information that adds value to the report for the reasons adduced earlier

Challenges of Monitoring and Evaluation practice in Nigeria

Monitoring and evaluation is a relatively new comer in development practice in less developed countries. Until very recently, most projects in Nigeria were executed without recourse to M&E as an integral component of project design and implementation. As a result, even when the motive for embarking on a project is genuine, lack of emphasis on monitoring and evaluation has accounted for project failure in several instances. In what follows, we examine some of the challenges of M&E activities in Nigeria.

Ignorance – for many stakeholders, incorporating M&E into developmental practice amounts to avoidable waste of time and financial resources. That view may be canvassed on the basis that other projects that they had been involved in succeeded without it. But the parameters upon which success is measured could not have been defined. Moreover, there are levels of success ranging from marginal to huge. We contend here that such a claim at best is confined within the realm of ignorance that finds expression in haphazardness. Modern development practice prioritizes M&E from project conceptualization to completion and even beyond.

Perceived as an Expensive Venture – engaging an experienced M&E Consultant appears expensive to many project planners and executors. However, compared to the services to be rendered and their impingement on prudence and efficiency, these experts are critical to successful completion of projects. This perception undermines engagement of tested practitioners for the purpose. Compared to the negative consequences of project failure as a result of lack of emphasis on M&E, it is clear that non-involvement of monitoring and evaluation in the project process has proved more costly in most situations.

Paucity of M&E Experts – the dearth of M&E specialists in Nigeria is a function of the relative evolving status of the activity in the country. As a result, few individuals have had formal M&E training from recognized institutions/organizations. Thus, most people that claim expertise do so on the basis of experiences gained over the years in development practice (learning on the job). Part of the reasons for inability to undertake M&E training among some persons and groups interested in the activity include its expensiveness and scarcity of organizations offering such course in Nigeria. Consequently, most large scale evaluations are outsourced to organizations in the United States, Europe and South Africa.

Corruption – just like other facets of the Nigerian system, M&E practice is also bedeviled by corruption. This may relate to a deliberate effort by compromised Consultants to undermine the credibility of the evaluation process irrespective of the concomitant negative consequences. It could also manifest in falsification and/or concealment of data in order to frustrate both the expert and the process.

Conclusion

Project monitoring and evaluation are essential in Nigeria where there is an array of programmes and projects by governments, national and international organizations designed to improve the wellbeing of people. They enable governments and funders to know whether their intervention is having the expected effect on the people. Such an appraisal informs the direction of subsequent projects and ensures their effective and efficient implementation. Many projects are implemented in Nigeria with no noticeable impact on the lives of the people for whom they are designed. This is explained by the dearth of expertise in M&E as well as deliberate misappropriation or diversion of project funds by unscrupulous individuals. On account of this, we submitted a proposal to the MacArthur Foundation in 2007 to provide M&E training to academics, government officials and NGO practitioners (Isiugo-Abanihe, 2007) in collaboration with the Philliber Research Associates of New York. The impact of this project, as well as other M&E training initiatives in Nigeria, has been the emergence of a critical mass of M&E experts who now offer M&E services in virtually all parts of Nigeria. M&E has now caught on in Nigeria as a tool to ensure that the beneficiaries of intervention projects derive envisaged benefits from such interventions.

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