

Monitoring and Evaluation Planning Process and the Implementation of Health Projects in Isiolo County, Kenya

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DOI: 10.29322/IJSRP.14.06.2024.p15036

Paper Received Date: 15th June 2024
Paper Acceptance Date: 18th June 2024
Paper Publication Date: 26th June 2024

Abstract: One of the contributing factors to health access issues in Isiolo County is the long and frequent delays that happen in the implementation phase of health projects. Such delays are caused by low capacities of the county in monitoring and evaluation. Adherence to the requirements of project planning, budgeting, M&E, and reporting is quite poor in the health sector (Republic of Kenya, 2018). That has led to challenges in project implementation and evaluation, thus resulting in untimely and poor standard county reports in Isiolo County. To resolve this issue, it is important to find out the influence of monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of county government's health projects in Isiolo County. Already, there are studies on the failure and success of projects in organizations. However, there are no attempts to analyze the influence of M&E practices on the implementation of health projects in county. To bridge this gap, this project studied influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the implementation of county government's health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya. The research question was; What is the role of M&E planning process on the implementation of County Governments' health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya? The study used descriptive design and a qualitative approach. Stratified random sampling was used to attain a sample size of 178 who were made up of county representatives, project managers, community health workers, chiefs, and assistant chiefs. The study found that M&E planning process as a practice of monitoring and evaluation influenced the implementation of health projects. That was attributed to the high impact on the implementation of health projects in Isiolo County by M&E plans performed in the project planning phase, work environment consideration in M&E, planning for all the M&E activities, and consideration of all M&E aspects. Based on the study findings, the County government of Isiolo should use an effective stakeholders' involvement strategy that would allow stakeholders to participate in the M&E of health projects.

Key words: *County Government, Health projects, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Planning Process, Practices*

1. Introduction

Project's monitoring and evaluation enhances the general effectiveness of its planning, implementation, and management (Estrella, 2017). Consequently, different programs/projects are begun with an aim of positively altering the economic and social political conditions of the individuals in a certain area. Monitoring is explained as the process of establishing whether the design of the project has been followed, whether there are any deviations and that rectification is conducted in a timely way (ADRA, 2017). Evaluation is the impartial and organized appraisal of a continuing or finished project, its plan, execution and outcome.

Evaluation is an intentional and structured valuation of a completed or continuing project, its design, implementation, and outcome. The goal of the assessment is to offer appropriate appraisal of the effectiveness, relevancy, sustainability, impact and effectiveness of the interventions, as well as the progress against the initial objectives.

Bao et al., (2015) argue that large-scale global health program transitions that are monitored and evaluated can improve accountability, encourage stakeholder involvement and foster understanding of the transition process and the best ways to manage it. In their study (2015), they suggest a conceptual framework that includes four major categories pertinent to transitions leadership, financing, programming, and service delivery along with leading questions and illustrative indicators to help users navigate crucial parts of monitoring and evaluating transition. Bao et al. (2015) contend that tracking and analyzing transitions can improve the

conceptual clarity of the transition process, offer a mechanism for accountability, promote interaction with neighborhood stakeholders and support learning-based transition management.

A project's performance is meaningfully and critically affected by stakeholder participation. As from 2014, Guinea had started a significant reform and reorganization of the implementation of development projects. The government via the global institutions and functioning ministries, manufacturing and construction corporations, and non-governmental establishments, have all participated in this (Magassouba et al., 2019).

At the commencement of innovative developments, such as the integration of eHealth equipment in community health care facilities, municipalities make presumptions about which stakeholders are pertinent. These presumptions are founded on experience with projects executions, but creative projects are inherently unpredictable, therefore experience alone cannot be used to construct a map. According to empirical mapping, several stakeholders appear during the implementation (Nilsen, Stendal, & Gullstett, 2020). Rogers (2015) explains that monitoring offers the key stakeholders and management of a development project indicators of the achievement and progress of the projected outcomes with respect to the fund allocated for it.

In the United Kingdom, Bell and Marais's (2015) study looked at a training program for monitoring and evaluating maternal and newborn health (MNH) programs that were created by Impact at the University of Aberdeen. The central goal of the teaching program was to improve the M&E expertise of national and local program executives who work for MNH and to develop the capability of academic partner organizations. The study found that the participatory M&E teaching program put on by Impact and Partners helped participants learn and change the way they did things. In the international efforts towards attaining social, economic and environmental sustainability, monitoring and evaluation has become more important as it is used as a measure and equilibrium tool in the course of projects execution (OECD, 2012). At the global and national levels, sustainability measures and monitoring and evaluation indicators are critical instruments for reporting, monitoring and defining on the environmental, social, and economic trends tracing advancement towards project goals and controlling practices and policies (United Nations, 2012).

At regional level, monitoring and evaluation is critical for the assessment of the sustainability of developments and can also serve as a management planning tool. In Africa, although the idea of monitoring and evaluation is recent and, in most cases, it is yet to be wholly embraced as an important element of the organizational projects' processes, several companies and organizations have used it (Crawford and Bryce, 2015). A study by Ayarkwa et al. (2010) on the external factors impacting the effectiveness of M&E on projects indicated that factors such as stakeholders support and involvement had great influence. It also showed that the success of monitoring and evaluation was determined by sources of funds and the amounts allocated, training and education of employees, government policies and factors connected to donors.

The health system in Isiolo County is highly affected by challenges of accessing health services. Over 50% of the residents of Isiolo County live in the rural regions with inadequate, sparsely distributed and understaffed health facilities (Census, 2019). There is 1 level 5 health facility, 5 level 4 health facilities, 9 level 3 health facilities, 58 level 2 health facilities, and 73 community health facilities (Isiolo CIDP III 2023-2027). Most of these primary health facilities do not have enough health resources and personnel to meet the population needs (Isiolo CIDP III 2023-2027)

One of the contributing factors to health access issues in Isiolo County is the long and frequent delays that happen in the implementation phase of health projects. Such delays are caused by low capacities of the county in monitoring and evaluation. Adherence to the requirements of project planning, budgeting, M&E, and reporting is quite poor in the health sector (Republic of Kenya, 2018). That has led to challenges in project implementation and evaluation, thus resulting in untimely and poor standard county reports in Isiolo County. To resolve this issue, it is important to find out the influence of monitoring and evaluation on the implementation of county government's health projects in Isiolo County. Already, there are studies on the failure and success of

projects in organizations. However, there are no attempts to analyze the influence of M&E practices on the implementation of health projects in county. To bridge this gap, this project studied influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the implementation of county government's health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya. The research question was; What is the role of M&E planning process on the implementation of County Governments' health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The concept of Monitoring and Evaluation

Project implementation is a challenging process more so in the satisfaction of project specifications. That entails the coordination of resources and people, and the incorporation and performance of project activities according to the designed project plan. The ability to realize a project can be critical than the management plan. Charan (2009) contends that despite the importance of project implementation, more research has been conducted in the preparation of a project instead of its execution process. Rutan (2010) observed that literature is dominated by content on planning, rather than literature on project implementation, on which little is known or studied. Understanding the role of M&E on the achievement of county government's health projects is important in the realization of health projects at the county level.

Monitoring is a means used in management to identify a discrepancy between the design and the outcome so as to undertake corrective actions. It ensures that the activities of a project are executed as it was intended. Bartle (2007) describes monitoring as the examination and documenting of actions happening in a program or project. It is also a practice of regularly collecting data on all project aspects. It also entails getting feedback on the project's progress to the stakeholders including beneficiaries, donors and implementers of a project. The resultant information is applied in the improvement of the project's performance and decision making.

Evaluation is explained by Ramothamo (2013) as the organized data compilation and analysis for decision-making. It is the manner of enhancing a project's achievements and points out the responsibility of work and resources. Evaluation builds human capital and enhances the management's planning ability. It determines the effectiveness and dependability of projects and impacts on the prospective projects, helping in making decisions.

Bartle (2007) explains that a project is a cycle of actions aiming to resolving a specific issue within a certain period. A project should have resources including human resources, money, and time prior to attaining any objectives. It has to pass through some phases. Monitoring should happen at the start and it should incorporate all the phases of a project.

The critical phases of a project should entail planning that covers the analysis of the situation, objective definition, strategies formulation, problem detection, crafting a work plan, and financial planning. There are different reasons for conducting M&E (Stem et al., 2005). The process of monitoring and evaluation could be applied for answerability (Moynihan, 2005).

Monitoring and evaluation can be employed to show performance of a project with the needed parameters and show the donors, funding agencies and the public that resources have been well utilized. Analysis through monitoring and evaluation ensures accountability for different performance areas. That would entail the appropriate management of workers, budget, regulatory and legal fulfilment with procedures and processes, as per the ethical and transformational considerations.

In such a context, monitoring and evaluation is perceived as a support for governance, as Cook (2006) posits that it comprises organizational management, culture and operating systems. It is also connected to the government if it is reinforced by a sturdy auditing structure of the government. Davis et al. (2006) asserts that enhancing parliamentary management is also a reason for evaluation. Therefore, it is not unforeseen, why it has not been applied openly to develop the developmental state goals.

Other than M&E being used for accountability purposes, it is also used to encourage a 'learning organization'. This is the use of monitoring and evaluation results for learning. It is assumed that institutions would be more self-reflective and open when they are presented with evaluative data; however, Preskill and Russ-Eft (2005) explain that it is not essentially the case since operationalizing knowledge is difficult, due to the complicated range of procedures and culture of management that has to be discussed. It is evident that whereas it is understood that monitoring and evaluation has to result in knowledge and consideration, it might not always be the situation and the manner in which institutions incorporate data can be complicated, and not contributory as proposed in the typical monitoring and evaluation program or project terms of management.

However, using evaluation in organizations is not simple, and it is affected by some aspects, such as bureaucratic, background, and technical factors. Such factors overlap, although it is obvious that all of them are lined up, and administrative knowledge is not easy' (Mayne, 2000). Turkerman (2007) evaluate the alliance in regard to how monitoring and evaluation leads to education and reflection and points out that such monitoring and evaluation mode is perceived as but an instrument that helps in administration by enhancing the quality of data generated for decision-making. Whereas a lot of studies have centered on NGOs, there is increasing interest in observing how monitoring and evaluation assist in developing education institutions (Roper & Pettit, 2002). There is high prospective for appraisal to result in administrative knowledge, rather than accountability only as shown by Gray (2009).

The assertion is that monitoring and evaluation is significant, as it results in diverse findings. It is essential to realize that monitoring and evaluation has taken diverse identities, because of background and based on that, it can be utilized for answerability, encouraging practice performance, or education, as shown in a cycle on the subject (Bemelemans-Videc et al. 2007).

Monitoring and evaluation has a common identity with auditing, particularly when it takes the role of accountability, this becomes a challenge (Bemelemans-Videc et al. 2007).

In certain instances, M&E centers on evaluating the socioeconomic or natural criteria to enhance the current knowledge about the elements of interest, such as population size and health (Salzer & Saladsky, 2006). Stem et al. (2005) calls that status assessment approaches to monitoring and evaluation. The status assessment findings can influence management decisions and policies at greater heights (Stem 2005). Nonetheless, status appraisal is usually not connected to precise activities of management. It means that status evaluation in monitoring and evaluation does not offer straight response on the success of particular policies or programs (Salzer & Salafsky, 2006).

Falling and Gregory (2003) refers to monitoring and evaluation as tracking performance while Stem at al. (2005) refers to it as effectiveness management. Such M&E approach is meant to determine the effects of the management performance to give a response on the progress towards the efficiency of program interventions and goals. In the determination of effectiveness, performance frameworks, the management integrates the M&E outcomes into project cycles intended for continuous enhancement (Moynihan, 2005). Deciding the number of resources to assign to the efficiency determination of monitoring and evaluation and the status of approach is a regular challenge faced by resource managers.

According to Stem (2005), monitoring and evaluation can be applied in a study perspective to help in the collecting or production of knowledge on a topic to get a better perceptive of the subject of interest and to distinguish among the rival propositions. In this view, adaptive management applies M&E in assumptions testing on the origin and outcome or how a particular resource organization policy will generate the required results when direct performance is needed but there is no adequate information for making informed decisions (BSP, 2001). Falling and Gregory (2003) explain that monitoring and evaluation can be applied in the context of decision analysis to offer reason for selecting among a wide variety of policy alternatives. In such a case, pointers are intended to be employed as standard for decision making. Falling and Gregory (2003), warn that a major confusion can occur around the distinction between monitoring and evaluation judgement and the tracking of its performance.

Monitoring and evaluation is an important tool for sound program management in every level as it offers data on the advancement of a project and success of the activities. It enhances decision making and project management allowing stakeholders' accountability. M&E also supports planning the prospective needs of resources and activities. It gives data that is used for advocacy and policy making. M&E provides information on the continuation of a project and on any hindrances encountered that require counteractive measures.

Bartle (2003) contends that monitoring and evaluation should be performed at every project's level. International Finance Corporation also considers M&E as a component of program designs as it ensures systematic reporting; it communicates outcomes and demonstrates responsibility. It determines effectiveness and competence, ensures effective resource allocation, encourages constant knowledge and development, and offers evidence for advanced management (IFC, 2006).

Evaluation is performed with an effort to track the activities of a project and recording the mode of delivery. It determines operations' practice that also assists in making counteractive measures in the process of a project. Evaluation is also important in the planning of prospective activities in regard to resources. It is used to ensure that the project activities are on track and all goes based on the plan. Evaluation assists in ensuring project competence as there is harmonization among the parts of a program. It also helps in the answerability and decision making for both current and future projects.

2.2 M&E Planning Process and the Implementation of Health Projects

Monitoring and evaluation plan means a flexible roadmap to different project stages, which helps in the recording of the project activities, offers solutions to M&E questions and shows development to the project's general goal and its specific objective. According to PMI (2004), a plan as a roadmap charts the precise purposes and the goal whilst addressing the evaluation queries, plan for the implementation, the timelines, the matrix of the outcomes, the instruments of M&E data collection, and actions to be applied. Kagiri and Wainana recommend that before starting the process of project implementation, project teams and organizations should conduct a detailed planning to include work environment, resources to be used and timelines. Project organizations need to conduct an in-depth planning that should entail the project's physical work, resources, time plan, management systems, output production, M&E, and cost plan.

M&E activities can generate useful outcomes if they are integrated in the phase of project plan (PMI, 2004). PMI (2004) additionally explains and asserts that project planning and designing are the activities that are inseparable. Hence, for a sustainable and relevant M&E, there has to be collaboration among project patrons, stakeholders, and the design team, who should produce an integrated and inclusive M&E plan.

PMI (2004) asserts that all projects in all levels, whether lone projects or different merged projects need an effective M&E plan. The monitoring and evaluation plan is applied in checking the process of project implementation and determine whether it is realizing it set general objectives and goal, thus keeping the project stakeholders and designers informed through M&E outcomes. The M&E plan also offers direction on the monitoring and evaluation design, indicates the information that is yet to be collected, and the best ways of doing that, and a suggestion on how the results should be used for higher effective operation. A comprehensive M&E methodology, and project design, the type of data collected and the means, the needed resources, plan implementation with precise timeline for every part of the monitoring and evaluation plan.

Developing a monitoring and evaluation plan calls for the right knowledge and understanding of the program, processes, inputs, outcomes, and outputs (Cooke et al., 2001). The required inputs needed for planning include human resource, directive and permission of developing the M&E plan supported with the right technological arrangement (Kalali et al., 2011). The procedure entails promoting the requirements of M&E, analyzing the necessitate for strategic information, entering into a contract with the project's stakeholders and getting their dedication particularly on the monitoring and evaluation elements such as the indicators,

reporting plans, tools, developing the mechanisms for the review of the M&E plan and ultimately preparing the certification for the final approval. The last outcome of this procedure should be a complete plan for monitoring and evaluation explaining the M&E structure, and plan items, support of all the stakeholders and finally the authority's approval (Jody & Ray 2004).

Monitoring and evaluation plan has to be created at a project's early phase. As Mugambi and Kanda (2013) explain that M&E must be considered before the design step of a project is completed to allow time for the planning of adequate resources and staff. This also allows the stakeholders to determine how practical and realistic will be for them to attain all that they meant to measure.

Project altering can impact the M&E design in regard to development actions and the evaluation of the project effect. Consequently, it is imperative to alter the monitoring and evaluation plan while the project undergoes transformation so that implementation can be correctly determined. With an inside monitoring and evaluation capacity, it is possible to adjust the monitoring and evaluation plan for flexibility and frequent review of the project outcomes (World Bank, 2010).

The first step of the process of monitoring and evaluation planning involves the identification of the available M&E expertise in the monitoring and evaluation team, the targeted beneficiaries and other stakeholders, and the analysis of support organizations. That enables the identification of existing gaps between the M&E requirements and the available resources. Therefore, Ibeto and Justine (2013) argue that guides capacity development for the improvement of the procedural capacity to perform monitoring and evaluation.

For the implementation of monitoring and evaluation, it is important to have a distinct monitoring and evaluation plan (Gyorkos, 2013). Gyorkos (2013) also claims that while undertaking project planning, a well-defined M&E planning should be incorporated as an important component of the entire project plan. He also argues that a monitoring and evaluation plan must contain the activities of M&E, people responsible for these activities, the activities time frame, adequate budget, and a plan for utilizing the M&E results. Mugambi and Kanda (2013) contend that the monitoring and evaluation results' beneficiaries should be involved in the M&E plan development. They additionally explain that participation of the project employees and the main stakeholders in monitoring and evaluation planning protects the viability, owning, and knowledge of the M&E organization. In some of the instances, M&E timing may be established by the requirements of the donors. However, more M&E planning can be conducted following approval and funding of a project (Mugambi and Kanda, 2013).

3. Methods and Materials

The study used descriptive design to explore monitoring and evaluation practices in Isiolo County. It used qualitative research with the questionnaire as the main data collection tool. The scholar used stratified random sampling to attain a sample size of 178 who were made up of county representatives, project managers, community health workers, chiefs, and assistant chiefs. The collected data will be presented using tables and measures of central tendency, qualitative data will be analyzed by use of content and thematic analysis, whereas quantitative data was analyzed by use of descriptive statistics (frequency, median and mean).

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Demographics

Demographic information is information concerning the respondents and it is essential in the establishment of whether the participants of the survey were a fair representation of the population for purposes of results generalization. Table 1 below shows the demographic features of the study's participants.

Table 1 Demographics

Demographic factor	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	94	55.6
	Female	75	44.4
Age	20-30 years	26	15.4
	31-40 years	74	43.8
	41-50 years	51	30.2
	51 and above	18	10.6
Education	Secondary	15	8.9
	Certificate	31	18.3
	Diploma	75	44.4
	Degree	36	21.3
	Masters	12	7.1
Years been a resident of Isiolo county	Less than 2 years	27	15.9
	3-5 years	63	37.4
	Over 5 years	79	46.7

The results on the gender of respondents showed that 55.6% were male whereas 44.4% were females. That means that the male respondents were more compared to the female ones. That could be because males in the regions tend to be more educated than females. On the participants' age, the results demonstrated that most of the participants 43.8% were aged 31 to 40 years, 30.2% were aged 41 to 50 years, ages 20 to 30 years and above 50 years were 15.4% and 10.6% respectively. That showed that data was collected on relatively older persons and that they had information on the implementation of health projects in Isiolo County as they are likely to have seen the initiation of many projects in the county. Data on the education background showed that 8.9% had secondary education, 18.3 had certificate as their highest education level, 44.4% had diploma, 21.3% had degree, and 7.1 had a masters' degree as the highest education level. The results were proof that most of the participants had education qualifications that allowed them to understand about Isiolo County health projects and the monitoring of the same.

The research participants were also required to tick the number of years they have been in Isiolo County. 15.9% indicated that they have been residents for less than 2 years, 37.4% for 3 to 5 years, while 46.7 had been residents for more than 5 years. That shows that most respondents had been in Isiolo county for over 5 years then those who had been there for 3 to 5 years. It means that the selected sample was conversant with implementation of health projects and their monitoring in Isiolo County and could thus provide information needed for the study.

4.2 The M&E planning process and the implementation of health projects

The researcher wanted to evaluate the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning process on the implementation of health projects in Isiolo County, Kenya. Therefore, the respondents were asked whether there are usually M&E plans for health projects. 91 (53.8%) indicated yes, 53 (31.3%) indicated no, while 25 (14.8%) stated that they were not sure. Those who indicated yes were requested to indicate when the M&E plans were developed and who develops them. 66 (72.5%) of the yes respondents indicated that the plans were developed at the beginning of the execution phase while 25 (27.4%) stated that the plans were developed in the project proposal stage. 71 (78%) indicated that the plans were developed by the M&E managers, 20 (22%) indicated that they were developed by M&E professional team and none thought they were developed by all stakeholders.

Using the likert scale, the researcher investigated different factors of monitoring and evaluation planning that showed the influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on implementation of health projects in Isiolo County. The responses of the participants were measured according to a scale of 1-5 in which 1- strongly agree 2- agree 3-not sure 4- disagree 5-strongly. The findings of the analysis are shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2 The influence of monitoring and evaluation planning on implementation of health projects in Isiolo County

Statement		1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD
Monitoring and evaluation of a project should be prepared in the planning phase	F	65	58	21	16	9	3.91124	3.57
	%	38.4	34.3	12.4	9.4	5.3		
During M&E the project’s work environment is considered	F	43	52	23	26	25	3.367	3.147
	%	25.4	30.8	13.6	15.4	14.8		
There are timelines in the M&E process	F	52	47	17	30	23	3.443	3.232
	%	30.8	27.8	10	17.8	13.6		
There is a M&E plan for resources to be used	F	41	30	16	39	43	2.923	2.830
	%	24.3	17.8	9.5	23.0	25.4		
M&E planning should consider all the activities of a project and allow adjustments	F	47	39	14	35	34	3.177	3.040
	%	27.8	23.1	8.3	20.7	20.1		

From Table 2, it is proof that 65 (38.4%) strongly agreed that the M&E plan of a health project should be prepared during the planning phase, 58 (34.3%) agreed, 21 (12.4%) were not sure, 16 (9.4%) disagreed, and 9 (5.3%) strongly disagreed. A mean of 3.911 and the standard deviation of 3.570 were realized on the statement. On the question on whether project’s work environment is considered during M&E, high number of the respondents 52 (30.8%) and 43 (25.4%) agreed and strongly agreed respectively

while 26 (15.4%) and 25 (14.8%) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively, and 23 (13.6%) were not sure. The mean was 3.367 and the standard deviation for this statement was 3.147, indicating quite a range among the respondents' answers. On the statement of timelines in the monitoring and evaluation process, 52(30.8%) strongly agreed, 47 (27.8) agreed with the statement. However, some respondents (30 (17.8%) and 23 (13.6%) disagreed and strongly disagreed and 17 (10%) were not sure. The mean was 3.443 and the standard deviation was found to be 3.232.

On the statement that there is a monitoring and evaluation plan for resources to be used, 41 (24.3%) strongly agreed, 43 (25.4%) strongly disagreed, 39 (23%) disagreed, 30 (17.8%) agreed, and 16 (9.5%) were not sure with the correctness of the statement. The mean was 2.923, while the standard deviation was 2.830.

47 (27.8%) of the participants strongly agreed that M&E planning should consider all the activities of a project and allow adjustment. 39 (23.1%) agreed, 14 (8.3%) were not sure, 35 (20.7%) disagreed, and 34 (20.1%) strongly disagreed with that statement. The mean was 3.178 and the standard deviation was 3.040.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that M&E planning process as a practice of monitoring and evaluation influenced the implementation of health projects. That was attributed to the high impact on the implementation of health projects in Isiolo County by M&E plans performed in the project planning phase, work environment consideration in M&E, planning for all the M&E activities, and consideration of all M&E aspects.

Based on the study findings, the County government of Isiolo should use an effective stakeholders' involvement strategy that would allow stakeholders to participate in the M&E of health projects.

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