Influence of Monitoring and Evaluation Staff Capacity on Performance of Projects Funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County, Kenya

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Abstract
This study sought to determine the influence of M & E staff capacity on performance of projects linked to Faith based organizations in Meru North. In doing this the Theory of Change was applied as the guiding theory. A descriptive cross sectional survey research design was applied to collect data from 47 Faith Based Organizations in Meru North. From the target population of 347, a sample of 186 respondents comprising of steering committee, resource officers, team leaders and project committee members were selected for this study. Questionnaires were administered as the instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using SPSS (version 25) and presented through descriptive and inferential statistics. The study found that technical experts are employed to run the respective areas in the projects, that project staff are trained in order to equip them with skills necessary to carry out M&E and that the skills and competence of the staff helps them to participate effectively in Monitoring and evaluation. It was concluded that M&E staff capacity has a great influence on the performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya. The study recommends that the organizations should provide adequate training for field staff involved in monitoring and evaluation.

Key words: Kenya, Meru, Monitoring and Evaluation, Staff Capacity, Performance of Projects, Faith Based Organizations (FBOs)
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1.0 Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation improves overall efficiency and effectiveness of projects. Most of the projects initiated by Faith Based Organisations have the main goal of changing positively the socio-political and economic status of the residents of a given region. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) accounts for progress of activities or success of output of these projects. Naidoo (2011) noted that if the M&E function is located in a section or associated with significant power in terms of decision-making, it is more likely to be taken seriously. This means that the monitoring team needs to be enhanced and strengthened in order for it to have more power which will increase its effectiveness. In addition to power of M&E teams other factors also play a role in strengthening monitoring teams which includes: frequency of scope monitoring to identify changes, number of persons monitoring project schedule, extent of monitoring to detect cost over runs, (Ling et al., 2009). Magondu (2013) also noted that the capacity of staff involved in monitoring and evaluation activities is vital not only on the success of the M&E function but also the success of the entire project. Therefore, there is great need for members of staff to be equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills for performance M&E roles.

Though monitoring and evaluation practices have substantial cost, time as well as human resource implications, they are very vital for projects performance and should not be overlooked (Khan, 2013). Monitoring and Evaluation activities supports both project managers and staff in the process of understanding whether the projects are progressing on schedule or meet their objectives, inputs, activities and deadlines (Solomon & Young, 2007). It is therefore, important to ensure that project management along with the donor agencies are focused and committed to monitoring and evaluation of their projects (Dyason, 2010). It is important that the project managers the vital role played by M&E staff. Monitoring provides the background for reducing schedule and cost overruns (Crawford & Bryce, 2003), while ensuring that required quality standards are achieved in project implementation. Monitoring and Evaluation are regarded as core tools for enhancing the quality of project management.

Statement of the Problem

Over the year’s organizations running projects in Kenya have recorded increased funding but there has been little or no assessment on the grass root capacities for these organizations to implement projects successfully. This has led to varied outcomes across different sectors. There has been increased number of litigations, wastage of resources, negative reputation of clients and professionals involved in unsuccessful projects as well as lack of envisioned product, service or change (Jugdev & Muller, 2012). Not only does best practices require that projects are monitored for control but also project stakeholders require transparency, accountability for resource use and impact, good project performance and organizational learning to benefit future projects. Projects regularly complain of poor performance of the projects or projects taking long time to complete and others not complete at all. This has resulted in a gaping underperformance of many projects nMonitoring and evaluation,
although very essential in improving performance, is also very complex, multidisciplinary and skill intensive processes. Building a resulted based M&E system is a requirement by the growing pressure to improving performance which is also one of the requirements by the FBO and donor’s to check on the effective use of the donor funds, impact and benefits brought by the projects. Hence there is a need for establishment of rules for constructing minimum parameters for monitoring and evaluation for projects that can be used to track progress and effectiveness only in Kenya but worldwide.

1.0 Literature Review

Good project performance entails that the project covers its scope within schedule and budget and attaining its set objectives. Effective M&E of projects is usually one of the ingredients of good performance. It provides means of accountability, demonstrating transparency to the stakeholders and facilities organizational learning through documenting lessons learned in the implementation of the project and incorporating the same in the subsequent project planning and implementation or through sharing experiences with other implementers (World Bank, 2012).

The M&E system cannot function without skilled people who effectively execute the M&E tasks for which they are responsible. Therefore, understanding the skills needed and the capacity of people involved in the M&E system (undertaking human capacity assessments) and addressing capacity gaps (through structured capacity development programs) is at the heart of the M&E system (Gorgens & Kusek, 2010). In its framework for a functional M&E system, UNAIDS (2012) notes that, not only is it necessary to have dedicated and adequate numbers of M&E staff, it is essential for this staff to have the right skills for the work. Moreover, M&E human capacity building requires a wide range of activities, including formal training, in-service training, mentorship, coaching and internships. M&E capacity building should focus not only on the technical aspects of M&E, but also address skills in leadership, financial management, facilitation, supervision, advocacy and communication. Monitoring and evaluation carried out by untrained and inexperienced people is bound to be time consuming, costly and the results generated could be impractical and irrelevant. Therefore, this will definitely impact the success of projects (Nabris, 2002). In assessment of CSOs in the Pacific, UNDP (2012) discusses some of the challenges of organizational development as having inadequate monitoring and evaluation systems. Additionally, the lack of capabilities and opportunities to train staff in technical skills in this area is clearly a factor to be considered.

Human capital training needs is paramount for reliable monitoring and evaluation stipulating that staff working must have the necessary staff capacity in M & E for them to guarantee monitoring and evaluation results that are of high quality (Uitto, 2010). Employing an M & E practice that is effective requires management to selectively appoint the right skills, enhance the capacities by further developing the skill on a regular basis. The training needs assessment should be accurate, monitored and executed diligently by the team responsible for the human capital management. Project research skills in project management encourage the team to have base data for the human capital skill retention, development and enhancement (Turner, 2011). M & E practical training is important in capacity building of personnel because it helps with the interaction and management of the M & E systems. M & E training starts with the understanding of the M & E Theory and ensuring that the team understands the linkages between the project Theory of change and the results framework as well as
associated indicators (Rossi, 2012). Skills are of significant importance to a monitoring and evaluation practice that is effective; the staff needs trained on the basics of evaluation. In the context of project performance evaluations, it is necessary to have devoted and sufficient numbers of monitoring and evaluation staff, it is critical for this project evaluators to have the correct M & E skills. Professionally trained staff and a budget were a key requirement in Malawi when they were implementing the monitoring and evaluation system (Rossi, 2012). There is noted unbalanced utilization of monitoring and evaluation personnel where they mainly assign tasks other than monitoring and evaluation. This create extra burden for them to concentrate on project M & E related work. Time then becomes a challenge for them to manage the entire process completely and advocate widely for its use leading to ineffective monitoring and evaluation.

Human capital, with notable experience is vital for the achievement of M & E results. There is need for a sound M & E human resource capital in regard to quantity and quality, hence M & E human resource strategies are needed for the achievement and maintenance of a stable M & E (World Bank, 2012). Competent employees are a major obstacle in selecting M & E practices. M & E being a new tool in project management field, it faces challenges in sustainable results and performances matrices. There is a big gap for skilled M & E professionals, capacity building of M & E systems, and harmonization of project management courses and technical support.

1.1 Theoretical Foundation

This study was anchored on the Theory of Change. This theory was put forward in 1950s by Kirkpatrick. Theory of Change is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation and evaluation that is used in the philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. Theory of Change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions (Brest, 2010). Theory of Change explains the process of change by outlining causal linkages in an initiative, that is, its shorter-term, intermediate and longer-term outcomes. The identified changes are mapped, as the outcome’s pathway, showing each outcome in logical relationship to all the others, as well as chronological flow. The links between outcomes are explained by rationales or statements of why one outcome is thought to be a prerequisite for another (Clark & Taplin, 2012).

The innovation of Theory of Change lies in making the distinction between desired and actual outcomes, and in requiring stakeholders to model their desired outcomes before they decide on forms of intervention to achieve those outcomes. A common error in describing Theory of Change is the belief that it is simply a methodology for planning and evaluation, (Taplin, Clark, Collins & Colby, 2013). Theory of Change is instead a form of critical Theory that ensures a transparent distribution of power dynamics. Further, the process is necessarily inclusive of many perspectives and participants in achieving solutions. A Theory of Change can be developed retrospectively by reading Program documents, talking to stakeholders and analyzing data. This is often done during monitoring and evaluations, reflecting what has worked or not in order to understand the past and plan for the future. Therefore, this Theory will be used in relation to the monitoring and evaluation skills required by staff in M&E planning, data collection and analysis. Theory of Change can begin at any stage of an initiative, depending on the intended use.
2.0 Methodology
A cross-sectional descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. This was found to be appropriate because data was collected from all the projects at one point in time. The target population of the study comprised of the management of the 47 Faith Based Organizations in Meru North Sub-County consisting of 92 steering committee, 64 resource officers, 87 team leaders and 104 project committee members giving a total of 347. To determine the sample size, Slovin’s formula was used to give a sample size of 186 respondents.

\[ n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} \]

Where
\[ n = \text{number of samples} \]
\[ N = \text{total population} \]
\[ e = 0.05 \text{ (margin of error)} \]
\[ n = \frac{347}{1+347*0.05^2} \]
\[ n = 186 \text{ respondents} \]

The study employed stratified sampling technique. This ensured that all subgroups in the population were included in the study. To ensure adequate representation, the population was first clustered in three main categories i.e. Project Officers, Program Managers and Project committee members. Each category was further stratified as follows: under project officers there were steering committee members, resource officers and team leaders, under Program managers there were both middle and top level managers.

Primary data was obtained using self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was made up of both open-ended and closed ended questions. Open-ended questions enabled the researcher to collect sufficient qualitative data. This was in order to gain a better understanding and more insightful interpretation of the results from the study. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained by determining the internal consistency of the tools which was computed using cronbach’s alpha coefficient that gave 0.702. Data collected from the responder was first checked for completeness and comprehensiveness. The returned and duly filled questionnaires were verified, coded and tallied. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Inferential data analysis was carried out by the use of regression model to determine the strength of the relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables. The regression equation was; \( Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \varepsilon \)

Where: \( Y \) = Performance of Projects
\( \beta_0 \) = Constant Term
\( \beta_1 \) = Beta coefficients
\( X_1 \) = Staff Capacity
\( \varepsilon \) = Error term

3.0 Findings and discussions
This section contains presentation of findings and discussions
3.1 Response Rate
Questionnaires were administered to sample of 186 out of which 144 were fully filled and returned. This gave a response rate of 77.4% which was within what Song, Coit, Feng and Peng (2014) prescribed as a significant response rate for statistical analysis and established at a minimal value of 50%. The findings are shown in Table 1.
Table 1: Response Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>144</th>
<th>77.4%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-response</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>186</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

3.2 Descriptive Statistics

The section presents descriptive statistics for project performance, and monitoring and evaluation staff capacity. The findings for each variable are presented in the respective sections.

3.2.1 Project Performance

The respondents were requested to indicate their response on various statements on performance of projects measured using 1-5 Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=strongly agree). The findings are as shown in Table 2.

Table 1: Performance of Projects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projects are completed on time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects are completed within the budget</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>31.9</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The delivery of the projects is within the scope</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is high quality delivery of the projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

From the findings in Table 2 most of respondents strongly agreed with the statement that there is high quality delivery of the projects as shown by 50.7% and a mean of 4.340 and this means that the delivery of the projects was of high quality. Further majority of the respondents agreed with the statement that projects are completed within the budget as shown by 47.9% and a mean of 4.063 and this is indication that the completion of the projects is as per the set budget and hence no cost overruns. Moreover, most of the respondents agreed with the statement that projects are completed on time as shown by 34.7% and a mean of 3.8056 and this means that most of the projects have been completed within the set timelines and hence this indicates that instances of time overruns are minimal. However, most of the respondents were neutral on the statement that the delivery of the projects is within the scope as shown by 54.9% and a mean of 2.6736. In the overall the respondents felt that most of the projects performed as per the expectations of stakeholders.

3.2.2 Staff Capacity

The respondents were requested to indicate their response on various statements on staff capacity measured using 1-5 Likert scale (1= strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=strongly agree). Their responses are shown on Table 3.
Table 3: Staff Capacity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Dev.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical experts are employed to run the respective areas in the projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>50.7</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project staff are trained in order to equip them with skills necessary to carry out M&amp;E</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>35.4</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The staff have adequate experience in monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>37.8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The skills and competence of the staff helps them to participate effectively in Monitoring and evaluation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The level of education is considered in selection and recruitment of staff into M&amp;E team</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

As per the findings in Table 3, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that technical experts are employed to run the respective areas in the projects as illustrated by 50.7% and a mean of 4.403. Further, most of the respondents agreed that project staff are trained in order to equip them with skills necessary to carry out M&E as illustrated by 52.8% and a mean of 4.236. Most of the respondents also agreed that the skills and competence of the staff helps them to participate effectively in Monitoring and evaluation as illustrated by 34.7% and a mean of 3.819. However, majority were neutral on the statement that the level of education is considered in selection and recruitment of staff into M&E team as illustrated by 44.4% and a mean of 3.056. This is an indication that while recruiting and selecting the staff to be included in the monitoring and evaluation team it is not clear if the level of educations is considered. In addition, most of the respondents were neutral that the staffs have adequate experience in monitoring and evaluation as illustrated by 37.8% and a mean of 3.0000. In overall, it was established that staff capacity is considered as to be important in Monitoring and Evaluation.

3.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis

According to Ward (2013), correlation technique is used to analyze the degree of association between two variables. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to determine the strength and the direction of the relationship between project performance and monitoring and evaluation staff capacity. The findings are shown in Table 4.
As per Table 4.4 there is a positive relationship between performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations, a positive relationship between performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations and staff capacity as expressed by coefficient of 0.522.

### 4.7 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is applied when the study aims at establishing if a variable (independent) predicts another variable (dependent). This study sought to establish influence of monitoring and evaluation M&E staff capacity on the performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya. The findings are presented in various Tables.

#### Table 4.5 Regression Model Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>Std. Error of the Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.880</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>0.879</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

From the findings, the independent variables were statistically significant predicting the dependent variable since adjusted R square was 0.768. This implied that 76.8% variations in performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya are explained by staff capacity. Other institutional factors influencing performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya that were not covered in this study accounted for 23.2% which form the basis for further studies.

#### Table 4.25: ANOVA Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Regression</td>
<td>378.098</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>94.525</td>
<td>119.648</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residual</td>
<td>109.813</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>0.790</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>487.911</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>642.810</strong></td>
<td><strong>196.252</strong></td>
<td><strong>.000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F-critical (obtained from F tables)= 2.4140

Source: Field data
From the ANOVA Table 4.15, p-value was 0.000 and F-calculated was 119.648. Since p-value was less than 0.05 and the F-calculated was greater than F-critical (2.4140), then the regression relationship was significant in determining how M&E staff capacity influenced performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>0.971</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>2.509</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff capacity</td>
<td>0.672</td>
<td>0.286</td>
<td>0.588</td>
<td>2.350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

The established model for the study was:

\[ Y = 0.971 + 0.588X_1 \]

Where:
- \( Y \) = Performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya
- \( X_1 \) = M&E staff capacity

The regression equation in table 4.5 has established that taking (M&E staff capacity), performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya would be 0.971. The findings presented show that a unit increase in the scores of staff capacity would lead to 0.588 increase in the scores of performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya in Kenya. The variable was significant since calculated \( t \) (2.35) was greater than table value of \( t \) (1.658). This showed that M&E staff capacity had great influence on the performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations in Meru North, Meru County Kenya.

### 4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concluded that staff capacity influence performance of projects funded by Faith Based Organizations significantly. The study deduced that technical experts are employed to run the respective areas in the projects, that that project staff are trained in order to equip them with skills necessary to carry out M&E and that that the skills and competence of the staff helps them to participate effectively in Monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, the study found that the level of education is considered in selection and recruitment of staff into M&E team.

The study recommends that the organizations should come up with policies that support adequate training of the field staff involved in monitoring and evaluation through offer of adequate training for the requisite skills. The study further recommends that the government should promote formulation and implementing measures that would enhance efficient monitoring and evaluation of government projects to achieve success in project performance in an effort to achieve better development and achieve vision 2030. The study further recommends that employees need to be well trained on selective monitoring planning practices and network diagrams and frameworks need to be made use of scheduling organization projects.

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