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FACTORS INFLUENCING IMPLEMENTATION OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION IN HIV RESEARCH PROJECTS IN RWANDA: A CASE OF PROJET SAN FRANCISCO (PSF)

JEAN PIERRE NKURANGA[1], Dr. PATRICK MULYUNGI[2]

[1]Student: Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kigali, Rwanda.
[2]Lecturer: Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Kigali, Rwanda.

Abstract: **Monitoring and evaluation system is a fundamental tool in project management aimed at checking whether the projects' objectives and goals are being achieved. It improves the overall efficiency of project planning, management and implementation. Many of the projects funded or initiated by donors have ended up collapsing either within the project period while others that survived the project period have not proceeded further after the termination of donor support. This has raised the questions; do these projects have a well-designed monitoring and evaluations plan to ensure effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation practices? The purpose of this project was to investigate the factors that influence the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation in HIV research projects at Project San Francisco (PSF). This study was meant to establish how financial availability, staff participation, management commitment, and relevant skills influence implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems in HIV research projects which are mainly donor funded. The research design that was applied on this study was a survey design where a census of the target population was done using questionnaires as the instruments of data collection. Descriptive statistics was used as the method of data analysis. This study targeted San Francisco project which is internationally funded and has been actively involved in research for the HIV Vaccine. About 103 respondents from Project San Francisco was formally interviewed using structured questionnaires. Briefing, rapport building, and piloting of questionnaires and respondents was done and ensure their efficiency in terms of validity and reliability. The data collected was coded, keyed into SPSS (a computer software database version 21), organized, and cleaned for any errors that might have occurred during data collection. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics with aid of the SPSS and Microsoft Excel (computer software). Qualitative statistical techniques were used to describe and summarize data. The results were then interpreted in the form of descriptive statistics which are frequencies and percentages. The findings were presented in form of tables and figures. The findings indicate that management commitment is significantly correlated to implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project ($r=0.347$, $p<0.01$). This implies that management commitment would result to implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco. The study concludes that there is need for management to have commitment towards the success of the project. This will be reflected in terms of staff capacity building efforts, both in staffing and training. The management should give management commitment priority since it is a vital planning tool in project management.**

Keywords: **Monitoring, evaluation system, HIV research projects.**

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are essential components of results-based management (Rist, Boily & Martin, 2011). Results-based management involves deliberately gathering empirical evidence to know the extent to which intended results are being achieved so that modifications to the design and delivery of activities can be made to improve and account for performance in achieving intended outcome (Taplin, 2013). Furthermore, organizations successfully adopting RBM will need to have appropriate systems and procedures in place that collectively constitute an RBM regime (Robert, 2010).

M&E is made up of two different processes: monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring is the process of regular and systematic collection, analyzing and reporting information about a project's inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. Monitoring is therefore a way of improving efficiency and effectiveness of a project, by providing the management and stakeholders with project progressive development and achievement of its objectives within the allocated funds (World Bank, 2011). It therefore keeps track of the project work and informs the management when things go wrong. Hence it is an invaluable tool for good management as well as a useful base for evaluation. Monitoring is an internal function to a project and it involves: establishing indicators, setting up systems to collect information, collecting and recording and analyzing information, and using the information to inform day-to-day management. Monitoring is important since it necessitates the modification of activities if they emerge not to be achieving the desired results (Hunter, 2009 and Shapiro, 2011).

Project Management is hence acknowledged as being the most successful approach of managing changes brought about by projects. This is because it has techniques and tools that enable control and delivery of the project activities within given deliverables, timeframes and budget (Shapiro 2011). Monitoring and evaluation is one of the tools that help project managers know when plans are going according to plan and when conditions change. They provide the management with information to make decisions in regard to the project. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) is useful to all projects, big or small, because it helps in identifying project areas that are on target and those that need to be adjusted or replaced. Different types of projects require different types of M&E systems (Shapiro 2011). However, the most popular M&E systems with project managers are the ones developed on M&E Matrix, based on the Logical Framework Approach to monitoring and evaluation (Welsh et al., 2015).

Monitoring and Evaluation, ensures that the project/program results at levels of impact, outcome, output, process and input can be measured to provide the basis for accountability and informed decision making at both program and policy levels. Actually, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) of China which is leading in the world's economic growth expressed the keenness to strengthen mechanisms of Monitoring and Evaluation to ensure funds are well-spent (Wong, 2012). Monitoring and Evaluation was also used extensively in the USA government to measure its performance (Pfeiffer, 2011). This is indicative of the significance of Monitoring and evaluation in all nature of projects.

In the early years of the HIV and AIDS epidemic, project/program managers had little information about what interventions were likely to work in reducing the spread of the virus and little idea of how they might measure the success of their interventions beyond simply tracking HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS, 2010). As the body of knowledge surrounding HIV grows, so does the interest in monitoring and evaluating the success of the programs' impact on the lives of families and communities. This interest comes from national governments as well from the taxpayers, program directors, and international donors who support their efforts. The need for better monitoring and evaluation has also spawned a growing data collection instruments and indicators (UNAIDS, 2010).

In recognition of the challenges posed by the AIDS epidemic, the Government of Rwanda established policy guidelines in the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1997 on AIDS in Rwanda and in 1999; AIDS was declared a national disaster. A body to spearhead the coordination of interventions, the National AIDS Control Council (NACC), was created under the Office of the President to provide leadership and coordinate a multispectral response to the epidemic (NACC, 2015). The National HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework came at a time when there was increased need for accountability both to communities and development partners. With increased resources made available to respond to the epidemic, it has become mandatory for the national response to have timely and accurate data for assessing whether the interventions are making a difference and whether the resources are being used effectively to achieve the desired effect (NACC, 2015). This led to the implementation of national monitoring and evaluation system under NACC in Rwanda. Conar (2009), in his survey paper about challenges facing structural fund in UK noted lack of technical staff in monitoring and evaluation, difficulties in adopting monitoring and evaluation recommendations, poor partnership in carrying out monitoring and evaluation and infrequent reporting of monitoring and evaluation results. All as formulated by these challenges undermines the performance of the projects. This was attributed to the weak monitoring and evaluation systems. It was documented that many NEPAD projects in Africa are challenged by weak monitoring and evaluation systems (Alfate, 2009). This report is a reflection of many devolved programs in Rwanda which have not fully achieved their objectives due to the same reasons given by the NEPAD. Management hitches in most projects in Rwanda were pointed out and attributed to lack of commitment from the management to allocate budget for implementation of an effective monitoring and evaluation system (UNEP, 2010; (IFAD, 2012).

Organizations that had developed comprehensive strategic/operational plans seemed to have made the most progress with the regular monitoring of their work. It seemed much easier for them to meet with reporting requirements and also to reflect on their own progress meaningfully. Those organizations that had grasped and implemented such planning and monitoring systems seemed to enjoy working with them (Clarke, 2009). This is because Monitoring and Evaluation systems track what is being done and whether the project/program is making a difference. These systems allow project /program managers to calculate how to allocate resources to achieve the best overall result (UNAIDS, 2010). Global fund (2004), acknowledges that Monitoring and evaluation is one of the cornerstones of a country's response to fighting HIV and AIDS, TB and Malaria and strengthening health and community systems; it provides the information needed to make evidence-based decisions for program management and improvement, policy formulation, and advocacy. It also generates good-quality data to satisfy accountability requirements. Investing in strengthening a national monitoring and evaluation system is important as it will eventually save resources that may otherwise be spent in inefficient programs or overlapping activities supported by different partners. This emphasizes on the importance of a good monitoring and evaluation system toward achievement of the HIV Projects goals. This research was designed to investigate the factors that are vital to performing a successful monitoring and evaluation. It mainly looked into the role played by management commitment, financial availability, staff capacity, and relevant skills in implementation of Monitoring and Evaluation systems. Human capacity is one of the critical components required in an HIV monitoring and evaluation system. At the individual level, it is important for people to obtain and maintain the knowledge, skills and competencies (KSC) required to carry out the variety of duties for a particular professional position or among a team of people responsible for HIV monitoring and evaluation (UNAIDS, 2008).

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Success of projects plays a key role in achieving organization growth and development (Britton, 2009). Best practice requires that projects are monitored for control because stakeholders require transparency, accountability for resource use and its impact, worthy project performance and organizational learning which will assist in forthcoming projects (United Nations, 2008).

This research focused on the influence of management commitment, financial availability, staff capacity, and relevant skills on the implementation of monitoring and evaluation system. Finances have been a major challenge in most donor funded projects. Most HIV projects are donor funded and majority of them have been terminated due to lack of funding or misappropriation of funds (IFAD, 2012). This has resulted from poor management and lack of proper tools to assess the progress or show the accountability (Worldbank, 2014). The monitoring and evaluation system when implemented is the watch dog of success of these projects. The system will work as a guiding tool to the management and also making donors gain access to the progress of the project.

In Rwanda finances have been a major challenge in most donor funded projects (IFAD, 2012). Most HIV projects are donor funded and majority of them have been terminated due to lack of funding or misappropriation of funds (IFAD, 2012). This has resulted from poor management and lack of proper tools to assess the progress or show the accountability (Worldbank, 2014). From recent studies, it is evident that the monitoring and evaluation results are not being utilized in the monitoring and evaluation systems in Rwanda (Umugwaneza & Kule, 2016). Studies have also revealed challenges in sustainability of most projects due to lack of proper budgeting by management, lack of skills, and lack of enough staff for implementation of the monitoring and evaluation systems (Goyder, 2009).

A significant share of the failed projects in Rwanda is from government funded or donor funded projects (Holvoet & Liesbeth 2014). These projects usually undergo the necessary monitoring and evaluation processes which are often a requirement of the law. The paradox is, despite a consensus among scholars that proper monitoring and evaluation leads to project success, there are still cases of project failure in Rwanda. Further projects fail despite heavy presence of monitoring and evaluation activities. This therefore raises serious issues as to whether the monitoring and evaluation employed is effective enough to achieve project success. The monitoring team perhaps may be lacking the necessary capacity or strength to carry out their work effectively, or they may be approaching their work using incorrect methodologies. The project monitoring team may also be lacking the necessary management support.

There is a big knowledge gap that is required in monitoring and evaluation skills, budget and staff capacity to effectively implement the monitoring and evaluation systems in Rwanda. This study highlighted the influence of management, finances, skills, and staff capacity in implementation of monitoring and evaluation systems in HIV research project at Project San Francisco. The findings of the study attempted to provide a solution to the stated problem.

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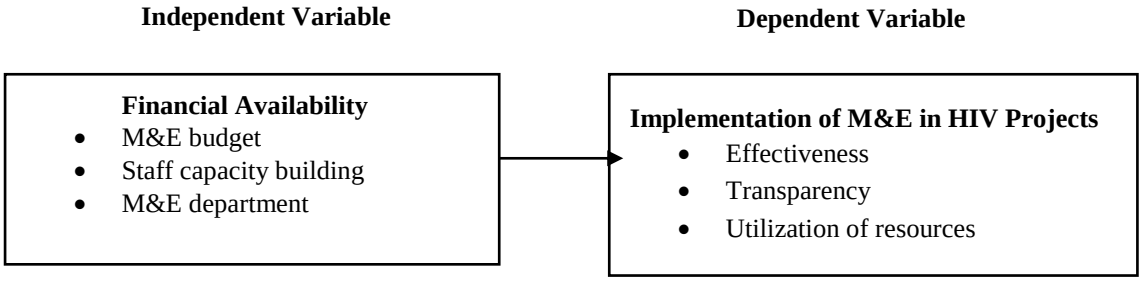
3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To establish the influence of financial availability controls on the implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco.

4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



5. RESEARCH DESIGN

A survey design which mainly describes the state of affairs of the issues under investigation or in other words is a fact-finding mission was used. Survey method was used because of the nature of San Francisco project, it is meant to describe a subject. This type of research also helps to collect information through description. Qualitative and quantitative approach was used. In quantitative approach the study employed data in form of numbers collected from employees of San Francisco project. Qualitative was used through interviews in order to establish the factors influencing implementation of San Francisco project.

6. TARGET POPULATION

According to Cooper and Schindler (2008), a population is a well-defined set of people, services, elements, and events, group of things or households that are being investigated.

San Francisco project staff has a total of 103 staffs in its three sites that are Centre Hospitalier Kigali (CHUK), the National HIV/AIDS Reference Laboratory, and the Ministry of Health's Treatment and Research on AIDS Center. Out of the entire San Francisco project staff only 103 were eligible to the study and comprised the target population. These included the project director, project managers in various departments, the IT staff, laboratory staff, nurses, doctors and data clerks, accountants and office staff.

Table 1: Target population

	Population
Project Directors	8
Project managers	6
IT staff	15
Accountants and clerks	21
Laboratory staff	18
Nurses	8
Doctors	6
Office staff	21
Total	**103**

7. SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Sampling is defined as the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they are selected (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013). Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Stratified random sampling technique ensures that different groups of a population are adequately represented in the sample. Stratified sampling divides the population into homogeneous groups such that the elements within each group are more alike than the elements in the population as a whole (Smith 2013).

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$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N\ (e)^2}$$

Where n = the desired sample size

e= probability of error (i.e., the desired precision, e.g., 0.05 for 95% confidence level)

N=the estimate of the population size.

$n = \frac{103}{1+103\ (0.05)^2} = 82$ Respodnets

8. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This study used questionnaires which are forms completed and returned by respondents. An inexpensive method that is useful where literacy rates are high and respondents are co-operative. They were the main tool for collecting data in this study due to their effectiveness. The respondents were given the questionnaires on hand delivery and the same approach was used to return the questionnaires. These were all self-administered.

Table 2: Respondents views on financial availability

Statements	5	4	3	2	1
Planning and performance monitoring in government have been predominantly characterized by a silo approach	-	-	1 (2%)	36 (51%)	33 (47%)
Planning and performance monitoring in government has resulted in a situation where planning, budgeting, and reporting and monitoring and evaluation functions are done by different sections in institutions in isolation of each other	-	3 (3%)	7 (10%)	30 (43%)	30 (43%)
Challenges of performance monitoring in government include the lack of accountability, particularly for monitoring and reporting on performance information, unrealistic target setting and poor quality of performance information.		9 (13%)	-	21 (30%)	40 (57%)
Monitoring and evaluation budget should be about 5 to 10 percent of the entire budget,		28 (40%)	12 (17%)	30 (43%)	-
The project budget should provide a clear and adequate provision for monitoring and evaluation events.		2 (3%)	12 (17%)	56 (80%)	-
Monitoring and evaluation budget can be obviously delineated within the overall project budget to give the monitoring and evaluation function the due recognition it plays in project running,		-	-	54 (77%)	16 (23%)
It is important to note that only 2% may be allocated for Monitoring and Evaluation of ongoing projects and capacity building activities while 5% is kept aside as an emergency reserve to be made available for emergencies that may occur		-	-	54 (77%)	16 (23%)

Table 2 shows that 47% of the study participant strongly agreed with the statement that Planning and performance monitoring in government have been predominantly characterized by a silo approach, 51% only agreed while (2%) were neutral with the statement. Majority (43%) agreed with the statement that Planning and performance monitoring in government has resulted in a situation where planning, budgeting, and reporting and monitoring and evaluation functions are done by different sections in institutions in isolation of each other, 43% strongly agreed with the statement while 10% were neutral and 3% disagreed with the statement. The table also shows that 57% of the respondents strongly agreed that Challenges of performance monitoring in government include the lack of accountability, particularly for monitoring and reporting on performance information, unrealistic target setting and poor quality of performance information, 30% only agreed while 13% disagreed with the statement. Majority (43%) of the respondents agreed that Monitoring and evaluation

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budget should be about 5 to 10 percent of the entire budget, 17% were neutral while 40% strongly disagreed. Additionally, no respondents strongly agreed that project budget should provide a clear and adequate provision for monitoring and evaluation events, 80% agreed, 17% were neutral while 3% disagreed. Furthermore, 23% strongly agreed that Monitoring and evaluation budget can be obviously delineated within the overall project budget to give the monitoring and evaluation function the due recognition it plays in project running while 77% only agreed with the statement. Lastly, 23% strongly agreed that It is important to note that only 2% may be allocated for Monitoring and Evaluation of ongoing projects and capacity building activities while 5% is kept aside as an emergency reserve to be made available for emergencies that may occur while 77% only agreed with the statement.

Most of the donor funded projects are faced with premature termination incase the donors withdraw because they lack a system to guide them and direct them on their progress to ensure sustainability (Lahey, 2015). The project directors and coordinators need to factor their own budget for implementing a monitoring and evaluation system when applying for funding (Worldbank, 2014). There is a confirmation from the study that finances are required to have a strong monitoring and evaluation system. It shows that the sponsor controls the monitoring and evaluation budget. This has led to the organization not having a monitoring and evaluation department and the exercise is controlled by the sponsor where the staffs for monitoring are sent and paid by the sponsor and the organization has no control.

Lack of adequate financial resources was noted to affect the performance as well as quality of monitoring and evaluation (Langi, 2008). Langi, further found out that project appraisal documents made limited provision for systematic baseline and subsequent beneficial surveys. The budget implications for baseline surveys, setting up management of monitoring and evaluation were systematically underestimated. It was recognized that failure to ensure spending of a reasonable proportion of resources on this important aspect of the program/ project management is likely to reduce internal learning and result in poor performance (Pasteur & Turall, 2016).

Table 3: Correlation between financial availability and implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco

		Financial availability	Implementation of M & E
Financial availability	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	70	
Implementation of M & E	Pearson Correlation	.466**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	70	70

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 indicate that Financial availability is significantly correlated to implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project ($r=0.466$, $p<0.01$). This implies that financial availability would result to implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco.

Regression analysis was done to determine the effect of financial availability on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco.

Table 4: Model summary showing Financial availability

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.791[a]	.626	.616	.561
a.	Predictors: (Constant), Financial availability			

This analysis of the financial availability obtained an adjusted R 61.6%. This implies that the simple linear model with financial availability as the independent variable explains 61.6% of the variations in implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco. This means that when Financial availability was used the implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco changed by 61.6%.

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Table 5: ANOVA results showing the effect of financial availability on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19.954	1	19.954	63.477	.000[a]
	Residual	11.946	72	.314		
	Total	31.900	73			

b. Dependent Variable: implementation of monitoring and evaluation

c. Predictors: (Constant), Financial availability

A regression analysis was done to determine the effect of financial availability on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco. From the analysis, a p-value less than 0.05 (p-value = 0.0000) was obtained. This implies that the simple linear model with financial availability as the only independent variable is significant.

Table 6: Coefficient results showing the relationship between financial availability on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco

Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**T**	**Sig.**
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta**		
1	(Constant)	.849	.338		2.509	.000
	Financial availability	.776	.097	.791	7.967	.000

a. Dependent variable: Implementation of monitoring and evaluation

Correlation coefficients show that Financial availability (X2) is significant (p-value = 0.0000) in influencing implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco (Y). The results of the analysis are shown in Table 6. The fitted model from this analysis is shown below:

$Y= 0.849+0.776X_2$

9. CONCLUSIONS

There is need for management to have commitment towards the success of the project. This will be reflected in terms of staff capacity building efforts, both in staffing and training. The management should give monitoring and evaluation priority since it is a vital planning tool in project management.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

This research suggests that organization should be able to raise enough funds from the project sponsors or donors in order to have staff capacity in terms of numbers and skills in M&E. This can be done during proposal writing to include a budget for M&E; and administration costs for officers involved in the projects. The study also suggested the organization to set up a M&E department to manage all monitoring and evaluation activities within the organization. This is effective because would cut down the costs of hiring officers to monitor every project. It ensures accountability and sustainability of project should donors withdraw.

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