

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and Performance of Humanitarian Projects of World Vision in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract: This study examined the effect of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks on the performance of humanitarian projects implemented by World Vision in Nairobi City County, Kenya. Despite the organization's significant contribution to child welfare through education, water and sanitation, and human rights programs, project performance remains challenged by delays, cost overruns, unmet objectives, and beneficiary dissatisfaction. The study specifically assessed the influence of M&E planning, budgeting, staff skills, and baseline surveys on project performance. Guided by the Theory of Change and Contingency Theory, the study adopted an exploratory research design targeting 107 projects and 749 employees, with a sample of 261 respondents selected using Yamane's formula and systematic sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis. Findings revealed that M&E planning, staff skills, and baseline surveys significantly enhance project performance, while M&E budgeting had a positive but statistically insignificant effect. The study concludes that effective M&E systems are critical to improving humanitarian project outcomes. It recommends strengthening M&E planning, enhancing staff capacity, improving budget utilization, and institutionalizing baseline surveys supported by modern data systems.

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation Framework; Project Performance; Humanitarian Projects; Theory of Change; World Vision Kenya.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humanitarian organizations play a vital role in addressing social vulnerabilities and promoting economic stability through development and relief interventions targeting vulnerable populations (Dashti et al., 2021). The global humanitarian sector has expanded significantly, with countries such as Russia, India, and China hosting large numbers of organizations (Anjete, 2023). These organizations implement projects whose performance is assessed based on achievement of objectives within time, cost, quality, and scope constraints (Kariega, 2020; PMI, 2013), making project performance central to organizational effectiveness and beneficiary satisfaction (Bannerman, 2008).

Despite this importance, humanitarian projects frequently underperform globally and regionally. Only 32% of projects in the United States are successful, while 24% fail and 44% are challenged (Standish Group, 2019). Similar trends are observed in India and parts of Africa due to weak project management practices, limited stakeholder engagement, delays, and cost overruns (Duale & Kaumbulu, 2023; Kivuva, 2022). In Kenya, about 30% of humanitarian projects fail, and more than half do not meet stakeholder expectations (Mathew, 2019; Falin, 2019), with comparable challenges reported in organizations such as World Vision Kenya (Jaleta, 2019).

Project performance is defined as the extent to which intended objectives are achieved through efficient and effective use of resources (Kwanyirigira, 2022). While traditionally measured using the triple constraint of time, cost, and quality, contemporary approaches also incorporate efficiency, effectiveness, stakeholder satisfaction, sustainability, and outcome

achievement (Favoretto & Calvalho, 2021; Garcia, 2008). This shift reflects increasing complexity in humanitarian operations and rising demands for accountability.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) has emerged as a key mechanism for improving project performance. Monitoring ensures continuous tracking of implementation progress, while evaluation assesses outcomes and effectiveness (UNDP, 2009). M&E strengthens decision-making, accountability, learning, and resource allocation (Chege & Bowa, 2020) and has evolved into a strategic management tool for development and humanitarian agencies (Okafor, 2021). Its effectiveness depends on planning, budgeting, staff competency, and baseline surveys (Atwa & Mudi, 2019; Kheswa, 2020; Diale & Nethengwe, 2019; Mbogo & Mirara, 2022; Kaberia & Mburugu, 2019; Muchiri et al., 2021; Estrella & Gaventa, 2010; Gaibo & Mbugua, 2019).

In Kenya, humanitarian organizations are key contributors to poverty reduction, health, education, and community development. The country hosts 9,794 active organizations implementing projects worth over Kshs 118 billion (NGO Coordination Board, 2023), with Nairobi City County serving as a major hub for interventions (Nairobi City County, 2024). Despite its impact, World Vision Kenya continues to face implementation challenges such as delays, cost overruns, and unmet objectives (Jaleta, 2019).

Although prior studies have examined M&E and project performance across sectors such as water, energy, and education, most have been conducted outside humanitarian contexts or in different geographic settings (Atwa & Mudi, 2019; Wambua, 2019; Oduor & Odhiambo, 2024; Diale & Nethengwe, 2019). This creates a contextual gap, particularly regarding humanitarian projects in Nairobi City County and World Vision Kenya. Therefore, this study investigates the effect of monitoring and evaluation frameworks on the performance of World Vision humanitarian projects in Nairobi City County, Kenya

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The study was anchored on the Theory of Change, Contingency Theory, and Results Theory to explain the relationship between monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and humanitarian project performance. The Theory of Change, developed by Carol Weiss in 1990, explains how project activities and interventions lead to intended outcomes and long-term impacts through a logical sequence of change (Serrat, 2017). The theory emphasizes the importance of defining project goals, expected outcomes, outputs, and activities during project planning to facilitate effective implementation and monitoring. It also supports stakeholder engagement, learning, accountability, and decision-making in project management (Prinsen & Nijhof, 2015; Oberlack et al., 2019). In humanitarian organizations, the theory is important because it demonstrates how projects can create positive social change and improve beneficiary welfare through effective monitoring and evaluation processes (Matimba, 2023). However, the theory may be limited by weak stakeholder consultation and power imbalances between donors and implementing agencies, which can undermine critical reflection and learning (Valters, 2014; Hamdy, 2019).

The study also adopted Contingency Theory, developed by Fred Fiedler in 1958, which argues that organizational effectiveness depends on the extent to which management practices fit prevailing environmental conditions (Shala et al., 2021). The theory views organizations as open systems that must adapt to environmental uncertainties, stakeholder demands, and operational challenges to remain effective (Thomson, 2003). Key concepts associated with the theory include adaptation, congruency, equifinality, and effectiveness (Tosi & Slocum, 1984). In humanitarian project settings, the theory explains how organizations such as World Vision can improve project performance by aligning project activities with stakeholder needs and environmental realities. Results Theory, advanced by Gibson (2016), further emphasizes that project implementation should remain outcome-oriented, with project activities aligned to intended goals and measurable results. The theory highlights the importance of monitoring and evaluation in tracking project progress and ensuring that interventions contribute to desired outcomes.

Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of M&E practices in enhancing project performance. Studies on M&E planning indicate that proper planning improves project coordination, efficiency, timelines, and achievement of objectives. For instance, Ndothya and Chege (2023) established that M&E planning significantly influenced project performance among CARE International projects in Nairobi City County. Similarly, Worku (2023) found a strong relationship between M&E planning and project performance among Danish Refugee Council projects in Ethiopia, while Muhayimana and Kamuhana (2020) reported that M&E planning enhanced efficiency and reduced project delays and costs.

Ivan (2019) and Kirori and Karanja (2019) also observed that M&E planning improved project success through effective target setting, stakeholder engagement, and feasibility assessments.

Studies on M&E budgeting similarly reveal that adequate financial allocation for M&E activities enhances project implementation and performance. Naisiae and Mungai (2024) found that M&E budgeting improved health project performance in Narok County by facilitating effective monitoring activities and improving data quality. Ouma and Nyang'au (2024) further established that humanitarian organizations in Nairobi City County with structured M&E budgets experienced improved resource utilization and project effectiveness. Comparable findings were reported by Peter (2024) in Tanzania and Mbogo and Mirara (2022), who concluded that adequate and timely M&E budgeting strengthens project planning and implementation.

Empirical evidence also highlights the importance of staff competency in M&E processes. Kamau and Muchelule (2024) established that staff training and technical expertise positively influenced project performance in Somaliland. Similarly, Otieno and Muchelule (2024) reported that training frequency, expertise, and stakeholder engagement significantly improved irrigation project performance in Siaya County. Musyimi and Ondara (2022) and Theogenie and Njenga (2022) further found that technical expertise, capacity building, and staff competency enhanced project implementation and overall project outcomes.

Baseline surveys have also been identified as an important component of M&E frameworks because they provide benchmark information for project planning and performance tracking. Achieng (2023) found a strong positive relationship between baseline surveys and project performance among community-based organizations in Kibera. Ahmed (2022) similarly reported that baseline surveys significantly improved performance of water projects in Somalia through effective data collection, storage, and analysis systems. However, Koima and Mukulu (2020) reported a negative effect of baseline surveys on project performance at KALRO due to inadequate utilization of stakeholder feedback and poor application of survey findings in project improvement. Overall, the reviewed studies demonstrate that effective M&E planning, budgeting, staff competency, and baseline surveys contribute significantly to improved project performance, although contextual and sectoral differences justify further investigation within humanitarian organizations such as World Vision Kenya.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed an explanatory research design to examine the relationship between monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks and project performance at World Vision Kenya. The design was appropriate for establishing cause-and-effect relationships using quantitative data analysis (Ansari et al., 2022).

The target population comprised 150 project managers involved in 107 World Vision Kenya projects implemented in 2023 (World Vision, 2023). Respondents were selected from employees based at the Nairobi head office who participated in monitoring and evaluation activities. Simple random sampling was used to ensure equal selection chances for all respondents, while Yamane's formula generated a sample size of 109 participants.

Primary data were collected using structured closed-ended questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale. The questionnaire covered demographic information, M&E framework components, and project performance indicators. A pilot study involving 26 respondents from CARE International was conducted to test the instrument's clarity, reliability, and validity (Polit & Beck, 2017; Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Instrument validity was ensured through content, construct, and face validity, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients. The overall reliability score was 0.91, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7, thus confirming strong internal consistency (Shuttleworth, 2015).

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while multiple linear regression was used to determine the effect of M&E planning, M&E budgeting, M&E staff skills, and baseline surveys on project performance (Cooksey & Cooksey, 2020).

Ethical standards were observed throughout the study. Respondents participated voluntarily, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and approval to conduct the study was obtained from relevant authorities, including Kenyatta University, NACOSTI, and World Vision Kenya (Akaranga & Makau, 2016)

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The study examined the influence of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework components on project performance at World Vision Kenya using descriptive statistics. Respondents generally agreed that M&E planning, budgeting, staff skills, and baseline surveys positively contributed to project performance, with aggregate mean scores ranging from 3.89 to 4.01.

4.1.1 M&E Planning

M&E planning was assessed through project design, scheduling, scope, reflection, and stakeholder communication.

Table 4.1: M&E Planning and Project Performance

| M&E Planning | N | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----|-------------|-------------|
| Project design aligns with objectives and stakeholder requirements | 94 | 4.04 | 0.96 |
| Activities are logically scheduled according to objectives | 94 | 4.05 | 0.95 |
| Project scope is realistic and objective-based | 94 | 3.95 | 1.05 |
| Critical reflection is incorporated in M&E planning | 94 | 4.01 | 0.99 |
| Stakeholder communication is integrated in planning | 94 | 4.02 | 0.98 |
| Aggregate Mean | | 4.01 | 0.99 |

The findings indicate that M&E planning was strongly embedded in project implementation, particularly in project design, scheduling, and stakeholder communication. Respondents agreed that effective planning enhanced coordination, accountability, and project tracking, consistent with previous studies linking M&E planning to improved project performance (Murunga & Njoroge, 2024; Otieno & Muchelule, 2024). The findings also support the Theory of Change, which emphasizes planning and critical reflection as essential for achieving desired project outcomes.

4.1.2 M&E Budgeting

M&E budgeting assessed adequacy of funds, allocation, utilization, timeliness, and adherence to budget provisions.

Table 4.2: M&E Budgeting and Project Performance

| M&E Budgeting | N | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----|-------------|-------------|
| Adequate funds exist for M&E activities | 94 | 3.93 | 1.07 |
| Budget utilization supports all M&E activities | 94 | 3.96 | 1.04 |
| Budget is regularly allocated to M&E | 94 | 4.07 | 0.93 |
| Timely provision of M&E budget | 94 | 3.87 | 1.13 |
| Strict adherence to M&E budget usage | 94 | 3.95 | 1.05 |
| Aggregate Mean | | 3.96 | 1.04 |

Respondents agreed that World Vision Kenya consistently allocated financial resources to M&E activities, enabling effective monitoring and reporting. Regular budgeting and timely release of funds enhanced implementation efficiency and project oversight. These findings align with studies by Ouma and Nyang'au (2024) and Muchiri et al. (2022), which established that adequate M&E financing improves project coordination and performance.

4.1.3 M&E Staff Skills

M&E staff skills were evaluated through training, technological competence, experience, mentorship, and leadership training.

Table 4.3: M&E Staff Skills and Project Performance

| M&E Staff Skills | N | Mean | Std. Dev |
|---|----|-------------|-------------|
| Staff are well trained in M&E processes | 94 | 3.95 | 1.05 |
| Staff possess technological M&E skills | 94 | 3.84 | 1.16 |
| Staff are experienced in M&E activities | 94 | 3.87 | 1.13 |
| Organization encourages mentorship on M&E protocols | 94 | 3.90 | 1.10 |
| Staff receive leadership training in M&E | 94 | 3.87 | 1.13 |
| Aggregate Mean | | 3.89 | 1.11 |

The findings demonstrate that staff capacity building, training, mentorship, and technical competence positively supported project implementation. Skilled M&E personnel improved data management and decision-making processes, thereby enhancing project outcomes. The results corroborate earlier studies linking staff competency with effective project execution and monitoring (Koimur, 2024; Moussa & Akims, 2024).

4.1.4 M&E Baseline Survey

The study assessed feedback collection, indicator coverage, timing, reporting, and use of modern tools in baseline surveys.

Table 4.4: M&E Baseline Survey and Project Performance

| M&E Baseline Survey | N | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----|-------------|-------------|
| Personnel are involved in feedback collection | 94 | 3.88 | 1.12 |
| All project indicators are covered in baseline surveys | 94 | 4.11 | 0.89 |
| Baseline surveys are conducted at the right time | 93 | 3.93 | 1.07 |
| Quality reports are generated from baseline surveys | 94 | 3.96 | 1.04 |
| Modern tools are applied in baseline surveys | 94 | 3.86 | 1.14 |
| Aggregate Mean | | 3.95 | 1.05 |

The results reveal that baseline surveys were widely used to support evidence-based decision-making and project benchmarking. Respondents particularly acknowledged the comprehensive coverage of project indicators and the generation of quality reports. The findings support prior research emphasizing the importance of baseline data in tracking progress and improving project outcomes (Safari & Kisimbi, 2020; Ouma, 2017). The findings also align with Contingency Theory, which stresses environmental scanning and adaptive decision-making.

4.1.5 Project Performance

Project performance was measured through cost reduction, stakeholder satisfaction, timely delivery, quality, and the overall contribution of M&E.

Table 4.5: Project Performance

| Project Performance | N | Mean | Std. Dev |
|--|----|-------------|-------------|
| Reduced project implementation costs | 94 | 3.99 | 1.01 |
| Improved stakeholder satisfaction | 94 | 4.04 | 0.96 |
| Projects are delivered on time | 94 | 4.00 | 1.00 |
| Projects delivered are of high quality | 94 | 3.99 | 1.01 |
| M&E has improved project performance | 94 | 4.03 | 0.97 |
| Aggregate Mean | | 4.01 | 0.99 |

Overall, respondents agreed that M&E significantly improved project performance through timely delivery, enhanced quality, reduced implementation costs, and increased stakeholder satisfaction. These findings support Results Theory, which argues that project implementation should remain focused on achieving measurable outcomes (Gibson, 2016).

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of relationships between M&E framework variables and project performance.

Table 4.6: Correlation Analysis

| Variables | ME Planning | ME Budgeting | ME Staff | ME Baseline | Project Performance |
|---------------------|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|---------------------|
| ME Planning | 1 | | | | |
| ME Budgeting | .752** | 1 | | | |
| ME Staff | .684** | .767** | 1 | | |
| ME Baseline | .813** | .747** | .738** | 1 | |
| Project Performance | .813** | .746** | .737** | .815** | 1 |

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

The findings reveal strong positive relationships between all M&E framework variables and project performance. M&E baseline survey ($r = 0.815$) and M&E planning ($r = 0.813$) recorded the strongest associations with project performance, followed by M&E budgeting ($r = 0.746$) and M&E staff skills ($r = 0.737$). The findings suggest that strengthening M&E systems substantially improves humanitarian project outcomes.

4.3 Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the effect of M&E framework variables on project performance.

4.3.1 Model Summary

Table 4.7: Regression Model Summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error |
|-------|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 1 | 0.870 | 0.756 | 0.745 | 0.42791 |

The model produced a strong correlation coefficient ($R = 0.870$), indicating a strong relationship between the M&E framework and project performance. The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.756$) shows that 75.6% of variation in project performance was explained by the four M&E variables.

4.3.2 Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Table 4.8: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

| Model | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|-------|
| Regression | 50.563 | 4 | 12.641 | 69.036 | 0.000 |
| Residual | 16.296 | 89 | 0.183 | | |
| Total | 66.860 | 93 | | | |

The ANOVA results indicate that the regression model was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), confirming that the M&E framework significantly influenced project performance.

4.3.3 Regression Coefficients

Table 4.9: Regression Coefficients

| Variable | B | Std. Error | Beta | t | Sig. |
|--------------|----------|------------|----------|----------|----------|
| Constant | 0.650443 | 0.215395 | | 3.019767 | 0.003301 |
| ME Planning | 0.317892 | 0.087307 | 0.353368 | 3.641064 | 0.000455 |
| ME Budgeting | 0.101725 | 0.092104 | 0.104562 | 1.104453 | 0.272374 |
| ME Staff | 0.160967 | 0.077269 | 0.184469 | 2.083187 | 0.040102 |
| ME Baseline | 0.279686 | 0.090199 | 0.313029 | 3.100760 | 0.002585 |

The regression analysis established that M&E planning, staff skills, and baseline surveys had statistically significant positive effects on project performance. M&E planning had the strongest effect ($\beta = 0.318$, $p < 0.05$), followed by baseline survey ($\beta = 0.280$, $p < 0.05$) and staff skills ($\beta = 0.161$, $p < 0.05$). However, M&E budgeting, despite having a positive coefficient, did not significantly influence project performance ($\beta = 0.102$, $p > 0.05$).

4.4 Summary of Research Questions

Table 4.10: Summary of Research Questions and Findings

| Research Question | Findings | Comments |
|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Effect of M&E Planning on project performance | $\beta = 0.317892$, $p = 0.000455$ | Significant positive effect |
| Effect of M&E Budgeting on project performance | $\beta = 0.101725$, $p = 0.272374$ | Positive but insignificant effect |
| Effect of M&E Staff Skills on project performance | $\beta = 0.160967$, $p = 0.040102$ | Significant positive effect |
| Effect of M&E Baseline Survey on project performance | $\beta = 0.279686$, $p = 0.002585$ | Significant positive effect |

Overall, the study concludes that effective M&E planning, competent staff, and comprehensive baseline surveys significantly improve the performance of humanitarian projects at World Vision Kenya.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study established that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) frameworks play a significant role in enhancing the performance of humanitarian projects at World Vision Kenya. Specifically, M&E planning was found to positively influence project performance through effective project design, stakeholder communication, realistic scope definition, and proper scheduling of activities. The findings further showed that M&E staff skills significantly contributed to improved project outcomes, as trained and competent personnel enhanced monitoring processes, data analysis, and decision-making. Similarly, M&E baseline surveys had a significant positive effect on project performance by providing reliable benchmark data for tracking progress and informing project decisions. Although M&E budgeting demonstrated a positive relationship with project performance, its independent effect was not statistically significant, suggesting that budgeting is more effective when integrated with other M&E components. Overall, the study confirms that an integrated M&E framework is essential for improving project delivery, accountability, stakeholder satisfaction, and achievement of project objectives. The study recommends that policymakers and development partners strengthen policies requiring comprehensive M&E systems and mandatory baseline surveys in humanitarian projects. World Vision Kenya should enhance stakeholder involvement in project planning, improve strategic utilization of M&E budgets, and invest more in staff training, mentorship, and technical capacity building. The organization should also continue adopting modern technologies in baseline surveys and data management to improve project monitoring and decision-making. Theoretically, the findings support integrated M&E and results-based management approaches, emphasizing the need for future studies to examine the interaction among different M&E components in influencing project performance.

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