Monitoring and Evaluation Challenges and Approaches by Non-Governmental Organizations in Musoma, Tanzania

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Abstract: This study sought to establish the monitoring and evaluation challenges and approaches by Non-Governmental organizations in Musoma, Tanzania using the cross-sectional quantitative study design. The approval to conduct this study was sought from the Ethical Committee Board of the Open University of Tanzania. The permission to collect data was further obtained from particular organizations and the respondents gave their consent before the data collection. A total of 44 respondents from 11 organizations were involved as respondents. Data was cleaned and analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 24 in frequencies and percentages. The result oriented approach was the most common used approaches. Other approaches such as Logical Framework, Reflexive and Constructivist approach were utilized depending on the need and nature of the project being implemented. An insufficient fund, inadequate skilled M&E experts and varying reporting requirements from multiple donors are challenges facing the majority of NGOs during implementation of monitoring and evaluation. The authors recommend the use of available experts in monitoring and evaluation to train the employees on the proper selection of the M&E approaches depending on the project needs. The authors also recommend the employees to utilize the available free online courses and trainings that do not require funds to improve their skills in monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Monitoring; Evaluation; Projects; Organizations; NGOs; Approaches; Challenges.

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Introduction

Monitoring and Evaluation (M & E) represent a critical element in achieving the intended outcomes of any project. In Africa, an ineffective approach to monitoring and evaluation is one of the factors contributing to failure of many projects' sustainability. In NGOs, monitoring and evaluation activities are considered as routine activities, they are not allocated as autonomous sections.

Therefore, they are not given the resources they deserve to ensure their effectiveness (Muhayimana & Kamuhanda, 2020; Nguliki, 2018).

In Tanzania, monitoring and evaluation are given lower priority during project initiation. This could be attributed to various challenges including limited resources (Lema, 2016). Studies show that most NGOs perceive M&E activities as extra work; hence their implementation is conducted by staff with no

sufficient knowledge. Funding for M&E activities is limited and there is poor support from the organization's management (Lema, 2016; Nguliki, 2018). Various organizations have been carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities as a routine, simply because it is one of the requirements to receive funds from the donors. The organizations are likely to experience difficulties in implementing their projects if monitoring and evaluation systems are not taken care of and this may result in failure of the projects (Nguliki, 2018).

There are several approaches to ensure effective implementation of projects, including statistical analysis, performance appraisals, financial auditing and rapid evaluation. However, many approaches are poorly utilized or are not utilized due to lack of M & E experts and poor allocation of resources for M & E activities Van Mierlo, 2011; Nguliki, 2018; Onyango, 2018). Several studies highlighted the efforts that have been put forward to ensure effective utilization of appropriate approaches and the significance of monitoring and evaluation in project implementation (Matsiliza, 2018; Micah and Lutero, 2017; Van Mierlo, 2011). Matsiliza (2018) highlighted the significance of integrating the result-based approach and other methods in monitoring and evaluation in each section and phase of projects as part of effective monitoring. Similarly, Kithinji, Gakuu and Kidombo (2017) in their study recommended the utilization of effective M&E systems, building capacity in organization and ensuring the allocation of adequate funds to support the project monitoring activities. Addressing and removing barriers to M&E activities during the initiation phase of the project life cycle has been shown to contribute to the organization's success (Holvoet & Rombouts, 2008; Toscano, 2013).

Some NGOs operating in Musoma Municipality and Tanzania as a whole have been facing challenges such as lack of funds and experts in M &E. As a result, many projects fail to progress and are not sustainable. The approaches that are utilized by organizations can either negatively or positively influence the success of those organizations (Van Mierlo, 2011).

Scholars studying monitoring and evaluation systems among the NGOs focused their studies on determinants and challenges of monitoring and evaluation system towards attaining effective project performance (Matyoko, 2018; Naswa et al.,

2015; Nguliki et al., 2018). Nguliki (2018), for instance, found that majority (80%) reported the lack of personnel with requisite knowledge, skills and experience in monitoring and evaluation as the top challenge. Matyoko (2018) revealed that there is correlation between the availability of health information system and M&E experts and projects sustainability. This study sought to establish monitoring and evaluation challenges and approaches by non-governmental organizations in Musoma, Tanzania.

Literature Review
Monitoring is defined as a routine collection and analysis of information to track progress against set plans, checking compliance with the established standards (IFRC, 2011, p.11). According to IFRC (2011, p.13), evaluation is "a systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy, its design, implementation and results."

The majority of NGO's monitoring and evaluation comprises of descriptive reporting, compliance and the collection of data on expenditures and program costs (IFRC, 2011). In some circumstances, NGOs adopt monitoring and evaluation systems that are executed by external consultants in order to meet government requirements, funders and other stakeholders (Naswa et al., 2015).

Challenges in Monitoring and Evaluation
Inadequate Capacity Building
Organizations cannot function without skilled people who effectively execute the tasks for which they are responsible (Toscano, 2013). According to Ooko, Rambo and Osogo (2018), building an adequate capacity of human resources is vital for sustainability of the M&E systems. Furthermore, there is a need to be recognized that developing evaluators requires technical orientation which can be developed through workshops and formal training. Other studies that were conducted in Tanzania highlighted the significant associations between lack of skilled M&E experts and poor project performance (Matyoko, 2018; Nguliki, 2018).

Lack of Monitoring and Evaluation Expertise
In their study in Rwanda, Muhayimana and Kamuhanda (2020) highlighted that skills such as advanced data analysis and skills for conducting focus group discussions are very scarce in organizations. Mutyaba (2013) stated that some NGOs may not be in a position to employ skilled

personnel in M&E, implying that monitoring and evaluation activities are not effectively done. If monitoring and evaluation are carried out by untrained and inexperienced personnel, then the project is bound to be wasting time and money and attainment of results could be impractical, leading to negative impact on the success of the projects (Hubert and Mulyungi, 2018).

Inadequate Financial Resources

Lack of adequate financial resources to carry out monitoring and evaluation is another challenge faced by NGOs (Holvoet & Rombouts, 2008). A good number of NGOs lack adequate funding for their activities and this means that the little resources available are channelled to actual implementation of project activities while M & E is regarded as an expense that they cannot afford or is implemented partially (Kithinji, Gakuu & Kidombo, 2017).

Inconsistent Requirements from Donors

NGOs encounter a challenge of multiple M & E requirements if the NGOs have multiple donors or if one donor requires very strict requirements than others. This is interpreted as a burden for NGOs to abide by the requirements. It creates the problem of strained capacity on the project in terms of manpower (Dobi, 2012). Strict donor funding requirements also propagate the practise of emphasis on upward accountability to the donor with minimum or no accountability to other stakeholders (Ehsan, 2013). Neglecting other stakeholders, including the beneficiaries, can lead to lack of a sense of ownership and poor project sustainability when the donors withdraw the funding (Dobi, 2012).

Approaches to Improving M & E Practices

There are four common approaches to monitoring and evaluation: result-oriented, constructivist, reflexive and Logical Framework Approach (LFA) (an Mierlo, 2011). While these approaches differ widely in their views, deciding which approach to use depends on nature of projects, the context as well as the monitoring and evaluation objectives (Gazi, 2011; Onyango, 2018). In practice, it may be desirable to triangulate methods from different approaches in order to combine their strengths and overcome their weaknesses (Onyango, 2018).

Result-oriented approach

The emphasis of result-oriented monitoring and evaluation lies in measuring the extent of achievement of the project objectives with subsequent interventions (Matsiliza, 2018). Result-oriented approaches are often used to provide accountability for the investment in the project, where donors and funders want to see what has been done with their money (Naswa et al., 2015). The strength of this approach is that the project managers and participants can assess what works and what doesn't work in certain interventions at a specific time and if necessary, the strategy can be modified along the way (Aly, 2015).

Constructivist Approach

The constructivist Approach assumes that people are the motor behind the development of innovations and societal change processes, which is achieved through interaction and negotiation (Iofciu, Miron & Antohe, 2012). Constructivist methods focuses heavily on monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the collective learning process and it highlights how successful collective learning processes are initiated and are progressing (García, Guzmán-Ramírez, & Gonzalez-Rojas, 2013). The strength of constructivist method is that it stimulates the exchange of perspectives (Van Mierlo, 2011).

Logical Framework Approach

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA) was invented in the 1960s as an approach that is used to prepare a program or a development intervention (Naswa et al., 2015). The approach involves a participatory process to clarify intervention inputs, outputs, outcomes, causal relationships, indicators used to measure the progress towards results and the factors that may influence the success or failure of the intervention (Naswa et al., 2015).

Reflexive Approach

This is the most recent approach to monitoring and evaluation (Van Mierlo, 2011). It focuses on both the collective learning process in groups of actors and networks as well as the results in terms of learning and organizational change (Gooding, 2017). Project members or other stakeholders not only exchange their opinions and motives but also discuss their presumptions and underlying values as well as the norms of the organization context in which they operate. In this way, they can arrive at diverse agreements about the best action during project execution (Gooding, 2017; Sulemana, Musah and Simon, 2018).

Methodology

Musoma Municipal is one of six administrative districts in Mara Region. Besides being the only

Municipal in Mara Region, it is also the headquarters of Mara Region, a Tanzanian port of Lake Victoria and a business center of the Great Lake Region and East Africa Community (MMC, 2017). It covers approximately 84.1 square kilometers and it is composed of plains with small scattered hills. According to the 2012 Population Censuses report, the population of Musoma Municipality was approximately 134,327 (62,694 males and 71,633 female) by 2012 (NBS, 2013). The municipal council is one of the fast-growing towns in Tanzania, experiencing fast population growth through both natural increase and migration.

Research Design

A cross-sectional quantitative study design was employed to explore the common challenges and approaches in monitoring and evaluation by non-governmental organizations in Musoma Municipality.

Population and Sampling

A list of NGOs operating in Musoma Municipality was obtained from the Municipal Community Development Office (CDO). The researchers collected the contacts and relevant details for communicating with the selected NGOs. The participating NGOs were purposely selected from the given list of NGOs operating in the municipal according to the predetermined eligibility criteria which included: organizations operating in Musoma municipality for not less than five years; the NGOs which were deemed active by criteria of CDO (active organization should submit the annual performance report to the CDO each year). A total of 44 respondents from 11 organizations were interviewed.

Table 1: Organization profile of NGOs operating in Musoma municipality (n=11)

Organization	Activities	Experience
Community Alive (CA)	Education	>5 years
Jipe Moyo center (JMC)	Protecting girls from abuse such as fight FGM, child marriage, and other GBV	>5 years
Children Against AIDS (CAA)	HIV/AIDs	>5 years
Lake Victoria Disability Center (LVDC)	Education and health &wellbeing services	>5 years
Children Dignity Forum (CDF)	Girls empowerment Child protection Engagement of men and boys	>5 years
Grain to Grow Foundation (GGF)	Capacity building Economic empowerment	>5 years
Center for Widows and Children Assistance (CWCA)	Youth empowerment Capacity building	>5 years
CCT-SWP- MARA	Economic empowerment	>5 years
Hope Revival Children Organization/Fast track (HRCO)	Youth empowerment Agriculture	
	Economic empowerment HIV/AIDs	>5 years
Rafiki Social Development Organization (RSDO)	Education	>5 years
Musoma Children Center (MCC)	Education	>5 years

Statistical Treatment of Data

Data was cleaned and analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 24 in frequencies and percentages.

Ethical considerations

The approval to conduct this study was sought from the Ethical Committee Board of the Open University of Tanzania. The permission to collect data was

further obtained from particular organizations and the respondents gave their consent before the data collection.

Results and Discussion

The NGOs profile

A total of 11 NGOs (Table 1) participated in this study. The majority of NGOs 6 (54.5%) was dealing with education and protection of key vulnerable

groups. Approximately 27.3% were supporting the HIV /AIDS prevention and treatment activities and 2 (18.1%) were dealing with economic empowerment of the community. All eleven organizations had been registered and operated for more than five years.

Research Question 1: What are the common approaches utilized in the execution of monitoring and evaluation activities among the NGOs?

The majority of respondents (57%) utilized the result-oriented approach in executing the monitoring and evaluation of the project activities. Nine (19.3%) participants utilized the Logical framework approach. Six (13.7%) participants utilized the constructivist method. The reflexive approach is the least 4 (10%) used method in conducting M&E activities (See figure 1). The majority of respondents (57%) utilized the result-oriented approach in executing the monitoring and evaluation of the project activities. Nine (19.3%) participants utilized the Logical framework approach. Six (13.7%) participants utilized the constructivist method. The reflexive approach is the

least 4 (10%) used method in conducting M&E activities (See figure 1). While the study found that 57% of the NGOs utilized the result-oriented approach in implementing their projects, result-oriented approaches are often used to provide accountability for the investment in the project. This is applicable whenever sponsors want to see what has been done with their money since many NGOs are funded by donors (Naswa et al., 2015). The findings are contrary to the study which was conducted in Ethiopia by Mulugeta (2018) who found that the logical framework was used by the majority (47%) of the NGOs as a monitoring and evaluation approach. Where the results of the present study showed that the logical framework is among the least chosen approaches, contrary to Mulugeta (2018), this finding explains the fact that the selection of M&E depends on the nature of the project (Onyango,2018) as evidenced by the fact that the majority of the NGOs (54.5%) in this study were based on education and protection of vulnerable people, while the logical framework was found to be the most used in health-related NGOs (Mulugeta,2018).

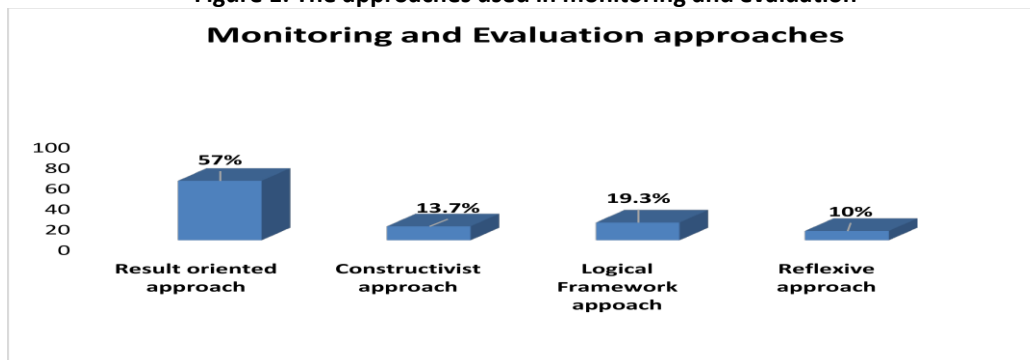**Figure 1: The approaches used in monitoring and evaluation**

Table 2: The challenges which are facing the NGOs operating in Musoma municipality

Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Is the allocated budget for M&E activities sufficient		
Yes	12	27.3
No	32	72.7
Do different donors have reporting requirements		
Yes	38	86.4
No	6	13.6
How is the extent of M&E reporting requirements from donors		
Very strict	22	50
Strict	21	47.7
Lenient	1	2.3
Is collecting M&E data difficult		
Yes	24	54.5
No	20	5.5
Do the NGOs have Monitoring and Evaluation experts		
No	28	63.6
Yes	16	36.4

Research Question 2: What are the challenges facing the NGOs in executing M&E activities in Musoma municipality?

The common challenge reported by respondents was insufficient fund to conduct the M&E activities 32(72.7%) followed by a lack of experts in monitoring and evaluation 28 (63.6%) reporting requirements from multiple donors 22(50%) (See table 2).

Similarly, Kithinji, Gakuu and Kidombo (2017) in their study in Kenya reported the lack of funding to be the most challenge facing NGOs. The challenge of inadequate skilled people to conduct monitoring and evaluation in NGOs in this study was similarly reported in a study done in Rwanda (Muhayimana & Kamuhanda, 2020). In addition, other authors emphasized that monitoring and evaluation require specific skills and expertise such as M&E designing of log frame, indicator setting, designing data collection tools, data analysis and report writing skills (Jili & Mthethwa, 2016; Muhayimana & Kamuhanda, 2020).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The four main approaches are used by various NGOs to execute the monitoring and Evaluation activities in Musoma Municipality although the result oriented approach was the most common used approaches. Other approaches such as Logical Framework, Reflexive and Constructivist approach are utilized depending on the need and nature of the project being implemented. An insufficient fund, inadequate skilled M&E experts and varying reporting requirements from multiple donors are challenges facing the majority of NGOs during implementation of monitoring and evaluation.

Based on the conclusions, the NGOs should use the available experts with experience in monitoring and evaluation to train their employees on the proper selection of the M&E approaches according to project needs. The authors also recommend the employees to utilize the available free online courses and trainings that do not require funds to improve their skills in monitoring and evaluation. Lastly, The NGOs should raise funds for purpose of improving the monitoring and evaluation section in their organization**.**

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