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

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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 welldesigned 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: Management commitment, monitoring and evaluation, implementation of HIV project, Project San Francisco.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background:

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

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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).

1.2 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

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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.

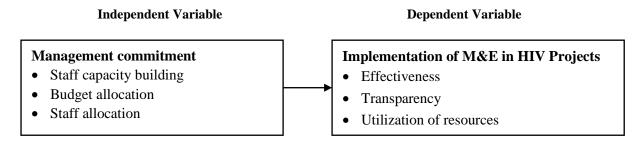
There is a big knowledge gap that is required in monitoring and evaluation skills, budget and staff capacity to effectively implement the monitoring and evaluation systems in Rwanda. This study highlighted the influence of management, finances, skills, and staff capacity in implementation of monitoring 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.

1.3 Objectives of the study:

The general objective of the study was to investigate the factors that influence the implementation of effective monitoring and evaluation in HIV research project at Project San Francisco. To achieve this the study determined the influence of management commitment to the implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework shows the relationship between four independent variables: management commitment, and how they affect or influence the dependent variable: implementation of monitoring and evaluation. For an effective monitoring to take place the management commitment is very important since the project managers are the key decision makers and thus are the people involved in implementing the findings. The implementation of monitoring and evaluation is highly dependent on the availability of finances to facilitate and sustain the process. The staff should be adequate and well trained in monitoring and evaluation skills. They help in carrying out continuous monitoring and evaluation through field visits and other duties relevant to the process in the whole of project life.



2.1 Empirical review:

Yang et'al (2009) analyzed the various factors which are critical to the success of a project most which were centered around managing stakeholders, Assessing attributes (power, urgency, and proximity) of stakeholders, Compromising conflicts among stakeholders effectively, Formulating a clear statement of project missions, Predicting stakeholders' reactions for implementing the strategies, Analyzing the change of stakeholders' influence & relationships during the project process and Assessing stakeholders' behavior. Yang's critical success factors were mainly focused around the stakeholder's management. It's the role of management to look into the affairs of stakeholders. However, stakeholder management is not the only responsibility of management as regards project success.

Proudlock (2009) found out that the whole process of impact evaluation, and particularly the analysis and interpretation of results, can be greatly improved by the participation of intended beneficiaries, who are after all the primary stakeholders in their own development and the best judges of their own situation. However, stakeholder involvement need to be managed by care, too much stakeholder involvement could lead to undue influence on the evaluation, and too little could lead to evaluators dominating the process (Patton, 2008).

Management and leadership as well as project teams, is also emphasized in the literature as having a significant effect on the project success. Management and leadership also play a key role in supporting monitoring and evaluation of projects. Yang et' al (2011) carried out an analysis that suggested that increases in levels of leadership may enhance relationships among team members. The study also indicated that teamwork had a statistically significant influence on project performance.

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Though monitoring and evaluation implementation have significant cost, time and human resource implications, they are very vital for successful projects and should not be overlooked at the beginning of the process (WHO, 2012). It is then essential to ensure that management personnel and donor agencies understand and are fully committed to these overheads, as well as being committed to take forward the recommendations resulting from monitoring and evaluation (Dyason, 2010). It should also be ensured that those involved in the process are appropriately trained and understand the importance of evaluation (Worldbank, 2014). It is essential that the implementers understand the methods and reasoning behind the monitoring and evaluation techniques that they are employing (Ober, 2012). It is equally important that program implementers accept responsibility for the processes used, are fully committed to them, and feel empowered to convince all other stakeholders of their short and long-term benefits (UNAIDS, 2008).

The findings of monitoring and evaluation should be disseminated so that others can benefit from the experiences (Kusters, Vugt, Wigboldus, and Woodhill, 2011). It is all easy once an evaluation has been undertaken for it to be filed away and be forgotten. Apart from minimizing any practical impact on the learning environment, it will also prevent stakeholders or those interested in undertaking a similar project/program in the future from learning from the successes and mistakes recorded. The monitoring and evaluation tools created during implementation should allow the possibility of supporting not only the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), but also effective strategies that work. This mainly involves use of internationally developed monitoring and evaluation tools that can provide important ways to compare and contrast results (WHO, 2012).

3. 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 is 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.

	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	

Table 1: Target population

4. MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT

Management commitment which is one of the objectives of this study was measured in terms of Staff capacity building, Budget and Staff allocation to the monitoring and evaluation department was investigated to find out whether it had any influence on the implementation of monitoring and evaluation.

Statements Top management has a positive attitude towards strengthening 1(1%) 7(10%) 18(26%) 44(63%) the monitoring and evaluation system 27(39%) The organization has a well-defined structure that includes a 2(3%) 16 23%) 25(35%) monitoring and evaluation unit assessment of 14 20%) 21(30%) 35(50%) organization conducts performance of M&E system on a regular basis The organization has a policy or set standards in place describes 2(3%) 9 (13%) 28(40%) 31(44%) roles and responsibilities of the operation of M&E System 7(10%) 63(90%) The organization has got a 'champion' for the M&E exercises

Table 2: Respondents views on management commitment

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The findings in Table 2 shows that 63% of the study participant agreed that top management has a positive attitude towards strengthening the monitoring and evaluation system, (26%) were neutral and 10% disagreed while only 1% strongly disagreed with the statement. Majority (39%) strongly agreed with the statement that the organization has a well-defined structure that includes a monitoring and evaluation unit, 35% only agreed with the statement 23% were neutral while 3% disagreed with the statement. The table also shows that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization conducts assessment of the overall performance of M&E system on a regular basis, 30% only agreed while 20% were neutral with the statement and none disagreed with the statement.

Majority (44%) of the respondents strongly agreed that the organization has a policy or set standards in place describes roles and responsibilities of the operation of M&E System, 40% only agreed, 13% were neutral while 2% strongly disagreed. Additionally, 90% strongly agreed that the organization has got a 'champion' for the M&E exercises, while only 10% agreed with the statement.

Table 3: Correlation between management commitment and implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco

		Management Commitment	Implementation of M & E		
	Pearson Correlation	1			
Accountability	Sig. (2-tailed)				
	N	70			
I1	Pearson Correlation	.347**	1		
Implementation of monitoring and evaluation	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
evaluation	N	70	70		
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).					

Table 3 indicated 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.

Furthermore, regression analysis was done to determine the influence of management commitment on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco and the following results were obtained. The results of the analysis are shown in Table 4

Table 4: Model summary showing influence of management commitment on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	
1	.775 ^a	.570	.558	.601	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Management commitment					

Further analysis of the influence of management commitment on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco obtained an adjusted R 55.8%. This implies that the simple linear model with management commitment as the independent variable explains 55.8% of the variations in implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco. This means that when management commitment was used on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco changed by 55.8%.

Table 5: ANOVA results showing the effect of management commitment on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	18.177	1	18.177	50.334	$.000^{a}$
1	Residual	13.723	70	.3.61		
	Total	31.900	71			
b. Dependent Variable: Implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project						
c. Predictors: (Constant), management commitment						

A regression analysis was done to determine the influence of management commitment 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 management commitment as the only independent variable is significant.

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Table 6: Coefficient results showing the relationship between management commitment on implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project San Francisco Coefficients (a)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
		В	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.609	.412		1.478	.000	
	Management commitment	.806	.114	.755	7.095	.000	
a.	a. Dependent variable: Implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project						

Correlation coefficients show that management commitment (X1) is significant (p-value = 0.0000) in influencing Implementation of monitoring and evaluation at Project (Y). The results of the analysis are shown in Table 6. The fitted model from this analysis is shown below:

 $Y = 0.609 + 0.806X_1$

5. 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.

5.1. 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.

5.2. Areas for further research:

The study recommends that research to be done to address the gap that exists between interpretation of M&E frameworks and its implementation as regards to the log frame. There should be found a way the donor organization's m and e framework localized into the implementation organization.

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