

CHAPTER SIX

WHY TOOLS MATTER IN MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

For monitoring and evaluation to be of value, there is a need to plan well and track developments in a prudent manner. As such, monitoring and evaluation have experienced exponential growth in recent years. Hence, the appreciation of monitoring and evaluation as tools to enhance service delivery to avoid citizen dissatisfaction cannot be ignored. It is noteworthy that despite their dynamic relationship, the two can thus be juxtaposed and explained independently of each other. For a better appreciation, it is important to organise monitoring and evaluation tools into distinct categories based on the type of organisation and the potential value they offer. Monitoring and evaluation enable assessment of the work against targets and indicators, and use of resources. Given that they provide crucial insights, enable informed decision-making, and ensure accountability, monitoring and evaluation tools are indispensable for effective project management. Monitoring and evaluation start with the challenge of minimising gaps between what is planned, what has been intended as the outcome of initiative or project (Banu, 2018).

To highlight current knowledge and practice around monitoring and evaluation and the attendant tools as they evolved, the literature review is drawn from national and international sources. The conclusions reached include the fact that choosing the best tools will depend on various factors such as time and resources available for the evaluation, aims of the project, reporting requirements and number of participants available for the evaluation. However, monitoring and evaluation tools are not necessarily mutually exclusive and mixed methods can be a prudent approach. Pursuant to the assertion made in this chapter that in respect of monitoring and evaluation, tools ensuring efficiency, effectiveness and impact are not optional in the whole process, the author employs the Theory of Change (ToC).

MONITORING AND EVALUATION: A CONCEPTUAL APPRECIATION

Monitoring and evaluation have experienced exponential growth between 2000 and 2024. According to Bamberger (2006, in Segone & Ocampo, 2006), the traditional functions of monitoring and evaluation stress the managerial and accountability features of the process although emerging approaches put the governance and policy dialogue dimensions forward, where monitoring and evaluation functions

as an accountability mechanism, fostering greater transparency, and enhances governance and democracy and the voice of civil society. Although governments the world over continue to promote the importance of monitoring and evaluation, this chapter undertakes to present a discussion of monitoring and evaluation as an important tool for enhancing the efficacy of service delivery.

Hence, the appreciation of monitoring and evaluation as tools to enhance service delivery to avoid citizen dissatisfaction cannot be ignored. Thus, the concepts of monitoring and evaluation have emerged in the field of development administration as a technique of objective planning and project implementation. Monitoring and evaluation are an approach to understanding the planning and implementation of development projects for achieving the desired goals and targets (Banu, 2018). Cloete (2009) recognises monitoring and evaluation as integral part of a management process that must be undertaken to achieve success. Matsiliza (2012) argues that monitoring and evaluation can also promote accountability in the public sector.

Despite “monitoring and evaluation” usually being used as a singular term, in fact, the two are distinct and related but not identical sets of organisational activities. Monitoring and evaluation represent two elements of the enterprise of assessing the merit or worth of an organisation or programme, encompassing assessment of both performance and impact for a broad range of different audiences and purposes (Curry, 2019). Regardless, both elements are crucial for successful project management, offering essential insights for decision-making and future planning. Monitoring and evaluation enable one to assess the quality and impact of the work against action plans and a strategic plan.

Kariuki (2014) defines monitoring as a continuous assessment of the function of project activities in the context of implementation schedules and the use of project inputs. For the World Bank (2011), monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide for the management. Monitoring reports on actual performance against what was initially planned and on what was expected.

For Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (1999), evaluation is the use of social research procedures and processes to systematically interrogate the effectiveness of social intervention programmes that are adapted to their political and organisational conditions. It is about assessing the overall impact and effectiveness of a project at certain points in its life cycle. Thus, evaluation occurs periodically on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. It interacts with monitoring in that it uses data gleaned through monitoring to conduct a systematic examination of the subject to assist in determining its efficacy, usefulness, efficiency and longevity. In this sense, the two are synergistic. It is for this reason evaluation is expected to provide useful and potential information to allow both stakeholders and beneficiaries to draw lessons for decision-making. Despite their dynamic relationship, the two can thus be juxtaposed in the following manner: monitoring checks whether the project implementation is on track while evaluation determines relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project; monitoring is a continuous process with recurrent reflection cycles, while evaluation is periodic and reflection extends over longer time intervals; monitoring focuses on use of funds, activities, and outputs while evaluation appraises outcomes and impacts; in complex programmes, monitoring takes place at each level while evaluation links the lesson learned across the different levels; monitoring is carried out by the implementation staff while evaluation is a responsibility of the senior management; and monitoring is carried out by individuals and the organisation implementing the programme while evaluation is carried out in cooperation with external evaluators or entirely outsourced. In addition, monitoring serves as a basis for evaluation (Onyang, 2015).

Monitoring and evaluation enable assessment of the work against targets and indicators, and use of resources. Towards this, it looks at the set objective, its accomplishment, and how it was accomplished. It can either be formative, by taking place during the life of a project or organisation with the intention of improving the strategy or way of functioning of the project or organisation, or summative by drawing

learnings from a completed project or organisation. Therefore, having an effective evaluation process in place can help with assessing the performance or outcome of programmes or projects.

As processes, they allow policymakers and programme managers to assess how an intervention evolves over time (monitoring); how effectively a programme was implemented and whether there are gaps between the planned and achieved results (evaluation); and whether the changes in well-being (impact evaluation) are due to the programme and to the programme alone (International Labour Organisation, 2015). Although the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2012) views it as the systematic and objective assessment of the achievement of an ongoing or completed project, Wanzer (2021) asserts that there is a lack of consensus on what evaluation is within the field of evaluation. The challenges are compounded by uncertainty over the overall goal of evaluation – both formative and summative – as more often than not, the intended use of their results remains vague and the goal of evaluation hazy. This causes tension between evaluations for accountability to donors against evaluations for organisational learning (World Bank, 2011). What is clear, though, is that evaluations are often retrospective, but their purpose is essentially forward looking (McLellan, 2020).

APPRECIATING MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS THROUGH THE THEORY OF CHANGE

Etymologically, the theory of change resulted from programme theory, which places emphasis on the theoretical foundations of programmes. Historically, it first emerged in the mid-1990s in the wake of several challenges to evaluating the impact of development programmes. Emerging in evaluation research and social justice advocacy, the approach is increasingly influential in international development. Weiss (1995, in Connell, Kubisch, Schorr & Weis) developed the theory of change to help remedy some of the problems associated with it and subsequently popularised it as a description of the set of assumptions that explain both the intended long-term impact and the logic chain of the programme that occurs at each step of the way (Weiss, 1997). It is a critical thinking approach to programme design, monitoring and evaluation (Bours, McGinn & Pringle, 2014).

Essentially, it is an expression of the linkages between the inputs and the results of a programme showing how the programme is intended to work (Funnell & Rogers, 2011; Weiss, 1995, in Connell, Kubisch, Schorr and Weis, 1995; Chen, 2005). Thus, the importance of this theory lies in that it helps organisations to shift focus from the programme processes to the intended outcomes and impacts of the programme (James, 2011; Organisational Research Services, 2004) and this guarantees that the pathway of change is based on a sound cause-effect relationship as well as presents the programme to a range of stakeholders in more comprehensible descriptions of how change happens (Rush & Ogborne, 1991). Given that the theory of change presents information more comprehensible and accessible to different kinds of audiences in a clear and simple view that crystallises the processes into a few steps that capture key aspects of the programme, it helps move stakeholders from being passive collectors and reporters of information to active users of information for programme planning and monitoring and evaluation process.

TYPES AND RELEVANCE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION TOOLS

The relevance of monitoring and evaluation as a tool has been recognised as important. The significance of monitoring and evaluation in the creation and provision of services cannot be overstated, as it has the potential to provide outcomes associated with enhancements in performance (Eresia-Eke & Boadu, 2019). As development practitioners are prioritising monitoring and evaluation as a platform for learning and accountability (Karani, Bichanga & Kumau, 2014), effective monitoring and evaluation requires the use of tools to help demonstrate the results and impacts of programmes; these tools help programme teams and other stakeholders know whether the objectives are being achieved (Cleland, 2004). In addition, Lock (2007) points out that such monitoring and evaluation tools also provide gov-