

The Role of Monitoring and Evaluation Practices to the Success of Donor Funded Food Security Intervention Projects

A Case Study Of Kibwezi District

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Abstract

Monitoring and evaluation in food security projects primary purpose is to allow project teams to run projects effectively, ensuring they have the desired results for beneficiaries (ACF, 2011). There is an increased demand for results from donor funded projects in the 21st century (IIRR, 2012). However, the success of donor funded projects on food security intervention continues to face serious challenges. Due to these challenges, the projects have not been able to solve the perennial food shortages faced by communities in the arid and semi-arid areas. The purpose of this study was to find out the role of monitoring and evaluation practices to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects. The findings of this study should assist the food security project implementing agencies to recognize the role played by participatory monitoring and evaluation (P M & E) practices in the success and sustainability of the projects. The study targeted residents of Kibwezi district who have benefited from donor funded food security projects. The study utilized a case study design because it was considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic and in-depth investigation is required. A sample of 40 respondents was selected from four Locations (Makindu, Nzambani, Masongaleni and Mtito Andei) from the larger Kibwezi district through purposive sampling. Data was collected through a questionnaire with 10 questions where respondents indicated responses on statements in a Likert scale. Data from Semi structured interviews from key informants, focussed discussion groups and the government officers who had been involved in these projects were used for triangulation. Quantitative data collected was analysed using MS Excel 2010. The study established that the community was not involved in any monitoring and evaluation of the food security intervention projects. Participatory monitoring and evaluation in food security projects therefore contributes to the success of food security projects though it should be complemented with good project management skills. For P M & E to be applied to the projects, the projects implementing agencies should conduct trainings to the community to build up their capacity in understanding and participation in the monitoring and evaluation system.

Keywords: Food security, donors, intervention, monitoring, evaluation, Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation (P M & E).

Introduction

Donors continue to spend huge amounts of money to finance food security intervention projects. However, the beneficiaries of these projects continue to suffer serious food shortages. The donors have guidelines on how project monitoring and evaluation is to be done for example the ten steps to a results based monitoring and evaluation (World Bank, 2004), Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation, Reflection and Learning for Community-based Adaptation (CARE_PMERL, 2012), Results-oriented Monitoring (Europe Aid, 2012), little has been documented on how these guidelines have been followed during project implementation. Available researches mainly dealt in food security intervention models (Lemba, 2009, Nzuma *et al*, 2010).

The guidelines from donors do not indicate how the projects implementing agencies will be audited to ascertain compliance to the guidelines. Against this background, the purpose of this research is to investigate 'the role of monitoring and evaluation practices to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects'. The research sought to find out the community involvement in the monitoring and evaluation of the projects. This was in response to the donors guidelines which demand a participatory monitoring and evaluation to deliver desired results to beneficiaries ACF,(2011) and demand for accountability (IIRR, 2012). The findings of this study was expected to inform donors to develop audit plans to ensure the guidelines are executed during project implementation, the implementing agencies to adhere to the participatory monitoring in all food security projects and the beneficiaries to demand inclusion in all activities through out the project life cycle.

The rest of the article is structured as follows: First, the problem statement which shows the existence of a gap which was to be addressed by this research. This is followed by the literature review which outlines the theoretical and conceptual framework, past literature on monitoring and evaluation practices and a critique of the existing literature on M& E. This is to be followed by the research methods and procedures used in the study. The findings of the study are then presented and discussed. Finally, conclusions and recommendations are outlined.

Problem statement

For many years to date Kibwezi district continues to benefit from donor funded food security projects. Huge amounts of money have been spent on these projects by donors to solve the perennial food shortages experienced by the community. However, these projects have not been able to solve the food deficit problem in the district. A comparison between two monthly reports on the food situation with regard to the staple food (maize) in Kibwezi by the ministry of Agriculture, one in the month of March during the harvests following the long rains and another one in the month of November before the start of the long rains indicated huge deficits that existed throughout the year. See below:-

Table1: A comparison between Maize consumption by population to availability in the months of November, 2012 and March, 2013.

District	Division	Population	November, 2012			March, 2013		
			Monthly maize consumption (90 Kg bags)	current maize stocks (90 KG bags)- Exclude NCPB	End of this month (deficit- 90 Ks bags)	Monthly maize consumption (90 Kg bags)	current maize stocks (90 KG bags)- Exclude NCPB	End of this month (deficit- 90 KG bags)
KIBWEZI	KIBWEZI	67,266	10,845	1,288	9,557	10,845	1,334	9,511
	MACHINERY	32,037	4,604	1,543	3,061	4,604	4,109	495
	MTITO-ANDEI	78,207	12,500	1,978	10,522	12,500	11,620	800
District Totals		177,510	27,945	4,809	23,140	27,945	17,063	10,806

Source: Ministry of Agriculture, Kibwezi district.

This situation exists despite donors' guidelines on a participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) which demands the community to be involved in all stages of the project life cycle. They were expected to participate in the assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring & evaluation of projects to ensure it would have the intended results and impacts (ACF, 2011). Even then, there were serious issues of interventions that did not empower the local community to own the technology thereby undermining the project effectiveness (Lemba, 2009). For future projects implementing agencies need to involve the community in M & E activities throughout the project life cycle to achieve projects success. This study sought to find out the role of monitoring and evaluation practices on the success of donor funded food security projects.

Objectives

The general objective of this study was to investigate the role of monitoring and evaluation practices to the success of donor funded food security intervention projects. This was done with a specific objective of sharing the results with the donors, project implementing agencies and the project beneficiaries. It is hoped that the recommendations can be applied to future food security projects to ensure projects success.

Literature Review

This chapter contains literature materials from a number of educational researchers; food security intervention projects reports and donor condition guideline manuals regarding food

security projects. The literature gave the study its background information necessary to evaluate the variable under study.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

If you do not measure results, you cannot tell success from failure (World Bank, 2004). ‘*We cannot control what we cannot measure*’. Donors have clear guidelines on Monitoring and evaluation (M & E) where all stakeholders must be involved in the Monitoring and evaluation process. According to ACF, (2011), the communities in which a project was implemented should have a sizeable say in shaping and undertaking M&E activities, as well as in decision-making around M&E findings. A Participatory monitoring and evaluation framework in food security projects was to assess the degree of relevance and success of a project through satisfaction feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders on whether needs were being addressed (ACF, 2011).

A participatory M & E encouraged the ownership of and accountability for the M&E process and outputs by the communities themselves (CARE_PMERL, 2012). The success of food security projects was a function of the community involvement in M & E activities throughout the projects life cycle. When key stakeholders in an intervention were allowed to participate in the project and provide feedback that contributed to a successful project (ACF, 2011).

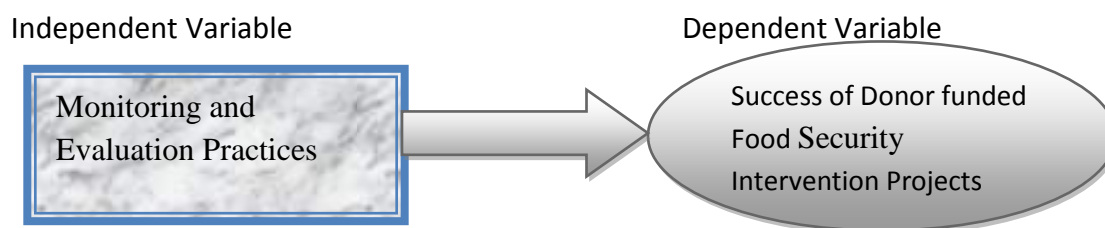


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Monitoring and Evaluation Practices

Monitoring is a continuous function that uses the systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (Mbeche *et al*, 2009). Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed project, program, or policy, including its design, implementation, and results. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfilment of objectives, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (Europe Aid, 2012). Food security projects were implemented in communities faced with hunger to solve food shortages. These projects were expected to address food availability, access and utilization. Donors have guidelines on the minimum thresholds for humanitarian response for example funding was awarded to only eligible organisations as guided by DFID,(2007) and guidelines to

measure the project success as prescribed by ACF, (2011) amongst other guidelines by different donors.

A monitoring and evaluation framework on how success of the projects should be measured forms part of the project proposal due to demand to demonstrate results and accountability requirements on projects performance (IIRR, 2012). Monitoring and evaluation on food security projects should provide a logical way of assessing whether and how goals were being achieved over time to meet community's priority needs. The ACF Food Security Intervention Principles stipulate that community participation and reinforcement of local capacities should be applied throughout the programme cycle. That meant the community should be directly involved in identifying their own needs, defining the programme objectives, implementing the activities and monitoring and evaluating the programme. This participation was essential to ensure that the programmes were best adapted and met both the needs and expectations of the population (ACF, 2011). Planning for monitoring helped to clarify project objectives, assumptions, indicators and activities. Good indicators for which data could be collected, analysed and used to make decisions about the project's direction, made monitoring and project management easier (ACF, 2011). Participation was also a solid operational principle, since leaving intended community members participating in the project out of decision-making increased the risk that interventions would not match people's priorities and needs (CARE PMERL, 2012). Participatory methods provided active involvement in decision-making for those with a stake in the project, program, or strategy and generated a sense of ownership in the M&E results and recommendations (World Bank, 2004).

During emergencies where focus was on responding to immediate needs and saving lives, there were short time frames of implementation and rapidly changing contexts, it was difficult to assess longer-term impacts (ACF, 2011). The data collected for M & E might sometimes be difficult to interpret due to the inevitable biases and there was threat of manipulation by interested parties (IIRR, 2012). However, a sound food security and nutrition monitoring system was simple, user-driven, based on existing institutional structures (which increased the capacity for analysis and interpretation) and had the commitment of relevant decision makers who would use the information in planning and policy design (Suresh B and A. Ergeneman, 2005, ACF, 2011).

Critique of the Existing Literature Relevant to the Study

The M & E plan has been observed to be expensive to implement, time consuming and needed skills (specialized training) especially when Primary data collection was needed. Primary data at times might lead to duplication of data being collected by others but secondary data might be cheaper as research costs were not required and could meet project needs; however, it was not always relevant nor always reliable (ACF, 2011).

The logical framework (log frame) has been shown to be a good M&E system which summarised plans to address the problem(s) analysed, objectives to address this/these, and intended results (activities, outputs, purpose and goal), indicators were the means of

verification to measure progress against these objectives. However, itself was not a substitute for experience and professional judgement and must also be complemented by the application of other specific tools (such as Economic and Financial Analysis and Environmental Impact Assessment) and through the application of working techniques which promote the effective participation of stakeholders (Europe Aid, 2012). Further it has been observed that some decisions regarding its design might be due to negotiations between stakeholders which can make the implementation of certain recommendations difficult (Europe Aid, 2012).

Research Methodology

The study utilized a case study research design, the researcher chose it because it was considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation was required and was more prominent when issues with regard to community based problems such as poverty (Johnson, 2006). A questionnaire containing ten questions with five choices on a Likert scale was used for quantitative data collection. Likert scale was used to rate the respondents agreement with statements at a scale of 1-5 which were expressed both positively and negatively and were assumed to have equal value. The Likert scale was used because it was considered more reliable because respondents had more information and answer each statement included into the instrument and permits use of statements that are not manifestly related to the attitude being studied (Kothari, 2004).

A purposive sampling technique was used to select 40 respondents who had been involved in the implementation of the food security projects and had at least an 'O' level education for a good understanding of the questionnaire. The sample of 40 respondents was envisaged to be a large enough sample to minimize the discrepancy between the sample characteristics and the population characteristics (Mugenda *et al.*, 2003). Qualitative data for triangulation was collected using semi structured interviews with key informants, focussed discussion groups and ministry of agriculture officers who were involved in the implementation of the food security projects.

Quantitative data was summarized in tables and expressed as a percentage of the total responses. An analysis of the data was done using a table and a chart as descriptive statistics. Analysis was done using MS Excel 2010. Qualitative data was used to support the quantitative data in answering the objective question.

Findings and Discussions

Demographic characteristics of sample population

The demographic characteristics of the sample population including their level of education, gender, level of participation in the projects, age and the number of projects they have been involved in for the last ten years were summarised in the table below:-

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the population research Sample

<i>Gender of participants (%)</i>	
Male	55.0
Female	45.0
<i>Age of participants (%)</i>	
Less than 35 years	12.5
Between 36 – 45 years	50.0
Between 46 – 55 years	15.0
56 and above	22.5
<i>Level of education of participants (%)</i>	
'O' Level	85.0
Certificate	10.0
Degree	2.5
A level	2.5
<i>Participation level in the projects (%)</i>	
Community beneficiary	42.5
Committee member	42.5
Local administration	15.0
<i>No of projects participants have been involved in (%)</i>	
1	10.0
2	12.5
3	7.5
4	12.5
5	22.5
More than 5	35.0

Majority of the respondents at 55% were males. The age bracket of between 36 to 45 years had the highest number of respondents at 50% and lowest at the bracket of age below 35 years at 12.5%. The education level for majority of the respondents was 'O' level at 85%. The participants were equally distributed between the community beneficiaries and committee

members at 42.5% and the rest were from the local administration at 15%. Majority of the respondents had been involved in more than 5 projects at 35%.

The chart below summarizes the responses from the respondents:-

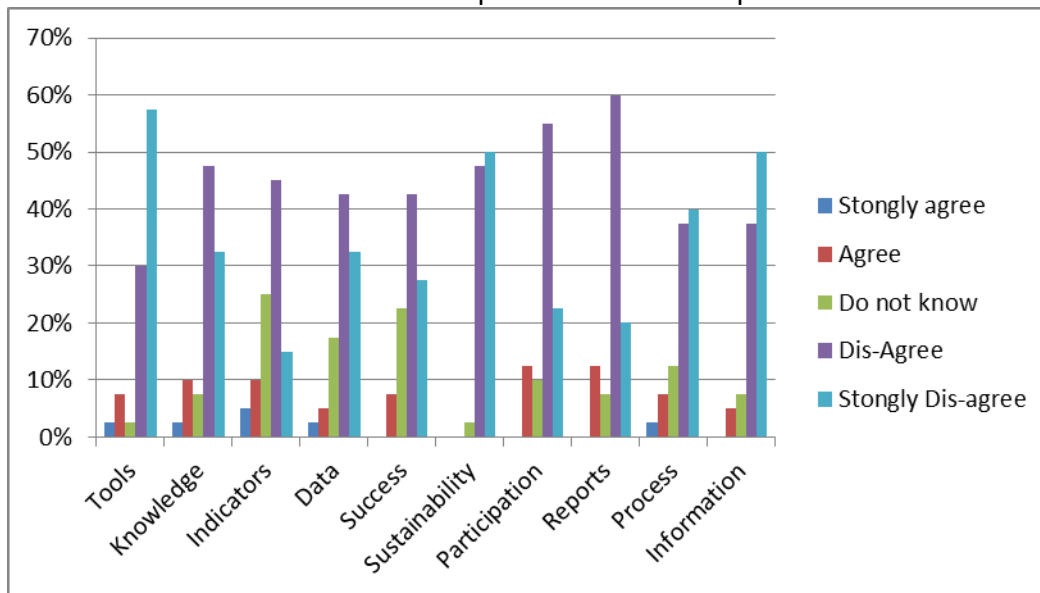


Figure 2: Summary of responses on monitoring and evaluation practices

The study sought to find out the role of monitoring and evaluation practices to the success of donor funded food security projects implemented in Kibwezi district for the last ten years. The study shows that the community was not involved in the development of M & E tools and had no knowledge of the existence of such tools. 58% of the respondents strongly dis-agreed and 30% dis-agreed on the community participation in the development of the M &E tools while 48% dis-agreed and 33% strongly dis-agreed having any knowledge on the M & E tools. This was inconsistent with the guidelines of participatory M & E which required inclusive and meaningful participation of all community groups, particularly the most vulnerable, was needed in all the phases of the projects (from assessment to implementation, monitoring and evaluation) (CARE_PMERL, 2012).The study established the community did not know the indicators of the projects success. 45% dis-agreed knowledge of these indicators, 25% did not know while 23% strongly dis-agreed on any knowledge of the indicators. This contravened the provisions of a good M & E system which demanded participation of those it sought to benefit so that affected communities buy into and shaped a projects direction by defining objectives, indicators, means of verification and input into decisions (ACF, 2011).

The study found out that the community was not involved in M & E data collection and analysis to measure indicators. 43% dis-agreed and 33% strongly dis-agreed on participation in data collection and analysis to measure indicators. This was improper according to guidelines by CARE which provided that the stakeholders were to be involved from the design of the PMERL framework through to data collection, analysis and feedback (CARE_PMERL, 2012). The projects did not meet success indicators which was an indication that the projects did not succeed. 43%

of the respondents dis-agreed and 28% strongly dis-agreed that the projects met the set success indicators. According to Europe Aid, (2012) impact indicators were used to measure the general objectives in terms of national development and poverty reduction. The study found out that the donor funded food security projects did not succeed. 50% of the participants strongly dis-agreed while 48% dis-agreed that the food security projects were successful and therefore the community had enough food. Reports from similar donor funded projects indicated that ownership of projects was only possible when communities participated meaningfully in the development, implementation and management of these projects. The lessons were that beyond accountability and results, communities and those that work with them were able to do things right and make a sustainable difference (IIRR, 2012).

The study revealed that M & E was completely unknown to the community due to lack of participation in any level of the M & E exercises. 55% of the respondents dis-agreed that the community understood how to carry M & E in food security projects. As to whether the community was involved in drafting and reporting projects progress, 60% dis-agreed that the community was involved in the drafting and reporting of projects progress. Guidelines by ACF, (2011) encouraged active stakeholder participation in project formulation, implementation and M&E activities to ensure relevant programming and accountability. The study determined that the community did not understand the M & E process. 40% dis-agreed while 38% strongly dis-agreed knowledge of the M & E process. This was due to the implementing agencies leaving the community out of the M & E activities. This contradicted the fact that a sound food security and nutrition monitoring system was simple, user-driven, based on existing institutional structures (which increases the capacity for analysis and interpretation) and had the commitment of relevant decision makers who would use the information in planning and policy design (Suresh B. and A. Ergeneman, 2005). From the study, the community had no access to baseline data and any other data for comparison of projects performance. 50% of the participants strongly dis-agreed while 38% dis-agreed that the information was available to make comparisons. This was a breach of donor requirements that food security projects should always report against the baseline and intermediate measurements to determine whether progress had been sustained, whether there was only a short spurt of improvement, or whether early improvements had all disappeared (World Bank, 2004).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The overall objective of this study was to find out the role of monitoring and evaluation practices on the success of donor funded food security projects in Kibwezi district. The study has therefore established that the community was not involved in any monitoring and evaluation of the food security projects. This was contrary to the clearly set out guidelines and emphasis by donors on participatory monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The projects were funded subject to demonstration of a clearly outlined M & E framework in the proposed projects. These M & E frameworks were drafted without the community participation. The presence of these M & E guidelines might have encouraged a up- down approach to the

development of the projects and the M & E frameworks which made the projects deficient of addressing the community priority needs and the indicators of success were fake. Keeping the community out of the M & E system raised serious questions of integrity, transparency and accountability in the projects on the side of the implementing agencies. Questions have been raised on who really benefited from these food security projects which to date have not been able to address food security in the area.

The implementing agencies failed to involve the community in the projects M & E exercises. The researcher did not establish how and when the implementing agencies collected M & E data to report project progress to the donors. It was however clear the reports did not provide any learning from previous projects and the community was not involved which led to lack of community ownership and therefore projects failure.

Recommendations

The donors should ensure the community (beneficiaries) involvement in all M & E activities throughout all the stages of the project life cycle. Training to the beneficiaries to build up their capacity to participate productively in the M & E is critical. This should ensure the financed projects address community priority needs and sufficient community participation to ensure project ownership, sustainability and success. An independent body should be set up by the donors to be charged with compliance audit to all the activities as outlined in the project proposal, M & E system and compliance to donors' guidelines. The beneficiaries must demand inclusion in all project activities and participation in drafting progress reports to donors.

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