

Monitoring and Evaluation

By Marianne Meier (SAD), Valeria Kunz (SAD), Aparna Nayampalli (MamaCash), Heather Cameron (Box Girls/Nike Consultant), Veerle Kets (King Boudewijn Foundation).

Summary

M&E is a burden for many grassroots organizations. There is often a lack of motivation, time, know-how (capacity) and/or funds. Due to the fact that M&E requests are often basically donor-driven, most reports mainly contain only positive results and rarely failures. In addition, different theories and standards of M&E of different stakeholders create confusion among grassroots organizations. These factors commonly reduce the quality of collected data to the disadvantage of all stakeholders, but most of all at the expense of the target groups, because project improvements remain static.

M&E should not be an imposed control instrument by the donor or an optional accessory (“nice to have”) of any project. M&E should be perceived as a dialogue on development and its progress between all stakeholders and want to share experiences, innovative tools, skills and techniques. We want to encourage grassroots organizations as well as donors to broaden their understanding of traditional M&E, thus becoming on the one hand more motivating for the staff, and on the other hand cost-effective. During the workshop participants gained understanding of M&E as a dynamic, participatory approach and broadened their perspective on M&E. Practical examples and case studies using creative M&E were discussed.

What is Monitoring and Evaluation?

Monitoring is the systematic collection, analysis and use of information from projects and programmes for three basic purposes:

- Learning from the experiences acquired (learning function).
- Accounting internally and externally for the resources used and the results obtained (monitoring function).
- Taking decisions (steering function).

‘Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of development activities provide government officials, development managers, and civil society with better means for learning from past experience, improving service delivery, planning and allocating resources, and demonstrating results as part of accountability to key stakeholders. Within the development community there is a strong focus on results — this helps explain the growing interest in M&E.’ (World Bank, 2004, Monitoring & Evaluation, Some tools & approaches)

‘Monitoring means comparing actual progress in activities and results to the objectives formulated in advance. Generally this will give you little more than a broad indication of whether these objectives were achieved.’ (War Child, Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2006).

Evaluation is assessing as systematically and objectively as possible an ongoing or completed project, programme or policy. The object is to be able to make statements about their relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Based on this information, it can be determined whether any changes need to be made at a project, programme or policy level, and



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if so, what they are. What went well, where is there room for improvement? Evaluation thus has both a learning function – the lessons learned need to be incorporated into future proposals or policy – and a monitoring function – partners and members review the implementation of policy based on objectives and resources mobilised.

Monitoring and evaluation are complementary. During an evaluation, as much use as possible is made of information from previous monitoring. In contrast to monitoring, where emphasis is on the process and results, evaluation is used to provide insight into the relationships between results (for example, the strengthened capacity of an organisation), effects (for example, improved services / products) and impact (for example, improved living conditions for the ultimate target group).

Three reasons

To summarise, M&E can be used for three reasons:

- Steering: steering and adjusting current programmes and projects.
- Learning: learning more about what works and what does not.
- Monitoring: accounting for the resources used in the light of objectives formulated in advance and results achieved.

M&E is thus not an imposed instrument of control, an optional accessory of any project (“nice to have”) just used for showing success stories. M&E should be a constitutive part of every project design (“must be”), a dialogue on development and its progress between all stakeholders and a participatory and creative approach of measuring change (ownership).

Participatory M&E

There is a lot of potential of participatory M&E approaches. Examples are:

- Most Significant Change (MSC) technique.
- Singing / Dancing.
- Photo/Video monitoring.
- Story-telling / Poetry.
- Web blogs / Diaries.
- Theatre / Performing Arts.
- Painting / Sculpture.

Participatory M&E is a learning and growing process on three different levels:

1. Personal, individual.
2. Organizational, institutional.
3. Community / families / neighbourhood.

With this approach target groups benefit from M&E efforts because project and staff are improving. It is accepted to reveal failures, thus raising reliability and transparency. Unexpected outcomes are considered. Results can be used for fundraising (PR, marketing) and add credibility. It is also fun and motivating for the staff and target groups.

It is recommended to combine traditional, standardized M&E tools with alternative, innovative M&E tools. Two examples from Africa are available:

- Moving the Goalposts Kilifi (MTGK), Kenya: ‘Problem tree’
- “Problem tree” Kalusha Foundation, Zambia, ‘Poetry Club’



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