# Planning for M&E and Implementation of Health Sector Projects in Garissa County, Kenya

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#### **Abstract**

The government of Kenya is dedicated to improving the quality and access to health care throughout the country. In this regard, the government has continually allocated a significant portion of the national budget to the health sector. However, despite all the efforts from the central, county governments and various development partners, funding has been inadequate and quite a number of projects in the public health sector encounter challenges in the course of their life cycle and more often than not, their implementation has not been successful. It is for this reason that this study sought to determine how planning for M&E influences implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County. The study employed descriptive cross-sectional survey research design with a target sample population of 53 health sector projects. Data was gathered using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Study findings demonstrated that planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive significant effect on the implementation of health sector projects. As such, the study concluded that planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive significant effect on the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya. Project planners and managers in Garissa County should focus on a more deliberate and structured approach to M&E planning.

Key words: Health, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation, Planning, Projects

# Introduction

Project implementation involves various procedures within the project management strategy to achieve development objectives. These include the management of individuals and resources, as well as the coordination and execution of project activities according to the project management plan. The success of projects is typically measured by their timeliness, adherence to budget constraints, and accomplishment of performance goals (Costa & Andreaus, 2021). According to Zwikael and Meredith (2019), project success is based on factors such as cost, timeliness, quality, scope, and customer satisfaction. Project implementation is assessed in diverse ways, encompassing a wide range of criteria. However, in its simplest terms, effective project implementation can be described by four fundamental dimensions. A project is considered effectively implemented when it is completed within the designated timeframe, remains within budgetary limits, achieves the majority of its original objectives, and is acknowledged by the clients for whom the project was intended (Costa & Andreaus, 2021).

Sectoral project implementation on the other hand refers to the process of executing and carrying out specific projects within a particular sector or industry. In the context of development and governance, sectoral projects are designed to address specific challenges or goals within a particular sector, such as health, education, agriculture, infrastructure, or environment (Di Tommaso et al., 2020). The various stages and activities, including planning, resource allocation, project design, procurement, implementation, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are involved in sectoral project implementation. The objective is to effectively translate policy objectives and strategies into tangible actions and outcomes within the targeted sector.

Effective sectoral project implementation requires strong project management skills, coordination among relevant stakeholders, effective governance structures, and robust monitoring and evaluation systems (Zwikael & Meredith, 2019). It aims to achieve the

desired outcomes and impact within the targeted sector, contributing to the overall development goals of the country or region. In the context of the health sector, sectoral project implementation involves carrying out specific projects and initiatives to improve healthcare services, enhance access to medical facilities, and address public health challenges. According to Di Tommaso et al. (2020), this encompasses a range of activities, such as building and upgrading healthcare infrastructure, equipping medical facilities, training healthcare professionals, implementing disease prevention and control programs, and improving healthcare delivery systems. The successful implementation of health sector projects requires close collaboration between government agencies, healthcare providers, community organizations, and other stakeholders (Opulu & Kimaru-Muchai, 2021). It also necessitates effective planning, resource allocation, and monitoring to ensure that projects align with healthcare priorities, meet quality standards, and achieve desired health outcomes. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are crucial in assessing the effectiveness of interventions, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring the efficient use of resources to maximize the impact on population health.

There exists a growing number of evidence that points towards a glaring relationship between successful implementation of projects and M&E process. According to Yiu et al. (2019), without effective M&E during implementation, no business project can succeed. The overall success of a project is dependent on proper M&E during the project execution. Galgallo (2019) observed that the success of a project is dependent on public involvement, proper planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in a participatory manner.

The government of Kenya is dedicated to improving the quality and access to health care throughout the country. In this regard, the government has continually allocated a significant portion of the national budget to the health sector. However, despite all the efforts from the central, county governments and various development partners, funding has been inadequate and quite a number of projects in the public health sector encounter challenges in the course of their life cycle and more often than not, their implementation has not been successful. A significant number of the projects have either stalled or are lacking in quality and they consequently fail to sustain employment opportunities that they avail (Mohamud, 2023). Based on available statistics, more than half (63%) of health projects in Kenya fail soon after implementation (OECD, 2019). Evidently most of the government health projects across counties in the country are yet to be accomplished despite being budgeted for. According to a study by Maina (2022), Garissa County fell behind schedule as it was ranked among the bottom 10 counties with 64-72% of the projects in the health sector unimplemented since the advent of devolution. It was therefore clear that health projects in Garissa County have experienced implementation challenges which necessitated this study. Other than funding, monitoring and evaluation practices play a vital role in the implementation of a project. It is on this context that this study sought to investigate the role played by monitoring and evaluation practices, specifically planning, technical expertise, management participation and stakeholder involvement, in the implementation of health projects in Garissa County.

Although the topic under review had been explored widely out of the country, there is lack of effort to contextualise the findings into local setting given low implementation rates of health sector projects across the devolved units and especially in Garissa County. Further, existing local studies focused on either different sectors such as infrastructure (Galgallo, 2019), project implementation challenges (Gitonga & Keiyoro, 2017), project management practices (Maina, 2022) or risk management practices (Aduma & Kimutai, 2018). Others also embraced descriptive analysis (Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013; Gitonga & Keiyoro, 2017) without looking at the causal effect via advanced modelling techniques.

It is for this reason that this study sought to determine how planning for M&E influences implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya. The study used a hypothesis to ascertain the influence;  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between planning for M&E and implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya.

#### Literature Review

The implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County continues to face significant challenges and falls behind other sectors in terms of performance and outcomes. Despite considerable efforts and substantial funding from the government and NGOs, the desired impact on healthcare services delivery and improvements in the county have not been fully realized (Garissa County government annual report, 2020)). One of the primary issues hampering project implementation is the limited capacity and resources within the sectors in the county (Osman & Kimutai, 2019). Garissa County struggles with shortages of healthcare professionals, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and a lack of essential medical equipment and supplies. These resource constraints directly impact the ability to provide quality healthcare services and hinder the successful execution of health projects.

Coordination and management gaps further contribute to the suboptimal implementation of health projects. Inefficient project management practices, inadequate coordination among stakeholders, and weak monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have been identified as key challenges. These deficiencies lead to delays, inefficiencies, and compromised project outcomes, resulting in a significant gap between the planned objectives and the actual results achieved (Purnell et al., 2016; Greenhalgh et al., 2018).

Additionally, procurement and supply chain management pose significant hurdles in the health sector. Issues such as corruption, delayed procurement processes, and inadequate planning have resulted in shortages of critical medical supplies, equipment, and essential medicines (Naher et al., 2020). The lack of proper procurement practices directly affects project implementation and compromises the quality of healthcare services provided to the community. Addressing these challenges requires urgent attention and comprehensive solutions. It is crucial to strengthen the capacity of the health sector by recruiting and retaining skilled healthcare professionals, improving healthcare infrastructure, and ensuring the availability of necessary medical equipment and supplies. Enhanced coordination and management practices, along with effective project planning, monitoring, and evaluation, are necessary to optimize the implementation of health sector projects. Moreover, reforms in procurement and supply chain management, coupled with increased transparency and accountability, are vital for overcoming the existing obstacles and achieving the desired impact in Garissa County's health sector.

Patients believe that standing in queue harms their health, which can be improved by addressing the cycle time of the system. Bhat et al. (2020) conducted a study on Lean Six Sigma for the healthcare sector key performance indicators. The study utilized the action research methodology to obtain a greater understanding of the use of LSS in the Indian healthcare sector. To comprehend and determine the difficulties in implementing LSS, a number of case studies were created and effectively implemented. In the Medical Records Departments (MRD) of four Indian private hospitals, five case studies were completed. The research found that effective leadership, availability of data, involvement of cross-functional team and effective communication are critical to the success of LSS projects. Furthermore, some of the most often used instruments for enhancing healthcare systems are control charts, cause and effect diagrams, 5S, gemba, two-sample t-tests, standardisation, waste analysis, and value stream mapping.

It is vital to understand the contribution of the digital and ICT in improving the management of health sector institutions. Brahami and Dergal (2022) did a study to determine the first steps of the digitization of the health sector, in particular, on the "SIHATIC" project. The study wanted to understand whether this digitalization can provide solutions to the problems encountered and contribute to the establishment of a more efficient and interactive medicine or it represents only a fad with few positive contributions on medical practice in health institutions. The study concluded that Algeria has made the necessary efforts for access to these technologies, and that their benefits in this health sector are no longer to be proven, but the results are not satisfactory enough for multiple reasons.

Planning for M&E in the implementation of health sector projects is crucial for project success. The planning process involves engaging key stakeholders, defining clear objectives and indicators, and developing a comprehensive M&E plan (Kabeyi, 2019). Collaborating with government officials, healthcare professionals, and community representatives ensures that project goals are

well-defined and align with the needs of the community. The M&E plan outlines activities, timelines, and responsibilities, taking into account available resources and integrating M&E within the project management cycle. Capacity building is also important, with training provided to staff involved in M&E to enhance their skills and ensure accurate data collection, analysis, and reporting. By planning effectively, valuable insights can be gained to inform decision-making and improve the delivery of healthcare services.

Effective planning for M&E in the implementation of health sector projects involves stakeholder engagement, goal definition, and the development of a comprehensive plan. By involving key stakeholders, project objectives can be clearly defined and aligned with community needs (Musau & Kirui, 2018). The M&E plan outlines specific activities, timelines, and responsibilities, taking into account available resources and integrating M&E into the project management cycle. Capacity building is also prioritized to ensure staff have the necessary skills for accurate data collection and analysis. Through effective planning, valuable information can be gathered to inform decision-making and enhance healthcare service delivery (Kabeyi, 2019).

Some projects could perform well in terms of timeline, cost, quality, goals, visibility, and donor fulfillment, but poorly in areas such as scope, acceptance, visibility, reputation, and impact. The study conducted by Kihuha (2018) focused on the M&E practices and their impact on the performance of United Nations Environment Program Global Environment Facility (UNEP-GEF) projects in Kenya. The research aimed to determine the influence of M&E practices, specifically in the areas of planning process, technical expertise, stakeholder involvement, and management participation, on project performance. The study involved interviews with the entire population of UNEP GEF project staff, including project managers, support staff, and monitoring and evaluation staff. The study found that the planning process and technical expertise had a significant influence on the allocation of M&E funds, the development of clear M&E plans/tools, and the regular collection and analysis of M&E information.

Addressing M&E issues is crucial to enhance effectiveness and improve project implementation efficiency. Opulu and Kimaru-Muchai's study in 2021 looked at how Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) affected the way infrastructure projects were carried out in Vihiga County, Kenya. The findings revealed positive relationships between stakeholder engagement, budgetary allocation, technical capacity, and technology with M&E performance. These variables accounted for 74.5% of the variation in M&E performance. However, the study also highlighted challenges in the county's M&E system, including insufficient budgetary provisions, low stakeholder engagement, and limited technological literacy thus need for the current study.

### Methods

The study was guided by systems theory, stakeholder theory and change management theory. The study employed descriptive cross-sectional survey research design with a target sample population of 53 health sector projects. The unit of observation was the project administrators and participants of all health sector projects implemented within a period of five years (2018-2022) in the county. Data was gathered using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. Pilot testing was done to enhance the validity and reliability of the instrument. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics to determine the significant dimensions of M&E practices that influenced implementation of the health sector projects in the county.

#### Results

#### **Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

This table presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study, which aimed to assess health sector projects in Garissa County Government. The study targeted a total of 152 individuals, including both managers/administrators and participants, involved in health projects implemented by the Garissa county health department. The table below provides a summary of the key demographic findings, which were described as follows:

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	65	61.32
	Female	41	38.68
	18 – 34 years	24	22.64
	35 – 45 years	41	38.68
Age bracket	46 – 55 years	24	22.64
	56 – 64 years	12	11.32
	65 years and above	5	4.72
	Certificate	19	17.92
	Diploma	43	40.57
Level of education	Degree	27	25.47
	Masters	9	8.49
	PhD	8	7.55
	0-2 years	9	8.49
	3-5 years	32	30.19
Years of experience	5 – 10 years	40	37.74
	10 years and Above	25	23.58

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From table 1 above, the gender distribution among the participants showed that 65 respondents (61.32%) were male, while 41 respondents (38.68%) were female. This data revealed a gender balance within the participants group. The study categorised respondents into different age groups. The largest age group consisted of participants aged 35 to 45 years, with 41 respondents (38.68%). In contrast, the age group of 65 years and above had the fewest participants, totalling 5 respondents (4.72%).

Participants in the study had diverse educational backgrounds. The majority of respondents held diplomas, with 43 participants (40.57%), followed by those with degrees (27 participants, 25.47%). The study also included individuals with certificates (19 participants, 17.92%), master's degrees (9 participants, 8.49%), and even a few with Ph.D. qualifications (8 participants, 7.55%). Table 4.1 also presents the years of experience among the participants. A noteworthy proportion of respondents had 3 to 5 years of

experience, accounting for 32 participants (30.19%). Additionally, 40 participants (37.74%) had 5 to 10 years of experience, while 25 participants (23.58%) had over 10 years of experience. A smaller group of participants, 9 (8.49%), had 0 to 2 years of experience.

## **Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation**

Table 2 provides a summary of descriptive statistics related to planning for monitoring and evaluation activities. This table evaluates various statements regarding the planning and execution of monitoring and evaluation processes, offering insights into the respondents' perceptions. The key findings are described as follows:

Table 2: Descriptives for Planning for Monitoring and Evaluation

Statements on Planning for monitoring and evaluation	Mean	STD	
Adequate planning is done for monitoring and evaluation activities.	3.65	1.22	
Clear objectives and indicators are defined for monitoring and evaluation.	3.85	1.08	
Timely and appropriate resources are allocated for monitoring and evaluation activities.	3.80	1.09	
There is a structured framework for data collection and analysis.	3.53	1.22	
Regular reviews and adjustments are made based on monitoring and evaluation findings.		1.17	
Composite value for Planning for monitoring and evaluation		.89	

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From table 2 above, the mean score for the statement "adequate planning is done for monitoring and evaluation activities" was 3.65, with a standard deviation (STD) of 1.22. This suggested that, on average, respondents agreed with current level of adequacy in planning for monitoring and evaluation activities. On the statement "clear objectives and indicators are defined for monitoring and evaluation," the mean score was 3.85, and the STD was 1.08. This indicated that, on average, respondents agreed that clear objectives and indicators were relatively well-defined.

Regarding "timely and appropriate resources being allocated for monitoring and evaluation activities," the mean was 3.80, with an STD of 1.09. This suggested that, on average, respondents agreed that resources were reasonably allocated in a timely and appropriate manner. On the statement "there is a structured framework for data collection and analysis", a mean score of 3.53 and an STD of 1.22 were obtained. This implied that, on average, respondents were in agreement with the current structured framework for data collection and analysis. "Regular reviews and adjustments made based on monitoring and evaluation findings" had a mean score of 3.80 and a STD of 1.17. This indicated that, on average, respondents agreed that regular reviews and adjustments were made in accordance with monitoring and evaluation results.

The composite value for planning for monitoring and evaluation, representing an overall assessment, was 3.73 with a low STD of .89. This suggested that, overall, respondents had a positive perception (were in agreement) on planning for monitoring and evaluation activities. This study determined the influence of monitoring and evaluation practices on the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya.

The hypothesis was;  $H_{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between planning for M&E and implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya.

In the output in table 3 below, model summary, ANOVA statistics and estimated coefficients for the independent variables in the multiple linear regression modelling are presented.

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis

Implementation of health sector	Coef.	Std. Error.	t-value	p-value [95%	Confidence	Sig
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projects	Interval]							
Planning for monitoring and evaluation $(X_1)$	.129	.053	2.41	.018	.023	.234	**	
Constant	1.102	.345	3.19	.002	.417	1.787	***	
Mean for dependent variable 3.20		3.200	SD for dependent variable			0.523		
R-squared		0.363	Number of observations			106		
F-test		14.413  Prob > F			0.000			
Akaike crit. (AIC)		124.526	Bayesian crit.	(BIC)		-	137.843	
*** p<.01, ** p<.05, * p<.1			-					

Source: Primary Data (2023)

From the model summary in table 3 above, 36.3% of the variation in the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, was explained by the influence of planning for monitoring and evaluation, technical expertise, management participation, and stakeholders' involvement (R<sup>2</sup>=0.363). On the significance of the multiple linear model, the ANOVA Statistics (F=14.413, p-value=0.000) indicated that the model was significant in explaining changes in the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County.

Individually, on the first hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between planning for M&E and implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, planning for monitoring and evaluation had a  $\beta = 0.129$  and  $p_{value} = 0.018$ , that lead to the rejection of that null hypothesis. The rejection of the first hypothesis implied that Planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive and significant influence on the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya.

#### **Discussions**

The study findings were in line with systems, stakeholder and change management theories. That is, in systems theory, there is interdependencies and interactions between different components. Stakeholder theory focuses on effective stakeholders' engagement throughout the project. Stakeholder and system theory emphasize on identifying and managing the diverse range of stakeholders can be challenging, though building relationships and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, lead to improved implementation, and sustainability. Change management emphasized the importance of creating the right conditions for change, introducing and adopting new behaviours and practices, and solidifying the change to ensure its sustainability.

The study findings indicated that planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive effect on the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya. This finding coincides with that of Bhat et al. (2020) who found that effective planning at the leadership level coupled with effective communication positively led to the success of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) project in the healthcare sector in India. Further, the current study findings supported those of Kihuha (2018) that planning process had a significant influence on the allocation of M&E funds, the development of clear M&E plans/tools, and the regular collection and analysis of M&E information.

Hubert, and Mulyungi, (2018) demonstrated a notably positive correlation coefficient between M&E planning and project performance in Rwanda, from selected non-governmental organisations in Gasabo District. Micah, and Luketero (2017) also agree with this study finding as in their study, a strong correlation existed between monitoring and evaluation plans, and the performance of maternal health projects in Bungoma County. Likewise, Mohamud (2023) found a moderate but significant correlation between M&E planning and the performance of health projects in Isiolo County.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Study findings demonstrated that planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive significant effect on the implementation of health sector projects. As such, the study concluded that planning for monitoring and evaluation had a positive significant effect on the implementation of health sector projects in Garissa County, Kenya.

Project planners and managers in Garissa County should focus on a more deliberate and structured approach to M&E planning. This entails setting clear project objectives, defining relevant performance indicators, and constructing a well-designed framework for This publication is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY.

monitoring and evaluation that closely aligns with project objectives. A robust planning phase would serve as the bedrock for sound project implementation.

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