Building Results-Based Monitoring &Evaluation Systems for Ailling Kenyan Organizations

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Abstract- Building a monitoring and evaluation system can be absolutely exhausting a task. Building a monitoring system to continuously track performance of government and or its institutions is essential for an assured success of such entities. The monitoring system gives a picture of the ongoing activities through select indictors on the direction of change, the pace of change, and the magnitude of change. Through this, it can also identify the unanticipated changes. All are critical to knowing whether policies, programs, and projects are moving in the intended direction and geared for the specific objectives.

Index Terms- monitoring, performance, indicators, change, policies, programs and projects, stalled, stopped, abandoned and projects.

I. INTRODUCTION

Results-based M&E has become a global phenomenon as national and international stakeholders in the development process have sought increased accountability, transparency, and results from governments and organizations. Multilateral development institutions, donor governments, parliaments, the private sector, NGOs, citizen's groups, and civil society are all voicing their interest in and concern for tangible results. Political and financial support for governments and their programs are becoming increasingly linked with government's ability to implement good policies, demonstrate effectiveness in the use of resources, and deliver real results.

The MDGs, the HIPC initiative, IDA funding, WTO membership, and EU accession are examples of just some of the international initiatives and forces for change in the direction of results-based M&E .Internally. Governments are facing the challenges of deregulation, commercialization, and privatization, as well as fluctuating budgets and resources.

For these reasons, governments and organizations are turning to results-based M&E in the hope that this public management tool can help them devise appropriate policies, manage financial and other resources ,and fulfill their mandates and promises to internal and external stakeholders.

Results-based M&E moves beyond the traditional input-output –focused M&E, and, when used effectively, helps policy makers and decision makers focus on and analyze outcomes. After all, inputs and outputs tell little about the effectiveness of a given policy, program, or project. While traditional M&E remains an important part of the chain of results –based M&E, it is the outcomes and impacts that are of most interest and import to governments and their stakeholders.

Building and sustaining results-based M&E systems is admittedly not an easy task. It requires continuous commitment, champions, time, effort, and resources. There may be many organizational and technical challenges to overcome in building these systems .Political challenges are usually the most difficult. And it may take several attempts before the system can be tailored to suit a given governmental or organizational policy, program or project .But it is doable .And it is certainly worthwhile in light of the increasingly common demands for and conditions attached to demonstrating good performance.

Good M&E systems also build knowledge capital by enabling governments and organizations to develop a knowledge base of the types of policies, programs, and projects that are successful _and more generally, what works, what does not, and why. Results-based M&E systems also help promote transparency and accountability, and may have beneficial spill-over effects in other parts of a government or organization. In short, there is tremendous power in measuring performance.

Many of the OECD countries have had 20 or more years of experience in M&E, and are at varying stages of progress with regard to results-based M&E systems. The OECD countries –like their developing country counterparts-created evaluation cultures and M&E systems in response to varying degrees of internal and external pressures .Furthermore, developed countries have chosen a variety of starting points for implementing results-based M&E systems ,including whole-of-government ,enclave ,and mixed approaches.

Recent OECD survey results found that most of the OECD member countries now include performance information in their budgets. With respect to results considerations, about half of the countries have taken into account the distinction between outputs and outcomes. Much remains to be done though, such as linking performance targets to expenditures, and using performance information to determine budgetary allocations. Thus, many OECD countries, results –based M&E is still a work in progress.
The lessons learnt from the OECD countries 'experience are useful and applicable to developing countries as they now face the challenges of creating their own M&E systems and cultures.OECD countries with democratic political systems ,strong empirical traditions ,civil servants trained in social sciences, and high levels of expenditure on education ,health, and social welfare have been among the most successful in adapting results-based M&E systems.Infact ,building such systems is first

and foremost a political activity with technical dimensions rather than vice versa. The OECD experience demonstrates that creating results-based M&E systems requires continuous effort to achieve comprehensive coverage across governmental management and budgetary systems.

Developing countries face a variety of unique challenges as they try to answer the "so what" question: What are the results and the impacts of government actions and interventions? These countries may encounter such obstacles as lack of demand for and ownership of M&E systems ,weak institutional capacity lack of bureaucratic cooperation and coordination ,lack of highly placed champions, weak or nonexistent legal and regulatory frameworks, a traditional M&E culture, lack of workforce capacity, political and administrative cultures and conducive to M&E implementation, and so forth. Despite these obstacles, many developing countries have made impressive progress in developing results-based M&E systems. The challenges are difficult, but good governance is essential for achieving economic, social and human development. Developing countries deserve good governance no less than others.

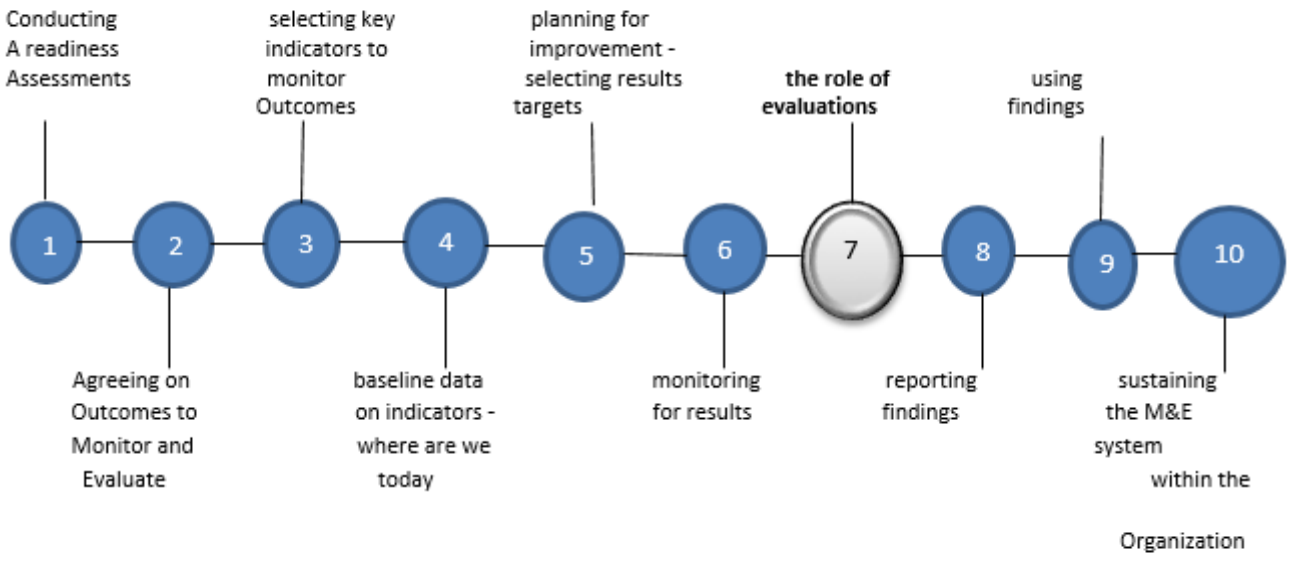
Finally ,given the increasing number of internal and external partnerships that are being formed to accomplish development goals ,a new need has emerged for M&E systems that encompasses these broader partnership efforts. International coordination of results is the next stage in evolutionary process of extending results-based M&E.

II. Organization of the Study.

This study is organized under the following sub-headings: abstract introduction, the theoretical model, ten steps for building a results-based M&E system, sad experience and example from the Uhuru administration, conclusion and References.

III. How to Create Results-Based M&E Systems.

There are ten steps here that can help governments and organizations create, develop and sustain results –based M&E systems. This model may be used for policies, programs, and projects. Though visually it appears as a linear process, in reality it is not. One will inevitably move back and forth along steps, or work on several steps simultaneously. See Figure 1 below.



Source: Research literature 2020.

The model has some unique features, including step1, conducting a readiness assessment. This assessment _often missed or omitted is a diagnostic tool that determines whether governments are actually ready and able to move forward in building, using, and sustaining M&E systems. The three main parts of the readiness assessment include an examination of incentives or demands for designing and building a results-based M&Esystem, roles, and responsibilities and existing structures for assessing performance of government, and capacity building requirements. More specifically, the readiness assessment looks at eight key areas ,including the following: what or who is encouraging the need for M&E systems; motivations of champions ;ownership and beneficiaries of systems; how the system will support better resource allocation and achievement of goals; dealing with negative or detrimental information generated by M&E ;existing capacity to support M&E systems; and links between the M&Esystem and project ,program,sector,and national goals.

A variety of lessons learned have been generated by readiness assessment conducted in developing countries .For example, Bangladesh had few of the necessary requirements to begin building M&E systems .Assessment in Egypt and Romania, however, yielded vital information about likely entry points for beginning work on M&E .Highly placed political champions and strong, sustained political leadership were found to be key ingredients in the M&E mix. Other findings are that ministries may be at different stages in the ability to conduct M&E .It may be possible to move forward with M&E by working with pockets of innovation within government. Communication and coordination within and between government agencies and departments and among donors are also important. Developing countries may currently lack the institutional, human, and technical capacity to design, implement, and use results-based M&E systems; however, this is not an instrumentable obstacle. Training and technical assistance can be provided to remedy these difficulties. But no amount of training and technical assistance can substitute for indigenous political will. Often, the political challenges are more difficult to overcome than the technical ones. Choosing outcomes to monitor and evaluate is the second step .All governments must set goals ,regardless of whether they have the capacity to conduct M&E.Outcomes will show which road to take .Building the M&E system is essentially a deductive process in which inputs, activities ,outputs, and outcomes are all derived from the setting of longer term strategic goals. Likewise, setting outcomes is the first building block for developing a performance framework. Indicators, baselines, and targets will all flow from the outcomes.

Building M&E systems is a participatory political process ,and key internal and external stakeholders should be consulted during the various steps of the model including the readiness assessment, the setting of outcomes, establishment of indicators, and so on. Critical stakeholders and their main concerns will need to be identified. Existing problems need to be reformulated into a set of positive outcomes. Outcome statements need disaggregation, and each statement should contain only one goal. (This becomes important when developing indicators and targets) .Agreeing on strategic priorities and outcomes will then help drive resource allocation.

Key performance indicators (step 3) can only be set after agreeing upon and setting goals .As with the case of outcomes, the interests of selecting indicators. Indicators are the quantitative or qualitative variables that provide a simple and reliable means to measure achievement of goals. As stressed throughout the model, indictors should be developed for all levels of the results-based M&E system, meaning that indicators will be needed to monitor progress with respect to inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts continually. Progress needs to be monitored at all levels of the system to provide feedback on areas of success, as well as areas where improvements may be needed.

Good performance indicators should be clear,relevant,economic,adequate,and monitorable (CREAM).Every indicator also needs its own separate M&E system ,so caution should be exercised in setting too many indicators .Proxy and predesigned indicators may be adopted with full recognition of the pros and cons of using them .

Constructing good indicators often takes more than one to try; arriving at the final set of indicators will take time. Piloting of indicators is essential .Indicators should be well thought through. And they should not be changed very often -this can lead to chaos in the overall data collection system. It should also be remembered that performance indicators can be used to provide feedback, and can provide a wealth of performance information. Many developing countries are making progress in the performance indicator selection process.

Baselines, step 4, are derived from outcomes and indicators. A performance baseline is basically information quantitative or qualitative - that provides data at the beginning of, or just prior to, the monitoring period. It is used as a starting point from which to monitor future performance. Or, stated somewhat differently, baselines are the first measurements of indicators. The challenge is to obtain adequate baseline information on each of the performance indicators for each outcome.

Eight key questions are outlined for with respect to building baseline information: sources of data, data collection methods, which collects data, how often data are collected, cost and difficulty to collect data, who analyses data, who reports data, and who uses data. Sources are who or what provides data. Not the method of collecting data. Data sources may be primary or secondary.

There are a variety of data collecting methods along the continuum from informal and less structured to more structured and formal methods. Data collection methods include conversation with concerned individuals, community interviews, reviews of official records, key informant interviews and participant observation, focus group interviews, direct observations, questionnaires, one time surveys, panel surveys, census, and field experiments. Data collection strategies necessarily involve some tradeoffs with respect to cost, precision, credibility and timelines.

Establishing baseline data on indicators is crucial in determining current conditions and in measuring future performance.Subsiquent measurements from the baseline will provide important directional or trend data, and can help decision makers determine whether they are on truck with respect to their goals.

Selecting results targets step 5.Targets are the interim steps on the way to longer-term outcome. Again a deductive reasoning process is involved, in which targets are based on outcomes; indicators and baselines .Selecting targets should also entail consultative, political, participatory process with key stakeholders. Targets can be determined by adding desired levels of improvements to baseline indicator levels (assuming a finite and expected level of inputs and activities).Targets should be feasible given all of the resources (inputs) considerations. Each indicator is expected to have only one target over a specified time frame.

Target setting is the final step in building the performance framework. The performance framework in turn becomes the basis for planning with attendant implications for budgeting, resource allocation, staffing, and so forth. Performance frameworks have broad applicability and can be usefully employed as a format for National Poverty, Reduction Strategies, Project plans, Programs, and Policies.

Monitoring for results, step 6, entails both implementation monitoring (means and strategies) and results monitoring. The key principles of building a monitoring system include recognizing the

performance information needs at the policy,program,and project levels; the need for performance information to move both the horizontally and vertically in the organization; identifying the demand for performance information at each level; and identifying the responsibilities at each level.

The major criteria for collecting quality performance data are the reliability, validity, and timeliness of the data. Every monitoring system needs ownership, management, maintenance and credibility. Monitoring for results also calls for data collection and analysis of performance data. These are to be expected, so it is important to pretest data collection instruments and procedures.

Building the monitoring system framework means that each outcome will require an indicator, baseline, target, data collection strategy, data analysis, reporting plan, and identified users.

Achieving results through partnership is essential. Means and strategies will need to be set by multiple partners. One must look beyond one's own organizational unit when considering available inputs. Partnerships may be created elsewhere in one's own organization, or even with other organizations inside or outside of government.

Step 7, involves using evaluation information to support a results –based M&E system. Monitoring and evaluation are complementary, and both are needed in these systems. Evaluation information can be used for a variety of purposes: making resource allocation decisions, rethinking causality of problems; decision making in selecting among competing alternatives; supporting public sector reform; and so on. Evaluation information can also be relevant at all phases of a given policy, program, or project cycle.

The timing of evaluation is another consideration. Evaluative information is essential when:(a) regular measurements of key indicators suggest a sharp divergence between planned and actual performance;(b) performance indicators consistently suggest weak or no results from an initiatives;(c) resource allocations are being made across policies, programs, or projects; and (d) similar projects, programs, or policies re reporting divergent evidence of outcomes.

There are seven different types of evaluation: performance logic chain, reimplementation assessment, rapid appraisal, case study, meta-evaluation, impact evaluation, and process implementation. Each is appropriate to specific kinds of evaluation questions .Quality evaluations can be characterized by impartiality, usefulness stakeholder involvement, and value for money, feedback and dissemination and technical adequacy.

Reporting findings step 8, is a critical step in the process .Continuous performance data and findings should be used to help improve policies, programs, and projects. In analyzing and reporting data, the more data measurements there are, and the more certain one can be of trends, directions, and results. There is an implicit tradeoff between measurement frequency and measurement precision .Cost and capacity also come into play.
Performance data should be reported in comparison to earlier data and to the baseline .Also, to measure and compare against expected results, one must be able to compare present and past circumstances. Monitoring data are not causality data. They do not tell why an event occurred. It is also important to take into account the target audience when reporting findings.

Using findings, step 9, will better inform the decision-making process. There is wide range of uses of performance findings .For example, performance-based budgets budget to outputs, but also help decision makers manage outcomes. Another noteworthy phenomenon is that if performance information is asked for, improved performance will occur. Using continuous findings can also help to generate knowledge and learning within governments and organizations .Building a credible knowledge management system is another key component of using findings.

There are a variety of strategies that can be used to share information .A good communication strategy is essential for disseminating and sharing information with key stakeholders. Sharing information with stakeholders helps to bring them into business of government and can help to generate trust. This is, after all, one of the purposes of building results-based M&E system.

Finally, step 10 deals with sustaining the M&E system. We suggested there are six critical components to doing so: demand, clear roles, and responsibilities, incentives, trustworthy and credible information, accountability, and capacity. We also examined the incentives and disincentives that may come into play in sustaining M&E systems .And we also know that problems will occur in implementing and sustaining the systems.

Sad experiences of the Uhuru administration of lack of feasibility studies, monitoring& evaluation for projects - Kenya:

The Standard Newspaper dated 21st July2020 attests to the sad example that shows how the Kenyan government mounts projects without conducting a feasibility study, or does any monitoring and evaluation exercise to ascertain the viability of proposed projects and can run up to completion for the country to be able to reap fruits**. "The Standard Newspaper above had the hard title: Legal tussles haunt President Uhuru's multi-billion legacy projects".**

An analysis of court cases shows that almost all mega plans have either stalled, intend to be stopped or have failed to take off even after implementation, says part of the paper. The fight over the projects through court cases demonstrate the vicious wars between the government ,individuals ,activists and NGOs that have put president Kenyatta's legacy at stake, says another part of the paper.

"An analysis of court cases shows that almost all the major projects the president has championed have battles in court ,some have stalled, others intend to be stopped and others have had their implementation halted", says the paper in part.

President Uhuru has often accused the judiciary of frustrating his projects, with the relationship between himself and the chief justice David Maraga deteriorating after the Head of State refused to appoint the 41 new judges says another part of the paper.

"There are several issues surrounding these projects .Some may be environmental and they (courts) may resolve the issues but, there is some harm they are likely to cause. In such a case, if the government does not lose the money invested in the project, it has to pay delay costs.

Activist Okiya Omutatah says, "the jubilee government is to blame for stalled projects by failing to follow procurement procedures.He,Omutatah defends the judiciary by saying that the government has thrown the law through the window ,rendering procurement and appointment processes a breeding ground for graft.

He cites the Standard Gauge Railway as one of the projects that was never budgeted for .He; Omutatah told the Standard Newspaper that the Jubilee government thinks that the law is an impediment and that you would rather rule through fiat than the law. He concludes by saying that the projects have been marred by corruption. Says the paper in part.

IV. Conclusion

Results-based M&E systems are a powerful public management tool that can be used by governments and organizations to demonstrate accountability, transparency and results oriented projects. They can help to build and foster political and financial support and harmony for common policies, programs, and projects. And they can help the government built a solid knowledge base.

Importantly, results-based M&E systems can also bring about major political and cultural changes in the way the governments and organizations operate-leading to improved performance, enhanced accountability and transparency, learning and knowledge.

Results-based M&E systems should be considered a work in progress.Continous attention, resources, and political commitment are needed to ensure the viability and sustainability of these systems. Building the cultural shift necessary to move an organization towards a results orientation takes time, commitment, and political will. In the absence of the efforts to undertake this transformation, the only way an organization can cost is downhill. Building and sustaining a results-based M&E system takes time and effort .But it is also noteworthy to remember that no system is perfect, and there are many different approaches, but the journey is worth the energy and effort and the rewards can be many especially, to Kenya under the prevailing environmental conditions where there are numerous legal tussles, Lack of rule of law and a pronounced ground for graft.

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