

## The Effect of Staff Capacity on Monitoring and Evaluation Effectiveness: The Case Study of International Non-Governmental Organizations in Hargeisa Somaliland

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### **Abstract**

*The study assessed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) effectiveness at the International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in Hargeisa City, home to most of Somaliland's INGOs. The INGOs were chosen for this study because they managed and implemented the donor-funded initiatives that provided social services to Somaliland's general populace. The specific objective was to assess the effect of staff capacity on M&E effectiveness. A mixed method design incorporating surveys for the INGO staff and key informant interviews was adopted. M&E employees were chosen using a simple random sample process, whereas respondents for personal interviews were selected using purposeful sampling. Descriptive data analysis was performed utilizing frequency tables, the mean, and standard deviation for Likert scale items in the questionnaire. Pearson product correlation was used to assess the association between variables. The Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) program was used as a tool to make sense of a quantitative data set. Content analysis was also used to analyze qualitative data captured through personal interviews. The study revealed that staff capacity-related predictors of the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation include measurement of the project performance, staff experience, and a good understanding of project design. The study recommends that INGOs' management improve staff capacity in performance measurement and project designing skills.*

Keywords: Monitoring and Evaluation, Predictors, International non-governmental organizations

### **Introduction**

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are critical techniques applied to projects, programs, or policies to provide helpful information about the extent of progress towards their intended results (monitoring) and achievement of desired objectives. The M&E also plays a key role in generating information about the deviation from the project plans that fail to deliver the intended results. The M&E is critical in supporting decision-making processes by offering information to project managers who make evidence-based decisions intended to improve the project performance ((Ojok, James & Benon 2016). The monitoring and evaluation have different but complementary functions that help interventions that work in certain contexts and time settings. The main focus of monitoring is learning by doing and information gathered in the process is used to inform making decisions regarding the implementation phase. Bell and Aggleton (2016) argued that monitoring and evaluation serve purposeful learning of stakeholders improving project designs and strategies. According to the World Bank, evaluation, on the other hand, is a selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress toward and the achievement of an outcome. evaluation is not a one-time event, but an exercise involving assessments of differing scope and depth carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs for evaluative knowledge and learning.

Despite the importance of M&E, setting up an effective system to monitor and evaluate projects posed challenges to the projects implemented globally. Singh et al. (2018) examined monitoring and evaluation practices by Indian companies that implemented sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies. Their study established that staff capacity was limited and they were not able to effectively measure the performance of the policies due to insufficient relevant knowledge of basic data analysis tools. As a result, the project team made a poor and ill-informed decision leading to the recommendation of remedial actions aimed at introducing midcourse corrections for the project.

In Africa, the field of M&E encountered multiple challenges including a lack of skills for staff in charge of M&E deliverables due to a shortage of capacity. A study in Kenya projects demonstrated that committee members charged with monitoring and evaluation of the projects were not provided with necessary capacity-building training. In the same study, 67% of respondents did not receive the relevant training on project evaluation. Weak M&E systems have the potential to lead to project failures as the staff with poor M&E skills cannot support management decisions to introduce midcourse corrections for projects.

The INGOs in Somaliland face challenges in monitoring and evaluating projects. According to the Ministry of Planning and National Development, the INGOs did not operationalize M&E to track project progress toward the results. As a result, limited information about projects was shared with stakeholders.

Data sources pointed out contributing factors that led to the poor performance of monitoring and evaluation citing the low capacity of staff responsible for routine data collection and measurement of project performance against a set of selected indicators (Somaliland National MEAL strategy, 2019).

Lack of staff capacity is detrimental to organizations. A study in Kenya for the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) project demonstrates effective monitoring and evaluation demands for M&E staff with good skills. As a result, this research recommends training aimed at improving the capacity of the staff and prioritizing developing logical frameworks, formulating indicators, and designing data collection tools for qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Report writing skills, data analysis, and interviewing skills are also regarded as necessary success factors for monitoring and evaluating staff which organizations are expected to focus on while strengthening the capacity of staff (Musomba Kasanga Sammy, 2013). The research results demonstrate that lack of monitoring and evaluation capacity, inadequate HR training, and limited funding for M&E are all found key barriers to effective monitoring and evaluation (Ojok, James, et al., 2016).

Training and experience are key factors in improving the capacity of M & E staff. Training equips staff with the knowledge to implement the project monitoring and evaluation systems aimed at coming up with clear results, smart indicators, methods of data collection, and proper utilization of the information for decision-making purposes. Similarly, experience provides the M & E team the opportunity to use the knowledge imparted through education and training schemes in delivering expected monitoring and evaluation tasks including routine monitoring exercises, ad hoc assessment, and project evaluations. Hence, developing the capacity of staff through training and practice is associated with strong monitoring and evaluation systems that serve the purpose of assessing the project's progress toward the intended objective and evaluating the achievement of results and long-term changes. On the other hand, poor training and low level of staff knowledge lead to poor results in monitoring and evaluation which in turn adversely affects the success of interventions. Capacity development and experience are instrumental in a good monitoring and evaluation structure (Okello and Mugambi 2015). This study tried to look into the effectiveness of the M&E and associated factors for international non-governmental organizations.

### ***Statement of the Problem***

Effective monitoring and evaluation are key to the realization of project objectives. The monitoring and evaluation improve transparency, accountability for resource use and impact, good project performance, and organizational learning to benefit future projects (Ogolla and Moronge, 2016). However, Somaliland faces challenges in carrying an out effective M&E system in the INGOs. According to the Ministry of Planning and National Development, the INGOs were not able to carry out M&E systems to track project progress toward the results impacting the project's performance.

The effectiveness of M&E is low for the INGO based in Hargeisa. The INGOs have not satisfactorily been accountable to sectoral line ministries and communities benefiting from the projects due to ineffective M&E systems. Existing M&E systems fell short of generating and providing information about the project performances promptly for internal decision-makers and other key stakeholders including government and donors. However, there was not enough research done to investigate the effect of staff capacity on the M&E of the INGOs based in Hargeisa. The objective of the study is to assess the effect of staff capacity on the M&E effectiveness of the INGOs in Hargeisa.

### ***Theoretical Frame Work***

Program theory assumes that programs and policies are carried out to achieve the desired situation (Donaldson, 2001). According to Bickman(1987), program theory is a logic model that demonstrates the way interventions are designed to attain intended results. A set of activities with clear pathways to objectives are implemented in a predefined time-bound. CA certain group of people benefits from the services and products that positively improve the living condition of the problems or addresses problem affecting beneficiaries.

Generally, program theory has three important components. The first component is called the organizational plan mobilizes necessary resources and coordinates the set of related interventions which are aimed at creating service delivery mechanisms. The second component is concerned with developing a service utilization plan. The service utilization plan ensures that beneficiaries can use the services or products made available by the delivery system which was developed in the previous stage.

Finally, the theory of impact plays a role that interventions make in difference in the lives of intended people hence bringing about changes in societal levels (Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004). The program theory assisted the research in several ways. The interventions and desired results guided key research questions that were administered to beneficiaries were formulated. Additionally, this theory also informed the researcher about existing knowledge thus enabling him to come up with hypothetical statements linked to the different research

variables. Finally, the theory offered a full description of the situation under study while also providing plausible generalizations in terms of specific circumstances in which the models developed were fully applicable.

**Methodology**

This study utilized a mixed method: quantitative and qualitative techniques. The quantitative technique is particularly suited for research objectives aimed at measuring the association between the response variable and predicting variables. According to Creswell (2014), quantitative research is an approach that examines the relationship among variables. Creswell further added that the variables were measured using instruments resulting in numbered data which were analyzed using statistical procedures. This study utilized a survey as a method of data collection while a questionnaire was administered to final respondents to capture information about the variables measured. On the other hand, qualitative methods were used to gain the perceptions and views of respondents. The personal interviews were the primary methods of data collection for a qualitative approach to generate rich information and reasons behind challenges facing INGOs in the context of monitoring and evaluation.

The sample takes into consideration the size of the population from which it was taken. Allen (2020) recommends that a smaller sample should be considered using a random sampling technique if it is really not feasible to study an entire population due to financial and time constraints. Therefore, based on the limitations the research employed a simple random sampling technique. A sample size of 161 respondents was obtained from the target population of 269 staff who worked for 5 main INGOs in Hargeisa that delivered aid to the people in need. The research utilized Solvin’s Formula to get a representative sample size. Below are the details of the computation procedures.

$$\text{Sample Size} = n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$$

$$n = 269 / (1 + 269 * 0.05 * 0.05) = 161 \text{ individuals .}$$

Where **N** was the population number, **e** was the desired margin of error and **n** was the computed sample size). The margin of error for this study was 5% while the confidence level was 95% was a standard cut-off value for social research.

**Table 1: Sample Size Distribution**

Agency	Key Program staff in Hargeisa	Proportional Sample size
<b>GIZ</b>	20	12
<b>Save the Children</b>	118	71
<b>Welthungerhilfe</b>	28	17
<b>World Vision</b>	89	53
<b>Oxfam</b>	14	9
Total	269	161

**Results**

A total of 101 respondents participated in this study against a target of 161. This low response rate could be associated with the fact the target population was the staff who were busy with project implementation processes and key M&E activities including baseline, mid-term, and end-line evaluation.

**Demographic characteristics**

Among the survey participants, most respondents, 79% (n=80) were male while 21% (n=21) were female. This was evidenced by the fact that 99% of respondents had a college education which was a basic entry requirement for the INGOs staff before joining their international organizations. About three quarters (73%) completed a master’s degree while those equipped with a degree and secondary certificates accounted for 26% and 1%, respectively. The highest proportion of respondents (66%) came from the 25 to 34 age group reflecting the economically active age group. This was followed by the 35-44 age bracket standing at 32%. Finally, the percentage of respondents below 24 years of age was relatively small at 12%. Regarding gender, about 71% of females were within the 25-34 age category as compared to 65% of males.

**Table 2: Demographic characteristics**

		<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>	Male	80	79%
	Female	21	21%
<b>Education Attainment</b>	Degree	26	26%
	Masters	74	73%
	Secondary	1	1%
<b>Age distribution</b>	15-24	2	2%
	25-34	67	66%
	35-44	32	32%

### The Effect of Staff Capacity of Monitoring & Evaluation Staff in the INGOs

The researcher examined the effect of staff capacity on effective monitoring and evaluation.

The following five indicators were employed: Staff experience is key to effective monitoring and evaluation; Staff has attended certified training to improve effectiveness M&E; Staff equipped with data analysis techniques lead effective M&E; Staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E; and Staff with the capacity to measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the Effect of Staff Capacity on Monitoring and Evaluation**

Capacity of Staff	n	S. disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	S. agree	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff experience is key to effective monitoring and evaluation	101	7%	6%	15%	45%	28%	3.8	1.1
Staff have attended certified training to improve the effectiveness of M&E	101	9%	10%	18%	49%	15%	3.5	1.1
Staff equipped with data analysis techniques leading to effective M&E	101	9%	9%	17%	38%	28%	3.7	1.2
Staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E	101	6%	5%	22%	42%	26%	3.8	1.1
Staff with the capacity to measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E	101	6%	7%	11%	44%	33%	3.9	1.1
<b>Overall</b>							<b>3.7</b>	<b>1.0</b>

### Source: Primary data (2022)

A five-point Likert scale was used to assess each variable by choosing: (5) strongly agree: if a respondent was in full agreement with the assertion (4) agree the respondent agreed with the assertion with some reservation, (3) neutral-if a person could not take sides, (2) disagree- if the person was disagreeing with some reservation while (1) strongly disagree -if the interviewees disagreed with the statement. A rating of 4 and 5 indicated the effect of staff capacity on effective monitoring and evaluation. On the other hand, the rating of 1 and 2 denoted no effect on staff capacity effective M&E system in the INGOs. The neutral 3) indicated when respondents were not clear on

the effect of staff capacity on effective monitoring and evaluation. The ranges for the scale were: 1.00 to 1.80 (strongly disagree), 1.81 to 2.60 (disagree), 2.61 to 3.40 (Neutral/Not sure), 3.41 to 4.20 (agree), and 4.21 to 5.00 (strongly agree). Table 5 below provides an analysis. Overall, the variable of the capacity of staff is a predictor of monitoring and evaluation as evidenced by the overall mean score of 3.7 with a standard deviation of 1.0 which lay in the agreed range (3.41 to 4.20).

Results indicated the majority of respondents confirmed that the variable (Staff with the capacity to measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E as reflected as reflected mean of 3.9(SD=1.10). This is also evidenced by the fact that 44% of respondents agreed followed by those who strongly agreed at 33%. Neutral, disagree, and agree were at 11%, 7%, and 6% respectively. The findings concurred with qualitative data analysed and captured through personal interviews. One key informant explained:

*In collaboration with project staff, M&E coordinators and managers proactively created M&E calendar events highlighting timelines for submitting baseline, evaluation, and progress reports to meet key task deadlines and deliverables, which led to project success. She added that M&E staff followed the project implementation plans and tracked the core indicators (A key informant, Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022).*

In addition, a significant proportion of respondents concurred with the variable (Staff experience is key to effective monitoring and evaluation at a mean score of 3.8 and standard deviation of 1.1). Slightly less than half of respondents (45%) agreed followed by strongly 28% and neutral at 15%. Only 6% strongly disagreed while 7% disagreed. Qualitative findings also confirmed these findings and one of the key informants stated:

*M&E staff had good experience in research skills related to qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection (e.g. surveys) which are instrumental in effective monitoring and evaluation. He further indicated that these research skills were basic prerequisites for the successful implementation of M&E deliverables because staff carried out period research to measure project impact and improve connectedness, sustainability, efficiency, and effectiveness while documenting and sharing the lesson learned among the concerned stakeholders (A key informant, Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April, 2022)*

Similarly, findings revealed respondents concurred with the variable (Staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E at Mean=3.8 and SD=1.2 implying some variations in responses). Whereby, 42% of the interviewees agreed and 26% strongly agreed. However, 22% of the respondents remained neutral while 6% and 5% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively.

As shown in Table 5, the study results corresponded with the variable (Staff equipped with data analysis techniques leading to effective M&E with mean score and SD=1.1). This is supported by the fact that 38% of respondents agreed closely followed by strongly disagree at 28%. Of the remaining respondents, 9% disagreed while a similar proportion of (9%) strongly disagreed, and neutral was at 17%. These findings were in line with personal interviews indicating staff with good data analysis was key to effective monitoring and evaluation. One of the key informants asserted that:

*The M&E team also utilized data digitization applications such as KoBo Toolbox to speed up the data collection process in the field and to increase accuracy levels. He also added that the knowledge of the staff on analytical software significantly among the INGOs due to the limited budget allocated to a staff training plan on software skills to ensure that staff stayed up-to-date on the newly emerging technologies (A key informant, Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April 2022)*

Finally, Table 3 depicts, the study results indicating a smaller yet significant number of respondents concurred with the variable (Staff has attended certified training to improve effectiveness M&E with the mean score of =3.5 and SD=1.1). Whereby, 49% of the respondents agreed and 15% strongly agreed. On the other hand, 18% of the respondents remained neutral whereas 9% and 10% strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively. These findings matched with recommendations suggested by Kamau and Mohamed (2015) who held the view that managers had to achieve quality in all aspects and processes with a special focus on the training of monitoring and evaluation teams to achieve the desired project results.

Overall, this study's findings showed that staff capacity is a predictor of effective monitoring and evaluation as evidenced by the overall mean score=3.7, and SD=1.0. This is evidenced by the fact all variables under the capacity of staff had mean scores exceeding the agreed range, 3.41 to 4.20. The factors (Staff with the capacity to measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E) had the highest mean at 3.9 which closely were followed by two factors (Staff experience is key to effective monitoring and evaluation and Staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E) at the same mean of 3.8. The factors (Staff equipped with data analysis techniques leading to effective M&E and Staff have attended certified training to improve effectiveness M&E) had relatively lower mean scores of 3.7 and 3.5 respectively.

Moreover, the factors (Staff with the capacity to measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E) had the highest strongly agree responses at 33% followed by the factors (Staff experience is key to effective monitoring & Staff equipped with data analysis techniques leading to effective M&E at 28%). This was followed by factors (Staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E at 26% & Staff have attended certified training to improve effectiveness M&E at 15%)

#### Results of Correlation Analysis

To examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables, Pearson's Product moment correlation was used to assess the strength and direction of association between research variables. A p-value of 0.05 was adopted to evaluate if the correlations between variables were statistically significant. Any value less than the probability value (P-value) of 0.05 denotes a significant relationship while a p-value greater than 0.05 denotes an insignificant relationship between the variables tested. Table 10 portrays the linear relationship between the capacity of staff and the effectiveness of M & E.

The study shows that the capacity of staff and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation had a positive and weak correlation,  $r(98)=0.124$ ,  $p=0.223$ . This analysis reveals that as the INGOs build the capacity of the staff, the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation tends to improve.

**Table 4: Correlation Analysis: The effectiveness of M&E and the capacity of staff**

Correlations			
		The effectiveness of M&E	Capacity of M&E staff
	Pearson Correlation	1	.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.223
	N	98	98

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The study shows that the capacity of staff and the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation had a negative and very weak correlation,  $r(98)=-0.002$ ,  $p=0.984$ .

#### Conclusion

The factors related to staff capacity predicting effective monitoring and evaluation of INGOS, "Staff with the capacity measure project performance is a requirement for effective M&E " was the most selected factor predicting the effective monitoring and evaluation. It can be concluded that "Staff experience is key to effective monitoring and evaluation" was another factor predicting the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. In addition, "staff with a good understanding of project design is important to effective M&E" was a key contributing factor in predicting the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation.

Concerning the association between variables, the capacity of staff was positively correlated with the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. The more INGOs allocate an adequate budget to M&E, improve the capacity of staff, and adopt the tools, the more monitoring and evaluation of INGOs become effective in carrying out monitoring and evaluation functions.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations were provided to the relevant audience: This study recommends that M&E staff implement important predictors related to the capacity of the staff to influence the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation. This research revealed that two predictors (staff with the capacity to measure project performance and staff with a good understanding of project design) are key to effective monitoring and evaluation. Hence, there is a need to train M&E staff in indicators theory and project logic models to improve their capacity which positively affects INGO's M&E systems.

#### Suggestion for further research

Researchers with an interest in factors influencing effective systems are recommended to examine the following areas:

- Participation of project beneficiaries in M&E performance
- The Support of the management in M&E success

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